



A Milestone in the History of Turkish Pop Music: Zeki Müren and Song Translation (1964)

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the previously unacknowledged importance of Zeki Müren's collaboration with Fecri Ebciöğlü in rewriting and performing Charles Aznavour's "La Mamma" [Mama] in Turkish in 1964 as "Annem". At that time, Müren was already a celebrated figure in Turkish art music, while Ebciöğlü had made a name for himself in the music industry through earlier releases, most notably "Bak Bir Varmış Bir Yokmuş" [Once Upon a Time], the inaugural song of Turkish pop music, translated from Bob Azzam's "C'est Ecrit Dans Le Ciel" [Written in Heaven]. This collaboration is a significant event in the realms of cultural history, translation history, and music history, yet it has been largely ignored by scholars and deserves closer examination. Müren's established fame in Turkish art music played a crucial role in the acceptance of this new genre by the Turkish audience (1), enhanced Ebciöğlü's own reputation (2), and reciprocally boosted Müren's popularity through the translation of a global pop hit (3). Utilizing the concept of *aranjman*, a song-translation practice unique to Turkey, the study asserts that Müren's rendition not only retains culture-specificity but also infuses it with their distinct style. This unique style is not merely a queer performance but is tied to Müren's stature as a performer of Turkish art music, composer, lyricist and radio programmer. All these aspects constitute the symbolic capital of Zeki Müren. The study aims to show that only by analyzing musical, verbal, and visual elements together can we fully understand the strategies employed and gain a comprehensive understanding of song translation.

Keywords: Zeki Müren, Aznavour, Song Translation, Sung Performance, Translation Studies

Introduction

Charles Aznavour's initial major international success came with the song "La Mamma". Released as a single by the French Armenian singer-songwriter in 1963, it achieved million-seller status, reaching the top spot in France and Spain, and was translated into numerous other languages including but not limited to English, Italian, Dutch, German, Spanish, Croatian and Arabic. It was also translated into Turkish by Fecri Ebciöğlü and was released as a vinyl titled "Annem" [My Mother] by Zeki Müren (1964). This song translation was indeed a notable collaboration between two influential figures in Turkish music history: Zeki Müren, a renowned Turkish art (and folk) music



singer, and Fecri Ebcioğlu, a respected figure in pop song translation into Turkish. In fact, this release marked a significant yet overlooked development. While Müren had already established themselves as a prominent figure in Turkish music, Ebcioğlu's prior work in song translation had solidified his reputation in the music scene. However, the importance of their partnership in translating and performing "La Mamma" remains understated, especially within academic circles, despite its profound implications for cultural, translation, and music history. This article aims to shed light on the significance of this collaboration, examining its impact on Müren's individual popularity, Ebcioğlu's recognition, and the broader acceptance of the new genre by the Turkish public. The article expands our understanding of *aranjman* as a song-translational practice in Turkey: it argues that Müren performs the translated song not only in a way that preserves culture specificity, but also in a way that reflects Müren's individual style. This can best be demonstrated through holistic song translation analysis.

To have a deeper understanding of Zeki Müren's collaboration with Fecri Ebcioğlu in translating and performing "La Mamma" into Turkish, a multi-faceted approach will be employed. A thorough examination of archival materials, including but not limited to vinyl covers, liner notes, interviews, and historical records, will provide contextual background and insights into the socio-cultural milieu of the time. Additionally, qualitative content analysis will be conducted at the musical, verbal and visual levels of both the original and translated versions of the song to identify nuances in the translation and performance. This holistic methodology aims to offer a comprehensive understanding of the collaborative process and its impact on Turkish pop music and cultural history.

Fecri Ebcioğlu: an agent of change in the 1960s

Fecri Ebcioğlu can be defined as an *agent of change*, who, benefiting from Zeki Müren's *symbolic capital*, took another gradual step in establishing pop music with Turkish lyrics. In the song he not only selected but also translated for Zeki Müren to perform, he utilized a combination of *domesticating* and *foreignizing* strategies, entirely consistent with his fundamental aim: legitimizing Turkish pop music as a new genre. After all, it was Ebcioğlu who first uttered the following in the 1960s: "every country sang songs in their own language, why didn't we?" (Meriç, 2006, p. 206; Pesen, 2019, p. 88). It has already been proposed that the 1960s witnessed a culture-specific trend at the crossroads of translation and music in the Turkish context (Pesen, 2019, p. 85).

