

46. Cross-cultural experience in *Die Brücke vom Goldenen Horn* in the context of cultural transfer strategies

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Abstract

Cultures that have rich immigration histories usually develop branches of literature which narrates the experiences they have gone through. These stories are often told by those who have immigration background. Germany is one of the most developed countries in the world, and among others, the contribution of Turkish immigrants to that success is seen as an undeniable fact today. Yet, such contributions come at a cost in that coming together culturally is not a straightforward process; particularly when *hosting* and *guest* cultures have substantial dissimilarities, as was the case in German and Turkish societies. Like many others, also German-Turkish immigration history is full of cultural tensions, clashes and sufferings but also, as Turkish born German writer Emine Sevgi Özdamar emphasizes, fulfils, rewards and gratifications. She attempts to demonstrate this in her earlier renowned novels by employing a number of culture-transfer strategies, among others in order to initiate familiarity with *the (less known) other*. *Die Brücke vom goldenen Horn*, one of her earlier novels, which illustrates such strategies in abundance is the focus and to what extent she succeeds in her venture is the topic of this paper.

Keywords: Cross-culturalism in German literature, transfer strategies for culture-specific elements, Emine Sevgi Özdamar, *Die Brücke vom goldenen Horn*

Die Brücke vom Goldenen Horn romanında kültür aktarımı stratejileri bağlamında çok kültürlülük deneyimi

Öz

Zengin bir göçmenlik tarihine sahip olan kültürlerde dikkat çeken noktalardan biri deneyimlenenlerin dile getirildiği edebiyat alanları geliştirmeleridir. Yaşananların öyküleri genellikle, deneyimin ilk elden tanıkları olan göçmenlerce anlatılır. Günümüzün en gelişmiş ülkelerinden biri olan Almanya'nın başarısında, diğer pek çok göçmen grubunun olduğu gibi, milyonlarca Türkün de büyük payı vardır. Ancak, benzerliklerinden ziyade farklılıklarıyla dikkat çeken toplumlar açısından, göçmenlik deneyimi hiç de kolay bir süreç görünümü sunmaz. Bu bağlamda, Türk - Alman göçmenlik tarihi de kaçınılmaz olarak kültürel gerginlikler, çatışmalar ve sıkıntılar içerir. Öte yandan, Türk kökenli Alman yazar Emine Sevgi Özdamar'ın da vurguladığı gibi, göçmenlik süreçleri, kültürlerin birbirlerini tanıyarak zenginleşebileceği fırsatlar olarak da okunabilir. Edebiyatçı Özdamar özellikle ilk dönem romanlarında az bilinen *ötekini* daha *tanıdık* kılmak üzere belirli kültür aktarımı stratejilerini devreye sokuyor. Bu stratejilerin zengin bir çeşitlilikte yer aldığı *Die Brücke vom goldenen Horn*, bu özelliğiyle yazarın yaklaşımlarını değerlendirmek açısından işlevsel bir kaynak sunuyor. İşte Özdamar'ın test ettiği kültür aktarımı

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stratejilerinin, özellikle de yazınsal yolculuğunun ilk dönemlerinde ne kadar etkili olabildiği bu makalenin araştırma konusunu oluşturuyor.

Anahtar kelimeler: Alman edebiyatında çok kültürlülük, kültürel öğelerin aktarım stratejileri, Emine Sevgi Özdamar, *Die Brücke vom goldenen Horn*

Introduction

Immigration nowadays is one of the weightiest issues that concerns almost every country in the world. Intensified by ever-increasing globalization, everyday hundreds and thousands of people migrate due to, among others economic, political and individual reasons from their native countries hoping to find a new *home*. This ceaseless movements bring about encounters of all sorts of cultures, which often come to the forefront due to their problematic aspects rather than potential conveniences. Nonetheless seeing the phenomenon through the eyes of those who experience of migrating in the first place though could help us understand unusual perspectives that may open up opportunities. Emine Sevgi Özdamar is one of those creative individuals with immigration history who attempts this by employing the power of literature. Presenting one's culture to those who are not familiar with it is not an easy undertaking though; nor gaining insight into the other's culture is a straightforward task. In her case she tackles the arduous challenge by using various culture-transfer strategies in order to enable cross-cultural communication between German and Turkish cultures. This paper aims to illustrate Özdamar's literary approach focusing on her second autobiographical novel, titled *die Brücke vom goldenen Horn*. To do so, I will firstly give a brief account of the author's personal life and her novel as they are closely linked to each other and directly relevant to the focus of this article. Then the experience of immigration, which the heroine goes through will be looked into, in order to interpret the inter-cultural aspects of her story. While following the main character through her journey, I will investigate the ways, in which Özdamar deals with cultural issues such as foreignness and familiarity literally, on both culture-specific and cross-cultural levels. The analysis intends to reveal the extent to which *the other* becomes transparent by the use of the author's culture-transfer strategies.

Author and her novel

Emine Sevgi Özdamar is one of the foremost Turkish authors living in Germany and writing in German. She went to Germany –as a *Gastarbeiterin*- when she was nineteen and stayed there for two years. During the period she worked in a factory and lived in a hostel with other Turkish female workers. As planned, she then came back to Turkey to attend a drama school. After her graduation she took roles in various theatre plays in Turkey and pursued her professional carrier as an actress. In the turbulent times of the 1971-military-putsch she was detained due to some articles she had written. Subsequently she went back to Germany and started working as an actress and assistant director. That was the time when she started writing and publishing her own literary texts, one of which brought her great popularity and prestige² in Germany.

² *Das Leben ist Eine Karawanserei hat zwei Türen aus einer kam ich rein aus der anderen ging ich raus* won the prestigious Ingeborg Bachmann Prize in 1991. (Horrocs and Kolinsky, 1996: 45-46). She was the first non-native speaker of German who had won the prize first time.

In Özdamar's writing inter-cultural experience seems to have an essential role. This is very much evident in her first novel *Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei*³, and the second, *Die Brücke vom Goldenen Horn*. The latter, which is an autobiographic novel, is the focus of this article.

