

BEYOND “IN-BETWEEN,” TRAVELS AND TRANSFORMATIONS IN  
CONTEMPORARY TURKISH-GERMAN LITERATURE AND FILM

by

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To Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and his master Guru Dev  
with all my gratitude

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## Table of Contents

Dedication .....	.ii
Acknowledgements .....	.iii
Abstract .....	.vi
Introduction .....	.1
Chapter 1: Relationally Constructed Worlds in <i>Selim oder die Gabe der Rede</i> and <i>Der weinende Granatapfel</i> .....	.29
Chapter 2: Multiply Layered Worlds .....	.108
Chapter 3: Moving Pictures in Between Cities .....	.188
Conclusion .....	.267
Bibliography .....	.276

## Abstract

This dissertation undertakes an interdisciplinary investigation of recent Turkish-German literature and film. Focusing on the motif of travel, it analyzes the ways in which novels and feature films since unification have constructed notions of identity and borders, self and other, of Turkey, Germany, and the fluid boundaries between these ostensibly separate worlds. In doing so, the dissertation takes as its point of departure Leslie Adelson's powerful 2003 critique of texts and approaches that would suspend Turkish-German subjects "between two worlds," separating them from German culture rather than situating them in the complex, hybrid realities of both Turkey and Germany today. With their emphasis on travel and movement, I claim, novels and films since unification mark a departure from earlier forms of *Gastarbeiterliteratur* and *-film* and have contributed significantly to unsettling the troublesome paradigm of a static "in-between."

To trace this shift, chapter one analyzes two novels that narrate the travels of German protagonists in Turkey. I show how both *Selim oder Die Gabe der Rede* (1990) by Sten Nadolny and *Der weinende Granatapfel* (1990) by Alev Tekinay, first mobilize the premises of the "two worlds" paradigm at the level of character and then undo those premises through narration. Chapter two analyzes the novels *Selam Berlin* (2003) by Yade Kara and *Die Brücke vom Goldenen Horn* (1998) by Emine Sevgi Özdamar. Mapping their protagonists' transformations onto socio-political transitions in Turkey and Germany, the novels destabilize presumed borders and chart connections between Turkey

and Germany. The third chapter studies bi-directional journeys in Fatih Akin's films, *Head-On* (2004) and *The Edge of Heaven* (2007). It analyzes new trajectories, such as second generation homecoming travels to Turkey and a back-and-forth movement between Turkish and German worlds. Destabilizing presumed understandings of fixed borders and identities, mapping transnational connections, and revealing shared histories, the novels and films analyzed in this dissertation offer ways of thinking beyond the divisions ostensibly inscribed in cultural, ethnic, and national forms of belonging.

## Introduction

During a 2009 lecture at the University of Michigan, the renowned Turkish-German writer Zafer Şenocak explained his ideas on the refusal of the “between two worlds” paradigm by one of the leading scholars in Turkish-German studies, Leslie Adelson. The literary paradigm in question entails a binary thinking between Turkey and Germany, which both in primary literature and analyses frequently characterizes Turkish migrants as static figures between the two cultures. Şenocak was born in Ankara, Turkey in 1961 and moved to München in 1970. Since the 1980s, he has been writing poems, essays, and novels.<sup>1</sup> Şenocak affirmed that Leslie Adelson is indeed correct in rejecting this paradigm and the “in-between” metaphor that characterizes migrants as stuck in between two worlds.<sup>2</sup> Şenocak emphasized how suspension and immobility do not capture the situation and provided his own experience as an example, which he explained as a condition of transitional existence between Turkish and German cultures—of looking, seeking, going between Turkey and Germany—not motionless and certainly not stuck in between anywhere.

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<sup>1</sup> After the 1980s, Şenocak’s poetic voice gave way to two volumes of essays, *Atlas des tropischen Deutschland* (*Atlas of the Tropical Germany*, 1992), and *Was Hitler Araber? IrreFührungen an den Rand Europas* (*Was Hitler an Arab? A crazy guide to the edge of Europe*, 1994.) His most prominent works of fiction are his short story collection, *Der Mann im Unterhemd* (*The man in the undershirt*, 1995), *Die Prärie* (*The prairie*, 1997), and his novel *Gefährliche Verwandschaft* (*Dangerous relations*, 1998).

<sup>2</sup> Leslie Adelson, “Against Between: A Manifesto,” “New Perspectives on Turkey,” (Spring- Fall 2003), 24.