Building on this perspective, this study argues that Zeki Müren's rendition of a song translated by Ebcioğlu not only maintains cultural specificity in the lyrics but also infuses the song with Müren's distinctive style. This style goes beyond a "queer performance" (Güvendik, 2018, p. 42; Hawkins, 2018, p. 100). Instead, it reflects Müren's widespread popularity and expertise as a performer of local music, composer, lyricist and radio programmer (Aşan, 2003, p. 27; Gür, 1996, p. 41; Hiçyılmaz, 1997, p. 59; Sancar, 2021, p. 8). All these roles collectively constitute Zeki Müren's symbolic capital, and the present study intends to demonstrate this through a holistic analysis of song translation, without neglecting the musical and visual levels (Pesen, 2022, p. 17).

I aim to explore the concepts introduced in this paragraph further, drawing from insights offered by prominent figures in sociology and translation studies. Through this exploration, my goal is to contextualize the phenomenon of song translation within the dynamic landscape of the Turkish pop music scene during the 1960s. Utilizing Gideon Toury's notion of "agents of change," I intend to shed light on Fecri Ebcioğlu's role as an influential figure in Turkish pop music, emphasizing the pivotal role individuals play in shaping cultural practices and norms within society (Toury, 2002, p. 151). Adapting Toury's framework to Ebcioğlu's case, his efforts in introducing and establishing Western pop music with Turkish lyrics can be regarded as those of a "self-appointed" individual introducing "a new option" into the Turkish music scene as a repertoire producer. In the 1960s, Ebcioğlu emerged as a prominent figure driven by the imperative to establish a domestic pop music market, thereby becoming an influential "agent of change" in the Turkish music industry. He curated a selection of Western hits and oversaw their translation into Turkish (Dilmener, 2006, p. 43; Dorsay, 2003, p. 213; Meriç, 2006, p. 59; Solmaz, 1996, p. 27).

To acknowledge "Annem," the subject matter of this study, as part of a wider socio-cultural context, Bourdieu's concept of "symbolic capital" offers valuable insights into Ebcioğlu's utilization of Zeki Müren's existing prestige and influence to propel the evolution of Turkish pop music. In the case of Ebcioğlu, his strategic leveraging of Zeki Müren's "symbolic capital" exemplifies the agency of key figures in driving innovation and transformation within the Turkish music industry. In cultural production, two types of capital stand out: while cultural capital is associated with knowledge and competence, symbolic capital concerns celebrity related to such competence (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 7). In other words, the latter refers to the reputation and prestige associated with an individual (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 22). It is the recognition within a particular field of expertise. Zeki Müren's expertise spanned Turkish art music, radio programming, and acting, to

say the least, contributing to their significant symbolic capital. It was this symbolic capital that likely caught the attention of Fecri Ebciöğlü, prompting him to invite Müren to record one of his early song translations into Turkish in the early 1960s.

Moreover, at the micro level, for the case of “Annem,” Ebciöğlü’s approach to song translation can be analyzed with the help of Klaus Kaindl’s framework of holistic song translation analysis, which emphasizes the multifaceted nature of musical translation. Kaindl maintains that the translation of music should be regarded as a complex phenomenon that is not only verbal but also musical, visual and, last but not least, socio-cultural (2005, p. 243). In other words, song translation is a multimodal activity that takes place at various levels, such as the verbal, musical and vocal modes that engage in functional connection with one another (Kaindl, 2020, p. 63). A detailed and holistic acknowledgement as well as analysis of these different levels altogether can shed light on the translational strategies applied, and move us beyond the view that reduces (song) translation into a merely verbal or linguistic activity. Adopting such a holistic attitude can help us see the fuller picture: Ebciöğlü’s adoption of both domesticating and foreignizing strategies at different levels reflects an innovative approach to song translation at a time of genre formation, wherein fidelity at the musical level is balanced with creative rewriting at the verbal level. By leveraging Müren’s symbolic capital, Ebciöğlü strategically positioned himself as a catalyst for innovation within the music industry in the early 1960s.

Furthermore, Ebciöğlü’s utilization of different translation strategies across different levels can be attributed to the concepts of domestication and foreignization as elucidated by Lawrence Venuti. Venuti proposes that translators navigate a continuum between domestication, or making the text conform to the target culture’s norms, and foreignization, which preserves elements of the source culture (1995, p. 20). The latter “evokes a sense of foreignness in the translation” (Venuti 1998, p. 242). In the context of Ebciöğlü’s work, the combination of these strategies serves a dual purpose: sounding as familiar to the Turkish listenership as possible while also integrating Western pop elements. This juxtaposition of domesticating and foreignizing strategies reflects broader sociocultural dynamics within Turkish society. Ebciöğlü’s efforts to legitimize Turkish pop music as a distinct genre mirror larger trends of cultural hybridity and globalization. As Turkish society became more influenced by globalization in the early 1960s, Ebciöğlü’s translational practices in “Annem” (1964) serve as a microcosm of these complex negotiations between tradition and innovation.

