

## Representation in translation and author's preferred text

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### Abstract

The purpose of this paper will be to question the concept of representation through a recent phenomenon, which came to be in fiction and fantasy genre as author's preferred text. Historically, representation has long been discussed in and around academic circles and those discussions found their way into translation studies as well. In this paper, I aim to track down three phases in which representation is a line of discussion and comment upon the effects of these discussions in general and on translation studies. The object of study will be Neil Gaiman's novels; *Neverwhere*, and *American Gods*. The different editions of these novels will be discussed within the context of representation in general, but more specifically within rewriting, the socio-cultural and economic position of the author, power relations between the author and the rewriters, and self-translation. Traditionally, the original texts precede the rewritten ones. However, in Gaiman's case, the so-called original versions of his *Neverwhere* and *American Gods* were published almost ten years after their first appearance. Moreover, the originals came under a new label: Author's Preferred Text. I aim to trace how this strange transition happened in the source context and discuss the possible reasons why it happened by applying three different approaches to the case at hand. Finally, I will conclude by presenting my own perspective on the subject.

**Keywords:** Representation, rewriting, editorship, author's preferred text.

## Çeviride temsiliyet ve yazarın tercih ettiđi metin

### Öz

Bu makalenin amacı temsiliyet kavramını yakın zamanda kurgu ve fantasti türünde ortaya çıkan yazarın tercih ettiđi metin olgusu üzerinden sorgulamaktır. Tarihsel olarak bakıldığında temsiliyet kavramı uzun yıllardır akademik çevrelerce tartışılmakta ve bu tartışmalar çeviribilim alanını da etkilemekte. Bu makalede temsiliyet üzerine yapılan tartışmalar üç farklı dönemde incelenecek ve bu tartışmaların çeviribilim üzerindeki etkileri tartışılacaktır. Makalenin araştırma nesnesi Neil Gaiman'ın *Yokyer (Neverwhere)* ve *Amerikan Tanrıları (American Gods)* romanlarıdır. Romanların farklı baskıları genel olarak temsiliyet, ancak özeldede yeniden yazım, yazarın sosyo-kültürel ekonomik konumu, yazar ve yeniden yazarlar arasındaki güç ilişkileri ve özçeviri bağlamlarında incelenecektir. Geleneksel olarak, yeniden yazımlar orijinal eserden sonra ortaya çıkarlar. Ancak, Gaiman'ın *Yokyer (Neverwhere)* ve *Amerikan Tanrıları (American Gods)* romanlarında bu durumun tam tersi yaşanmıştır. Orijinal olduđu söylenen romanlar ilk baskıdan yaklaşık on yıl sonra ve yeni bir etiket altında – Yazarın Tercih Ettiđi Metin - yayımlanmıştır. Makalede, yaşanan bu ilginç geçişin izleri takip edilecek ve tartışılan üç yaklaşım yoluyla bu durum üzerine çıkarımlar yapılacaktır.

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**Anahtar kelimeler:** Temsiliyet, yeniden yazım, editörlük, yazarın tercih ettiği metin.

### Representation in translation and author's preferred text

Representation has been one of the main line of debates in translation for centuries. The era in which religious determinism was prevailing marked the time when *Word* had the utmost power. Since they were God's remarks, they had to be represented in full. Not being able to do so had fatal consequences around 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC. Even the person recognized as the official translator of the Bible, Saint Jerome, was questioned, and in turn questioned certain people, on their ability to represent God's remarks with the adequacy and elegance that they required when they are translated into English. This led to several court cases, translators facing the ultimate punishment and consequently multiple recantations (Robinson, 2014, p. 23-27). In 1536, however, William Tyndale, an Oxford educated scholar, was strangled to death and his corpse was burned at the stake for heresy. The reason for his heresy was twisting God's remarks and using vernacular English to represent them in his bible translation (Daniell, 1994). This was one of many reasons that sparked the Reform movement yet the dominance of *Word* and the supreme position its representation held continued until the Renaissance and the Age of Enlightenment. In these new eras, there came various types of empiricism which approached to representation from a new and different perspective.