The “between two worlds” paradigm, a “cultural fable,” as Adelson explains, treats Turkey and Germany as fixed, homogeneous, and stable worlds, and assumes an “absolute cultural divide” between the countries.<sup>3</sup> Adelson is highly critical of the way the “between two worlds” paradigm functions both as a motif in Turkish-German texts and as a metaphor for thinking about Turkish-German cultural productivity, characters, and authors from the past two decades.<sup>4</sup> This dissertation investigates the various ways in which Turkish–German literature and film after the early 1990s deploy travel as a motif in their narratives. I explore how the utilizations of this motif transcend the narrow metaphors of the “between two worlds” paradigm and enable productive destabilizing effects.

The four novels and two films analyzed in the dissertation enable the emergence of positive effects regarding individual identities as well as the worlds of Turkey and Germany and their relation through alternative formations of cultural contact and mobility. These positive effects are multiple. They regard the ways in which the texts problematize and undermine the play of cultural and ethnic difference and the persistence of thinking within a “two world” binary. Further, while destabilizing presumed understandings about fixed borders and identities, the texts portray fluid identities in transitions as well as portray Turkey and Germany as complexly changing. Certain texts chart transnational connections, reveal shared histories, and illuminate characters and their worlds in global interconnectedness.

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<sup>3</sup> Leslie Adelson, “Against Between: A Manifesto,” “*New Perspectives on Turkey*,” (Spring- Fall 2003), 22. Adelson, *The Turkish Turn in Contemporary German Literature*, Palgrave, 2005, 5.

<sup>4</sup> Although Adelson is critical of the paradigm at large, her emphasis on the paradigm’s unsuitable nature especially for the texts after the 1990s regards the ways in which after the 1990s, diversified styles and themes that open up new understandings about Turkey and Germany then indeed necessitate alternative readings that acknowledge this newer literature’s merits.

In the first chapter, the novels *Selim oder die Gabe der Rede* (1990) by Sten Nadolny and *Der weinende Granatafpel* (1990) by Alev Tekinay represent their German protagonists as displaced ‘others’ in Turkey, and enable the interrogation and destabilization of their protagonists’ thinking with the two worlds paradigm.<sup>5</sup> In the second chapter, the novels *Selam Berlin* (2003) and *Die Brücke vom Goldenen Horn* (1998) portray two young protagonists who develop new identifications and transcultural identities after departing from Turkey and in their travels to Germany. The narrations of both protagonists’ constant travels in these cities display Turkey and Germany as multilayered and interconnected rather than as two separate worlds. In the third chapter, Fatih Akin’s films, *Head-On* (2004) and *The Edge of Heaven* (2007) mobilize travel along a bi-directional route. The films convey a new trajectory for Turkish-German characters of the second generation by depicting their travels to Turkey from Germany as new beginnings that portray alternative ‘homecomings’ to a new land—to Turkey.

Adelson pertinently observes a “Turkish turn in contemporary German literature” which “began to acquire critical mass in German-language fiction in the 1990s”—the decade when “ethnic signifiers, memory cultures, and tectonic shifts in transnational conflicts loomed disorientingly large, not only in Germany but on a global stage in dramatic transition.” I focus on the texts after the 1990s because of these texts’ alternative charting—on an imaginative level—of significant changes.<sup>6</sup> These changes regard the ways in which the texts help undermine the two worlds paradigm that

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<sup>5</sup> When I use the phrase the two worlds paradigm, I do so with the understanding that it connotes the same idea inherent in the “between two worlds” paradigm; it entails thinking with fixed “two worlds”—imagining cultures as exclusively intact and homogeneous entities. I leave it unmarked with the understanding that whenever the word paradigm is already in the phrase, this inherently denotes the pitfalls of the binary thinking with the paradigm.

<sup>6</sup> Leslie Adelson, *The Turkish Turn in Contemporary German Literature*, 15.

continues to be practiced and whose pitfalls continue in the sociological tensions about the presence of people with Turkish origin in Germany. The texts analyzed in this dissertation challenge and write alternatives to major/minor discourses between Turkey and Germany and subvert the dynamics of bounded ethnic and national categories. At the same time, the texts significantly map the growing transnational climatic that envelop the relation of these countries.