In analyzing the song translation process, Ebciöğlü's translational strategies manifest themselves distinctly at different levels of musical expression. At the arrangement and instrumentation levels, foreignizing techniques are evident in the incorporation of Western musical elements, signaling a departure from traditional Turkish music conventions. Conversely, at the verbal and sung levels, domesticating strategies seem to have been employed to ensure linguistic and cultural coherence with the Turkish audience. Through this interdisciplinary exploration, we gain a deeper understanding of Ebciöğlü's pivotal role in shaping the trajectory of Turkish pop music. By synthesizing concepts from sociology and translation studies, we can contextualize Ebciöğlü's contributions within larger sociocultural frameworks, illuminating the complex interplay between music, identity, and globalization in Turkey in the 1960s.

During this period, pop music in Turkey was predominantly composed of covers, with original songs written in English being a rarity (Pesen, 2019, p. 81). The introduction of pop music with Turkish lyrics was met with skepticism, challenging the entrenched cultural norms. Ebciöğlü's groundbreaking initiative to rewrite foreign songs in Turkish marked a significant departure from performances and releases in foreign languages, setting the stage for the emergence of Turkish pop music as a distinct genre. Inspired by a French song, he spontaneously composed Turkish lyrics, giving birth to "Bak Bir Varmış Bir Yokmuş" [Once Upon a Time], commonly accepted as the inaugural song of Turkish pop music, released by Odeon in December 1961 (Dilmener, 2006, p. 43; Dorsay, 2003, p. 213; Meriç, 2006, p. 59; Pesen, 2024, p. 2; Solmaz, 1996, p. 27). Ebciöğlü's description of Adamo's initial performance of "Her Yerde Kar Var" [Snow Everywhere] provides insight into the challenges of singing a pop song in Turkish during the 1960s (Meriç, 2006, p. 209):

Salvatore Adamo had a concert at the Atlas Movie Theatre. The presenter was Erkan Yolaç. I told them both not to tell anyone that I was the [rewriter] of the lyrics [in Turkish] lest I could be jeered at. Towards the end of the concert Adamo suddenly started singing «Her Yerde Kar Var, Kalbim Senin Bu Gece» [Everywhere's covered in snow, my heart belongs to you tonight]. There was not a single response from the audience. There was an eerie quiet. I felt totally humiliated. If I could have gotten lost in my jacket, believe me, I would have. It went on and on. Then, the song was over. Again, not a single sound. Then, after a couple of seconds, the audience

burst into an enthusiastic applause. They were screaming, «play it again, play it again...» Adamo resang the song. As soon as it was over, I was carried onto the stage on shoulders. This time, we resang the song together. As you might know, that song of mine would soon be number one. After that day, the popularity of foreign songs decreased. The youth began showing great interest in songs with Turkish lyrics... (Pesen, 2019, p. 89; Pesen 2010, p. 74)

As the excerpt above reveals, despite initial resistance, Ebciöğlü persisted in his mission to popularize pop music with Turkish lyrics. He devised innovative strategies, such as inviting foreign artists like Salvatore Adamo to resing their songs in Turkish, although they had not spoken a single word of Turkish before. In the translation of “La Mamma” [Mama], Ebciöğlü utilized a different strategy: the endorsement of pop music with Turkish lyrics by one of the most renowned performers of an already established genre: Turkish Art Music. In what follows, I will compare the original song and the translation in terms of musical, verbal and visual aspects.

A holistic song translation analysis

Charles Aznavour was born on May 22, 1924, in Paris, France, to Armenian parents who had fled the Ottoman Empire during WWI (Aznavour, 2003, p. 10). Aznavour’s career spanned several decades, leaving an indelible mark on the global music scene. Renowned for his powerful and emotive singing style, he captivated audiences with his performances in multiple languages, including French, English, Italian, and Spanish. Some of his most iconic songs, such as “Hier Encore” (1964), “La Bohème” (1966), and “She” (1974), have become classics. In addition to his musical achievements, Aznavour had a successful acting career, appearing in numerous films. His influence extended far beyond France, shaping the development of *the French chanson* and inspiring countless artists worldwide. Robert Gall, a French lyricist, played a pivotal role in Aznavour’s career, collaborating with him on several projects. “La Mamma,” [Mama] Aznavour’s first major global hit, stands as a testament to their partnership. Released as a single in 1963, the song, composed by Aznavour with lyrics by Gall, resonated with audiences worldwide, becoming a million-seller and solidifying Aznavour’s status as an international musical sensation. Its universal themes and emotional depth transcended language barriers, leading to translations in numerous languages (Murrells, 1984, p. 170).

