



## A Study of Selected Works on Shakespeare in Turkish Academia

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### Abstract

Turkish audience became familiar with Shakespeare's works in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century thanks to the visiting troupes from Europe and Armenian actors' performances in Türkiye. The first translations of Shakespeare's plays, albeit initially from French to Turkish, were also seen in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Although some journalists and critics reviewed Shakespearean performances in newspapers or literary magazines in this period, it took a considerable amount of time to evaluate the context of Shakespeare's *oeuvre* and his dramatic approach in Türkiye. Only after the establishment of the Republic of Türkiye in 1923, Turkish intellectuals and scholars began to introduce and analyse Shakespeare in an array of different works. This essay sets out to investigate a selection of works featured in their attempt to introduce Shakespeare to the Turkish reader/audience from the 1930s to 2012. The article maps out some studies extensively bridging the gap between Türkiye and Shakespeare in various ways. The focus of the analysis will be on Cenap Şehabettin's *Vilyem Şekspiyer (William Shakespeare)* (1931), Metin And's "Türkiyede Shakespeare" ("Shakespeare in Türkiye") (1964), Talât S. Halman's *Türk Shakespeare (Shakespeare the Turk)* (2003), İnci Enginün's *Türkçede Shakespeare (Shakespeare in Turkish)* (2008) and *Türkiye'de Şekspir Olmak (Being Shakespeare in Türkiye)* (2012) directed by Gülşah Özdemir Koryürek. The range of these works provides a comparative approach to initiate an argument about how Shakespeare is located in Turkish literature, culture, and academia.

**Keywords:** Shakespeare in Türkiye, Cenap Şehabettin, Metin And, Talât S. Halman, İnci Enginün, Gülşah Özdemir Koryürek, Vilyem Şekspiyer, "Türkiyede Shakespeare", Türk Shakespeare, Türkçede Shakespeare, Türkiye'de Şekspir Olmak

### Introduction

Although it is hard to point to an exact date for the Turkish's initial encounter with Shakespeare's name, it is recorded that Armenian theatre companions performed Shakespeare's plays in İstanbul, as early as the 1840s, during the reign of the Ottoman

Empire.<sup>1</sup> While Armenian actors popularised Shakespeare's publicity in Türkiye, the translations of Shakespeare's plays by Turkish writers – from French to Turkish at the outset – were the first steps to bridge the gap between the playwright and the Turkish reader. Moreover, the establishment of Darülbeyti in 1914 (the first conservatory and theatre company founded in the last years of the Ottoman Empire and existing today as İstanbul City Theatre) enhanced the number of translated and performed works. Translations from English to Turkish were available mostly after the 1940s (Halman, 2014, p. 12). Furthermore, since the inception of the Republic of Türkiye in 1923, all of Shakespeare's works (including his poems) have been translated into Turkish. There were indeed literary articles and essays about Shakespeare and his works in various newspapers as well as journals in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, it took a substantial amount of time for Turkish intellectuals and scholars to critically evaluate Shakespeare's *oeuvre* in different veins. Initially, towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the British schools established in İstanbul, albeit for evangelism, led to the emergence of Turkish Shakespeare scholars (Öğütçü, 2023, pp. 86-88). It would not be a mistake to suggest that the foundation of the departments of English Language and Literature at universities in the first years of the Republic encouraged the further study of Shakespeare's works academically. Since then, different generations of Shakespearean scholars in Türkiye have contributed to the development of Shakespeare studies. That is to say, with the new dynamics of the Republic, the gradual interest in Shakespearean studies brought about the publication of multiple works, introducing the bulk of Shakespeare's plays and poems to the Turkish reader. This study aims to explore a selection of works featured by their endeavour to present Shakespeare to the Turkish reader/audience from the 1930s to 2012. This analysis focuses on Cenap Şehabettin's (1870-1934) *Vilyem Şekspiyer (William Shakespeare)* (1931), Metin And's (1927-2008) "Türkiyede Shakespeare" ("Shakespeare in Türkiye") (1964), Talât S. Halman's (1931-2014) *Türk Shakespeare (Shakespeare the Turk)* (2003), İnci Enginün's (1940-...) *Türkçede Shakespeare (Shakespeare in Turkish)* (2008) and *Türkiye'de Şekspir Olmak (Being Shakespeare in Türkiye)* (2012) directed by Gülşah Özdemir Koryürek (1984-...). This essay sets out to study these works because all of them directly focus on Shakespeare and his works with a particular aim to introduce him to the Turkish reader/audience. The way that the authors/producers deal with Shakespeare and place him in Turkish literature and culture can be compared and contrasted. Therefore, this essay casts light on these selected works about Shakespeare in chronological order. In the examination of these texts, this article also introduces the authors/producers and their contribution to the Turkish context in terms of Shakespearean studies. The range of these works seeks to provide a comparative approach as a conclusive remark to discuss how Shakespeare is located in Turkish literature, culture, and academia.