While examining inter-cultural experience, Özdamar usually focuses on situations of everyday life, in which cultural clashes take place. These types of conflicts, and the problems they bring about (which she also has gone through personally) have a substantial importance in *Die Brücke vom goldenen Horn*. Yet she sees the phenomenon from a wider angle. From that point of view problems do not emerge only among people who do not share a native language, but also between those who have the same mother tongue yet are from different backgrounds.

Another point she emphasizes in an interview is that the process of sorting out the problems that emerge due to inter-cultural encounters may well open up opportunities⁴, enabling different people from diverse cultural backgrounds to live in peace with each other without losing their own characteristic traits of preceding identities.

One of the most remarkable features of Özdamar's prose is probably the language she composes. While examining interactions between people from different countries, histories, cultures or backgrounds, she seems to have needed a different linguistic means, which would enable her to reflect the communication or indeed non-communication between people in a functioning way. The need of such a medium becomes obvious particularly when it comes to relationships between people who do not enjoy the advantages of sharing a common native language. To overcome this difficulty Özdamar chisels a German-based, yet strongly Turkish-flavoured hybrid language that seems to provide an exotically seasoned, thus perhaps more expressive linguistic means.

While examining Özdamar's *Die Brücke vom goldenen Horn*, the centering of this article will be on inter-cultural encounters, the surfacing problems and opportunities stemming from such clashes and Özdamar's hybrid language that seems to be employed as a cultural transfer strategy to bridge over impeding cultural differences.

Navigating in permeable cultural bubbles

The heroine of *Die Brücke vom Goldenen Horn*, an eighteen-year-old Turkish girl, fed up with endless arguments with her mother regarding her future, decides to join the first wave of Turkish immigrants heading for Germany to work. She initially, like many others, does not intend to stay there for a long time: 'Ich dachte, ich werde nach Deutschland gehen, ein Jahr arbeiten, dann werde ich [in Turkey] die Schauspielschule besuchen.' (1988:14) Yet like many others', her earlier intention would prove to be quite impracticable. She starts working in a factory and living in a hostel with other female Turkish workers. Particularly in the hostel, we come across a colorful depiction of the everyday life of Turkish women. Isolated from the new alien culture, they try to find ways to overcome their loneliness and foreignness. The hostel begins to resemble their native country; it becomes an extension of Turkey, which they set up in the middle of another country (i.e. Germany). In their small universe, at this level, their connections to the outside world are very restricted:

³ Özdamar, E. S. (1998). *Das Leben ist Eine Karawanserei hat zwei Turen aus einer kam ich rein aus der anderen ging ich raus (German Edition)*. Verlag Kiepenheuer & Witsch GmbH & Co KG.

⁴ "... The experience can be rewarding. Once, when reading Jean-Luc Godard, I came across a sentence that I really like: In order to be creative, he said, you need to leave your native country, indeed to betray it, and then you could be in two places simultaneously. That's how it really is, in my experience ..." says Özdamar. (Horrocs and Kolinsky, 1996: 53)

Die ersten Wochen lebten wir zwischen Wonaymtür, Hertietür [*Hertie* is a well-known German supermarket chain], Bustür, Radiolampenfabriktür, Fabriktoiletentür, Wonaymzimmertisch und Fabrikgrüneisentisch. (1988: 27)

In their bubble of cultural isolation she and her comrades seem to have been reduced just functional parts of a giant machine called “work”; thus only moving between their factory and dorm. As they are often unable to have access to the foreign environment surrounding them; the only function they can have in that period is that of a passive onlooker:

Sie [i.e., The German] gingen durch die Straßen, als ob das Fernsehen sie gerade filmen würde. Die Straßen und Menschen waren für mich wie ein Film, aber ich selbst spielte nicht mit in diesem Film. Ich sah die Menschen, aber sie sahen uns nicht. Wir waren wie die Vögel, die irgendwohin flogen und ab und zu auf die Erde herunterkamen, um dann weiter zu fliegen. (1988: 39-40)

It should be also mentioned that while these people’s physical whereabouts is clear (i.e., abroad), the location of their emotional existence appears to be a cloudy area, regardless of their diverse backgrounds. This state of mind seems to affect every aspect of their lives and create a sort of bi-local existence where one’s bodily presence with its perceiving, feeling and acting is related to the actual ‘here’ and at the same time to another present situation in a remote locality (i.e., their homelands). There are transitory spheres between ‘here’ and ‘there’; and one’s links with ‘here’ and ‘elsewhere’ may come into conflict and cut one’s present existence into two contradictory realms which compete with each other.⁵ The heroine of the novel as well, like many others, experiences this state of being simultaneously ‘here’ and ‘there’. While her bodily existence is present in an unfamiliar territory (i.e., Berlin), to a great degree, she is mentally located far away, in a spatially distant homeland. In the novel these constantly experienced tidal movements need to be bridged in order to survive psychological split. Accordingly, the reader witnesses many remarkable situations in the narrative, where people attempt to satisfy their longing for the native culture in the symbolic qualities of the foreign country. A ruined train station in Berlin (*der Anhalter Bahnhof* in German) for instance, is called by the heroine and her friends “the sulking train station” (*der beleidigte Bahnhof*) as they associated the derelict building with their dreary mood caused by being severed from their native culture. As they go to that deserted remains of the train station to have their sandwiches in the lunch time, they also walk around and experience a trance-like state, in which, they even almost believe to be heard by their beloved ones in Turkey when they are chatting with each other:

Die Pferdebouletten in der Hand, gingen wir zu unserem beleidigten Bahnhof (Anhalter Bahnhof) [...]. Der beleidigte Bahnhof war nicht mehr als eine kaputte Wand und ein Vorbau mit drei Eingangstoren. [...] Dort auf dem Boden des beleidigten Bahnhofs verloren wir die Zeit. Jeden Morgen war dieser tote Bahnhof wachgeworden, Menschen sind da gelaufen, die jetzt nicht mehr da waren. Wenn wir drei Mädchen da liefen, kam mir mein Leben schon durchlebt vor. Wir gingen durch ein Loch hinein, gingen bis zum Ende des Grundstücks, ohne zu sprechen. Dann liefen wir, ohne es uns zu sagen, rückwärts zurück bis zu dem Loch, das vielleicht einmal die Tür vom beleidigten Bahnhof gewesen war. [...] Es sah so aus, als ob der Bahnhof in einer ganz anderen Zeit stand. Vor dem beleidigten Bahnhof stand eine Telefonzelle. Wenn wir drei Mädchen an ihr vorbeigingen, redeten wir laut, als ob uns unsere Eltern in der Türkei hören konnten. (1988: 28-29)

⁵ In other words, the experience of space is structured by the simultaneous involvement with one’s local presence and with a specific present situation elsewhere, and that one’s involvement with more or less remote whereabouts is of significance for the meaning of one’s local presence as they influence one another.

