

The *Caravanserai* Turns Twenty: Or, Rethinking New German Literature – in Turkish?

ABSTRACT

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This article aims to rethink the development of Turkish-German literature since the 1970s, with a special focus on the structural tension between monolingual and multicultural genres and social spaces. The boom of multicultural promotional politics in the FRG (1985-1995) initiated the ‚progressive monolingualization‘ of (publishable) literary utterances, a development that is reinforced today in German-only language policies at the federal and local level, as well as by the panethnic rubric of ‚Deutschsprachige Literatur‘ (German-language literature). Meanwhile, scholarship still lacks a critical narrative about contemporary translingual literature on German territory, one that would account for persistent literary historical and institutional-pragmatic lacunae within intercultural German Studies and intercultural publishing.

Like an oblong piece of furniture being carried up a narrow staircase, Emine Sevgi Özdamar’s first novel bears one of the longest titles in twentieth century German literary history – if we agree to disregard Fassbinder’s 1974 film adaptation of *Effie Briest*.¹ The author herself admits a preference for the complete, official title *Life is a Caravanserai Has Two Doors I Came in One I Went out The Other*, and though the significance of its length rarely garners critical attention, we might wonder: what was the German literary world to make of this roomy title, a lyrical text in itself, which flouts the Gricean maxims of quantity and manner? – already before the text as such comes on the scene (Grice 1975).

The title takes up so much space and time that even academic scholarship does not get past the fifth word when mentioning it. At first glance, the title seems to be a didactic and concrete spatial story, consisting of 18 rudimentary German words (out of 19 words total). But *Caravanserai*? Specific to Persian and

¹ *Effie Briest oder: Viele, die eine Ahnung haben von ihren Möglichkeiten und Bedürfnissen und dennoch das herrschende System in ihrem Kopf akzeptieren durch ihre Taten und es somit festigen und durchaus beständigen.* Dir. Rainer Werner Fassbinder. Tango Film, 1977.

Turkish transit cultures since the mid-16th century, it is likely that this one untranslatable word spoils the monolingual transparency of the title for the vast majority of German (and English) readers.

And yet, the title stages itself as an intransitive gesture of translation, a disingenuously accommodating exercise of metaphor – a linguistic riddle disguised as a cultural heuristic. Twenty years after its publication, we may re-read Özdamar’s debut novel not as a confessional autobiography, but as a parable about German Turkish literary history – in its various ethnicized, multicultural, monolingual, and cosmopolitan readerly contexts. The strange, two-door architecture of the caravanserai – we might imagine it as a sprawling roadhouse inn that mirrors the structure of the journey itself – finds emulation in its lengthy, cobbly title, which itself cites the classic Turkish folksong, or *türkü*, „I am Walking on a Long, Narrow Road“ [Uzun ince bir yoldayım], as sung by Aşık Veysel, Barış Manço, Bülent Ersoy, the U.S. heavy-metal band Pentagram, and the Turkish German pop superstar Tarkan.²

Uzun ince bir yoldayım
Gidiyorum gündüz gece
Bilmiyorum ne haldeyim
Gidiyorum gündüz gece
Dünyaya geldiğim anda
Yürüdüm aynı zamanda
İki kapılı bir handa
Gidiyorum gündüz gece

I am on a long, narrow road
Walking day and night
I don’t know where I am
I walk day and night
When I came to this earth
I was already walking
In a building with two doors
Walking day and night

Özdamar’s title cites and performs a spatial figure, but also a widely known, classic Turkish lyric about the ceaseless existential travel of itinerant minstrels [aşıklar] of Turkey, Iran, Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia. It is a figure of

² When not otherwise noted, translations are mine. A selection of audio recordings is accessible at <http://www.turkishhan.org/asik%20veysel.htm>.

transmigration, of passing through, upon, or over – rather than, say, of *immigration*.

In Özdamar's novel, the only explicitly two-doored house belongs to Aunt Pakize, who „lived in the gypsy quarter in a wooden house with two doors, because she was a whore. When the police came in one door, she could take off through the other“ (Özdamar 1992: 379). The narrator, Pakize's niece refers to herself as having a „whore mouth“, and eventually joins her aunt on a „whore train“ bound for West Germany. The figural triad between the narrator's „whore mouth“, the „whore train“, to Germany, and aunt Pakize's two-door house reconstrues the novel's title, imbuing it with the sense of a domicile of linguistic dissidence – an illicit *être chez-soi* in language – where one can escape out the back when the authorities arrive (Derrida 1996: 36). With this ill-famed building, on an indefinite „long, narrow road“, Özdamar offers an apt heuristic figure for the broader arc of Turkish German literary history itself – an indefinite, non-sedentary dwelling in language, whose inhabitants cherish the possibility of free egress and continued travel.

Conceits of the Voice

I have completed the construction of my burrow and it seems to be successful. All that can be seen from the outside is a big hole; that, however, really leads no where. If you take a few steps you will strike against natural firm rock. [...] At a distance of some thousand paces lies, covered by a moveable layer moss, the real entrance to the burrow. It is secured as safely as anything in this world can be secured. Yet someone could step on the moss or break through it, and then my burrow would lie open, and anyone who liked – please note, however, that quite uncommon abilities would be required – could make his way in and utterly destroy everything. (Franz Kafka, *The Burrow* 1933: 48)

It has become a scholarly template of sorts to periodize Turkish German cultural production from 1970 to the present as an arc from compelled testimony to autonomous critical intervention, from the indentured labors of authenticity to liberatory exercises of imagination, from stigmatic ethnicization to aesthetic discovery – in short, as a Kantian maturation toward enlightenment. In the arena of German Turkish film, Deniz Göktürk postulated this shift in production and spectatorship as one from a „cinema of duty“ to „the pleasures of hybridity“. (Göktürk 2002, Malik 1996). Over the course of the late 1980s and early 1990s, this hard-won meta-narrative took hold through intensive conceptual cross-pollination among various disparate yet overlapping sectors of German society

– including civil rights advocacy organizations, academic and transnational interventions (ranging from the uptake of Said’s *Orientalism* and Black British Cinema to the general rise of antiessentialism in the academy), and homegrown efforts among Germany’s pan-ethnic activist collectives like Kanak Attak.

Yet, two decades on, this meta-narrative – of a critical-aesthetic project ripening towards the „freedom“ and „self-assertion“ that Sheila Johnson and Annette Wierschke describe, respectively, as being the conceptual core of Emine Sevgi Özdamar’s work – has serious literary-historical drawbacks (Murti 1999, Ghaussy 1999, Johnson 2001). Reliance on a notion of „coming to voice“ in German texts, of a literary maturation out of a parochial, patriarchal, or otherwise hegemonic adolescence – often figured as the heritage language of „the fatherland“ – threatens to obscure as much as it illuminates about the (literary) history of Turkish migration to Germany. Considering the multilingually opaque lifeworlds of migration that nourished the emergence of this tradition, the retrospective notion of „coming to voice“ through literary fidelity to the German language – even when it takes the critical stance of „speaking back“ – deserves closer scrutiny.