## **Shakespeare in Turkish Print and Media from the 1930s to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

The first translations of Shakespeare's plays by Turkish writers appeared in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as is evident in Hasan Bedrettin and Mehmet Rıfat's translation of *Othello* in the 1870s and Mehmet Nâdir's later translations in the 1880s (Avcı, 2014, n.p.). However, there were no elaborate works either to present Shakespeare in Türkiye or to

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<sup>1</sup> See Günakan in this special issue.

critically analyse his literary pieces in that period. Yet, there was an exception: Cenap Şahabettin who wrote about Shakespeare during the constitutional monarchy period and the republican period of Türkiye. Before dealing with the details of Şahabettin's work on Shakespeare, it might be necessary to introduce the writer. Şahabettin was a doctor, journalist, poet, playwright, and literary critic. He was also an eminent figure of the Servet-i Fünûn literary movement. Born in 1871 in Manastır, Şahabettin with his mother moved to İstanbul after his father's death. He was an exceptional student securing first place in school which led him to Paris. He worked as a doctor and later as a journalist in different places, and produced works of travel literature on his observations in the East and the West. Yet, he was recognized through his poetry as a member of the Servet-i Fünûn literature, named after the journal he wrote for. Although his first poems resonated with those of the poets of divan literature, he later found his own voice and became more authentic in his poems. Moreover, he was the first Turkish poet to write a sonnet (Enginün, 1989, p. 7). Şahabettin was indeed at pains to invent new words in his poems tinged with allegories and depictions of nature, and he fervently argued that poetry needed a special language and dictum. That is probably the reason why he always employed verbose and obscure language in his poems. After the modernisation process of the Republic, however, he purified his writing style and his language. Notwithstanding his fame as a poet, it has to be recognised that Şahabettin was a significant prose writer. According to Seda Özbek's research, Şahabettin only produced 209 poems while he wrote 1001 prose pieces (2016, p. 6). He was particularly interested in literary discussions, language, philosophy, and politics in his non-fictional writings. His works on literature rested on his commentary on literary figures. He was an admirer of Shakespeare and Ibsen so he wrote a series of articles on these two playwrights. In effect, Şahabettin's comments on Shakespeare and his various works were at first published in the journals *Servet-i Fünûn* and *Peyam*. These were later collected in a book entitled *Vilyem Şekspiyer* in 1931.<sup>2</sup>

By focusing on *Vilyem Şekspiyer* in more detail, it is possible to claim that this work does not offer a novel approach to the evaluation and criticism of Shakespeare's works. İnci Enginün aptly observes that Şahabettin does not say something new about Shakespeare, but rather he introduces Shakespeare and his works to the Turkish reader through his overall analysis (1989, p.32). And this is exactly the main tenet of Şahabettin's *Vilyem Şekspiyer*. However, there is more to say considering that Şahabettin puts Shakespeare on a pedestal, narrates his life story as if he were a true observer of Shakespeare's life, and fervently defends the author against any accusations and negative commentary. The book consists of ten chapters, ranging from Shakespeare's life to his understanding of women, love, and art. Şahabettin has a long chapter on *Antony and Cleopatra* as well. To begin with, it would not be a mistake to suggest that Şahabettin uses a fairytale narrative to recount Shakespeare's life. As a case in point, Şahabettin refers to the Forest of Arden and Shakespeare's late mother as follows:

William was fond of the beautiful and close collection of trees especially for its name because the forest was the namesake of his late mother who was intelligent

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<sup>2</sup> From the last years of the Ottoman Empire to the Republic's days, the phonological translations of Shakespeare's names have been used. In effect, an array of translations have been employed: Şekspir, Şekspiyer, Vilyem Şekespir, Şekisperi, Şekspiyer and Şakıspır. While the phonological translations of Shakespeare's name are also appropriated, Şekspir, among all of them, has been turned into a kind of exonym in different types of writings and media forms.

and noble. [. . .] Whenever he had the chance, orphan Shakespeare took shelter in the shadows of trees as if he had snuggled in his mother's lap, dried his tears with fallen leaves, and framed his dreams with the green around him. He had his first music lessons there with the birds on the branches of oak trees. (1931, p. 7)

While Şahabettin idealises Shakespeare's journey from Stratford to London, he is notably critical of Anne Hathaway as he calls her a "sullen," "quarrelsome" and "aggressive" wife (1931, p. 11). Therefore, he acknowledges and affirms Shakespeare's 'escape' from this shrewish wife by asking: "Why would he dedicate his whole life to a woman making him miserable?" (1931, p. 11). Moreover, Şahabettin condemns those in Stratford who do not appreciate Shakespeare (1931, pp. 12, 18). He also defends Shakespeare against those who declare him a bad father by arguing that his real daughters are Cordelia, Rosalind, and Viola, and he takes care of those daughters well (1931, p. 21).