In Immanuel Kant's works in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century, the distinction was made between information based on experience and evidence, and information independent of experience. *A posteriori and a priori* knowledge paved the way for subjective and/or objective synthesis of proven knowledge, experience, and general world knowledge (Kant, 1998). Therefore, it is safe to say that from Kant's perspective, representation is the manifestation of objects and thoughts which are recognized and interpreted through a synthesis of knowledge.

Empiricist perspective coupled with the remnants of the deterministic point of views started to change the thoughts on translation as well. Influential authors and thinkers of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, such as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Friedrich Schleiermacher, formed their views on translation accordingly. Both of them believed translation would either be the representation of the author and his culture, which means bringing the author to the readers, or representation of the translator and his culture, which means bringing the reader to the author. (Robinson, 2014)

These views were revolutionary in terms of translation. However, they were still logocentric and still logocentric perspectives kept gaining prominence through Ferdinand de Saussure's structural linguistics in the early to mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. With his dual system of *langue* and *parole* (De Saussure, 2011), Saussure further strengthened the logocentric idea of representation. His *langue*, which is an abstract universal language system, is the original through which his *parole* allows people to make infinite number of statements. That is, every uttered statement is a representation, however varied they can be, of *langue*.

This systemic and source-oriented understanding of language thoroughly affected how people approached to translation for many years. It can be argued that Saussure's effect is still felt today. However, with the contemporary French philosophy, logocentrism has been put under constant scrutiny. In 1967, Jacques Derrida comes crushing upon Saussure's logocentric idea that writing is a mere representation of speech, saying that "representation mingles with what it represents, to the point where one speaks as one writes, one thinks as if the represented were nothing more than the shadow or

reflection of the presenter. A dangerous promiscuity and a nefarious complicity between the reflection and the reflected which lets itself be seduced narcissistically. In this play of representation, the point of origin becomes ungraspable” (Derrida, 1997, p. 37). In the same year, Roland Barthes killed the author (Barthes, 1977), as in overthrowing the author as the ultimate source of origin for the text. According to Barthes, the text does not represent the author. Instead, the text represents the text and how that representation is interpreted is up to the reader.

### Representation in translation studies

In fact, when translation studies was named and founded as an academic discipline in 1972 by James S. Holmes (Holmes, 1988), empiricism was well established, and logocentrism and linguistic structuralism were the dominant approaches to translation. It can be argued that translation studies was born as a reaction to linguistic structuralism utilized to account for translations and built its own structural/systemic paradigm based on socio-cultural paradigms. Itamar Even-Zohar started working on his polysystem theory in mid 1970s and published his work in the following years (Even-Zohar, 1990). His underlying argument was that systems cannot isolate themselves and by nature they are dynamic. This called for a polysystem, a system of systems that is in constant motion and interaction. Even-Zohar then argued that translated literature has a special position in literary systems (Even-Zohar, 1990) and this paved the way for Gideon Toury’s systemic/descriptive approach to translation. Toury started working on his target-oriented theory based on socio-cultural and translational norms in 1980 (Toury, 1980) and furthered it in 1995 (Toury, 1995). In line with these scholars, a group of people, later named as the manipulation school, came together (Hermans, 1985) and solidified the empiricist, structural and descriptive movement in the discipline of translation studies, and in turn, they solidified the discipline itself. This movement brought along fresh blood and excitement to the academia and cultivated the studies to be done with a different and expanded type of logocentrism. A logocentrism not based on the source but the target dynamics.

It is completely understandable that translation studies was founded upon the prevalent “scientific” paradigm. The era demanded it. However, since the 1960s post-structuralist and deconstructionist positions has gained notable standing around the academic circles. Naturally, they found their way into translation studies as well (Arrojo, 1997) (Koskinen, 2000) (Venuti, 1998) (Dizdar, 2011). For these positions, representation gained a whole new meaning which greatly differ from structural logocentrism.