Yet, nearly fifty years after the first labor recruitment agreement between Germany and Turkey were signed, attempts to hone a genealogy of contemporary Turkish German writing often still rise and fall in accordance with an enlightened monolingualism – often of an explicitly panethnic, cosmopolitan bearing (Butzkamm 1978, Gramling 2009). While widening its ethnonational aperture, literary discourse in 1990s Germany settled on German as a pan-ethnic *lingua franca* for the literary utterance, resulting in pragmatic publishing protocols that inhibit scholarly inquiry into some of transnational literature’s most generative peculiarities. The most consequent of these literary-industrial and literary-historical variables include: 1) whether a given text was written in German or Turkish (or Kurdish), 2) whether and how it was subjected to self-translation, back-translation, or instant pre-production translation, 3) whether the publication format (newspaper, chapbook, occasional anthology, etc.) lent or lends itself to archiving and reproduction, 4) how the text was introduced to or fostered by German literary institutions, and 5) whether its author fits more or less well within a normative legacy of mass Turkish labor (im)migration to Germany.³ Unlike other, monolingual domains of late-

³ Murti notes the case of Aysel Özakin who, after ten years publishing in West Germany, left for England in 1990. (Murti 1999)

twentieth century German literary publication, Turkish German writing has been, from its inception, an obliquely situated two-doored house of significations, which often escape out the back when the authorities arrive.

Such inherent variables of transnational writing have, however, garnered little resonance in even the most deliberately inclusionist and multicultural of German literary histories, which often choose monolingualism as their common and unproblematized denominator. Ruminating on the dearth of coverage about migrant literature in Wellbery et al.'s encyclopedic *New History of German Literature* (2004), B. Venkat Mani notes – with prudent uncertainty – that grappling with the transnational circumstances of Turkish German literature requires more than an inclusionist solution. He broadens this procedural question to an epistemological one: „What kinds of beginnings are being carved out for the multicultural production? What are the documents, how are they being catalogued?“ (Mani 2007: 188; Wellbery et. al. 2004) Like Kafka's parable of „The Burrow“, the programmatic institutional pathways by which the literary domain of Turkish German writing has been constructed leaves many of its most promising points of entry either blocked, camouflaged, or left in disrepair.

What is Niyazi's Business in German Literature?

Sehr Geehrter
Herr
Hofmann.
Arbeitsamt II.
Nicht immer schreien!
Nicht immer nein sagen!
Ich bin nicht dein Diener.
Ich bin nicht verbrecher
Ich bin arbeiter.
Arbeiter arbeiten immer.
Arbeiter zahlen steuer.
Du machen bitte
Meine papier ordnung
Wieder.

Dear
Mister
Hofmann.
Labor Bureau II.
Not always shout!

Not always say no!
 I am not your servant.
 I am not criminal.
 I am worker.
 Worker always work.
 Workers pay tax.
 You make please
 my paper in order
 again.

– Aras Ören, *What is Niyazi's Business on Naunyn Street?*, 1973 (Ören 1980: 88f.)

Niyazi Gümüşkılıç is most often cited as the first aesthetic figure of Turkish migration to Germany. He has, nonetheless, all but fallen out of the literary-historical archive. Relatively „ungoogleable“ today and of ambiguous national affiliation – („Was it written in German or Turkish?“) – the hero of Aras Ören's 1973 Berlin milieu poem *What is Niyazi's Business on Naunyn Street?* hovers on the edge of German literary history – despite Niyazi's status as post-War Germany's first Turkish literary subject. In Ören's poem – which was first written in Turkish – Niyazi is laconically introduced with the following set of traits:

Iyi Almanca bilir
 Giyimine özenir
 Ve kulaklarının altına inen
 Favorileri vardır.

He can speak German well
 Takes care of his appearance
 And has sideburns down to
 Below his ears. (Ören 1980: 34f.)

Shortly thereafter, the poem states his reason for residence in Berlin-Kreuzberg:

Bu Almanya işi çıkınca,
 Herkes gibi ben de
 Dedim kendikendime:
 Almanya bir küçük Amerika.

When the thing with Germany came up,
 I said to myself,
 Like everybody else, me too:
 Germany is a little America. (Ören 1980: 38)

Of note for the present context is the lack of import afforded in the text to the German language (which is set in a parallel equivalence with „appearance“ and „sideburns“, connoting artifice and contemporary fashion) and the German nation (which is brushed off as a purgatorial copy of the eldest NATO sibling, the United States.) With the preemptive description „He can speak German well/Takes care of his appearance“, the reader is given to understand that s/he need worry neither about Niyazi’s linguistic proficiencies nor his capacity to get along sociably in Germany.

Thus though *Niyazi* is regarded as the first Turkish German poetic text to reach a German reading public, the language and culture of the host country remain quite incidental topics for the narrative. The location of Naunyn Street is a site for labor-rights struggles on an international scale; yet it observes no pre-given metonymic relationship to Germany or Germanness per se.

Ören’s poem chronicles the dynamics of social solidarity in a working-class Berlin neighborhood surrounded by the GDR on three sides, a working-class isthmus of intra- and transnational migration where landlords were rumored to be relatively more open to rental applicants with Turkish-sounding surnames. Against this backdrop, questions of Niyazi’s own identity, his struggles with or against cultural assimilation into a German national community, and illustrations of Turkish cultural identity, play an inconsequential role in this poem by today’s ideological standards. The narrator prefers to delve into the family history of his ethnic German neighbors, the Kutzers, who – it turns out – were also immigrant expellees from East Prussia (Ören 1980: 25). The narrative is localist and lateral in orientation, surpassing any sustained thematization of national identity.

Next to international class solidarity and pan-ethnic affiliation among migrants, the topicality of national language and culture seems to register as little more than faint detail. Reflecting on the publication context of this poem, Sievers observes how Ören’s poems „perfectly matched Rotbuch Publishing House’s contemporary titles, including several books on Marxism, such as Bernd Rabehl’s *History and Class Struggle* or D. Rjazanov’s *Marx and Engels for Beginners* but also poems, stories and essays by German left wing writers, such as F. C. Delius and Peter Schneider“ (Sievers 2008, n.p.). The penultimate section of the poem is a climactic conversation between Niyazi and Horst Schmidt, in which Horst attempts to rally the glum Niyazi to labor solidarity:

We should begin with this street,
 Niyazi, like others have begun on their streets.
 We live here, and here,
 On this street, in this neighborhood, we are many, many – like him, like
 you, like
 me – who are pushed up against the wall every day
 And many don't know what to do. [...]

When Niyazi asks where this effort should start, Schmidt replies:
 Way at the bottom [*Ganz unten*], Niyazi, way at the bottom.
 First we have to show them how they can get what's rightfully theirs.
 They have to learn to push back against people who take these rights
 away. Do you
 understand?
 They should start petitions, for example,
 Make demands.
 Write to every office
 with every little bit of their German
 and go to every person, every bureau,
 everywhere, where someone is taking the rights away,
 that are available to them. (Ören 1973: 67)⁴

Here, using German is not a literary or aesthetic choice, nor a signal of community membership of any kind, but rather a pragmatic tool for securing civil rights internationally.