After the chapter on Shakespeare's life, Şahabettin's writings on the playwright can be categorised into two: the technical and thematic commentary. Beginning with the former, Şahabettin initially deals with Shakespeare's poetic skills. According to Şahabettin, Shakespeare is capable of throwing light on topics such as religion, philosophy, and politics, but, as a great poet, he does not want to serve his poems to such ends because Shakespeare alienates himself from his national and religious identity and produces his works as a universal being (1931, p. 24). In this vein, he creates what Şahabettin depicts as "beautiful poetry" in which Shakespeare lands his reader in vitality and the desire to live (1931, p. 27). Moreover, Şahabettin highlights the strength of Shakespeare's writing style. He employs hyperbolic terms to praise Shakespeare at this point. For him, notwithstanding anachronism, Shakespeare is the pioneer of Romanticism, just like the Old Testament as the first sign of religion (1931, p. 44). He migrates to another comparison when he juxtaposes Shakespeare with Homer and Victor Hugo by praising Shakespeare as the first creator of the "heroic revolution in literature" with his best style in the West. Shakespeare, Şahabettin believes, diverges from other playwrights thanks to his poetic style. The power of his style is elaborated in a metaphor by Şahabettin as it compares the difference between the light in a graveyard and the sunlight (1931, p. 52). This indicates that Shakespeare's style is vivid and vital, and according to Şahabettin, whoever reads Shakespeare cannot find this essence in any writing (1931, p. 53). Additionally, the critic appears to follow Aristotle's dictum as he ventures into three unities of time, place, and action in Shakespeare's works. In a similar fashion to Shakespeare's use of a wide range of characters, a myriad of places, Şahabettin observes, is exploited in various plays. Şahabettin admits that there is no unity of action because of subplots in Shakespeare's plays, but he argues that the playwright "marvellously" unites all plots in the end and reaches a complete story (1931, pp. 54-55). Şahabettin also has to affirm that Shakespeare is spontaneous in his use of materials. To clarify his claims on the unities, he analyses *Pericles* as an example.

As Şahabettin's argument advances, he opens up new discussions on Shakespeare's subject matters and themes. First, he evaluates Shakespeare's perception of women in his works in depth. Shakespeare, for Şahabettin, is a poet exhibiting tolerance to women. Although Shakespeare's women are always virtuous and do not betray their partners, the men unjustly treating women create tragedies in his works. Shakespeare's women naively experience love unless they are defeated by their pride or desire to dominate, and their virtue is the definitive mark of women's special value (1931, p. 32). Şahabettin pays attention to the tragic end of Shakespeare's female characters by romanticising the moment of their deaths. He argues that Shakespeare does not allow women to commit suicide so he does not blemish their beauty. Instead, Shakespeare, according to Şahabettin, unites women with the

death that they crave with the help of men (1931, p. 34). This unconventional proposition, if not a misogynistic note, posits how Şahabettin romanticises the representation of Shakespeare's women in a problematic way. He also expounds that Shakespeare defends oppressed women, but his sense of justice dominates the last act of his plays so he becomes neutral in his final approach to women. Interestingly enough, Şahabettin classifies Shakespeare's female characters into two: young girls and women. In this light, young girls resemble flowers at the level of femininity and love enables them to be happy (1931, p. 35). To support his point, Şahabettin addresses Cleopatra as tamed by love and depicts her as one of Shakespeare's young girls, not unlike Ophelia (1931, p. 36). He makes further claims about love by glossing over it as divine. Using religious terminology, he treats love as a holy matter in Shakespeare's works, but he feels urged to recognise the different types of love, from physical to philosophical love, as something Shakespeare includes and incorporates together. What is more, Şahabettin classifies Shakespeare's career into three stages: the suspicious period, the bloom period and the last period (1931, p. 63). While he does not deem the first period necessary – so he does not explore the works at this stage – he pays attention to the rest as he gives detailed summaries of the works and comments on them, ranging from *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* to *The Tempest*. Among those works, what matters more to Şahabettin is Shakespeare's tragic plays considering the long pages of specifics he offers about *Hamlet* (1931, pp. 72-90), *King Lear* (1931, pp. 95-106), *Macbeth* (1931, pp. 106-121), *Julius Caesar* (1931, pp. 121-132), *Timon of Athens* (1931, pp. 132-151) and *Antony and Cleopatra* (1931, pp. 152-169). Finally, Şahabettin certifies that Shakespeare has been dignified starting from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and he became immortal thanks to his works.

In 1964, more than three decades after Şahabettin's *Vilyem Şekspiyer*, Metin And's "Türkiyede Shakespeare" ("Shakespeare in Türkiye") was published. Metin And was of authority in Turkish theatre studies, producing more than a thousand works on various topics of Turkish theatre, ballet and art. Although he was an alumnus of the law school at İstanbul University, he was interested in music, ballet, theatre and opera by writing on those issues in different magazines and newspapers. Later, he was nominated for the Rockefeller fellowship and became educated in the field of his new interests. After the institution of the Faculty of Language, History, and Geography at Ankara University, he became a member of the department of theatre for more than thirty years until his retirement. While most of his studies were rich mines for understanding different veins and periods of Turkish theatre, Metin And contributed to the special issue of a journal published by the Western Language and Literatures Research Institute at Ankara University in 1964 by reporting Shakespeare studies in Türkiye. In effect, 1964 was a special year for Shakespearean scholars all around the world since it was the fourth centenary of Shakespeare's birthday. For this reason, the Western Language and Literatures Research Institute prepared a special issue for their journal which included articles on Shakespeare and his studies. As explained in its preface, the issue aimed to introduce Shakespeare to the Turkish audience. The outstanding theatre scholars in Türkiye such as Engin Uzmen, Sevda Şener, and Özdemir Nutku contributed to this issue. While the issue consists of articles on Shakespeare's life, his comedies and tragedies, the understanding of Shakespeare and Shakespeare in Germany, Italy and America, Metin And, broadly speaking, deals with Shakespeare studies in Türkiye. Put simply, And's study is useful in mapping the contours of Turkish translations, performances, and analysis of Shakespeare's works until his 400<sup>th</sup> birthday. Thus, he provides the reader with a concise and brief record of the relevant material. And sets out to accept that Shakespeare was not as well known by the Turkish population compared to Moliere and Goldoni. It was rather the Armenian actors and acting companies that made