Zeki Müren was renowned for their versatile musical talent, spanning across various genres including Turkish art music, Turkish folk music, and last but not least Turkish pop music, the first example of which they gave with “Annem”. Their resonant baritone voice and emotionally charged performances solidified their position as one of Turkey’s most cherished and influential musicians. While primarily recognized as a singer and performer, Müren also left their mark on the Turkish music scene as a lyricist, song translator, and composer. Beyond their musical endeavors, Müren enjoyed a prosperous career in Turkish cinema and television, gracing numerous films and TV shows with their acting prowess. Not only celebrated for their artistic prowess, Müren was also admired for their flamboyant and distinctive personal style. In an era when the challenges faced by the LGBTQ+ community were even more daunting than they are today, Müren emerged as a symbol of hope and resilience for many. Their extravagant costumes and captivating stage presence further contributed to their iconic status. Even today, Müren remains a cultural icon in Turkey, with their contributions to Turkish music and entertainment continuing to be revered. Their songs remain popular and their influence definitely transcends generations. Under Fecri Ebciöğlü’s guidance, Müren’s symbolic capital contributed a great deal to the establishment of pop music with Turkish lyrics, and soon later, Müren also made a duet with Ajda Pekkan, the first star of pop music with Turkish lyrics. Also known as the “super star” of Turkish pop music, Pekkan is one of the singers with the highest *symbolic capital*, mostly famous for song translation performances such as “Her Yerde Kar Var” (translated by Fecri Ebciöğlü), “Kimler Geldi Kimler Geçti” and “Bambaşka Biri” (both translated by Fikret Şeneş). “İki Yabancı,” the song Müren and Pekkan sung together in the early 1960s, was also translated into Turkish by Fecri Ebciöğlü, a significant fact that underscores how Ebciöğlü acted as an *agent of change* in establishing pop music with Turkish lyrics right from the start. By translating songs for these iconic artists and even bringing them together, Ebciöğlü helped pave the way for the widespread acceptance and popularity of pop music with Turkish lyrics, shaping the cultural landscape for generations to come.

I will commence the holistic comparative analysis with a comprehensive examination of the song’s musical facets, encompassing instrumentation, voice and arrangement. Then, I will delve into a detailed analysis of the verbal aspects, focusing on the first two verses and the initial chorus due to space limitations. Finally, I will carry out an analysis on the visual level, commenting on the paratextual elements in the form of vinyl covers and liner notes.

The musical level

The source song opens with a solo nylon-string classical guitar playing an arpeggio in E minor. As Charles Aznavour sings the first “La Mamma,” a second guitar joins in, responding to the singer’s verbo-musical phrase with its own musical phrase. The instrumentation, characterized by two guitars, creates a sense of nostalgia and sadness, perfectly complementing Aznavour’s vocal performance. Aznavour, known as one of the leading representatives of the *chanson* style in France during the 1950s and 1960s, captivates the listener with his baritone voice. His skillful transition between wordy lyrics in the first verse and prolonged vowels, such as “Laa” and “Mamaa,” ending with vibratos, mesmerizes the audience. At the end of the word “Mama,” Aznavour employs a melismatic technique, performing a descending scale on the phoneme “a,” effectively underscoring the title and main theme of the song. Throughout the piece, the second guitar maintains its presence, subtly responding to the lyrics, while the string section joins in during the second verse, “On la réchauffe de baisers” [she is warmed with kisses] (at 00:51), adding depth to the arrangement. At 1:02, the second guitar reappears to respond to the lyrics “La Mamma,” accompanied by the violins, creating a dynamic feel in the arrangement. The introduction of the church organ at the mention of “Saint Marie” and “Ave Maria” establishes a meaningful link between the music and lyrics, enhancing the religious undertones of the composition. During the chorus, beginning with “Y a tant d’amour,” a string section accompanies Aznavour, responding with precision to each line. The same instrumentation and arrangement persist throughout the song, culminating in a grand finale with the addition of the brass section during the last words, “jamais tu ne me quitteras,” amplifying the nostalgic and lyrical feel of the piece.