With Niyazi as one of its first and primary exemplars, such early guest-worker fiction and poetry as Ören's *Niyazi* was of a localist and internationalist socio-political bearing than its more nationally oriented successors in the late 1980s left behind, gaining it – in the words of one critic – the damp retrospective moniker of „proletarian prose“ (Göktürk et al 2007: 419). Many early proponents and producers of „guest-worker literature placed deliberate stress on the internationalist class consciousness the word intoned, rather than on its ethnicized or ostracized positioning vis-à-vis discourses of national belonging, whether German or otherwise (Schami and Biondi 1981: 134f.). Published in heritage language newspapers like the Turkish *Anadil* [*Mother Tongue*] and the

⁴ „Wir sollten mit dieser Straße anfangen, / Niyazi, wie andere in ihren Straßen anfangen. / Hier wohnen wir, und hier, / In dieser Straße, in dieser Gegend, sind wir viele, viele, die wie er, wie du, wie ich, / Jeden Tag von neuem an die Wand gedrückt werden, / Und viele wissen nicht, was tun. [...] Ganz unten, Niyazi, ganz unten. / Erst einmal müssen wir ihnen zeigen wie sie zu dem kommen, was ihr Recht ist. / Sie müssen lernen, gegen die vorzugehen, die ihnen diese Rechte wegnehmen. / Verstehst du?/ Eingaben machen sollen sie, zum Beispiel, / Forderungen stellen, / Mit dem eigenen bißchen Deutsch / An jede Stelle schreiben / Und hingehen / Zu jeder Person, zu jeder Behörde./ Überall, wo man ihnen das Recht wegnimmt/ das ihnen zusteht.“

Italian *Correo D'Italia* [*The Mail from Italy*], the hypotexts of migration were to be found not preserved between book covers, but folded over in leaflets and newspapers (Genette 1997).

That a localist and internationalist literary politics of social solidarity, designed for multiple audiences in multiple languages, tended to trump national, ethnic, and religious affiliations in early Turkish German cultural production is evident in Güney Dal's first novel, published by *edition der 2* in Berlin in 1979, a narrative account of the 1973 „wild strike“ at Cologne's Ford factory.⁵ The variant titling between the Turkish and German versions of Dal's novel indicates the „localizing“ translational dynamics of early guest-worker publishing – that is, the strategic procedure of sculpting a translation towards the presumed socio-political norms of a given community of readers (Pym 2004). Where the 1976 Turkish version had been titled *Labor Exiles* [*İş sürgünleri*], Brigitte Schreiber-Grabitz' German translation released three years later foregrounded ethnicity with the title *When Ali Hears the Bells Ring* [*Wenn Ali die Glocken läuten hört*]. Where, for Turkish readers, the novel had signaled the collective historical experience of temporary foreign labor recruitment, its German-translated title stressed the individualized alterity of a single „Ali“ amid the tolling bells of the German workday (Cheesman 2007: 145–192).

An overarching dilemma is how and to what effect the internationalist, multilingual web of migrant texts and hypotexts in the 1970s and early 1980s *graduated* into a migration literature in the 1990s in which mastery of the German language arbitered representability. How does literary scholarship, and the authors it chooses to anthologize for critique, come to terms with this triage?

From Internationalism to Speechlessness

An image of helpless subalternity [...] characterizes not only the perception of migrants and the minoritized as a whole, but also all of their utterances. (Hito Steyerl: *Can the Subaltern Speak German?* 2001, 2003)

Teraoka points to a corpus of literary texts, films, plays and television shorts in the mid- 1980s that, by suppressing representations of multilinguality, gave rise to a speechless Turkish figure in German society. Franz Xaver Kroetz' 1984 *Fear and Hope in the FRG* [*Furcht und Hoffnung der BRD*] features a Turk who laughs but never speaks. In Botho Strauss' *Big and Small* [*Groß und*

⁵ On this watershed event, see „The Turks Rehearsed the Uprising“ in Göktürk et al. 2007: 42.

Klein], a Turk blusters about in German monosyllables, issuing to his German wife such commands as: „Beer“, „Come“, „Shit“, (Teraoka 1987: 198). Iconic speechlessness reached a highpoint with Günter Walraff's best-selling *Ganz Unten* – tellingly translated into French as *Tête de Turc* – in which a stealth investigative reporter goes undercover as the Turkish daylaborer „Ali“. Walraff writes:

The foreigner's German I used in my new life was so rough and ready and clumsy that anyone who had ever made the effort to really listen to a Turk or Greek living here would have noticed that something wasn't quite right. I simply left out the final syllables of some words, reversed the order of sentences, or often, just spoke a slightly broken Kolsch or Cologne dialect. However, strange as it may seem, no one ever became the least suspicious of me. These few little changes were enough. [...] Of course I was not really a Turk. But one must disguise oneself in order to unmask society, one must deceive and dissimulate in order to find out the truth. I still don't know how an immigrant copes with the daily humiliations, the hostility and the hate. (Walraff 1988: 2)

One is led to wonder how Walraff's intuitive assessments of Turkish loneliness in Germany may have differed, had the author been linguistically proficient enough to enjoy a relaxing after-shift chat in Turkish (and not just in his stylized *Gastarbeiterdeutsch*) during his year as the guest worker Ali. A bit of hearty conversation in Turkish from time to time might have saved him from reiterating what Homi K. Bhabha would later stridently diagnose as the „lonely figure that John Berger named the seventh man“. (Bhabha 1994: 139; Berger 1975) Adding inanimacy to loneliness, Bhabha ultimately sums up the Turk as leading „the life of a double, the automaton“. (Bhabha 1994: 316) Indeed, early German representations of transnational labor migration – like Fassinder's 1974 *Angst essen Seele auf* – had paved the way for such figural attenuations by depicting guest workers as lonely individuals bereft of linguistic community beyond that which well-meaning Germans labor to bestow upon them.

The sedimentation of these images – of „the head of a Turk“ without a single language, let alone two – seems to have been taken up whole in the institutional and scholarly contexts of the mid-1980s. In her co-edited collection *A Not Only German Literature* with Harald Weinrich, Irmgard Ackerman was thus able to dub German-writing immigrants as „spokesmen for the speechless“ – in contradistinction to their countrymen and women who „remain mute in their suffering“ (Ackermann and Weinrich 1986: 248–251). Already in 1985, Teraoka began to identify in this trend a general „silencing of the aesthetic of

the other“ (Teraoka 1987: 22). Bhabha’s gloss in *The Location of Culture* was, of course, telling:

How opaque the disguise of words [...]. He [the Turk] treated the sounds of the unknown language as if they were silence. To break through his silence. He learnt twenty words of the new language. But to his amazement at first, their meaning changed as he spoke them [...]. Is it possible to see the opaqueness of the words? (Bhabha 1994: 165)

How is it that the opaque, new language is the only language worth considering, in such a vivid, psychological depiction? The possibility of Turkish-speaking camaraderie or pleasurable multilingual exchange of any kind plays as little of a role in Bhabha’s analysis as it had in Berger’s text fifteen years prior. Yet even in one of the most sustained and poignant interventions on what she called „speech of the uncounted“, Begüm Özden Fırat overlooks the stark omission of multilingualism in Bhabha’s account (cited in Adelson 1994, Göktürk 2002, Soysal 2003).