Shakespeare earn recognition in the Ottoman period; Bedros Atamyan, for instance, paved the way for the popularity of Shakespeare. Although Shakespeare's plays were performed from time to time in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Metin And contends that the irregular rules of censorship for the stage prevented people from exploring more Shakespeare's works, particularly his tragedies. As the Ottoman rulers did not favour tragedies in which the monarchs were killed as is evident in *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, and *King Lear*, the plays such as *The Merchant of Venice* and *Othello* became popular in the multicultural atmosphere of the Empire (And, 1964, pp. 56-57). And also recognises the first translators of Shakespeare's works, Hasan Bedrettin and Mehmet Rifat, who translated *Othello*, *Comedy of Errors*, *The Merchant of Venice* and *Romeo and Juliet* though from indirect sources. Then, Metin And discusses whether Shakespeare's works influenced Turkish writers by suggesting that Shakespeare's plays resonated in some plots of Turkish literature as can be exemplified in Ebuzziya Tefik's *Ecel-i Kaza*, Namık Kemal's *Gülnehal* and *Kara Bela*, and Abdülhak Hamit's *Zeyneb* (1964, pp. 57-58). As And's record advances to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, he again refers to the Armenian actors' stagings, among which a female actress, Siranuş Nigosya, performed *Hamlet* (1964, p. 58). Later on, Metin And observes, Turkish actors, particularly with State Conservatory, Tatbitak Sahnesi, and later after the establishment of State Theatre, popularised the performances of Shakespeare's plays on the Turkish stage in that most of his plays had been recorded to be performed at the time And wrote this article. Although one of Shakespeare's plays took place at the opening of each theatre season, Metin And presents an ongoing debate among those – as evidenced in the quotes from Selim İzzet and İsmet Hulusi – who did not endorse frequent Shakespeare performances in Türkiye (1964, pp. 58-59). Here, And brings a critical remark on the issue which highly differentiates his academic attitude towards Shakespeare from Şahabettin's devotional arguments. And provides solid reasons that repelled some critics from watching Shakespeare's plays: 1) Some figures were offended by City Theatre on personal grounds so they censured the productions. 2) Turkish intellectuals were grouped into two, depending on the place of their graduation, whether they got educated in England or Germany and France. 3) The last, but the most significant reason, was that translations were deficient and inadequate at the time (1964, pp. 59-60). In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a new chapter on Shakespeare in Türkiye began with the changing principles of State Theatre. Moreover, studies in the state conservatory, the establishment of Tatbikat Sahnesi and Shakespeare courses at universities<sup>3</sup> contributed to the production of good-quality translations and stagings of Shakespeare in Türkiye. And also calls out important theatre people such as Muhsin Ertuğrul and Cüneyt Gökçer, who modernised Shakespeare performances (And, 1964, p. 60). More interestingly, not only people in big cities, but Turkish people from the countryside met Shakespeare thanks to the performances of travelling troupes who localised his works (*Othello* was performed under the title of *Arabın İntikamı/ The Revenge of the Arab*) and sometimes parodied his works for the taste of the audience (1964, pp. 60-61). Before concluding his article, Metin And is obliged to note that celebrating Shakespeare's birthday is not a sign of affectation. Instead, it signals that Shakespeare has become an indispensable part of our lives in Türkiye (1964, p. 61). And's study ends with a remarkable record of Shakespeare's translations and performances in Türkiye. Accordingly, he reports that among Shakespeare's thirty-seven plays, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Henry VI, Parts I, II, III*, *Titus Andronicus*, *King John*, *Richard II*, *Henry IV, Parts I, II*, *All's Well That Ends Well*, *Pericles* and *Cymbeline* had never been translated and performed while *Richard III*, *Troilus and Cressida* and *Henry VIII* were translated but had not been staged in Türkiye by 1964 (1964, pp. 61-66).

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<sup>3</sup> See Ögütçü (2023) for more information about the origins of Shakespeare courses at Turkish universities.