This introduction will later explain the significance of the texts analyzed in the dissertation within the larger dynamics of socio-political and cultural shifts in Germany and Europe after the 1990s. At this point, I want to locate the trajectory of the development of Turkish-German literature from its beginning days in the 1960s. This historical context helps explicate the relevance of the “between two worlds” paradigm to Turkish-German literature, Adelson’s refusal of the paradigm, as well as my investigation about portrayals of travels and characters’ lives between Turkish and German cultures.

The Turkish-German cultural production has its roots in the guest-worker era of the 1960s.<sup>7</sup> In the first period of literature production by Turkish origin authors in Germany, roughly the period of the 1960s and 1970s, the works—categorized under the contested term “Gastarbeiter” literature—were mostly “about the concerns of the guest workers.”<sup>8</sup> For example, themes focused on describing “the workers’ painful experiences in a foreign country, their problems on the job and at home, and their loneliness and

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<sup>7</sup> Due to the labor shortages of the 1950s and 1960s, the German government recruited foreign workers from various countries such as Italy, Spain, Greece, Morocco, Portugal, Tunisia, and Yugoslavia. The labor contract with Turkey happened in 1961. By the time an official halt to the recruitment of foreign laborers was put in place in 1973, a considerable size of Turkish workers and families had formed in Germany.

<sup>8</sup> Venkat Mani, “On the Question: What is Turkish-German”, Stanford, 2001, 8.

homesickness.”<sup>9</sup> These literary productions included work written by authors, such as Aras Ören and Yüksel Pazarkaya, who did not have guest-worker experience but adopted the role of portraying guest-workers’ experiences and problems in Germany.

While seeking to fulfill a “Vermittlungsfunktion” in representing the difficult experiences of those living in the foreign land,<sup>10</sup> some of these depictions about the guest-workers served to implement a closed guest-worker identity.<sup>11</sup> In addition, the portrayals of the guest-worker as perpetually looking back and imagining “Heimat” in Turkey poses a problem in the way that it sustains the conception of a division between the lives of the guest-workers and the German world in which they live.<sup>12</sup>

In the 1980s, first, with the multicultural literary compilations by Irmgard Ackermann and Harald Weinrich, and second, with the creation of the field of “Interkulturelle Germanistik,” Turkish authors and their work gained the status of educating and bridging cultures.<sup>13</sup> While the authors assumed responsibility for speaking on behalf of “foreigners” and their culture, the name change “Ausländerliteratur” in the classification of this literature still denoted the ‘other worldly’ existence of the literature

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<sup>9</sup> Heidrun, Suhr. “Ausländerliteratur: Minority Literature in the Federal Republic of Germany”. *New German Critique* (Winter 1989), 78.

<sup>10</sup> Important examples by three most prevalent authors, Pazarkaya, Ören and Güney Dal, are: *Heimat in der Fremde* (Pazarkaya, 1979), *Wenn Ali die Glocken läuten hört* (Güney Dal, 1976), *Europastraße 5* (Dal, 1981), *Privatexil* (Aras Ören, 1977). The work of these authors in the 1970’s that concentrates especially on the experiences of the guest-workers, made these writers “Chronisten und Kritiker ihrer Zeit,” Sargut Sölçün, “Literatur der türkischen Minderheit” in *Interkulturelle Literatur In Deutschland*. Ed. Carmine Chiellino. (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2000), 137.

<sup>11</sup> The fixed and closed character depictions by Pazarkaya are described by Sölçün: “Die Naivität der anatolischen Bauern, ihre Ungeschicklichkeit in den hochtechnologierten Fabriken und ihre Sprachlosigkeit in der von anonymen Systemen ...” Sargut Sölçün, *Interkulturelle Literatur In Deutschland*, 137.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 137. It is, however, important to note that there indeed was a division between the guest-workers’ lives and the Germans, and the unfair conditions under which they lived, as marginalized and treated as second-class citizens, formed the basis out of which their literary productions arose.