While an image of the languageless Turk was being circulated in the domestic culture industry and implicitly seconded in the academic sector, migrant authors were grappling with the topic from a vastly different angle. For Aras Ören, speechlessness was the overall historical condition of modern Europe in a „turbulently developing world of communication technologies“ (Ören in Göktürk 2007: 392). Seconding Enzensberger’s call for a new consciousness industry that might counter mass media incursions into civic life, Ören claimed in 1986 that

Europe is the reflection of my face, and I am the reflection of the face of Europe. My speechlessness is also Europe’s. [...] This mutual impact signifies an expansion of my creative energies and allows them to become an integral part of the creative European zeitgeist. My search for the new language contributes to this movement in that it can overcome the speechlessness on the borders of language. (Ören in Göktürk 2007: 393)

Thus, as early as the mid-1980s a struggle over the definition of „speechlessness“ began to take shape, as exemplified by Ören’s implicit contestatory response to Walraff.

A (Not Only) German Literature⁶

⁶ This subtitle refers to one of the early multicultural anthologies designed by German-as-a-Foreign-Language pedagogues, marking a shift from labor internationalism to cultural integration. (Ackermann / Weinrich 1986)

That Germany – as a linguistic community or centripetal space of integration – had played next to no guiding role in the politics of early guest-worker literature may account for its awkward position, not only in German literature overall, but in the „literature of migration“ canon as well. Whereas the multilingual guest-worker literature of the 1970s had generally been predicated, in the absence of a large German-language readership, on labor rights and the collective position of labor migrants, the literature of migration during the Kohl era was propelled by growing public receptivity on the political Center-Left to narratives about ethnic background, cultural difference, homelands, religious identity, integration, and individualistic liberalism (See for instance Pokatsky in Göktürk et al 2007, 388). The moniker „guest-worker literature“ eventually came to be regarded as a literary-historical anachronism to be transcended at all costs, in favor of an engagement with literariness and intercultural understanding in an exclusively German-language context.

The shift from a labor-based to a culture-based bearing in the field of Turkish German literature began to take hold around 1982, amid two contemporaneous political acts of recognition from German institutions: 1) a growing consciousness and parliamentary commitment to foreigners' rights at the highest level of the federal government (see Göktürk et al 2007: 247-251), and 2) regional scholarly initiatives to recognize immigrants' German-language literary competence through prizes and competitions. Where writers' efforts in the 1970s had generally been focused on promoting political expression through poetic (and journalistic) means *in any language*, the 1980s discourse focused on commending stylistic achievement in German as a foreign language, as academic institutions began to respond to the multicultural civic imperatives of the late 1970s. Harald Weinrich, the founder of the Adalbert-von-Chamisso Prize for second-language writers of German, described the provenance of this new orientation in 1986 as follows:

The creation of the Adalbert von Chamisso Award for authors with native languages other than German should be a signal that this literature, coming from the outside, is welcome among us Germans and that we can appreciate it as an enrichment of our own literature as well as a concrete piece of world literature. And even if we sometimes are not sure how to address these half-foreigner, half-native authors who often do not have a German passport but do have a German pen, we are momentarily absolved of our linguistic confusion when we name them „Chamisso's grandchildren“. (Göktürk et al 2007: 390-391)

That the namesake of this prize, Louis Charles Adélaïde de Chamisso, was a

French aristocrat driven into exile as a youth by the French Revolution begins to suggest the irony of the ascription „Chamisso’s grandchildren“ to writers whose literary engagement had arisen out of workers’ rights advocacy. This break with „guest-worker literature“ entailed a number of concomitant shifts: 1) a reinvestment in the singular author as the primary locus of enunciation, as opposed to literary collectives such as *Südwind-gastarbeiterdeutsch*, translation collaborations, and anthologies; 2) a prohibitive investment in German as the preferred language of literary expression (to which Güney Dal and Aras Ören remained enduring exceptions), 3) a strengthened recourse to host-country or heritage „culture“ as the proper theme of migrant writing (as opposed to labor and civil rights), and 4) a de-proscription on spatial motifs that might reiterate stereotypical guest-worker milieus: imprisonment, dystopia, claustrophobia, etc. Such syndromes of claustrophobia, which shaped the narrative world of Tevfik Başer’s 1986 film *Forty Square Meters of Germany* to Sinan Çetin’s 1993 film *Berlin in Berlin*, met with decreasing resonance in the pan-ethnic Kanak critiques of the 1990s, which prized a rhetoric of ubiquity („We are everywhere!“ [„*Wir sind überall!*“]).

Through the annual event of the Chamisso Prize, this German-as-a-foreign-language initiative of (monolingual) literary competence gradually gained the symbolic and rhetorical upper-hand in discussions about the cultural integration of Turks in German society. The eloquence of Turkish German authors in the German language became a touchstone for public discourse about the „integratability“ of *all* Turks, whether or not they were at all interested in German literature – let alone Turkish literature, for that matter. This spirit of language super-mastery as a kind of immigrant *coup d’esprit* was poignantly refigured in Sten Nadolny’s 1990 epic novel *Selim, oder die Gabe der Rede* [*Selim, or the Gift of Speech*], and lives on in the cabaret performances of Fatih Çevikkollu and Django Asül, who dazzle their German audiences with hyperauthentic Colognish and Bavarian dialects respectively. (Çevikkollu regularly refers to his Cologne dialect as a means for demonstrating his unimpeachable Germanness in contrast to ethnic Germans who hesitate to use their dialects in mixed company.)