Having established Şahabettin's narration as a Shakespeare advocate besides And's academic study, it is possible to consider Talât S. Halman's *Türk Shakespeare* (*Shakespeare the Turk*) which wavers between the two writers' approach to Shakespeare. To be more precise, Halman provides a dramatic narration as a Shakespeare devotee and centres his play around the minute details of Shakespearean studies, translations, and performances in and out of Türkiye. Before laying the tenets of his play, a brief look at Halman's career is of note here. This Turkish writer and academic started his career as a professor at Columbia University and later worked at other significant universities in the United States by giving lectures on Turkish literature. After returning to Türkiye in 1971, he became the first Minister of Culture followed by a stint as a cultural ambassador for Türkiye's international relationships. When Queen Elizabeth II visited Türkiye in 1971, she nominated Halman a Knight Grand Cross. Finally, he worked at the Department of Turkish Language and Literature and became the dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Letters at Bilkent University in Ankara. What stands out in his career is that he translated many notable Turkish works – poems, stories, legends, and plays – into English, and he completed the translation of all of Shakespeare's sonnets and his other poems into Turkish. While concentrating on his play entitled *Türk Shakespeare*, it is initially crucial to understand the reason why Halman refers to Shakespeare as the Turk. In the preface to the work, Halman explains that the claim is not about Shakespeare's nationality; he uses this title because of Shakespeare's powerful and inspiring influence on Turkish literature and theatre (2003, p.9). At the beginning of the play, he further specifies the reasons why he entitles his work in this way: 1) According to the Sun Language Theory and Turkish History Thesis in the 1930s and 1940s, all nations are derived from the Turks in Central Asia so Shakespeare can be indirectly counted among those Turks. Here, Shakespeare's universality is also important, making him part of the Turkish culture. 2) The Turkish language resonates with Shakespeare's dramatic voice and poetry. 3) The popularity and dominance of Shakespeare on the 20<sup>th</sup>-century Turkish stage enables Halman to regard Shakespeare as one of the Turkish playwrights (2003, 1. 14-16). Halman also has a subtitle for this work: *Heroes and Fools in Shakespeare's World*. The second half of the title addresses the idea that Shakespeare's heroes may turn into fools and his fools into heroes in the plays. According to Halman, this fluidity reflects the nature of humankind that Shakespeare mirrors in his works so he builds his title on this aspect of the bard's plays (2003, p. 11). What is more, Halman provides his motivation to write this play; it was the outstanding Turkish actor Müşfik Kenter who asked Halman to prepare a one-man play on Shakespeare. Thus, Halman wrote the play by using anecdotes, quoting some parts from Shakespeare's works, and narrating Shakespeare's story in Türkiye. As for the direct extracts from Shakespeare's plays and sonnets, Halman declares that he translated all of them. He also notes that players do not need to perform the whole play. His play can be cut, interpreted, and revised depending on the purpose of the performance.

Halman's *Türk Shakespeare* consists of two parts, and it would not be a mistake to suggest that the course of the play almost resonates with the stream-of-consciousness technique as the narrator moves from one topic to another loosely connected in the monologue form. Ostensibly, the work can be called a monologue play or monodrama in which one narrator addresses the audience without being interrupted. In understanding the play, it is instructive to dwell on the work in two aspects depending on the narration. On the one hand, the narrator quotes from a variety of Shakespeare's works, and these extracts constitute the main frame of the play. To name a few, Halman translates some scenes and parts from *As You Like It*, *Julius Caesar*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Coriolanus*, *Richard III*, *Henry VIII*, *The Tempest*, and sonnets. Then, the narrator comments on the significance of the

themes, characters, and relevant issues in the manner of an instructor. For instance, he uses Act II, scene ii of *Julius Caesar* to illustrate the depiction of a hero (2003, 1. 17-18), discusses Shakespeare's intricate portrait of fools in the example of *King Lear* (2003, 1. 18-20), elaborates on the issues of revenge and justice in *The Merchant of Venice* (2003, 1. 32), presents Shakespeare's ideas on music in the quotes from *The Tempest*, *Richard III* and *Othello* (2003, 2. 54-57), and sheds light on the perception of love as dealt with in five Shakespeare sonnets (Sonnets 57, 64, 91, 113, 130) (2003, 2. 98-100). Additionally, he gives details about Shakespeare's Globe (2003, 1. 21), alludes to those criticising the playwright harshly (2003, 1. 21), delves into the Elizabethan period and Shakespeare's connection with the monarch (2003, 2. 62-63), and points out the debate on Shakespeare's identity (2003, 2. 63). On the other hand, Halman turns into a storyteller who reveals interesting details on Shakespeare's stagings in and out of England. He, for example, narrates the audience's reaction to the American actor John Wayne's performance in *Macbeth* (the audience laughed at the actor because of his attitude in the manner of a cowboy) (2003, 1. 24), the interaction between the actor and the audience in an American staging of *Richard III* (when Richard III asked a horse for his kingdom, one of the audience members offered him a donkey, and the actor agreed and called the audience to the stage) (2003, 2.58), and William Charles Macready's change of King Claudius's death scene in *Hamlet* (2003, 2. 86-87). Halman's humorous anecdotes extend to his recollection of memorable performances in Türkiye as well. For example, he mentions the orchestra's playing music for polka dance when Güllü Agop ardently performed *Macbeth* (2003, 1.22-23), details the use of real Turkish soldiers in a performance of *Macbeth* in 1962 at Rumelihisarı (2003, 1. 24-25), recounts Sultan Abdülhamit's fear of the actor's use of a knife at *The Merchant of Venice*'s staging (2003, 1. 32-33), and narrates how *Othello* and its characters had been localised when it was staged under the title of *The Revenge of the Arab* and the characters were given Turkish names such as Otello Kamil, Iago Lütü and Cassio Ahmet (2003, 2. 64-65). Furthermore, Halman describes the first performances of Shakespeare's plays by Armenian actors (2003, 1. 22), clarifies that Shakespeare's plays were regularly performed after the establishment of İstanbul City Theatre in the 1930s (2003, 1. 46-47), and names significant Turkish translators such as Muallim Naci and Orhan Burian (2003, 1. 48-49). More interestingly, the poem that Halman writes and dedicates to Shakespeare, "A Halmanic Poem to the Bard," reveals how he idolises the playwright. Here Halman claims that Shakespeare is "the playwright for Turks of all ages" and deifies him in comparison to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Republic of Türkiye: "Shakespeare, like Atatürk, condemned those who make spears: / They both sang loving praises of those who break spears. / Our nation is Atatürk's but also Shakespeare's" (2003, 1. 45-46). Ostensibly, this comparison highly elevates Shakespeare's place for the Turkish population, and it reflects Şahabettin's admiration of Shakespeare. While Halman esteems Shakespeare, the playwright's use of derogatory terms about the Turkish people does not escape Halman's notice as he quotes relevant lines from *Othello*, *Richard III*, and *Henry V* (2003, 1.31). At this moment, the narration once more reflects Şahabettin's sense of closeness to Shakespeare in that Halman voices his resentment toward Shakespeare as if he were a close figure since the playwright reflects the Turks in a negative way (2003, 1.31). Undoubtedly, Shakespeare's condemnation breaks Halman's heart while the Turks look up to the playwright. Considered together, it is possible to claim that Halman's play is quite informative about Shakespeare's works, his background, and the performance history. Halman's dramatic narration is packed with global aspects of Shakespeare's impact as well as his influence on Türkiye. Halman's academic background makes it appear that he is giving a lecture on Shakespeare. Yet his storytelling comes to the fore as much as his