The target song also commences with a solo nylon-string classical guitar, echoing the arpeggio in E minor found in the source. However, there is a slight deviation: while the source guitar plays the arpeggio four times, the target guitar plays it twice before the singing begins. As Zeki Müren’s voice enters with the first “Annem,” a second guitar joins in, mirroring the response seen in the source. Although the reverb effect on the target guitar is less pronounced compared to the source, the musical phrase it produces in response remains identical. The presence of two guitars, coupled with their execution, contributes to the overall atmosphere of nostalgia and sadness, a characteristic shared with the source song. Müren’s vocal performance is distinct, characterized by a thinner, but still baritone quality and clear pronunciation, reminiscent of highbrow Turkish

individuals. Unlike Aznavour's rapid delivery of wordy sections, Müren adopts a slower pace, infusing each word with the aura of Turkish art music, a genre they were renowned for upon the release of "Annem" in 1964. Despite these differences, both vocalists possess unique qualities, each contributing to the song's emotional depth in their own way. The introduction of the string section during the second verse echoes the arrangement of the source song, maintaining consistency in instrumentation. Müren's rendition of the chorus words "Anneciğim, annem" is marked by subtle vocal ornamentation, enhancing the song's sadness with a sobbing-like quality reminiscent of Turkish art music. Notably, Müren refrains from employing melisma, exercising their artistic liberty to imbue the translation with an original aspect. Although the target instrumentation and arrangement remain faithful to the source, one notable deviation is the replacement of the church organ with an accordion. This alteration results in the loss of the religious undertones present in the source composition, with implications for the interpretation of the lyrics, as discussed below. In the latter half of the song, Müren is left alone in the final words "Artık rahat uyu canım anam" [rest in peace now dear mama] accompanied only by a subtle guitar arpeggio. This departure from the source arrangement evokes a sense of loneliness and solitude, themes often explored in the repertoire of Turkish art music.

Fecri Ebcioğlu's translation for Zeki Müren's performance demonstrates a nuanced approach at multiple levels, including the musical, verbal, and visual dimensions. At the musical level, Müren's rendition is characterized by a high level of articulation and skillful vocal ornamentation, reminiscent of their performances in Turkish art music. This utilization of familiar musical techniques represents a "domesticating" strategy, creating a sense of cultural authenticity and resonance with Müren's established style. Furthermore, the choice of key, with both songs performed in E minor, highlights a deliberate effort to faithfully replicate the original composition. Despite the differences in duration between the original and translated versions, the consistency in key suggests a conscious decision to preserve the essence of the music while adapting it to Turkish lyrics. An intriguing example of translational innovation occurs during the entrance of the chorus at the 3:15 mark, where phonemic relyricizing is employed. This technique, reminiscent of the phonetic vowel qualities of the line "Ave Maria" as "Anneciğim Anam," underscores the overlapping of the musical and verbal levels, enhancing the poetic and emotive impact of the lyrics. On the arrangement and instrumentation front, Ebcioğlu collaborates with an orchestra made up of instruments used in Western classical music, maintaining a sense of continuity with the original compositions. This

adherence to the original instrumentation represents a “foreignizing” strategy, aimed at integrating Western pop elements seamlessly with Turkish lyrics. Such consistency aligns with Ebcioğlu’s intention: establishing Turkish pop music as a distinct genre with international appeal.

The verbal level

The lyrics of “La Mamma” paint a poignant tableau of a gathering around the deathbed of a beloved mother. The song unfolds as family and friends from various walks of life come together upon hearing the imminent passing of “la mamma”. The narrative captures the emotional intensity and universal experiences associated with a mother’s impending departure. Amidst the sorrow, there is a celebration of the love, memories, and shared moments that define the relationship between a mother and her children. The lyrics beautifully depict the rituals of comforting and cherishing the fading moments, with references to religious elements, familial warmth, and the bittersweet blend of tears and smiles. “La Mamma” stands as a timeless ode to maternal love, embracing both the sorrow of parting and the enduring legacy of a mother’s affection. The following is the first verse of the song:¹

Ils sont venus	They have come
Ils sont tous là	They are all here
Dès qu’ils ont entendu ce cri	As soon as they heard this cry
Elle va mourir, la mamma	She’s going to die, the mamma
Ils sont venus	They have come
Ils sont tous là	They are all here
Même ceux du sud de l’Italie	Even those from the south of Italy
Y a même Giorgio, le fils maudit	Even Giorgio, the cursed son,
Avec des présents plein les bras	With gifts in his arms
Tous les enfants jouent en silence	All the children play in silence
Autour du lit sur le carreau	Around the bed on the floor
Mais leurs jeux n’ont pas d’importance	But their games don’t matter
C’est leurs derniers cadeaux a la mamma	It’s their last gift to mama.