<sup>13</sup> The authors partially contributed to the promotion of their literature as bridges. See for instance Yüksel Pazarkaya’s *Rosen im Frost* (Unionsverlag, 1982), 12: “If the German population had been adequately informed, say, about Turkish culture and intellectual history, about Turkish society, anti-Turkish sentiments would have found a less fertile breeding ground.”

and its authors. As the category “Auslanderliteratur” sets apart this literature as foreign, and constructs a binary of minor against major, accordingly, the very act of promoting cultural understanding inherently posed a paradoxical problem: namely, the notion of bridging two cultures through an exchange of enriching and educational messages to the Germans about and from Turks in essence reifies the isolation of Turkish culture and its differences as fixed and authentic. Besides, there were also representations by Germans, e.g. Günter Wallraf’s *Ganz Unten* (1985), which aimed at giving a voice to the ‘Turk,’ but in so doing depicted an image of the Turk as an outsider, as “the lowest of the low,” who becomes the “authentic” representative figure of not only all Turks, but also “represents oppressed groups everywhere.”<sup>14</sup>

The trajectory of the Turkish-German film has been similar to that of literature. At first, directors associated with the New German Cinema took interest in themes of migration and in portraying experiences of foreigners in Germany: *Shirins Hochzeit* (1975) by Helma Sanders-Brahms exemplifies the first phase of a “cinema of duty.”<sup>15</sup> While “universalizing the suffering of womanhood,”<sup>16</sup> the dutiful depiction in this film actually portrays the Turkish female character as a helpless and victimized figure—a representation continued in the 1980s in the works of Tevfik Baßer. Baßer’s first film, *40qm Deutschland* (1986), represents fixed characters remaining unchanged in spite of their relocation to another country, and the film particularly portrays the female character

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<sup>14</sup> For a thorough analysis of two other works who sought, in documentary reportage forms, to authentically represent the Turkish experience, namely, Max von der Grün’s *Leben im gelobten Land: Gastarbeiterporträts* (1975), and Paul Geiersbach’s *Bruder, muss zusammen Zwiebel und Wasser essen*, (1982), see Arlene Teraoka, “Talking Turk,” in *East, West and Others* (Univ of Nebraska, 1996) 135-163.

<sup>15</sup> Deniz Göktürk. “Turkish Delight-German Fright: Migrant Identities in Transnational Cinema”. *Mediated Identities*. Eds. Karen Ross, Deniz Derman, Nevana Dakovic (Istanbul: Bilgi University, 2001)p. 137. The problems posed by the dutiful depictions of „cinema of duty“ are similar to the literature, in the manner that the films follow traditional patterns of cultural purity and authenticity.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. 138.

as trapped. These dutiful representations, similar to others in literary productions, ended up reifying stereotypical views of foreigners as victimized and as torn between cultures.

This trajectory reveals that thinking within boundaries of fixed “two worlds” and a cultural divide between Turkey and Germany, coupled with metaphors of “in-betweenness” about migrants, have been upheld in the interpretive analyses as well as partially generated by the literary and cinematic productions. In other words, together with the analytical readings—particularly through the methodologies that treated narratives as socio-empirical and authentic truths about migrants’ lives—the themes and styles of literary and filmic representation helped perpetuate the paradigm that Leslie Adelson has named the “between two worlds” paradigm.<sup>17</sup> In explaining the two worlds paradigm as the “literary correlate of models of multiculturalism developed during the 1980’s,” Jim Jordan explicates how a paradigm “voluntarily adopted by diasporic writers as representative of their situation at the time,” has become more than a metaphor, and instead an enduring way of thinking about all Turkish migrants and diasporic writing.<sup>18</sup> Accordingly, in calling this false conceptualization about “an absolute cultural divide” and migrants’ suspended lives between two cultures a “cultural fable” that “shadows much of the literature born of migration and not merely discussions of it,” Adelson

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<sup>17</sup> Leslie Adelson, “Against Between: A Manifesto,” 21; *The Turkish Turn in Contemporary German Literature*, 5. Instead of claiming that all Turkish-German writing in this period intended to explicitly support the two worlds paradigm, I am suggesting that the themes and styles of works gave way to reading the works and thereby interpreting migrants’ lives much more prevalently through the pitfalls of the two worlds paradigm. Tom Cheesman notes Akif Prinççi as the only exceptional author into the 1980s with works that depart from writers who “based their writing in the migrant experience” of “foregrounding cultural and ethnic difference, dislocation, and conflict.” Cheesman, *Novels of Turkish German Settlement*, 85. Şenocak’s work can be seen as another exception.