Staging the Hypotext

The inchoate, multiple-language proto-literary traffic of the 1970s yielded to the single-language „cosmopolite fictions“ of the 1980s (Cheesman 2007: 15). With this term, Tom Cheesman refers to the discursive tension between political

euphemization and transnational lifeworlds in Turkish German prose narrative. This relationship could be usefully described as one of hypertext and hypotext: of a set of published narratives that emulate a communal traffic in stories, letters, heritage-language newsletters and leaflets, and personal notations which were exchanged below the threshold of publishability from 1959 to 1980 and beyond. Though this relationship between text and hypotext is evident as early as Ören's *Niyazi* – the last lines of which reproduce fragments of letters in broken German – other later authors followed suit. Noteworthy exemplars are Emine Sevgi Özdamar's „Karagöz in Alamania“ [*Blackeye in Germany*], a stylized rendering of the letters of an unnamed guest worker. Feridun Zaimoglu took this genre of text/hypotext adaptation a step further with his mock ethnographies and fictionalized interviews in *Kanak Sprak* and *Kopp und Kragen*, where Zaimoglu steps into the role of spokesperson for multiple *Kanaken*, whose utterances were in need of normalization in order to be publishable. In his introductory manifesto to *Kanak Sprak*, Zaimoglu made his hypotextual venture explicit:

Their underground codex developed long ago, they speak a jargon of their own. Kanaki speak, a kind of creole or underworld argot with secret codes and signs. Their speech is related to the freestyle sermon of the rappers; like them, they adopt a pose to express themselves. This language decides their existence: it is a wholly private performance in words. The verbal power of the Kanakis expresses itself in a forceful, breathless, nonstop hybrid stammering, marked with random pauses and turn of phrase invented on the spot. The Kanaki's command of his mother tongue is imperfect, and his grasp of „Allemannish“ is no less limited. His vocabulary is composed of „gibberish“ words and phrases known to neither language. Into his improvised metaphors and parables he weaves borrowings from high Turkish and from the dialectal slang of Anatolian villages. (Cheesman in Göktürk 2007: 407)

Zaimoglu presents *Kanak Sprak* didactically to the reader-as-outsider, while simultaneously indicating its ultimate recalcitrance, its incommensurability with predominant publishing criteria. Instead of attempting an expansion of the signifying capacity of German, the *Kanak Sprak* project insists on an apophatic aesthetics, of rendering the absent, hypotextual heteroglossia of Kanak speech comprehensible by *translating* it into a (somewhat impolite) German „polite fiction“. Zaimoglu's later work, especially in the 2006 *Leyla*, abandons this stylistics of apophatic multilingualism in favor of the „deictic presence“ of testimonial realism.

„Interesting Stuff Came From Foreigners“

A 2006 controversy between two renowned German authors of Turkish descent indicates how this imagined and authoritative corpus of source-narrative based in multilingual, transnational milieus still holds sway in how migration literature is composed and interpreted. The scandal between Feridun Zaimoglu and Emine Sevgi Özdamar hinged upon the authors' alleged propriety over the narrative content of a set of audio-cassettes dictated in Turkish by Zaimoglu's mother, a former guest-worker herself. Both a narrative resource and a critical albatross, such documents of the guest-worker period form a multilingual hypotext that underlies the production and reception of Turkish German literature today.

Özdamar's novel *Life is Caravanserai has Two Doors I Came In One and Went out the Other* (1992) thus bears the volatile distinction of having been the platform for two entirely unrelated, high-profile literary scandals over the course of its first 20 years. Even before the novel was published in its entirety, some commentators interpreted Özdamar's 1991 win at the Ingeborg Bachmann Prize for Literature competition in Klagenfurt, Austria as the straw that broke German literary competence. Whereas the Chamisso prize was reserved for non-native writers, the Bachmann Prize had been awarded annually since 1977 for an individual author's excellence in German literature, regardless of how or when they learned German.

After the Bachmann Prize was conferred on Özdamar, Jens Jessen, a literary columnist for the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* described *Caravanserai* as

the helpless text of a German-writing Turkish woman, which plays with folkloristic elements from the fairy tale tradition of her homeland, and which the jurors good-naturedly viewed as surrealism. For this reason, among all the others, the Ingeborg Backmann Prize is as good as dead. Only out of the deference befitting an obituary shall we say the author's name: Emine Sevgi Özdamar. Against the backdrop of contemporary Turkish prose, which is in no way naïve or folkloristic, the choice is absurd, even insulting. (Jessen 1991)

In a like-minded diatribe entitled, „Why Don't the Germans Love to Read Their Own New Writers?“ Arno Widmann described *Caravanserai* as a „grammarless flood of Oriental images“ (Widmann 1994: 12f.). Such vitriol, however, competed with other headlines announcing how „Interesting Stuff Came from

Foreigners“ and „Immigrants are Breathing Life into German Literature“ (Jankowsky 1997: 267). In the ensuing months, these two encampments turned into full-fledged discourses in their own right, with *Caravanserai* as a kind of accidental touchstone.⁷

Just as the newly awarded Bachmann Prize was being lauded and bemoaned in the press, a concurrent literary-historical event was taking place in Berlin. The promotional material for a year-long series of readings and events called *Türkei literarisch* [*Turkey literarily*] described its corrective aim as follows:

Modern Turkish literature is still one of the least known among European literatures here. With the exception of Yaşar Kemal and Nazım Hikmet, a sufficient reception of Turkish literature is still to come in Germany. This year, the Literary Colloquium presents a series of the most important authors from Turkey. The spectrum ranges from the great lyric poet Fazıl Hüsni (b. 1914) to the young theatrical and prose author Murathan Mungan (b. 1955), from the novelist Adalet Ağaoğlu to the experimental short-story writer Ferit Edgü. In addition, Turkish authors living abroad, especially in Germany, will be represented, including those of the younger generation who have begun to build a bridge to the language and literature of their second homeland. The beginning of the series evokes the literary city of İstanbul, the intellectual and cultural center of Turkey. The Turkish literature known in Germany, from a more rural and provincial perspective, will be placed in a new light by the invited authors from İstanbul.⁸

The series, which included such obscure authors as Orhan Pamuk, was accompanied by an anthology of the participants' works translated into German. As a collection, *A Sky Belongs to Every Word* [*Jedem Wort Gehört ein Himmel*], sought to complement a German literary engagement with Turkey that „is in general shaped by a longing for the totally Other. From the sacks of coffee that were left standing at the gates of Vienna to the Döner kebab stands of Berlin

⁷ For an analysis of *Caravanserai*'s reception see also Dayıoğlu-Yücel 2005: 28-33.

⁸ „Immer noch ist die moderne türkische Literatur eine der hiezulande unbekanntenen europäischen Literaturen. Abgesehen von Yaşar Kemal und Nazım Hikmet steht eine befriedigende Rezeption türkischer Literatur in Deutschland noch aus. Das Literarische Colloquium stellt in diesem Jahr eine Reihe mit den wichtigsten Autorinnen und Autoren der Türkei vor. Das Spektrum reicht vom großen Lyriker Fazıl Hüsni Dağlarca (geb. 1914) bis zum jungen Theater- und Prosaautor Murathan Mungan (geb. 1955), von der Romanschriftstellerin Adalet Ağaoğlu bis zum experimentellen Erzähler Ferit Edgü. Auch türkische Autoren, die im Ausland, vor allem in Deutschland leben, werden vertreten sein, vor allem solche der jüngeren Generation, die begonnen hat, zur Sprache und Literatur ihrer zweiten Heimat eine Brücke zu bauen. Der Auftakt der Reihe steht im Zeichen der Literaturstadt İstanbul. Die in Deutschland eher aus ländlich-provinziellen Perspektive bekannte Literatur wird durch die eingeladenen İstanbuler Autoren in ein neues Licht gerückt.“ *Türkei Literarisch* (1991) Berlin: *Literarisches Colloquium Berlin e. V.*

stretches an arc of exotic pleasure – enticing but also often unsettling.“ (Göktürk / Şenocak 1991: 7)⁹

It is easy to see how these two simultaneous literary-historical events marked both a cleft and a convergence in the institutional transmission of German Turkish writing. While Özdmar's Bachmann Prize valorized the content and composition of one representative immigrant writer's achievements in German, the concurrent *Türkei Literarisch* – with its painstaking efforts to translate and transmit a range of Turkish and Turkish German authors – sought to undermine precisely the monolingualist underpinnings at the heart of the German literary prize circuit. (No small irony lies in the fact that Ingeborg Bachmann herself exceeded in stridently multilingual writing, especially in her 1972 short story „Simultan“ [„*Simultaneous Interpreter*“].)