The lyrics describe a scene where people have gathered, including those from the south of Italy, they come from even that far since they love her, upon hearing a cry

1 Throughout the article, all informative lyrics translations from French into English on the right are my own.

indicating the imminent death of a woman referred to as “la mamma”. Giorgio, the cursed son, is also present with gifts. Despite the children playing silently around the bed, their games seem insignificant in the face of the impending loss, and the gifts are seen as a final offering to “la mamma”.

On la réchauffe de baisers On lui remonte ses oreillers Elle va mourir, la mamma Sainte Marie pleine de grâces Dont la statue est sur la place Bien sûr vous lui tendez les bras En lui chantant Ave Maria	She is warmed with kisses They prop up her pillows She's going to die, the mamma Saint Mary full of grace Whose statue is in the square Of course, you reach out to her Singing Ave Maria to her
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The lyrics here describe a scene in which a woman, referred to as “la mamma,” is comforted as she approaches death. She is surrounded by expressions of care, as people warm her with kisses and prop up her pillows. The mention of Saint Mary and the singing of “Ave Maria” suggest a spiritual or religious context, invoking prayers for comfort and solace as the woman faces the end of her life. The lyrics suggest that the family members are reaching out to Saint Mary for comfort and solace. The lines “Bien sûr vous lui tendez les bras” (Of course, you reach out to her) and “En lui chantant Ave Maria” (Singing Ave Maria to her) indicate that the gestures and prayers are directed towards Saint Mary. The reference to “Ave Maria,” a traditional Catholic prayer dedicated to the Virgin Mary, further supports the idea that comfort and solace are sought from Saint Mary rather than the character called “La Mamma”. The overlapping of the two mothers in the song as foil characters, Mother Mary and the passing Mamma, adds valency to the song. The family members reach out to Mother Mary praying Ave Maria, but they also reach to their own mother in fact, praying... This also turns the entire song into a prayer for La Mamma, for Virgin Mary and for all mothers in the world.

Ave Maria Y a tant d’amour, de souvenirs Autour de toi, toi, la mamma Y a tant de larmes et de sourires A travers toi, toi, la mamma	Hail Mary There is so much love, so many memories Around you, you, the mamma There are so many tears and smiles Through you, you, the mamma
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The lyrics express love, memories, and emotions surrounding “la mamma” (the mother). There was always the presence of both tears and smiles, indicating a range of emotions experienced through her. The lines express a strong connection and sentimentality associated with “la mamma”. The narrator expresses prayers and devotion to “la mamma” through the words “Ave Maria,” which is a traditional Christian prayer, “Hail Mary” in English. The mention of love, memories, tears, and smiles suggests a deep emotional connection and a sense of reverence or affection towards “a mamma” in the singer’s prayers. This part of the lyrics can also be considered a prayer for both La Mamma and Mother Mary, and for all mothers, who were all surrounded with love, pain, tears and smiles, from the labours of birth till death.

The Turkish version of the song expresses deep emotions about the loss of a mother. The lyrics convey a sense of longing, love, and grief for the departed mother. The singer reflects on the passing of time since the mother’s departure, the memories left behind, and the impact on the family. There is a strong emotional connection portrayed, with the singer expressing the difficulty of living without the mother and the void left in their life. The lyrics also touch on the hope of a reunion in the afterlife and the everlasting love and respect for the departed mother. Overall, it is a heartfelt tribute to a beloved mother figure:²

<p>Sen gideli geçti günler Seni arar evde gözler Resmin hatıra kaldı annem Oğlun kızın büyüdüler Annemiz nerde dediler Ama seni görmediler Bırakmış gitmiş dediler Ne olurdu bir kerecik Görseydik biz de seni Tatsaydık anne denen sınımsız sevgini Ah, annem</p>	<p>Days have passed since you left Eyes at home search for you Your picture remains a memory, ma Your son and daughter have grown up They asked, “Where is mama?” But they didn’t see you They’ve been told you had left If only, just once, We could have seen you too Tasted the warm love called mother Oh, mama</p>
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In the first part of the lyrics, the singer reflects on the passage of time since the departure of someone dear. The singer mentions searching for the person in the house with their eyes, with only the memory of their image remaining. The lyrics convey a sense of

2 Throughout the article, all informative lyrics translations from Turkish into English on the right are my own.

longing and sadness as the children, both sons and daughters, have grown up in the absence of their mother. People around them inquire about the whereabouts of the mother, expressing concern and speculating that she has left. The singer expresses a deep desire for just one more opportunity to see and experience the warm and affectionate love of their mother. The phrase “Ah annem” at the end translates to “Oh, my mother,” indicating a strong emotional connection and longing for the presence of the mother.