They attach symbolic qualities not only to concrete places mentioned above, but also to other people to reconcile the shores of the painful presence that seem to make them suffer:

Die Frauen suchten in den anderen Frauen die Mütter, die Schwestern oder die Stiefmütter, und wie die Schafe, die in einer Regennacht vor Blitz und Donner Angst hatten, kamen sie sich zu nah und drückten sich manchmal bis zur Atemlosigkeit. (1988: 36)

Wären die Männer alleine durch die Straßen gelaufen, wären sie vielleicht weggeweht worden von der Erde und hätten sich ihre Köpfe an den Hauswänden geschlagen. Deswegen liefen diese Männer immer zusammen. [...] So fand jeder Mann, wenn er zusammen war mit anderen, seinen Vater, seinen Großvater, und es war schön, auf einem Weg, dessen Ende man nicht sehen konnte, neben einem Vater oder neben Großvaterfüßen herzulaufen. (1988: 45)

The faster pace of life in Germany seems to be another alienating element for the Turkish immigrants who are used to a much slower lifestyle in their native country. For instance, the women in the hostel find another symbolic relief with the arrival of a new female migrant (*Gastarbeiterin*) from Turkey. The girl in question speaks softly very slowly which according to the heroine makes them perceive the passage of the time and all sorts of movements around them slower. In that illusory way the thirst for the laidback way of living that was left behind is tried to be quenched; at least while not laboring:

Dann kam ein neues türkisches Mädchen ins Wonaym, Engel. [...] Engel hatte eine weiche Stimme und sprach sehr langsam. So fingen wir auch an, langsamer zu reden. [...] der Schnee fiel langsam, die Haare flogen langsam, [...] das trockene Gras zwischen den stillgelegten Bahngleisen des beleidigten Bahnhof bewegte sich langsam. Nur in der Fabrik verschwand die Langsamkeit, obwohl Engel vor mir arbeitete. [...] Im Wonaym fing ich durch Engel sofort wieder an, mich langsamer zu bewegen. (1988: 56-57)

Inevitably in this restless state many clashes take place between people regardless of their nationalities and cultural backgrounds. Prime examples of this can be found where the troubles between different groups of Turkish women, namely *Zuckers (Sugars)*, *Esels (Donkeys)* and *Huren (Sluts)* who live in the same hostel arise. The hostel manager, decides that members of different groups must be separated from each other in order to maintain peace and order: “Jetzt wohnten die Kinder mit Kindern, Zuckers mit Zuckers, Esels mit Esels und Huren mit Huren zusammen” (1988: 42); an attempt that succeeds:

Danach wurde es still in unserem Frauenwonaym [...]. An den ersten Abenden ging keine Frau aus dem Zimmer. In allen Zimmern wurde über die Frauen in den anderen Zimmern geredet. Die Kinder in ihren Zimmern machten vor den anderen Kindern die Zucker und Esel und Huren nach, die Zucker und Esel und Huren machten in ihren Zimmern die Kinder nach. [...] und so fingen die Frauen irgendwann an, sich wieder ähnlich zu sehen. Ihre Gesichter und Körper und Münder nahmen die Gesichter, Körper und Dialekte der anderen in sich auf, gewöhnten sich an sie. [...] und sie fanden sich wieder zusammen. Im Bus saßen sie wieder gemischt zusammen, in der Wonaymküche gaben sie sich Töpfe und Pfannen von Hand zu Hand, ohne sich zu fragen, ob diese Hände den Zuckers oder Eseln oder Kindern oder Huren gehörten. (1988: 43)

Considering the severity of cultural and political differences among the hostel's residents, it seems quite questionable though whether such a simplistic solution could bring peace to the fragmented

female community. In the novel particularly the fights taking place among women from the same country (yet of different cultural backgrounds) unmasks a deceiving stereotype: The differences among people from the same country might carry as much importance as the disparities arising among different nationalities. Also, when it comes to survival, the unifying power of co-operation could surpass dissimilarities. As one critic indicates, “Özdamar does not only highlight the relevance of situations in which foreigners do not understand each other sufficiently but, nevertheless, cannot cease to interact with one another.” (2000: 83) This interaction seems to demonstrate that indeed, necessity is the mother of invention.⁶

While depicting the lives of the migrants in Germany, Özdamar makes another intriguing point visible: Male Turkish immigrants do not seem to be as much capable of overcoming cultural barriers as women are. They can hardly make individual decisions or act independently. Unlike women, moving as a group and relying on each other seems to provide the much-needed shelter for men; yet fall short of bridging cultural gaps:

Sie [die Männer] sagten nicht ‘ich gehe’ sondern einer stand auf und sagte: ‘Wir gehen’. Wenn einer Tee in ein Glas goß, sagte er: ‘Wir trinken Tee’. Wenn eine Zeitung auf dem Tisch lag, sagte einer: ‘Wir werden Zeitung lesen.’ Jedes ‘Ich’ nähte sich an das nächste ‘Ich’ und machte ein ‘Wir’. Nur die Stoffe ihrer Hosen oder ihre Strickwesten erzählen ihre ‘Ich’-Geschichten, oder die Farbe ihrer Haut, die Falten an ihren Hälsen, nur ihre verschiedenen Dialekte zeigten, daß sie von verschiedenen Müttern geboren worden waren. (1988: 46)

Wenn einer krank war und mit seinem Fieber am Tisch saß, sagte er nicht ‘Ich bin krank’, die anderen sagten über ihn: ‘Er ist krank.’ (1988: 47)

As the pieces of narrative depict, male immigrants’ existence as individuals seems to have melt away in Germany; they cannot function independently anymore, but in the group, they belong to. They are not even able to express some basic, day to day needs individually (ordering a cup of tea for instance) or a talk about themselves. The hints to their personal stories are only and vaguely accessible through their complexions, accents, clothing etc. Male migrants are portrayed as inert, almost helpless kids.