academic portrait in that his recollection of Shakespeare in Türkiye makes the play an interesting piece for the Turkish audience.

While Metin And summarises Shakespearean studies in Türkiye at his 400<sup>th</sup> birthday in a nutshell and Talât S. Halman narrates the playwright's works and recollects the studies on him in a dramatic form, İnci Enginün's *Türkçede Shakespeare (Shakespeare in Turkish)* provides the most extensive research on Shakespeare in Türkiye among the ones reviewed in this essay. Enginün is a Turkish scholar, writer, and literary critic specialising in the field of new Turkish literature. After graduation from the Department of Turkish Literature at İstanbul University, Enginün advanced in her academic career in the same department and later gave lectures at various universities in and out of Türkiye. Of note in her academic studies is that she wrote a dissertation on the translations in Turkish and the influences of Shakespeare's works on Turkish literature during the Tanzimat Reform Era. This former study is nested within her work of inquiry, *Türkçede Shakespeare*, as the first part of this book remains residing in her PhD research topic. Broadly conceived, *Türkçede Shakespeare* covers the bulk of works written about Shakespeare and his translations in Türkiye from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the beginning of the millennium. The book is basically divided into two main parts: the translations of Shakespeare and his influence on Turkish writers during the Tanzimat Reform Era and after the republican period. In this chronological order, the first half is derived from Enginün's dissertation. After mentioning how Shakespeare was introduced to the Turkish culture during the Ottoman reign, Enginün studies six important translators of Shakespeare: Hasan Bedrettin, Mehmet Rifat, Hasan Sırrı, Mihran Boyacıyan, Mehmet Nadir, and Muallim Naci. Although we learn some of these names from Halman and And's works, the details about the translations and translators were thoroughly depicted by Enginün. As a case in point, she reveals that the first translation by Hasan Bedrettin and Mehmet Rifat was originally from Ducis's *Othello* in French (2008, p. 34). The full text of Shakespeare's play was first translated by Hasan Sırrı in 1884 when he translated *The Merchant of Venice* (2008, p.41). He also translated *The Comedy of Errors* by using Charles and Mary Lamb's stories. Likewise, Mihran Boyacıyan translated *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and *The Comedy of Errors* from the Lamb's stories (2008, p. 66). Mehmet Nadir later translated a variety of Shakespeare's works – occasionally only some pieces of his works – such as *The Winter's Tale*, *Hamlet*, *Troilus and Cressida*, sonnets, and *Venus and Adonis* which appeared in the literary magazines of the time. Enginün quotes these translations in the chapters in which she deals with the translators. Then, she probes further into how Shakespeare's works influenced Turkish writers during the Tanzimat Reform Era. Succinctly put, the impact on Turkish literature was limited, but Enginün unveils parallelisms between Shakespeare's works and those written by Ebuzziya Tevfik, Namık Kemal, Hamit, and Paşazade Sezayi comprehensively.