<sup>18</sup> See Jim Jordan’s “More than a Metaphor: The Passing of the Two Worlds Paradigm in German-Language Diasporic Literature” for a thorough analysis of how the paradigm came into existence, from its production in literature to its reception. Jordan also explicates the “deployment of images, metaphors and motifs which depict the migrant as suspended, trapped or stranded between two worlds in the literature from late 1970s to the early 1990s.”

refutes the paradigm especially because “the gap between these two modes of narration has widened considerably since 1989.”<sup>19</sup> She explicates that the “cultural fable we like to tell about migrants “between two worlds” differs with increasing frequency from stories that literary texts born of migration actually set into motion at the turn to the twenty-first century.”<sup>20</sup>

Indeed, with the entry of second and third generations to the arena of cultural productions, who “are beginning to write their own history, create their own place, and voice their own expectations about what it means and what it should mean for Turks to live in Germany,” the cultural fable of stranded migrants between two worlds becomes ever more untenable.<sup>21</sup> The last two decades, beginning with the fall of the Berlin Wall brought about Turkish-German literary and filmic productions that engage multiple arenas in Turkey and Germany—historical, cultural and political—at once. In accordance, the scholarly analyses beginning with Leslie Adelson’s refusal of the “between two worlds” paradigm have been mapping the significant emergence of newer forms of literature within the last two decades from various angles.

Adelson’s own intervention in *The Turkish Turn* “introduces the concept of *touching tales* as an alternative organizing principle for considering *Turkish lines of thought*.”<sup>22</sup> Adelson’s reading of works by Nadolny, Özdamar, Zaimoğlu, Şenocak and Ören suggest new “lines of thought” by studying “varying configurations” that reflect “German guilt, shame, or resentment about the Nazi past, German fears of migration, Turkish fears of victimization, national taboos in both countries, and Turkish perceptions

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<sup>19</sup> Adelson, *The Turkish Turn in Contemporary German Literature*, 5.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>21</sup> David Horrocks and Eva Kolinsky, Introduction: Migrants or Citizens? Turks in Germany between Exclusion and Acceptance,” *Turkish Culture in German Society Today*, x-xxviii, here xviii.

<sup>22</sup> Adelson, *The Turkish Turn in Contemporary German Literature*, 20, original emphasis.

of German fantasies.”<sup>23</sup> Adelson’s lines of thoughts that locate touching tales “clarify the claim that German literature of Turkish migration probes the historical intelligibility of our time.”<sup>24</sup> To contribute further to such intelligibility, Kader Konuk’s article “Taking on German and Turkish History: Emine Sevgi Özdamar’s *Seltsame Sterne*,” pursues a line of thought regarding “the figure of the immigrant as the carrier of transnational memories” and the ways in which “authors of Turkish heritage might challenge an ethnically defined memory culture.”<sup>25</sup> By charting complex analogies regarding Turks and Jews and acts of ‘Vergangenheitsbewältigung’ undertaken by the works of German intellectuals of Turkish heritage, the article’s engagement with three authors helps uncover significant lines of thought concerning the transformation and transnationalization of memory culture.<sup>26</sup>

Venkat Mani, in *Cosmopolitan Claims*, investigates the cosmopolitan identities that substitute the voiceless figure of the Turk and his study “reveals the modes in which the Turk ruptures and disturbs normative perceptions of the politics of identity: ethnic, linguistic, and political.”<sup>27</sup> Mani’s study encourages a rethinking of the cultural productivity of Turkish-German literature through cosmopolitanism. Tom Cheesman, in *Novels of Turkish German Settlement* also probes “cosmopolitics” by revealing the ways in which “Turkish German literature both issues from and accelerates what Ulrich Beck

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>25</sup> Kader Konuk, Taking On German and Turkish History: Emine Sevgi Özdamar’s *Seltsame Sterne*, *Gegenwarts Literatur*, 6/2007, 235-236.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 236-237. In situating “the immigrant’s position as the carrier of multiple transnational histories and responsibilities,” besides Özdamar’s *Seltsame Sterne*, Konuk’s article uncovers the implications of the genealogical connections in Şenocak’s *Gefährliche Verwandschaft* as well as probing Doğan Akhanlı’s significant narration of a “neglected-traumatic episode” regarding the Turkish refusal to help Jewish refugees in 1941. p, 247.