Still largely untranslated in German, despite the magisterial efforts of such venues as *Die türkische Bibliothek* and *Schritte*, the vast majority of contemporary Turkish literature has a necessarily hypotextual relationship – both to contemporary German discourses on transnational themes and to German Turkish writing itself. In absence of extant translations for German readers, it is the (German-writing) Turkish German literary authors who must overwrite this hypotext with legible refigurations.

Purloined Hypotexts

Well, I may venture so far as to say that the paper gives its holder a certain power in a certain quarter where such power is immensely valuable. (Prefect G., „The Purloined Letter“, Edgar Allen Poe)

Nowhere was this hypotextual dilemma of migration literature more evident than in a messy 2006 plagiarism debacle between Emine Sevgi Özdamar and Feridun Zaimoglu. An anonymous Germanist – who later turned out to be named Marianne Brunner – published her findings that Zaimoglu had plagiarized motifs from Özdamar's 1992 *Caravanserai* novel. The Munich-based researcher alleged a preponderance of overlapping narrative detail in Zaimoglu's 2006 novel *Leyla* – from the Eastern Anatolian setting of Malatya, to the epilation routines of its female characters, to the phonetically spelled cameo appearances of Hollywood luminaries like *Kessrin Hepörn* and *Humprey*

⁹ „Von den Kaffeesäcken, die die flüchtenden Osmanen vor den Toren Wiens stehen ließen, bis hin zu den Kebap-Buden in Berlin spannt ein Bogen der exotischen Genüsse – verlockend, doch zugleich oft unheimlich.“

Pockart. That the same editor at Cologne's Kiepenheuer and Witsch publishing house had shepherded both novels through the editing process was just one of the infelicitous circumstances upon which feuilleton reporters launched a splashy summer exposé, just days before the World Cup was to open (Krekeler 2006).

Few witnesses of this plagiarism scandal would care to remember May 2006 as an important moment in any sort of literary history. „Literary critical argumentation could degenerate no further“, claimed one rueful critic, „than this demagogic repartition of subjunctive and indicative“ (Mecklenburg 2006). Despair multiplied on a daily basis as journalists implicated ever-new co-conspirators in a duel that had first appeared to involve the two veteran authors alone. The predominantly male reviewers of Zaimoglu's novel from only weeks before now appeared woefully unreliable, if not disingenuous. The editorial staff at Kiepenheuer and Witsch came under suspicion for having negligently overlooked a looming disaster in order to ensure high sales with a novel that features intrafamilial honor killings, domestic sexual violence, and young Muslim women's subjectivity – topics that had topped the German pop literary charts (Kelek 2006, Ateş 2003) Zaimoglu was lampooned for lifting motifs from a more skilled literary artist than himself, in order to ease his as yet unsuccessful transformation from activist pseudo-ethnographer to literary novelist.

Redoubling the crisis was the fact that both authors were generally regarded as iconic bellwethers in Germany's literature of migration, a sub-genre that had been prone to evaluation on an authenticity scale, since Akif Pirinçci's novels hit the market in the early and mid-1980s. In order to head off the threat of a collective conceptual recidivism into obsolescent polemics about authenticity, identity, and sociological realism – not to mention Orientalism – most parties hoped the story would fall from public view after a few news cycles. (Mecklenburg 2006, Dayioglu-Yücel 2008) By way of a private arbitration, the KiWi publishing house quashed the threat of a long and public legal struggle.

But the affair signals an important moment for the literature of migration in Germany, not because of the veracity of any of its contentions, but because of the unique structure of its discourse as well as the presumptions about authorship, citation, language and originality that it brings to light. Zaimoglu claimed that the similarities between his novel and Özdamar's ought to be seen as the norm, rather than the exception, in the overall itinerary of literary

influence. „Take a look at post-War German literature. In the 1960s and 1970s, novels are chock full of Nazi fathers who are more than just somewhat similar to one another.“ (Zaimoglu 2006)¹⁰ Zaimoglu’s retort insists that borrowing or sharing motifs is a norm of the literary field, and that migration literature bears no special forensic burden to prove uniqueness. Here Zaimoglu seems to second Bourdieu’s attempt to demystify

the ideology of creation, which makes the author the first and last source of the value of his work, [and] conceals the fact that the cultural businessman (art dealer, publisher, etc.) is at one and the same time the person who exploits the labour of the „creator“ by trading in the „sacred“ and the person who, by putting it on the market, by exhibiting, publishing or staging it, consecrates a product which he has „discovered“ and which would otherwise remain a mere natural resource. (Bourdieu 1993: 76)

For some, the way this affair pulled apart domains of multilingual subjectivity and authorship, which had heretofore been protected under the honorific cloak of literary craft, was both refreshing and sobering. Phrases themselves – languages (native and foreign), figures, and discursive layering – were, for the moment, as sovereign as the individual authors and their emblematic success in the market.

Özdamar, in turn, was baffled by the charge that she was the one who had „stolen“ narratives from Zaimoglu’s aunt decades before, when the two women were living at a guest worker dormitory on Berlin’s Stresemann Street in the 1960s (Mecklenburg 2006). Even Zaimoglu’s mother Güler Zaimoglu played a prominent role in the debacle as her son’s authenticating, Turkish-speaking alibi. The forensic frenzy left no one, including the novel’s readers, uninjured. One observer, Zafer Şenocak, commented that „The question whether one author copied from another is unimportant. But the fact that a journalist investigating such a question would call up the protagonist of a novel, indeed must do so, in order to confirm her authenticity – that is disturbing.“ (cited in Cheesman 2007: 191)

What the affair indicates for migration literature – beyond the unsightly inner workings of a discourse of compulsory authenticity – was how a multilingual corpus of hypotext from the guestworker period (Güler Zaimoglu’s cassettes,

¹⁰ „Sehen Sie sich doch mal die deutsche Nachkriegsliteratur an. In den sechziger und siebziger Jahren sind die Romane voller Nazi-Väter, die sich teilweise mehr als nur ähnlich sind.“

stories shared at guestworker dormitories, letters, notebooks) continued to fertilize the ground of Turkish German literary fiction and its reception. Unfit for publication in its occasional, multilingual, and personal form, this hypotext nonetheless harbors accounts of historical circumstances that are documented in no other format. Like Holocaust memoir, collective readily belief in such a hypotextual corpus or inaccessible oral history archive fuels a gamut of authorial gestures of retrieval and emulation, and a tradition of contestation about the veracity of their sources. The pathos of distance upon which such literary rituals rest is not the result of transnationality itself, but rather of the monolingual institutions that have arisen to channel transnationality into domestic discourse.