Cultural and linguistic barriers

In the Novel, only those who have access to the foreign language and thus to hosting society can act individually: “Im türkischen Arbeiterverein sagten nur Regen [*Yağmur*, a Turkish student] und unser kommunistischer Heimleiter ‘ich’” (1988: 47). Only they can pronounce the singular first-person pronouns. This seems important, because the heroine of the novel, like the communist hostel manager and the Turkish student, extends the realm of her freedom at a more accelerated pace, after learning a foreign language. This not only brings her a much better status in her community (she becomes an interpreter), but also enables her to communicate with the outside world that contributes to her efforts of self-discovery.

Work is another important domain of inter-cultural encounters. The necessity of keeping a business running seems to make the linguistic and cultural barriers become of secondary importance. In the factory many immigrants who can speak neither German nor each other’s languages, fulfill their

⁶ “Miteinander hätte zu bedeuten, die aus der Nähe von Fremden resultierenden Spannungen zu ertragen und unter dem Handlungsdruck der Praxis aus negativen Erfahrungen zu lernen.” (Krause, 1997: 239)

responsibilities in peace mainly with the help of common sense and the language they create. Although it is difficult to talk about a real shared understanding, so long as responsibilities of work are fulfilled, both sides seem not to be bothered by the lack of a common ‘formal language’. An amusing dialogue that takes place between the heroine and the porter of the factory is an example for that:

[While the protagonist is going through the entrance of the factory] Der Pförtner hob sich ein bißchen aus seinem Stuhl, das war seine Arbeit. Ich übte meinen deutschen Satz, den ich aus der Zeitungsschlagzeile heute gelernt hatte, bei ihm. ‘Erwarkeinengel’ – ‘Morgenmorgen’, sagte er. (1988: 26)

As this brief conversation between the heroine and the porter of the factory shows, at work the language could be reduced to mere formalities without contextual meaning: The porter is not bothered at all with what the heroine says while greeting him; he is just there to contribute to smooth-running of the business; just like the female immigrant is:

[...] Work, with its potential for providing an alternative ‘Heimat’ to that of one’s ethnic homeland, may have its beneficial aspects in terms of willingness to tolerate others, if only on material grounds: ‘Ein Arbeiter hat keine Heimat, wo die Arbeit ist, da ist die Heimat’. (Horrocs and Krause, 1996: 69)

Even *if only on material grounds*, this surprisingly unifying quality of work could also function as a bridge between the native and foreign country through generating an alternative homeland.

While struggling with functioning in two cultures simultaneously, the new environment with its tiring necessities starts gradually invading memories and habits of ‘the previous life’ though; here and there its interventions become weaker:

Seitdem ich in Istanbul ein Kind war, hatte ich mir angewöhnt, jede Nacht zu den Toten zu beten. [...] Meine Mutter sagte: ‘Wenn man die Seelen der Toten vergißt, werden ihre Seelen Schmerzen bekommen.’ Auch in den ersten Nächten in Berlin betete ich für die Toten, aber ich wurde schnell müde, weil wir so früh aufstehen mußten. Ich schlief dann, bevor ich die Namen aller meiner Toten aufgezählt habe, ein. So verlor ich langsam alle meine Toten in Berlin. (1988: 20-21)

Wenn wir uns im Spiegel anschauten, lief keine Mutter, kein Vater, keine Schwester hinten im Raum an uns vorbei. [...] so sahen wir uns jeden Tag im Spiegel als einsame Menschen. Nachdem wir im Spiegel verstanden hatten, daß wir alleine waren, war alles leichter. (1988: 40)

Again, it is often the exhausting laboring they are involved that weakens the strength of the homesickness. At night they fall asleep exhausted without finding much time to remember their homelands and their beloved ones; their shadows gradually fade away and cease to accompany them. The vacuum their absence creates makes the migrants aware of their loneliness another level: Without the company of shadows solitude proves less painful...

This new form of loneliness differs from that of the former as it enables the immigrants to explore the world outside of their comfort zone. As a result, the heroine and some of her friends make friends with other men outside the hostel and start to socialize. Soon she moves with a female friend (who has a boyfriend) in a flat, in order to experience more freedom. Yet, this first serious attempt to get involved with the unknown territory ends in failure; they find themselves, exposed and vulnerable:

Jede Zigarette, die wir in dieser Nacht rauchten, zeigte uns, daß wir etwas Falsches getan hatten. Wir waren von der Herde weggelaufen und weinten jetzt um die Herde. [...] Das war Berlin. Dieses Berlin hatte es für uns bis jetzt nicht gegeben. Wir hatten unser Wonaym, und dieses Wonaym war nicht Berlin. Berlin begann erst, wenn man aus dem Wonaym herausging, so wie man ins Kino geht, einen Film sieht, und mit dem Bus wieder zurückkommt und den anderen beim Ausziehen den Film erzählt. Jetzt waren wir in diesem Film drin, aber das Bild war gefroren, stehengeblieben. Niemand klopfte, niemand stand auf und machte die Tür auf. (1988: 63)

They immediately realize that the essential condition of challenging foreignness is mental readiness, rather than physical courage; they move back to their hostel the very next day.