<sup>27</sup> Venkat Mani, *Cosmopolitan Claims, Turkish-German Literatures from Nadolny to Pamuk*. Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 2007, 38.

terms the “cosmopolitanization” of German society and culture.<sup>28</sup> Cheesman refuses hitherto favored terms, ‘literature of migration,’ ‘diaspora literature,’ or ‘intercultural literature,’ for the ways in which these terms “perpetuate the notion that the work in question emerges from an interstitial space, distinct from the space occupied by German culture proper.”<sup>29</sup> He favors “literature of settlement” as appropriate to capture a phenomena shared by the diverse literary productions that intervene in the cultural transformation of Germany and correspond to the notion of “extending the concept of Germanness.”<sup>30</sup>

My investigation in this dissertation follows the concerns of the above mentioned scholars’ approaches in exploring the significant emergence of productive effects regarding individual identities as well as the cultural/ national identities of Turkey and Germany enabled by texts that utilize motif of travel. For instance, in my analysis of Fatih Akin’s films in the third chapter, I devote particular attention to the ways in which Akin’s character portrayals not only extend the concept of Germanness but also destabilize a presumably authentic Turkish-German identity. Of particular interest to me is that the primary texts narrate travels between Turkey and Germany and portray characters negotiating German and Turkish cultures. Nevertheless, what these narratives reveal about their characters as well as each country and culture exceeds the narrow metaphors of the “between two worlds paradigm.”

Therefore, I follow particularly on Adelson’s trail by situating my inquiry as a complement to her intervention about “against in-between” by exploring the effects and

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<sup>28</sup> Tom Cheesman, *Novels of Turkish German Settlement, Cosmopolite Fictions*. Rochester, New York: Camden House, 2007,12.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 12.

possibilities of narratives that portray protagonists living in between the two cultures as well as traveling between the two countries.<sup>31</sup> In this sense, my analyses treat travel as another line of thought. Adelson concentrates particularly on the narrative spaces of history whereby the site of her touching tales accentuates shared histories. While my analyses of certain texts, such as *Die Brücke vom Goldenen Horn* and *Selam Berlin* concentrate on effects generated by similar lines of thought pointed out by Adelson, I also ask about other lines of thought enabled by alternative formations of cultural contact during travels. By emphasizing the manner in which the texts utilize travel, I posit that these narratives allow us to recognize new configurations of identities and Turkish and German worlds precisely through movements and interactions in and between these two worlds—in more expansive ways than the constricted metaphor of “in-between.” I inquire about the ways in which the texts probe the pitfalls of a fixed “two worlds” thinking, allow extensions to Germanness and Turkishness and beyond, surpass the dynamics of national and ethnic categories, and warrant states of unbounded thinking, being, and becoming.

In the narrative depictions of the characters’ traversals through Turkish and German landscapes, the texts indicate the emergence of new selves with shifting positionalities instead of marginality and stagnation of characters. In addition, narrative configurations of spatial landscapes point out the ways in which spatial borders are not fixed and always what they seem to be. In my analysis of narrative configurations of space and character relations, I find that the texts convey transitions and transformations of characters and at the same time destabilize fixities and binaries associated with the

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<sup>31</sup> Whenever I use the “in-between” in quotation marks, I mean to point out that this is the narrow, limiting, imposing, and confining “in-between” state. I do not highlight this term in other contexts, in order to differentiate.

socio-cultural identities of Turkey and Germany—revealing instead geopolitical and personal transitions and thresholds. For instance, the narrative portrayal of ferry rides through the Bosphorus in the novel *Die Brücke vom Goldenen Horn* subverts the binary of Europe and Asia by mapping fluid and co-mingled states of Western and Eastern, modern and traditional elements in the city presumed to be divided into two worlds. In the novel *Selam Berlin*, the portrayal of Berlin’s topography during the transitional period of the *Wende* provides a destabilization of East and West German binary by involving the Turkish-German subject in the midst of this transitional era.

As already mentioned, the cultural landscape of Turkish-German literary and filmic productions has diversified after the 1990s with the appearance of new authors and the emergence of a wide arena of styles and themes. I will briefly sketch this trajectory as well as introduce the artists whose works this dissertation studies. Analyzed in the dissertation’s first chapter, *Selim oder die Gabe der Rede* (1990) by Sten Nadolny is a meta-fictional novel about a friendship between a German writer and a Turkish guest-worker. Sten Nadolny, born in 1942 in Zehdenick, Germany, lives in Berlin and prior to *Selim oder die Gabe der Rede*, his novel “*Die Entdeckung der Langsamkeit* (1983),” a fictionalized meditation on the life of British Arctic explorer Sir John Franklin, achieved worldwide success. Also analyzed in the first chapter, the novel *Der weinende Granatapfel* (1990) by Alev Tekinay, adopts the fantasy genre in portraying a German character’s search for his Doppelgänger in Turkey. Tekinay, born in 1951, in Turkey, has lived since 1971 in München, Germany, and has an academic post in Augsburg. She has written several volumes of short stories and another novel in 1993, *Nur der Hauch vom Paradies*, regarding the crisis of a male Turkish-German writer in Germany.