### Neil Gaiman and author’s preferred text

From here on out and amidst all the theories, approaches and positions, I would like to present a case to be scrutinized within the concept of representation. Neil Gaiman, an English author, comic book writer and scriptwriter, published his first solo novel *Neverwhere* in 1996 and third novel *American Gods* in 2001. Then, he republished *Neverwhere* and *American Gods* in 2006 and 2011, respectively. However, the second versions of the books were republished under the label of *author’s preferred text*. What happened before, in between and after both publications will constitute the case study of this paper.

Before 2001, Neil Gaiman was a relatively successful person, but he never had the fame, fortune and following that he has today. He didn’t get a university degree, he pursued freelance journalism and writing jobs and later on worked as a comic book writer. Even though he collaborated with the late great Sir Terry Pratchett on *Good Omens* (Pratchett & Gaiman, 1990), Gaiman still flew under the radar for

most people. However, his fortune turned around in 2001 when he published *American Gods* (Gaiman, 2001). The novel became a bestseller immediately in various lists (New York Times, Los Angeles Times) in 2001. One year later, with *American Gods*, Gaiman won literally all the prestigious awards in fiction and fantasy genre, including Hugo Award for Best Novel (2002), Locus Award for Best Fantasy Novel (2002), Nebula Award for Best Novel (2002). He gradually gained a huge fanbase and following.

In the preface of 2001 version of *American Gods*, Gaiman acknowledges his editors by saying “the two people without whom: Jennifer Hershey at Harper Collins in the U.S. and Doug Young at Hodder Headline in the UK. I’m lucky to have good editors, and these are two of the best editors I’ve known. Not to mention two of the most uncomplaining, patient, and, as the deadlines whirled past us like dry leaves in a gust of wind, positively stoic.” (Gaiman, 2001, p. 4-5). Gaiman gives full credit to his editors and holds them in a very high regard. He obviously feels indebted to them and presents them as the contributors to the success of the novel.

Ten years later, in the author's preferred text version of *American Gods*, Gaiman states referring to the first version that “my editor was concerned that the book I had given to her was slightly too big and too meandering (she didn't mind it being too odd), and she wanted me to trim it, and I did. I suspect her instincts may have been right, for the book was certainly successful—it sold many copies.” (Gaiman, 2011, p. 2). Gaiman here gives credit to his first editor, yet he shows discomfort in the fact that he had to trim his own piece of art. He follows his thoughts by revealing that it was very unexpected for him that the publishers would agree to publish his “original and untrimmed” version. He points out that getting his original version ready to be published was an extremely hard and tedious job for the editor, Pete Atkins, whose job was to find errors and typos, and correct them. Gaiman thanks the original editor of the first version, Jennifer Brehl, and the editor of the new version, Pete Atkins. However, he closes his remarks by saying that “The version of American Gods that you are holding is about twelve thousand words longer than the one that won all the awards, and it's the version of which I'm the most proud.” (Gaiman, 2011, p. 6-7). By that point, Gaiman's position obviously changed for the better and he fortified his position as the ultimate subject<sup>2</sup> and agent of his own work.

### Rewriting, power relations and deconstruction

Rewriting has long been studied within translation studies in many contexts including the context of intralingual translation (Birkan Baydan, 2011) (Berk Albachten, 2012) (Taş, 2018). However, much as common sense (*a priori* knowledge) tells us that the original precedes the rewritten text, when the case I presented here is synthesized with the evidence at hand (*a posteriori* knowledge), an irregularity occurs in our perception of representation. So irregular that the only similar case I found was Gülsüm Canlı's study on William Faulkner's *Sanctuary*<sup>3</sup> (Canlı, 2018).

Before I continue with my discussion, I would like to present two translation studies scholars and theoreticians, André Lefevere and Maria Tymoczko, both of whom I locate in a space between empiricism/logocentrism and post structuralist/deconstructionist. The reason why is quite simple. I believe neither of them has rigid lines and they make use of both sides in their theories and studies.