Uçtun içimden sen Meleklerle selam benden Şad olsun rahmet eden, annem Andıkça seni her an Kalbimde yanıyor kan Şikayet edemem çünkü Aldı seni yaradan	You flew away from within me Send my greetings to the angels Blessed be the one who shows mercy, ma Every moment I remember you Blood in my heart is burning I can't complain because The Creator took you
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The lyrics convey a sense of acceptance and acknowledgment of the mother's departure, sending positive wishes to her in the afterlife and recognizing the divine aspect of her passing. There is a mixture of grief, reverence, and understanding of the natural order of life and death.

Anneciğim, annem Sevgi sana, rahmet sana Tek dileğim var yalnız sana Al yanına, bas bağrına Yaşamıyor sensiz ana	Dear mother, my mother Love and mercy be upon you I have only one wish just for you Take me to your side and embrace me Can't live without you mama
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In the chorus, the singer addresses their mother affectionately, expressing love and extending wishes of mercy to her. The singer has a singular desire directed solely towards the mother. There is a plea to be taken to her side, to be embraced, and a recognition that life feels incomplete without her presence. The lyrics reflect a deep emotional connection and a longing for the comfort and warmth that the mother provided. In the last two lines, the singer even wishes to die to get closer to the mother, which aligns with the emotional themes commonly found in Turkish Art Music such as loss, longing, grief and nostalgia. Interestingly enough, Fecri Ebcioğlu's translation at the verbal level inspired Zeki Müren to compose *an original song* with the same

theme and title, “Annem” [Mama], centered around the experience of losing one’s mother, released in 1968 by Grafson in the album *Zeki Müren Classics, Vol. 4*. Widely recognized by the refrain “Anne, anne, anneciğim” (mother, my dear mother), Müren’s subsequent composition “Annem” (1968) became exceptionally popular in the realm of Turkish Art Music. To this day, it remains the foremost result when searching online for “Annem” by Zeki Müren.

The visual level

A holistic analysis of any song would be missing without examining the visual level. As a song released in the early 1960s, naturally, “La Mamma” did not have an official music video. Let alone Youtube, even TV was not in every home back then. Still, pop music, right from the moment it became a worldwide trend with Elvis Presley in the mid-1950s, relied heavily on its visual appeal to its potential listeners. In those years, this was mainly in the form of vinyl covers and liner notes. Fans could buy the artist’s vinyl to play it at home on their gramophones. And when they bought the vinyl, they were faced with the artist’s photographs that came with the cover and also additional information provided. These paratexts all added to the song’s individual meaning, as well as the artist’s image in general. This was also the case for the official vinyl cover of “La Mamma” (See Figure 1).



Figure 1. The vinyl cover (on the left) and the record cover (on the right) of “La Mamma” (Aznavour, 1963).

Consistent with the musical and verbal levels, Charles Aznavour’s image on the cover is sad, symbolizing an individual who is about to lose their mother. It can even be further argued that his arms are clasped and Aznavour’s eyes look down at his mother, who is in her deathbed, about the die. Aznavour seems to cherish the days that have

passed and is also rather worried about a future without her. On the record, his name, along with Robert Gall, can be seen, and also, Paul Mauriat and his orchestra, who accompany Aznavour on the record with their guitars, violins, the church organ and the brass section are featured. Unlike the musical and verbal levels above, however, there is no reference to the religious tone of the song on the vinyl cover. This is not the case for the target song (See Figure 2).

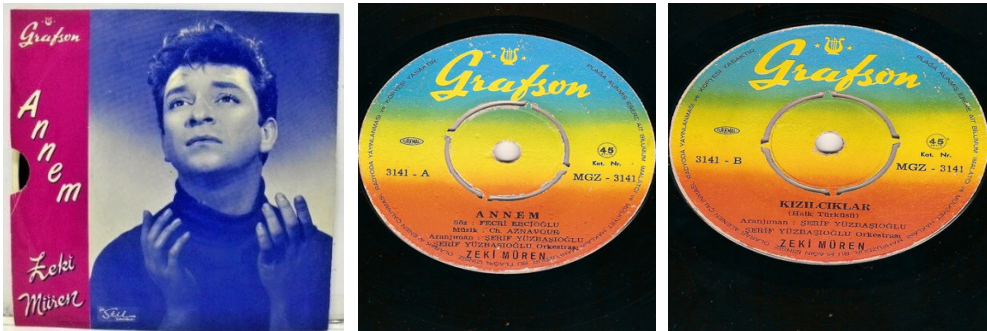


Figure 2. The vinyl cover (on the left) and the record covers of the A side (in the middle) and the B side (on the right) of “Annem” (Müren, 1964).