At the end of the first year, the protagonist goes back to Istanbul to visit her parents. She finds everything as it was, apart from the pace of life that once she was used to. After having been used to living with the relatively fast pace of pre-industrial Germany, a country which undergoes constant changes, she perceives the life in Istanbul much slower:

[In Istanbul] Ich schob die Luft vor mir her, meine Bewegungen kamen mir so langsam vor, die Bewegungen aller Menschen. [...] Esel, Lastträger, Autos, Schiffe, Möwen, Menschen, alles bewegte sich, aber es kam mir alles viel langsamer vor als die Bewegungen in Berlin. (1988: 106)

In Istanbul stand alles an seinem alten Platz, die Moscheen, die Schiffe, die Männer, [...] der Gemüseverkäufer gegenüber unserer Wohnung. Sogar ein altes Auto, das kaputtgegangen war, stand genau an dem Platz, an dem ich es vor einem Jahr gesehen hatte. [...] Ich dachte, ich kann wieder gehen, alles wird an seinem Platz bleiben und auf mich warten. (1988: 107-108)

This almost frozen reality of İstanbul tires her quickly; she yearns for her new homeland now. Believing that everything would be the same, she goes back to Germany to learn German and experience her sexuality freely ('Ich wollte Deutsch lernen und mich dann in Deutschland von meinem Diamanten befreien' (1988: 108)). In this short period, one can feel the first signs of estrangement from the native country that she has begun to undergo. This gradually developing disunity shows its face clearly later on, when she goes back to Istanbul again to study for a longer time. She attends a German course and becomes an interpreter for a hostel of immigrants. After having learned German, she gets involved more intensively with immigrants from other countries as well. She falls in love with a Greek man and tries to sleep with him, in order to get rid of her Diamant (her virginity), but this fails. After he leaves for Greece, she in a frustrated mood goes to Paris for a short break. In the streets of the city, she looks for German-speaking people to communicate with. Soon she comes across a young German man. To her surprise, instead of speaking his mother tongue, he keeps speaking English with her. The conversation between the two reveals an important hint of opportunity regarding inter-cultural encounters:

Nachdem ich alle meine englischen Wörter herausgegeben hatte, fragte ich ihn, warum er mit mir English sprechen wolle. Er sagte: 'Ich geniere mich in Paris für die deutsche Sprache, das ist die Sprache von Goebbels und Hitler.' Ich sagte: 'Ich liebe Kafka.' [...] Der deutsche Junge sagte 'Good bye' und ging. (1988: 125)

In the scene the reader observes two people sharing the same language. Yet one of them does not want to speak his native language as he associates it with probably the darkest period of the German history,

that is the holocaust, which he is understandably ashamed of, whereas the other as an immigrant perceives the same language as a means of creativity and freedom to communicate. This encounter seems significant, as the latter attitude towards a foreign language, free from disabling burdens of a foreign history, invites the native speaker, to see his language from a refreshing point of view, which could perhaps balance to some extent the heavy burden of the history.

In her short time in Paris, she falls deeply in love with a young Spanish man and fulfills one of her greatest wishes: she finally loses her *diamond* (i.e., her virginity). The fact that this comes about abroad is indeed of significance: We see the heroine trying to do away with it from the beginning of the novel. It is important that those attempts do not take place in her native country, where sexual freedom seems to be experienced less freely.⁷ The protagonist's transition from being a girlhood to becoming a woman takes place smoothly abroad through the inter-cultural experience she has undergone, which enables her to escape inconvenient circumstances of her native country.

In the second part of the novel, we witness the heroine coming back to Turkey again. This time though, the estrangement she experiences is much greater than before:

Die Studenten fuhren mich zu meinen Eltern. Vor dem Haus kam uns ein Mann mit einem Pontiac-Auto entgegengefahren. Aus dem Autofenster heraus sagte er: 'Willkommen meine Tochter, kennst du deinen Vater nicht mehr? Hast du uns in Deutschland vergessen?' [...] Wir gingen hinter ihm her in die dritte Etage, eine Frau öffnete die Tür und schrie: 'Meine Tochter!' [...] ich hatte meine Mutter nicht wiedererkannt. [...] Ein Vogel im Käfig fing an zu singen. Die Frau, die meine Mutter sein sollte, sagte: 'Schau, der Vogel Memisch hat dich erkannt, er singt für dich.' [...] Auch den Vogel hatte ich vergessen. (1988: 175)

Predominantly unpleasant political atmosphere and memories in her native country start casting a cloud on the cherished aspects of her social environment as she finds herself alienated from her family. She feels suffocated in the house of her parents in Istanbul. As the protagonist's father and mother remark amusingly, even though everything she left behind seems to have remained unchanged, she herself seems to have undergone a substantial change which comes across as an estranged character:

Die Frau, die meine Mutter sein sollte, sagte: '[...] Sprich etwas. Sag uns einen Satz in Deutsch.' Wenn sich in Berlin unter den linken Studenten die Diskussion im Kreise drehte und die Ursache nicht zu finden war, gab es eine Frage, die ich dort oft gehört hatte: 'Wer war zuerst da: Die Henne oder das Ei?' Ich sagte diesen Satz in Deutsch. 'Was heißt das in Türkisch?' fragte meine Mutter. Ich übersetzte. Meine Mutter sagte: 'Bei uns gibt es einen ähnlichen Satz. Der Hahn kroch aus dem Ei und fand die Schale nicht schön genug für ihn. Vielleicht findest du uns auch nicht mehr gut genug für dich, weil du Europa gesehen hast.' Mein Vater sagte: 'Deine Mutter wollte auch eine Europäerin werden. Sie hat sich die Haare blond färben lassen.' (1988: 176-177)

The alienation of the heroine, on which her parents remark, in a half-offended half-joking way, seems to indicate that they do not share same intimacy anymore. While she is going through a deep transformation by direct contact with European (i.e., German) culture, her parents' concept of being

⁷ This applies especially to the period before her attending drama school, whose atmosphere seems to be dominated by left wing and liberal people. Although the heroine experiences her sexuality in a relatively free way (1988: 210, 226, 234, 251) in the liberal environment where she hangs out in Istanbul, compared to the foreign country -as the following incident shows-, it is still very difficult to talk about a completely relaxed atmosphere in her native society, in terms of experiencing female sexuality.

European remain limited. As witnessed in the case, where the farther scoffs at her mother, it could even equal dying one's hair blonde.

We can also note that the change of the perception of the heroine emerges as an effect of her past, which undergoes constant changes through the new experiences. Her parents' remarks seem to suggest that not only her attitude, but also, indeed she herself has gone through a great transformation.⁸ Her past intrudes into her present and shapes it. Yet also her present consciousness keeps reinterpreting the past and rearrange it as well. By this ongoing interaction she constructs a functioning individual who tries to adapt to new circumstances.