<sup>2</sup> It is not my intention to discuss the matter of subject here as it falls outside the scope of this paper. For more information on subject in translation studies, see. Yılmaz Kutlay, 2019

<sup>3</sup> Canlı, regarding William Faulkner, uses the term “translauthor”, which denotes an author translating his own text. However, she pushes the term to “intr-auto-translauthor” to account for the intralingual self-translation done by the author. In a sense, Gaiman might be considered the same, but it is not my intention to discuss that side of the case here.

In Lefevere's rewriting theory, every translation is an act rewriting. The theory, drawing on Edward Said, starts with the questions of if there is a certain limit to interpretation, if all reading is misreading, and if so whether all readings are equally misinterpretations. Lefevere says that there is nothing wrong with these kind of questions and about criticism he goes on to discuss that "what is wrong, though, or at the very least dishonest, is for criticism, any kind of criticism, to pretend to be objective and try to take on the trappings of the scientific while remaining partisan and subjective." (Lefevere, 2014, p. 217-218). This side of Lefevere welcomes the deconstructionist positions and he basically alludes to the notion that any kind of criticism disregards the logocentric notion of representation and each individual, for various reasons, can read, understand and manipulate the text in their own way. When it comes to the other side of Lefevere, which is more of a structural nature, he devises his own system to account for the various reasons that I just mentioned. Lefevere's system is neutral, consists of texts and agents who read, write and rewrite them. However, the most important notion here is that Lefevere sees the system as a set of constraints that are not deterministic. These constraints are two control factors; patronage - powerful persons and institutions, and professionals - critics, rewriters. The remaining constraints are poetics, discourse and ideology (Lefevere, 1992, p. 12-20). These two sides of Lefevere both give us a vantage point<sup>4</sup> to form our own representation, the circumstances surrounding the case, and then based on that representation make sense of the situation and comment upon it.

When Lefevere's rewriting theory is applied to the case I presented above, there may appear certain speculations. However, I do believe some fair deductions can be formed as well. First of all, the notion of author's preferred text directs the case towards patronage. The first version of the novel is obviously rewritten, and it is rewritten by the author himself. The reason for that probably lies with the fact that at that time the author had little to no fame and fortune. Therefore, he lost the power struggle, or maybe didn't even push his luck. The author's preferred text version of the novel is also rewritten but claims to be the "original", or in other words, claims to be *how the author intended the novel to represent himself*. These interpretations can be multiplied and pushed more towards the borders, but within the context of this paper, I find them sufficient.

The second translation studies scholar I would like to mention regarding my case is Maria Tymoczko. In my opinion, Tymoczko's approach resembles that of Lefevere's in that she utilizes both paradigms too. Tymoczko emphasizes the role of power and how cultural hegemony manifests itself through translation based on the power dynamics (Tymoczko, 1999). In a later paper, which serves as an introduction to a book consisting various studies based on power, Tymoczko and Gentzler delve into the debate of representation and propose that "translators must make choices, selecting aspects of parts of a text to transpose and emphasize. Such choices in turn serve to create representations of *their* source text, representations that are also *partial*. This partiality is not to be considered a defect, a lack or an absence in a translation; it is a necessary condition of the act." (Tymoczko & Gentzler, 2002, p. xviii) (italics mine)

If we are to apply Tymoczko's propositions to the case again, we still see power as the prominent factor determining how a text will be published. When the author didn't have enough power to see his will come to life, he was put in situation where he had to compromise. Compromise means a partial representation. However, when the power balance shifted towards Gaiman's favor, he made a move to increase his *perceived* level of representation, which is also partial according to Tymoczko. This type of judgement making with various degrees on a spectrum is much like something structuralist approaches

<sup>4</sup> In a previous study of mine, I discussed the notion of vantage point more in depth. For more information, see. Çakıroğlu, 2019.

often utilize. However, the difference between rigid structuralism and Tymozcko's perspective is obvious in that there is no absolute dichotomy here and she readily accepts the fact that there is no complete representation.