A Secret Language that Fills the Soul

The way Özdamar's text was revisited in 2006 as an allegedly purloined hypotext for Zaimoglu's novel offers us an opportunity to differentiate between modes of multilingual representation in the novel, a topic that escaped attention in the press debate. Whereas Zaimoglu's novel *Leyla* adheres to the testimonial realism prevalent in such programmatic texts as Necla Kelek's *The Foreign Bride* (2006) and Seyran Ateş' *Great Journey into the Fire* (2003), Özdamar's text strains against this genre of what Arendt called „assimilated recollection“, making it already an odd sourcetext for Zaimoglu's figurations in *Leyla* (Arendt 1947).

Though brief, Göktürk's 1994 essay on „Multicultural Tonguetwisters“ remains the most prescient and compelling language-oriented intervention into Özdamar criticism. Forgoing a thematic reading of *Caravanserai*, Göktürk points out that the novel's „literal, not particularly successful translations“ of Koran and Turkish lyric verse index not an „aesthetics of deficiency“ but a deliberate stylistic innovation that foregrounds the author's claim that „Mistakes are my identity. Five million people who live here speak in mistakes. It is a new language.“ Göktürk adds that „it is not only Turks that write false German, in the meantime German literaturks are doing so as well. [...] Time will tell how far they will reach into literature“ (Göktürk 1994: 81).

Göktürk praises the novel's contribution to „a humorously liberated stance vis-à-vis processes of cultural mixing“ that breaks the cycle of „moaning and commiseration fostered amid the consoling warmth of multicultural niches“. (Göktürk 1994: 89) Nonetheless her essay shares an overt reticence about the novel with other early critics like Zafer Şenocak, who saw in it a potential alibi

for a new streak of Orientalism in German public and intellectual discourse about Turkey. For Göktürk this ambivalence lay not only in Caravanserai's emulation of (debatably) childlike oral narrative, but in the German-language publishing industry's inveterate lack of curiosity about modern Turkish literature. (In subsequent essays, Göktürk reconsidered this reticence, discovering in the text a potent and comical canvas for staging the narratability of Turkish themes for contemporary German audiences (Göktürk 1999).

Until the rise to prominence of such Turkish writers as Orhan Pamuk, the languid pace of literary translations out of Turkish into German contrasted starkly with the accelerated program of translating European *belles-lettres* for use in Turkish primary and secondary schools under Education Minister Hasan Ali Yücel, an event that Özdamar comically documents in her novel: „Then a little fat man came into the school, an actor. The school had a stage. He said, „Atatürk and his Culture Minister Hasan Ali Yücel had all the world's classics translated into Turkish for you.““ (Özdamar 1992: 269).

This acute unidirectionality of translation leads Göktürk to question Özdamar's awkward impromptu rendering of, for instance, an Ahmet Haşim poem „The Staircase“ [*Merdiven*], instead of drawing on the already extant and elegant literary translation by Annemarie Schimmel (Haşim 1973: 143) „One might have hoped for a more careful philological engagement with literary sources“, writes Göktürk. At second glance, the narrator of *Caravanserai* herself seconds Göktürk's discomfiture about how she renders Haşim's beautiful and tender poem: „I read it in a big room in front of many people. I read, but it sounded like a limping song. Backstage, I saw my schoolblouse – the hem hanging down in the back“ (Özdamar 1992: 268). A seeming non-sequitor follows this detail, as the narrator turns to thoughts of her literature teacher, who had encouraged her to read stories aloud in class.

Is this a scene of shame and self-consolation? The patent difficulty in translating the poem from (late Ottoman) Turkish into contemporary German has long been the object of sustained study. (A. Göktürk: 1983, 132-153) While Göktürk suggests Özdamar might have effectively preempted charges of naïve exoticism by, for instance, taking advantage of the cumulative resources of German philology and Turkology in coming up with a translation of „The Staircase“, the narrator's first public reading (at age twelve) seems to index a rich translingual dilemma that restages the „mistakes“ that, according to Özdamar, characterize her own linguistic identity.

The hem of the narrator's school blouse, hanging out in the back while she reads the poem, signals a rebellious or negligent impropriety in how the narrator attends to school norms that may be seen as constitutive of her narrative presence in the novel. (The narrator often complains about how her school blouse is too small; Özdamar 1992: 268) Yet the poem that she reads on stage begins:

Ağır ağır çıkacaksın bu merdivenlerden
Eteklerinde güneş rengi bir yığın yaprak

Heavily, heavily, you will climb the stairs
A bundle of sun-colored leaves at your hem

Schimmel's translation reads

Langsam, ganz langsam wirst du diese Treppe hinaufgehen
An deinem Saume sonnenfarbige Blätter

In contrast, Özdamar's narrator below misplaces the infinitive verb *steigen*:

Langsam, langsam wirst du steigen auf diese Treppen
In deinen Röcken viele Blätter, sonnenfarbig.

As the narrator finishes the poem and proceeds backstage, she notices the embarrassing seam of her blouse, which compounds the uneasiness she feels with the „limping song“ she has just performed of Haşim's lyric. Yet the poem itself begins with such an image: of sun-colored leaves at one's hem, as she climbs the stairs – dignified, heavy, and slow. Thus the narrator implicitly locates her own equivocal public performances of language within Haşim's lyrical tableau, of a woman climbing a staircase toward the evening horizon. That the remembrance/rendering of Haşim's verse is presented in the mixed syntax of spontaneous, emergent translation establishes an arc between the 12-year-old's reading of the poem, Özdamar's own writing career and practice, and the Turkish language reform.

That both performances arose in the course of a „poetry contest“ at school mirrors the promotional, institutional culture of the Adelbert-von-Chamisso-Prize for second-language writers of German. Remarkable (because absent) in the narrator's reading of Haşim's poem is the second-to-last line of the ten-line poem: „Bu bir lisân-ı hafîdir ki ruha dolmakta.“ [„This is a secret language that fills the soul.“] Omitting this line from her written recollection performs yet again the secrecy of this new language of errors that „fills the soul“.

It is directly after this scene of reading – a few non-sequiturs later – that the little fat man arrives to the school to deliver the Kemalist government’s translations of world classics, including Molière’s *The Imaginary Invalid*, in which Özdamar’s young narrator plays Beline, the conniving wife of an inconsolable hypochondriac. This abrupt juxtaposition between the narrator’s two performances – Haşim’s ascending figure and Molière’s fretful and sanguine Beline – offers a comic and subtle index of the tension between Ottoman literary modernism and midcentury Kemalism’s emphasis on imported Western classics. (During the same period the Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Yayınları also published a series of transcriptions of Ottoman and Turkish classics, which had been heretofore unavailable to a generation of readers that had grown up reading Latin script.)