The vinyl cover of “Annem” features a somber Zeki Müren in a prayerful pose, evoking religious connotations. Müren’s expression reflects the profound grief of losing a loved one, with eyes cast upward in a gesture of supplication or lamentation. The Turkish lyrics further emphasize the theme of loss, as Müren gazes skyward, perhaps seeking solace in spirituality. The credits on the record acknowledge Fecri Ebcioğlu as the lyricist, Charles Aznavour as the composer, and Şerif Yüzbaşıoğlu as the arranger and the maestro of the orchestra that accompanied Müren, highlighting the collaborative effort involved in translating the song at different levels. Moreover, the cover also signifies a convergence of tradition and modernity on the grounds that the inclusion of a Turkish label such as Grafson, established in the late 1950s, signals the emergence of a domestic music industry catering to Turkish pop music for the first time after releasing several Turkish Art Music vinyls by Zeki Müren. Moreover, the vinyl also attests to a balance of the juxtaposition of foreign and local elements: the B side, as is evident on the record cover, featured a popular Turkish Folk Song sung by Zeki Müren, titled “Kızılıklar”. This song selection is yet another reflection of the balanced foreignizing and domesticating strategies observed at the musical, verbal and visual levels. As the agent of change in Turkish pop music, Ebcioğlu carefully juxtaposes foreign and domestic elements at every level. In essence, Ebcioğlu’s translational strategies, evident across multiple levels

of musical expression, serve to not only legitimize Turkish pop music but also contribute to its evolution as a dynamic and culturally resonant art form.

Conclusion

In conclusion, “Annem,” the Turkish translation of Charles Aznavour’s “La Mamma,” represents a balance of domesticating and foreignizing strategies at various levels, which in a more general sense reflects both cultural and artistic shifts within the Turkish music scene of the 1960s. Through the replacement of Christian elements with spiritual motifs, the transformation of themes from the deathbed to the loss of a beloved mother, and the blending of Turkish Art Music with pop influences, Zeki Müren and Fecri Ebcioğlu produced a version that resonated deeply with Turkish audiences. This translation not only marked the beginning of a fruitful partnership between Müren and Ebcioğlu, but also played a pivotal role in the evolution of pop music with Turkish lyrics in the years to come. Acting as an agent of change, Ebcioğlu skillfully benefited from Zeki Müren’s symbolic capital to make the public accept the idea of pop music with Turkish lyrics, and to that end, made a very clever song translation in the form of a balanced synthesis at the musical, verbal and visual levels. While Müren’s vocal performance, the verbal content and the vinyl cover pointed to a domesticating strategy, the instrumentation and arrangement at the musical level displayed a foreignizing move. All of this is revealed through a holistic approach to song translation, which occurs not only at the verbal level but also at the musical and visual levels, all within a broader socio-cultural context. The subsequent collaboration between Müren and Ajda Pekkan, another iconic figure in Turkish pop, further solidified the genre’s prominence and paved the way for future innovations in the Turkish music industry. Moreover, as stated above, “La Mamma” in Turkish served as a precursor to Müren’s own composition “Annem, annem, anneciğim,” which reflected themes of maternal love and loss. In this sense, from a broader perspective, the translation of “La Mamma” into Turkish, within the pop music genre, could potentially have had an influence on Turkish Art Music as well, especially in relation to similar thematic content. It suggests a dynamic relationship between different musical genres, an interesting point to consider in the broader context of cultural exchange and artistic evolution. All in all, serving as a milestone in the history of Turkish pop music, Fecri Ebcioğlu and Zeki Müren’s song translation “Annem” exemplifies the dynamic interplay between tradition, innovation and creativity, shaping not only the repertoire of Turkish pop music but also the broader cultural history. Academia has been showing interest in the combination of translation studies and *aranjman* songs

since the early 2010s (Hava & Yıldırım, 2016; Kaleş, 2015; Okyayuz, 2016; Okyayuz & Kaya, 2021; Pesen, 2019; Pesen, 2010). I can only hope that this first study combining Zeki Müren and (song) translation studies will also resonate in a similar way in the near future.

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