Emine Sevgi Özdamar has contributed significantly to the Turkish-German literary landscape primarily since the 1990s as well with her short story collection *Mutterzunge* (1990). The dissertation analyzes Özdamar's work *Die Brücke vom Goldenen Horn* (1998), for which the author received the Chamisso Prize in 1999. Özdamar, born in 1946, Malatya, has been living in Germany since the early 1970s and resides in Berlin. Her first novel *Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei, hat zwei Türen, aus einer kam ich rein, aus dem anderen ging ich raus* (1991), received the prestigious Ingeborg-Bachmann Prize. Zafer Şenocak and Feridun Zaimoğlu's works have immensely enriched Turkish-German literature through the 1990s. Particularly noteworthy to mention is an essay collection by Şenocak, *Atlas of a Tropical Germany. Essays on Politics and Culture 1990-1998* (2000), translated by Leslie Adelson into English; the work provides remarkable commentaries on cultural and political relations about Turkey and Germany, Christianity and Islam and the rest of the world. Zaimoğlu gained attention as a chronicler of lives at the margins with *Kanak Sprak* (1995), whose characters are based on real people living on the margins of the German society. Zaimoğlu's recent novel *Leyla* (2006), narrates a family saga, and namely, the life story of Zaimoğlu's own mother Leyla, her childhood in an Anatolian village, her family's move to Istanbul, and Leyla's departure to Germany with her husband and son.

Since this introductory chapter's space is not sufficient to discuss all of the authors and works, I will conclude by mentioning four other authors, Kemal Kurt, Selim Özdoğan, Osman Engin, and Yade Kara, as these also help illuminate the range of variety in the productions. Kemal Kurt, living in Germany since 1975, and the author of poetry, essays, and short stories is most honored for his texts *Was ist die Merhzahl von Heimat*

(1995), and *Ja sagt Molly* (1998). The latter novel significantly transgresses all limitations to what may constitute Turkish-German literature; the novel features a struggle among the protagonists of world literature to survive as the librarian of Babel decides to keep only one fictional title alive. Born in 1971 in Turkey, and living since his childhood in Germany, Selim Özdogan's novels have largely appealed to young mainstream readers as they concern protagonists seeking meaning in life, friendship struggles, as well as confrontations with consumerism. His three significant novels uncovering these themes are *Es ist einsam im Sattel seit das Pferd tot ist* (1995), *Nirgendwo und Hormone* (1996), and *Mehr* (1999). Osman Engin, a critically acclaimed satirist about Turkish-German relations, adopts Zaimoğlu's Kanak epithet in satirizing ethnic stereotypes and comically accounts for injustices in society. His most successful book is *Der Kanaken Gandhi* (1998) and Engin received the ARD Media Prize for his satire "Ich bin Papst," (2006)—making fun of everyday prejudices and stereotypes. Yade Kara, born in 1965 in Turkey, has lived in Berlin since childhood. The dissertation analyzes her debut novel *Selam Berlin* (2003) that tells the events of the *Wende* from the view point of a second generation Turkish-German male. In 2008, Kara published *Café Cyprus* that narrates the sequel to her protagonist Hasan's life in *Selam Berlin* in London.

Turkish-German films after the 1990s have also been immensely divergent in themes and have used ethnic identity only as one element among many others. Thomas Arslan's intensively slow paced films, set in only singular locations, such as *Geschwister* (1996), *Dealer* (1999), and *Der Schöne Tag* (2000), differ from the films of Fatih Akin, that favor action and multiple settings. Fatih Akin has become the most critically acclaimed and well-known Turkish-German director particularly after his international

successes with *Head-On* (2004) and *The Edge of Heaven* (2007), both of which I analyze in the dissertation's final chapter. Akin, born in Hamburg in 1975, received a visual communications degree from the Hamburg College of Fine Arts in 1994. Already with his first feature film, *Short Sharp Shock* (1998) about a friendship story between a Turk, a Serb, and a Greek living in Hamburg, Altona, Akin was acknowledged as the pioneer of the new Turkish-German cinema. Other noteworthy accomplishments in Turkish-German film are the *Kleine Freiheit* (2003) by Yüksel Yavuz that problematizes the illegal status of a Kurdish youth in Germany, *Yara* (1999) by Yilmaz Arslan that portrays a girl in Turkey longing to return to Germany, *Lola and Billidikid* (1999) by Kutlug Ataman that portrays the stories of three gay and transvestite males, and *Ich Chef, Du Turnschuh* (1998) by Hussi Kutlucan, that handles the subject of asylum in Germany in a satirical form.