As the personal transformations take place the once *foreign* country becomes more and more familiar and begins to be the subject of her longings:

Berlin war für mich wie eine Straße gewesen. Als Kind war ich bis Mitternacht auf der Straße geblieben, in Berlin hatte ich meine Straße wiedergefunden. Von Berlin war ich in mein Elternhaus zurückgekehrt, aber jetzt war es für mich wie ein Hotel, ich wollte wieder auf die Straße. (1988: 193)

Yet before taking the big step to Berlin, she finds an interim substitute: She discovers literally the European side of İstanbul. She finds the 'the streets of her childhood' on the that side, where she attends an acting school and make friends with left-wing students and intellectuals. Then, she becomes politicized and gets involved in student movements of 68's in İstanbul. We see her in Istanbul intensively socializing and immersing in everyday life more actively. Her political involvements lead her to remote terrains of Turkey. She travels to the east with some leftwing students to find out and report about poverty and starving people living in long-forgotten villages. (1988: 266-287)

After returning from the eastern part of the country, she carries on with her political involvements in İstanbul and this becomes increasingly dangerous in the chaotic times of the approaching military putsch in 1971. The reader, through her eyes, witnesses, how many young people are being detained, intimidated (this includes the protagonist), tortured and even extrajudicially executed. Surviving in such terrible circumstances becomes unbearable. She becomes estranged from her boyfriend whom once she passionately loved and leaves him. In those peculiar times, turmoil and collective madness seem to take control of the society:

Die Polizei hielt einen Kongreß ab und verlangte, daß man jemanden, der einen Polizisten geschlagen hatte, erhängen durfte. Kunden, die im Obstladen Obst kauften und den Preis zu hoch finden, riefen, man müßte die Obstladenbesitzer erhängen. So könnte man die Ordnung herstellen. (1988: 304)

Die Polizei warf die Studenten aus den Fenstern der Universitäten, manche starben, die Regierung ließ die Universität von Polizei und Armee besetzen, dann wurden die Universitäten ganz geschlossen. (1988: 303)

Die Grauen Wölfe [a right-wing extremists' group] kamen mit Gewähren in die Busse, entführten die Linken aus den Häusern, aus den Studentenheimen und töteten sie auf den Friedhöfen. (1988: 328)

⁸ "The critical wisdom in Walter Benjamin's idea that the true historian has to understand history as a point of interlinkage between the concerns of the present and those of the past, as a dialogue between two temporalities. Events of the past need to be understood not only in terms of their original context, but also in terms of their message for the present. It is a truism born of the idea of paradigm shifts that when the present changes, so does the past. When a new structure of knowledge emerges, our understanding of the past often undergoes a radical revision." (Seyhan, 1996: 415)

In this nightmarish atmosphere, only chaos nourishes: Law-enforcement forces start acting in highhanded and unlawful ways, violence extremely increases both in the society and at educational institutions such as universities, extremist political groups and parties terrorize opposing people.⁹

At the end she cannot cope with the scary state of the country and decides to go back abroad, to the city, through the experiences of which she seems to have acquired another homeland; a new *Heimat* in German, that offers opportunities to fulfill her dreams.

Regardless of the fact that one of the main reasons of her going back to Germany is due to the life-threatening circumstances of Turkey, another strong motive seems to be liberating opportunities and alternatives, which a foreign culture opens up for her on an individual level.¹⁰

Cultural transfer strategies

While narrating Özdamar uses a technique that can be seen as a form of inter-cultural mode of writing. Understanding the way, in which the author weaves her language is indispensable, in terms of both comprehending and appreciating her literary work. Before getting into detailed examination of *Die Brücke vom Goldenen Horn*, it would be useful to have a general look at the technique and its main characteristics that dominate at least her earlier texts:

Özdamar uses a German-based hybrid language. She defamiliarizes the German idiom by using Turkish figurative expressions and imagery from Turkish culture [thus] integrates Turkish images into German, a technique which is characteristic of Özdamar's prose in general. (2000: 71-72).

She also incorporates some other *ingredients* of Turkish language into German by using various techniques. This involves among others verbatim translations of Turkish idioms, expressions, sayings, metaphorical expressions and lyrics of traditional songs. She makes use of Turkish oral story telling tradition too by incorporating riddles, anecdotes and fairy tales into her texts. The writer brings into play various constructions of hybrid words and sentences as will be touched upon in more detail later on.

Özdamar writes in a foreign language (i.e., German) other than her mother tongue. The reason being for her doing so might shed some more light on the subject:

[...] I was attracted to German as a new language. I often traveled back to Turkey by train, finding myself together with Greeks, Yugoslavs, Turks and Bulgarians, all migrant workers. Their common language was German. They would sing love songs and then try to translate them from their own language into German. They made mistakes, of course, but the German they spoke was devoid of clichés, and came out almost like poetry as they struggled to express the images of their mother tongues in this new language. And this was the language of some five million Gastarbeiter. If I wanted

⁹ In an interview Özdamar remembers those terrible times: "The theater was closed down after the military coup in 1971. Our careers broke down. Or the love broke down indeed. Everything came to a halt. That was a very deep hole and only a dream could help in that situation to come back in the world again." (Pfister, 1992) The translation into English is mine.

¹⁰ Edward Said indicates enhancing aspects of nourishing from other cultures and warns us about defining ourselves on strictly geographical or indeed racial terms: "Said bedauert [...], daß das starre festhalten an geographisch definierten, fest umrissenen Identitäten zur Verarmung von Identitätskonzepten führe: 'Warum müssen wir immer zu einer und nur einer Kultur gehören? Warum müssen Kulturen uns definieren und binden, identifizieren und begrenzen? Warum ist Ethnozentrismus unser gemeinsames Schicksal während wir über die von den nationalen Kulturen künstlich errichteten Barrieren mit Gefühlen widerspenstigen, unnötigen Respekts, Gehorsams und Zustimmung hinüberblicken?'" (Wierschke, 1997: 181-182)

to write a play about their experience, and I did, I knew it would have to be written in this new language. (Horrocs and Kolinsky, 1996: 47)

Interestingly, Özdamar emphasizes that she had never thought that writing her first novel in Turkish would have been easier. (1998: 38) Although the *base language* she employs is German, apparently this was not completely sufficient for her to construct her narrative either. The reason for the inconvenience could become perhaps more visible if we dwell on a critical issue: How to capture a state of mind, whose very existence takes place in overlapping, at times contradicting domains of intercultural experience? The author's answer to the question seems to be employing *the new language* used by migrant workers of the time, that in her opinion is more functional in terms of reflecting their existence of being simultaneously 'here' and 'there'. In other words, Özdamar advocates a hybrid language for a hybrid form of existence.