The second half of Enginün's book dissects the time after the constitutional monarchy period and extends to the republican period in Türkiye. This part opens with Enginün's commentary and observations on the Servet-i Fünûn writers and their studies on Shakespeare. She provides how Cenap Şehabettin, Halit Ziya, Mehmet Rauf, and Süleyman Nazif criticised Shakespeare and commented on his works.<sup>4</sup> Yet, the corpus of works on Shakespeare, Enginün records, was restricted at that time. Shakespearean literary criticism, as also in the case of the translations of his works into Turkish, fully blooms in the republican period. According to Enginün, Abdullah Cevdet, Muhsin Ertuğrul, and Halide Edip Adıvar are the three pillars when one may need to enlist the figures who induct Turks

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<sup>4</sup> See Şahin in this special issue.

into the world and works of Shakespeare.<sup>5</sup> Abdullah Cevdet not only translated Shakespeare's plays but also widely wrote about them. Muhsin Ertuğrul proved to be competent in augmenting visibility and heightening familiarity with Shakespeare's plays on stage through his innovative performances. Undoubtedly, he modernised the acting techniques of Turkish theatre while he vivified Shakespeare's works effectively for the Turkish audience. Halide Edip Adıvar, after receiving an education in English literature, translated Shakespeare's works and also produced her works under the influence of Shakespeare. It is also known that she gave lectures on Shakespeare at İstanbul University as it was recorded that the first course of the department was about Shakespeare (Enginün, 2008, p. 328). Advancing her analysis to the Republican-period studies, Enginün orients the reader into three new categories to classify Turkish translations: 1) translations conducted thanks to Muhsin Ertuğrul's encouragement 2) translations performed by university scholars 3) translations done by Turkish poets and playwrights (2008, pp. 344-361). After a great number of translations and their improvement, Shakespeare reached Turkish people in print as well as in different media forms. For Enginün, it is hard to follow the influence and parallelisms of Shakespeare's *oeuvre* on Turkish writers in the republican period taking into account the huge number of works produced into consideration. However, she draws attention to the use of some elements derived from Shakespeare in the writings of eminent Turkish writers such as Yahya Kemal Beyatlı, Ahmet Haşım, Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu, Reşat Nuri Güntekin, Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, Necip Fazıl Kısakürek, Oktay Rıfat, Turgut Uyar, Selim İleri, and Murathan Mungan. Finally, Enginün offers a rich reference list of works about, and translations of, Shakespeare from 1868 to 2000 in Türkiye. The strength of Enginün's work is that she wields a substantial record of Shakespearean studies in our country by unpacking minute details about such works.

The last work of analysis is a documentary, *Türkiye'de Şekspir Olmak (Being Shakespeare in Türkiye)* (2012), designed and directed by Gülşah Özdemir Koryürek and produced by Korhan Koryürek. Gülşah Özdemir Koryürek is an actress, director, and writer interested in children's literature. Her documentary, sponsored by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Türkiye, recounts the adventures of Shakespeare and his works in Türkiye. Recorded from 2011 to 2012, the document is packed with illustrations of Shakespeare's place in Turkish performing arts – theatre, ballet, and opera – cinema, and music. In this one-hour long documentary, Özdemir Koryürek embarks on a journey from the roots of Shakespeare's Turkish productions in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and reaches our age by focusing on the diverse interpretations of Shakespeare. For this purpose, the documentary hosts Turkish theatre scholars, actors, directors, composers, and playgoers who reflect their own perception of Shakespeare in our culture. Accordingly, some outstanding theatre critics such as Özdemir Nutku, İnci Enginün, Cevat Çapan, and Dikmen Gürün dwell on the origins and development of Shakespeare's translations and performances in Türkiye. Moreover, directors and players entrench an understanding of Shakespeare on the Turkish stage. What prevails in the directors' commentary is that there is a tendency to interpret and adapt Shakespeare's plays. A case in point would be Can Doğan's replacement of fantastic elements in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by changing the way that characters fall in love. In another instance, Yücel Erten talks about his production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in a different setting, the early 1900s on an Aegean island, and depicts this experience as if drinking Turkish coffee with Shakespeare. Işıl Kasapoğlu talks about his seven-hour *Hamlet* production in which he sets out to allude to Turkish political and social structures, making his audience enthusiastically watch this long version

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<sup>5</sup> See Zengin and Kaya in this special issue.

of the play. He also refers to his 1993-1994 season production of *Macbeth* in Diyarbakır during the political upheavals of Türkiye and states that he made people believe that *Macbeth* was written for Diyarbakır. Nesrin Kazankaya, too, concerns herself with contemporary issues in directing Shakespeare's plays and gives an example of her directing *Measure for Measure* as an allusion to the Yugoslav Civil War. As for Turkish players, it is always challenging though appealing to perform in Shakespeare's plays. Erkan Taşdoğan, for example, argues that one needs to deeply analyse Shakespeare's lines, think about their correlation to today's world, and then act in Shakespeare's play. Müjdat Gezen voices his life-long desire to perform Hamlet, and the documentary presents a section of his acting Hamlet in the celebration of his theatre career's 50<sup>th</sup> year in 2010. Ayla Algan revisits her memory of playing the role of Ophelia in Muhsin Ertuğrul's production in which she improvises during Ophelia's death scene, being applauded by the audience and shocking Ertuğrul with her daring attempt. Furthermore, Uğur Seyrek, a choreographer, shares his experience of presenting *Othello* in a ballet show while Yekta Kara talks about the production of *Macbeth* as an opera by claiming that working on Shakespeare's plays in the form of opera and ballet requires a huge crowd of performers as they must be grandiose in scale. The adaptation of Shakespeare's works to Turkish cinema is another issue that the documentary dwells on. In this regard, Metin Erksan's *Kadın Hamlet: İntikam Meleği* (*Female Hamlet: The Angel of Revenge*) (1976) provides an interesting case since a female Hamlet – not a female actress performing a male's part – appeared for the first time according to Erksan's account. Müjdat Gezen mentions his screenwriting of *Girgiriye* movie and *Cennet Mahallesi* (*The Paradise Quarter*) television series in which he benefits from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* by using the story of two lovers from enemy families comically. Besides, the adaptation of Shakespeare's sonnets to Turkish music is exemplified in the songs by Ezginin Günlüğü, a Turkish band, and the composer Nadir Gökçürk suggests that there is not much difference between Türkiye and England and any other countries considering the mythological roots of various nations. Accordingly, Shakespeare's themes in his sonnets are not unlike Gökçürk's threads of the songs. Lastly, the documentary offers the views of playgoers all of whom appreciate the necessity of watching Shakespeare on stage but differ from one another when it comes to how Shakespeare is comprehended by the Turkish audience. In conclusion, the strength of this documentary is that it offers diverse ways that Shakespeare has been produced and reproduced in Turkish art and culture. The evidence highlights that there is a tendency to appropriate Shakespeare to bridge the gap between the two cultures in a way that Shakespeare's closeness to the core of the Turkish context is emphasised in a myriad of productions and performances.