Haşim’s second book of poetry *پيالہ Piyale* [The Goblet], in which the poem „The Staircase“ was published in 1926, would be one of the last books of poetry to be printed in the Arabo-Persian script of the Ottoman Empire before the „catastrophically successful“ switch to a modified Latin alphabet in 1928 (Lewis 1999). Meanwhile Özdamar’s selection of *The Imaginary Invalid* as her narrator’s first theatrical role parodies the West European perception of Ottoman society as the perpetual „sick man of Europe“. About the process of language reform in Turkey, Haşim wrote:

For the last three days, while I write, I watch curiously the grappling of alien words with the new letters on the white page. These words written with letters, the outlets of which were the nose and the throat, cannot find their sounds on the keyboard of the new alphabet to make themselves heard. In a sentence, these words sound like the muffled, ugly screams of people who have lost their voices. (Haşim 1928)¹¹

The narrator in *Caravanserai* embeds Haşim’s confrontation with language change and language loss in her own performance of reading, the struggle to maintain a language that has been either taken away, or a language one has had to renounce. In this she calls forth the history of rapid, long-term, and strategic language reengineering since the early 19th century in Turkey, which knows no equivalent in post 18th century Germany. In the 1860s, the co-founder of the *Hürriyet* newspaper Ziya Pasha would write:

Today, when decrees and orders are read out in the hearing of the common people, can anything be made of them? Are such compositions

¹¹ Also cited in Ertürk 2008: 49.

meant exclusively for those with a mastery of the written word, or is it intended that ordinary people should understand what the State commands? Try talking to any commoner in Anatolia and Rumelia about a commercial regulation, or the decrees and orders relating to the auctioning and awarding of the right to collect tithes, or establishing the amount of tax due from each household, or any matter at all; you will find that none of the poor creatures knows nothing about any one of them. (cited in Lewis 1999: 79)¹²

As late as 1900, Gibb would note of the baffling multilingual flexibility and figural potential of Ottoman literary language:

It is not too much to say that during the whole of the five and a half centuries [14th to mid-19th] every Persian and Arabic word was a possible Ottoman word. In thus borrowing material from the two classical languages a writer was quite unrestricted save by his own taste and the limit of his knowledge; all that was required was that in case of need he should give the foreign words a Turkish grammatical form. (Webb 1900: 8)

In re-performing Haşim's lyric in the context of her own narrative experimentations with German, Özdamar proposes a lineage of multilingual writers arcing through Ottoman verse, modern Turkish poetry in the midst of language reform, and Turkish German writing. For her, none of these three positionalities represent a „commitment“ to one language to the exclusion of others, but rather an engagement with language as a historical resource „always in translation“ (Pennycook 2006)

Long before Aşık Veysel sang his haunting recordings of „I am on a Long, Narrow Road“, previous tellings of this parable offered a wellspring of advice for everyday speakers in multilingual situations. In the *Book of the Stranger* [*Garipname*], the 13th century Muslim mystic Aşık Pasha had written:

To know all the staging posts of the road
Do not despise the Turkish and Persian languages.
[...] None had regard for the Turkish tongue;
Turks won no hearts.
Nor did the Turk know these languages
The narrow road, these great staging posts. (İz 1967: 584f.)¹³

¹² „Elyevm resmen ilan lunan fermanlar ve emirnameler ahad-ı nas huzurunda okutuldukdta bir şey istifade ediliyor mu? Ya bu muharrerat yalnız kitabette melekesi olanlara mı mahsustur? Yoksa avam-ı nas devletin emrini anlamak için müdür? Anadolu'da ve Rumeli'de ahad-ı nastan her şahsa, devletin bir ticaret nizamı vardır ve a'şarın suret'i müzayede ve ihalesine ve tevzi-i vergiye ve şuna buna dair fermanları ve emirnameleri vardır deyü sorulsun, görülür ki biçarelerin birinden haberi yoktur.“

¹³ „Çun bilesin cümle yol mezilleri. / Yirmegil sen Türk ü Tacik dillerin [...] Türk diiline kimesne bakmaz

For Aşık Pasha, not only great literary artists but common people may attain true knowledge by learning many languages – here Persian, Arabic, and Turkish, though the latter remains the most in need of reinvigoration. Nonetheless, each of these languages is represented not by a territorial principle – by the exclusive use of one language in a given space – but rather by the figure of the caravanserai [here *menzil*], through which one must pass on a continual and indefinite journey. Özdamar’s novel is principally dedicated to refiguring language use in this light.

A Berlin Secession?

B. Venkat Mani brings forth a potent critique of literary historiography in his volume on Turkish-German novels, suggesting that the „random access history“ model presented in Wellbery et al.’s *New History of German Literature* is structurally unsuited to grapple with the multilingual delimitations of Turkish German text. Perhaps Turkish German literature is more aptly imagined historically as an „inn with two doors“ – a field of discontinuous accessions and attritions, of institutional recognitions and misrecognitions, of tactical euphemizations, and a fluidity between national and international media structures that is, after all, dissimilar to those of its non- migrant counterparts. Consider for instance the film career of Erden Kiral, whose Berlin-based filmmaking in the 1980s has had only the most ephemeral interface with multiculturally oriented histories of contemporary German film since Kiral moved to İstanbul in the 1990s. Or the work of Zafer Şenocak, whose Turkish-language novels *German Education* [*Alman Terbiyesi*], *The Residence* [*Köşk*], and *Yolculuk Nereye* [*A Voyage to Where?*] enact and entail a break with the monolingual German-language market, in which he had published novels and essay collections since the mid-1980s.¹⁴ Even Emine Sevgi Özdamar, who was cited early on as a central figure in contemporary German literature, is beginning to publish texts in Turkish for which no German-language translation, nor literary-historical influence in German Studies, is yet in sight.¹⁵ After decades of literary publishing in German, these veteran Berlin based authors seem to be leading a multilingual secession movement – a Berlin secession, away from the constraints of the traditional discourses that housed their work

idi / Türklerin hergiz gönül akınaz idi / Türk dahi bilmez idi bu dilleri / İnce yolu, ol ulu menzilleri.“

¹⁴ Zafer Şenocak: *Alman Terbiyesi*. İstanbul: Alef, 2007; *Yolculuk Nereye?* İstanbul: Alef, 2007; *Köşk*. İstanbul: Alef, 2008.

¹⁵ Emine Sevgi Özdamar: „*Kendi kendinin Terzisi Bir Kambur*“: *Ece Ayhan’lı anılar, 1974 Zürih günlüğü, Ece Ayhan’ın mektupları*. İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2007.

throughout the 1990s. Yet the fact that many such authors have always traveled back and forth from one language to another (and to the next) over this thirty year period means that „the German literary scene“ may be too modest an aperture through which to account for literary historical phenomena that we are now often poised to delegate to the sphere of cosmopolitanism. The Caravanserai of German Studies will have to honor their complex right of return.

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