In Özdamar's literary production, the medium chosen contains a large amount of 'foreignness', which is acquired by introducing Turkish language into German. This amalgamation is substantial as it sustains the main pillars of the writers' prose, whose absence may have proved to be greatly detrimental:

Die türkische Übersetzung von Karawanserai [the first novel of Özdamar] behält von diesem Zauber [attractiveness of the original] nichts bei. [...] Ein in Frankreich lebender türkischer Schriftsteller, Nedim Gürsel, hatte den Roman in der türkischen Übersetzung gelesen, weil er kein Deutsch kann, und war enttäuscht, als er von den positiven Eigenschaften, die die Literaturkritik so gelobt hatte, im Text nichts wiederfand. Erst dann, als er ihn in französischer Übersetzung las, wurde ihm bewusst, daß es sich hier um einen köstlichen Roman handelt. (Gürsel, 1997: 177)

As the above anecdote indicates, according to another well-known Turkish writer Nedim Gürsel, the Turkish translation of the novel does not work because it wipes out an inherent quality of the text: the fact that it is written in a composite of two characteristically interwoven languages that are German and Turkish. When the fundamental German element vanishes from the formula, the whole text is reduced in a single language (just Turkish) thus losing one of its vital roots. This does not happen in French translation; because although the language pair is not the same, two linguistic pillars that support the text are still present.

While trying to capture and demonstrate foreignness in her literary creation Özdamar also seeks to make her readers familiar with what they may be ignorant of, that is, the Turkish culture. This is not an easy undertaking to achieve and along the way some effort is also required of the reader:

[...] Während Özakıns [another female Turkish writer] deutsche Übersetzungen in glattem, makellosen Deutsch geschrieben sind, gebraucht Özdamar in ihren auf deutsch geschriebenen Texten z. T., translinear übersetzte türkische Metaphern, Redewendungen, und Ausdrücke, die sie in die deutschsprachige Literatur 'einschmuggelt'. Dadurch bereichert sie die Sprache um kulturfremde Bilder und Ausdrucksformen, die das Hintergrundwissen und die Willigkeit der LeserInnen herausfordern, sich mit der Fremdkultur beschäftigen und sich diesbezüglich eine gewisse kulturelle Kompetenz zu erarbeiten. (Wierschke, 1997: 186)

As argued above, among others, verbatim translations of metaphors, sayings, phrases and expressions from Turkish into German challenge those who are not familiar with Turkish culture and language.

Overcoming such challenges requires the reader to find out about the foreign culture in order to understand the unfamiliar. Those, on the other hand, who are not keen on making an effort and opt for an easy read may walk out of the text empty-handed.

As mention previously, one of the remarkable characteristics of Özdamar's hybrid writing is her use of Turkish idioms that are translated almost *word for word* into German. Like other of her texts, *Die Brücke vom Goldenen Horn* is packed with such idioms, many of which may well sound quite strange to those who are not familiar with Turkish language and culture. Nevertheless, for the majority of those idioms, the initial first impression gradually fades away through the textual context in which they are introduced:

Ich schaffte die Schule nicht mehr. Meine Mutter weinte. -'Kann jetzt Shakespeare oder Molière dir helfen? Theater hat dein Leben verbrannt'. -'Theater ist mein Leben, wie kann mein Leben sich verbrennen?' (1988: 12-13)

'Dir etwas beizubringen ist schwerer, als ein Kamel zum Springen zu bringen.' (1988: 265)

Mein Vater sagte: Allah soll dir in Deutschland Vernunft beibringen. Du kannst nicht 'mal Spiegeleier braten. Wie willst du bei Telefunken Radiolampen herstellen? (1988: 14)

Das Zimmer war voller Rauch. Eine Männerstimme sagte: Freunde, machen wir die Tür auf, hier kein Auge ein Auge sehen. (1988: 44)

As seen above, when something culturally unfamiliar is supported by the context, deciphering its meaning is relatively straightforward. Also, in the second excerpt, along with the supporting context, Özdamar manipulates the literal translation of a Turkish idiom in a way that it arguably becomes more digestible for the German reader¹¹.

However, a few of the idioms that are translated literally might prove to be excessively challenging for the reader due to lack of sufficient supporting context:

Wir [the heroine and some of her female friends] aßen die Bohnen mit Lamm, er [a male Turkish immigrant called Hamza] aß selbst nicht, rauchte und pustete den Rauch in unsere Gesichter. [Hamza speaks:] 'Esst, meine Rosen, esst, ihr seid in dieser Welt und im Jenseits meine Schwestern.' (1988: 50)

In the excerpt when the male character addresses the female immigrants, uses a Turkish idiom¹². Obviously the meaning of that idiom could only be deciphered if one looks into multiple cultural levels (among others gender related, ethical, sociological, religious planes) it refers to. Yet, as this is not the case, the reader inevitably ends up at a loose end. On the other hand, this difficulty could also be read as a purposely employed strategy by the writer to contest those who are unfamiliar with Özdamar's native culture: Only those who make an additional effort to discover an unknown terrain are rewarded with the insight into *the other's* world.

¹¹ The Turkish idiom in question here is "deveye hendek atlatmak" ("get blood out of a stone" in English), a verbatim translation of which would be "to make the camel jump over a ditch". In her German translation Özdamar omits the word *ditch*, possibly in order to make the conjured-up image less complicated thus more understandable for the reader.

¹² The Turkish phrase here is "dünya ahiret bacısı olmak".