If Gaiman's case is to be looked through completely post-structural point of view, one needs to turn to Derrida and his position on representation. In one of his papers, Derrida goes through Heidegger's perspective and deconstructs his Being, which is destined to be and originates from a source, as if Being was a reflection of the source. Heidegger's position suggests the presumption of metaphorical, utopic, abstract and never-to-be-known notion of representation. However, Derrida is not so sure about Heidegger's proposition. Derrida is of the mindset that this reflection of the origin, as he calls it "original" *envoi*<sup>5</sup>, is not accessible so readily, rather it can be made sense only by *renvoi* (Derrida, 1982, p. 2). Derrida quotes Heidegger's thoughts on author and publisher relationship. Heidegger thinks that there are two reasons why publishers are becoming more relevant than the author. The first reason is that compared to the authors, publishers get a better sense of what the readers need and how the readers are convinced of what the publishers sell is what they need. The second reason, on the other hand, is that publishers who know what they are doing always have an agenda, prepared in advance and adapted to the new circumstances so that they can gain publicity through authors (Heidegger in Derrida, 1982, p.305-306). Heidegger suggests that published materials, be it books, researches, academic or philosophical writings, usually go through the filter of the publishers and the product is represented to serve their own agenda. Therefore, the essence of what is tried to be represented morphs into another representation. However, through a series of discussions, Derrida arrives at a (somehow) conclusion that it is futile to try and represent the essence of representation<sup>6</sup>. Because "the essence of representation is not a representation, it is not representable, there is no representation of representation, ... nor does [representation] lend itself to this (Derrida, 1982, p. 314). The underlying reason for that is whenever a supposedly original *envoi* is cast out, it multiplies itself infinitely, and those multiple *envoi* only makes sense through *renvoi*, which also multiplies on their way back.

It is quite possible to put Gaiman's case under the scope I mentioned above. Gaiman never really had a chance to represent himself fully through his work according to both Heidegger and Derrida. According to Heidegger, publishing anything make the work lose its essence anyway, but if the publishers' agenda is somehow cast aside, we can get closer to that essence. Therefore, the first version of *American Gods* lost its essence of representation more than the first one. According to Derrida, there can be no correlation between two versions, the first and the author's preferred text versions, simply because the essence cannot be represented. Both the versions sent out different *envoi* and got back different *renvoi*. Among these infinite possibilities of sending off and sending back, finding a transparency between them is impossible. However, that is not to say that *envoi* gets lost ever. That is never the case. *renvoi* always finds its way back, but always in a different shape, form, meaning and essence.

### Concluding remarks

To conclude, in this paper, I tried to track down the concept of representation in translation and translation studies through the selected schools of thoughts. I found out that between the discussion on representation in humanities throughout time and discussions on translation, there are certain correlations. It is ironic here for me to say that because somehow representation happens between

<sup>5</sup> Derrida uses the terms "envoi" and "renvoi" with multiple meanings. They correspond to the reflection metaphor used in Heidegger and they roughly boil down to "sending off" and "sending back", respectively.

<sup>6</sup> According to Derrida, "envoi" is a representation. Therefore, the so-called original is a representation itself in Heidegger's terms.

disciplines as well<sup>7</sup>, but as Derrida says, the information travelling through disciplines represents something very much different to scholars on the receiving side. If anything, the case of Neil Gaiman, and his term author's preferred text that I put under the microscope using different approaches prove that. However, what it also proves is that the way I interpreted the mentioned approaches, the way they are represented for/in/around me, guided the interpretations and statements that I made on the case. Moreover, I, as the author of this text, have no control over how my text will be conveyed to the readers since, after all, the author is dead. I believe this multiplicity, or rather infinity, is what makes readings, re/readings, discussions in humanities and in connection translation studies so intriguing and enlightening.

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<sup>7</sup> This subject would constitute the topic of further study, which I believe would contribute to a critical line of discussion.

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