### The Selected Studies Reconsidered

To draw everything together, the diversity of selected works in this study – from books to an article and from a play to a document – indicates that Shakespeare's influence on Türkiye can be discussed in different veins as his works are revisited in a myriad of ways by Turkish writers, critics, playmakers, and so on. To summarise the main points, in the early years of the Republic, Shakespeare's life, his cultural background, and his works are neatly presented to the Turkish reader as is apparent in Şahabettin's collection of essays and the special issue published by the Western Language and Literatures Research Institute. It is clear that all of the writers, excluding Şahabettin, go to the roots of Shakespeare's

translations and performances in Türkiye and record various details and anecdotes in this respect. Evidently, the research on Turkish translations and performances of Shakespeare also commences at an early stage considering And's meticulous survey. Without a doubt, Enginün's detailed investigation provides rich ground for those in search of the history of Shakespearean studies in Türkiye, but a new list of such studies needs to be completed since her record only reaches the studies until 2000. Advancing to the documentary in 2012, it is possible to see that recording Shakespeare in Türkiye moves on to another stage regarding the variety of Shakespeare productions in Turkish performance arts, cinema, and music.

Another issue regarding these selected studies is the common attitude of the writers to the cult of Shakespeare. Starting from Şahabettin's work, a deep appreciation of Shakespeare is highly felt in these works. While Şahabettin openly admires Shakespeare and defends him, Halman equates him to the great leader of Türkiye, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Also, Halman's title of the play unveils the desire to celebrate Shakespeare as one of us. In Özdemir Koryürek's document, various critics, directors, and writers particularly pinpoint how Shakespeare's works are appropriated in the Turkish context by advocating a sense of closeness to the playwright and his world. In their academic approach, And and Enginün both hint that Shakespeare and his works have become an indispensable part of Turkish literature and academia.

Among the selected works, what remains to be seen is that Shakespeare's influence on male authors and playwrights is constantly illustrated in And, Halman, Enginün, and Özdemir Koryürek's explorations. Yet there is still a gap in terms of Shakespeare's impact on Turkish female authors as well as the role of female scholars, performers, and directors to probe into Shakespeare. Enginün's reference to Halide Edip Adivar and Özdemir Koryürek's female speakers in the document are limited compared to the number of male literary critics, scholars, directors, and players named in the selected works. This is to say that further studies might be encouraged to dig into and trace the matrilineal roots of Shakespearean studies and performances in Türkiye.

## **Conclusion**

Regarding how Shakespeare is located in Turkish literature, culture, and academia, the selected studies first indicate the strong interest of Turkish reader/audience in Shakespeare, considering that all of his works have been translated into Turkish by various translators and a wide range of his plays has been frequently staged in Türkiye since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Secondly, the list of Turkish literary works echoing Shakespeare's plots suggests the powerful impact of Shakespeare on Turkish writers who esteem him a rich mine for inspiration in their literary creations. Moreover, adapting and appropriating Shakespeare's works in different genres and media forms illustrates how two cultures engage a dialogue by bridging the temporal, cultural and social gaps. One may also claim that using Shakespeare to reflect on contemporary Türkiye unveils how Shakespeare's global icon is transferred to the local context as a sign of cultural exchange. Lastly, the analysis of selected works on Shakespeare in this study demonstrates that Shakespearean studies in Türkiye move from the urge to introduce the playwright to the need to locate him and his works in the Turkish context. From the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Shakespeare and his works have been introduced and interpreted in academic studies as is evident in the

works from that of Şahabettin to Özdemir Koryürek. In each work, it is possible to observe that writers attempt to find out the ways Turkish scholars, authors, and producers appreciate Shakespeare. Drawing on the analysis of the selected works, Turkish academia appears to excavate the significance of Shakespeare in Türkiye by locating his place in Turkish culture and literary studies. In conclusion, it becomes clear that Turkish literature, theatre, culture, and academia espouse Shakespeare to the extent that his identity and works can embraced and adopted as if he was one of us.

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