The employment of verbatim translations of Turkish idioms, names and expressions does not only help to convey ‘the foreignness’, but also opens up the possibility for enriching the other culture:

[...] the concept of cultural translation is complicated and contested by the respective subject positions of the translators. In ‘Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers’, Walter Benjamin cites the work of Rudolf Pannwitz [...]. Pannwitz, like Benjamin himself, is critical of translations that appropriate the soul of another language and subject it to the rule of the language, into which it is translated instead of equalizing the power and expressive balance between the two: ‘Unsere Übertragungen auch die besten gehen von einem falschen Grundsatz aus: Sie wollen das indische griechische englische verdeutschen anstatt das deutsche zu verindischen vergriechischen verenglischen [sic]’ (qtd. in Benjamin, ‘Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers’ 61).¹³

Özdamar’s efforts can also be evaluated from this Perspective of Benjamin. Her prose shows that while conveying Turkish (language thus culture) into German, does she not only render the meaning, but also through letting her mother tongue regenerates it with unexpected pushes to make the reader capable of touching the soul of the foreignness. Conveying the soul of one culture to the other, as the author herself also indicates, is nevertheless often challenging:

[...] I was also very keen, on a secondary level, to retain some “mistakes” in the book’s language. Readers must be able to experience for themselves the process the writer has gone through linguistically. They have to be made to stumble, as it were.’ (Horrocs and Kolinsky, 1996: 49)

In the process of cultural transfer *necessary mistakes* may occur, because dynamic workings of the inter-cultural experience itself is far away from being straightforward and not flawless.

Özdamar shifts her use of language and her pronunciation (which is textually reflected in the novel as it is) as her main character spends more and more time in Germany. As a result, when the heroine of the novel returns to Berlin for the first time (after having attended a German course), ‘Wonaym’ (a *necessary mistake* as Özdamar puts it) is transformed into the *proper* ‘Wohnheim’ (1988: 109); showing that the language is the vehicle of her both assimilation and foreignness.

Although some critics point out that Özdamar, while reflecting the realities of her native culture and country both in Germany and Turkey, at times falls into the trap of creating an undermining exotic image of the experience of immigration¹⁴; it would be unfair to suggest that *die Brücke vom goldenen Horn* constitutes of a sham oriental image as a whole. In the second part of the novel for instance, where the heroine of the novel travels in the eastern part of Turkey, the reader –along with the heroine who is also quite ignorant of that part of her own culture - encounters a fair portrayal of the ‘foreign’, which might present a balanced view of rural Turkish life at the time:

Hinten auf der Getreideladung des Lastwagens fuhren wir jetzt zur persisch-irakisch-türkischen Grenze in der Stadt Hakkari. Der Mond beleuchtete das Getreide, es roch sehr schön. Der Lastwagen fuhr steile Bergstraßen herauf, höher und höher, als führen wir zum Mond, wir rutschten mit dem Getreide nach vorne und nach hinten, unsere Haare voller Getreide. Wir konnten die Sterne mit den

¹³ “The fundamental error of the translator here, according to Pannwitz, is that he is fixated on the arbitrary status of his own language instead of letting the other language recharge it with a jolt.” (Seyhan, 1996: 416-417)

¹⁴ “Zweisprachige Hybridität setzt jedoch eine schärfer differenzierte Leserschaft voraus ...die Transliterationen Özdamars und ihre Abweichungen von grammatischen Regeln mögen einer deutschen Leserschaft exotisch erscheinen und deshalb das Risiko in sich bergen, orientalische Klischees zu verstärken.” (Boa, 1997: 127)

Händen fassen und den Mond mit Getreide füttern. Überall sahen wir Sternschnuppen, am Lastwagenfenster hörten wir Geräusche, als ob die herunterschneidenden Sterne gegen die Glasscheibe knallten. Es waren aber die Vögel, die gegen das Lastwagenfenster flogen. (1988: 278-279)

Im nächsten Dorf standen viele Bauern, Polizisten und zwei Offiziere auf dem Dorfplatz. Ein Mädchen aus dem Dorf hatte unten am Fluß mit einem fremden Mann gesprochen, und ihre Brüder hatten ihren Kopf zwischen zwei Steinen zerquetscht. (1988: 269)

First excerpt above depicts a night journey taking place on a truck in a remote provincial part in the mountains, close to the Iranian border. The moon illuminates vaguely surrounding crop fields that smell beautiful. They see lots of shooting stars in the clear sky. Yet as the reader starts becoming mesmerized by the beautiful atmosphere, they wake from this exotic dream by the sinister sound of the birds smashing on the windshield of the truck. In the second passage there is nothing but a shocking reality of extremely conservative way life of Turkey. The heroine and her friends come across some law enforcement officers investigating a case of a brutal murder and finds out that brothers of a young woman smashed her head with stones just because she had been seen with a young man chatting alone.

Conclusion

Die Brücke vom Goldenen Horn is a literary depiction of the lives of first-generation immigrants in Germany. These struggling characters who are of divergent backgrounds seem to be torn up between their native countries and the realities of a quite different cultural reality. Everything they experience in their chaotic *new home* melds into each other: Past and present, native and foreign cultures come together shaping peculiar formations, in which the native components do not necessarily lose all of their characteristics. In this turbulent process the past intervenes and the present rejects; the present intrudes and the past refuses. Özdamar regards this stormy experience in a rather positive light. As she puts it in an interview, “the whole thing runs like a simultaneous film in which images and yearnings merge without any gaps. When the two come together in this way, it makes for a beautiful encounter” (Horrocs and Kolinsky, 1996: 54).

As was the case for Özdamar personally, the heroine of her novel does not come empty-handed from what she experiences cross-culturally either; perhaps also thanks to her relatively liberal background and intellectual inclinations that pave the way for her to become happier in a politically more stable new environment in Germany. In terms of culture-transfer strategies which she brought into play, even if not fully comprehensible at all times, the strategies she employs seem to be capable of piquing her readers' curiosity. Afterall, when she published her first two novels (*Das Leben ist eine Karwanserei* and *Die Brücke vom Goldenen Horn*), the employment of mostly contextually supported verbatim, semi-literal and at times untranslated elements of Turkish language and culture aroused eagerness and created a great popularity in the target readership and literary circles in Germany; and this could perhaps qualify her earlier prose as a successful literary endeavor.

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