As I already explained my reasons for selecting works that utilize motif of travel out of this broad spectrum of themes and works, I also want to clarify my motivation for selecting the particular novels and films. Despite the existence of other texts that utilize motif of travel, such as Zaimoğlu's *Leyla*, Akin's film *Im Juli*, or Yilmaz Arslan's *Yara*, my particular selection is grounded on the basis of this dissertation's inquiry. The texts of my choice give greater credence to my exploration about the unique ways in which positive effects and new configurations about individual identities, and Turkey and Germany are generated precisely through movements and interactions of protagonists in and between Turkish and German worlds. The character and spatial configurations in these narratives indicate that constellations of situatedness in between two worlds can generate change, transition, and transformation for the individual characters and also for

the worlds of Turkey and Germany. In this regard, with respect to the positive effects indicated by the texts, by way of a return to Şenocak's remarks with which I began the introduction, I want to relay two other significant personal and biographical points that Şenocak shared which tie to this dissertation's exploration.

Şenocak's first remark was an extensive elaboration about his experience of living with and within “two languages” and hence, “two bodies.” He explained that with each language and body, with Turkish and German, he experiences a different rhythm. Nevertheless, he remarked how easily he moves in and out of the Turkish body and language and passes to the German, and vice versa. Şenocak's personal note on such a ‘two worldly’ experience—within Turkish and German languages and bodies—in the context of his first remark about his circling state are important to consider because they bring forth a picture of a mobile and continuous state of becoming and being, instead of indicating identity as a fixed entity. What Şenocak animates with his examples is an exact opposite image of suspension, rather a state of steady motion, where neither the departure nor the arrival points matter more than the movement itself.

Şenocak's second important remark relayed a story about his own experience with the continuation of the “between two worlds” paradigm. He was recently, at a conference in France, grouped with other Turkish-German authors on a panel despite the fact that his topic of presentation was on Berlin. As he stated it, he should have been placed on another panel that dealt directly with Berlin, but he was not. The act of categorizing Şenocak with the Turkish-German panel, by grouping him according to his biography, rather than the subject matter of his presentation, upholds the “between two

“worlds” paradigm by not treating Şenocak as a German writer, and in this sense, fixates him in a determined world of Turkish-Germanness.

It is important to highlight that the issue at stake, which Şenocak criticizes with his personal example, is not about how he is called Turkish-German. Şenocak does not have a problem with his personal identity, or that he is seen by others as Turkish-German. As his own remarks prove, he defines his identity as comprising varying and fluctuating realms of both Turkishness and Germanness; and as significantly, he talks about his Turkish background—a mix of a varied Anatolian, Eastern, and Istanbul heritage. By questioning why he could not have been placed with the German authors, Şenocak interrogates the exclusionary act that exemplifies the continued practice of imagining complex cultural and individual identities as firmly fixed. While Şenocak is bound to a Turkish-German identity, the fact that this identity also inhabits Germanness is not considered.

Concerning my own use of the phrase Turkish-German literature and film in this dissertation, I should note that my preference for the term has nothing to do with the biography of the authors and film directors. For instance, the novel *Selim oder die Gabe der Rede* is written by the German author Sten Nadolny. However, I understand the term Turkish-German in similar terms to how Şenocak explains his own identity formation comprising both Turkishness and Germanness. I see the hyphen in Turkish-German as more than a connection of two equal sides; neither side of the hyphen is fixed.<sup>32</sup> In other words, I suggest that the hyphen is animated, extending in both directions without equalizing or fixating the two sides.

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<sup>32</sup> I explicate this point thoroughly in my third chapter in terms of identity states of “being” and “becoming” when I analyze Akin’s portrayals of his Turkish-German characters.

Accordingly, the primary texts in this dissertation are informed variably by Turkish and German histories, cultures, and languages. Significantly, while the primary texts' events take place in Turkey and Germany, the narratives depict neither Turkish and German socio-cultural landscapes nor their histories as homogeneous and stable wholes unto themselves. For instance, in *Die Brücke vom Goldenen Horn*, Özdamar's thematization of the student movements in Berlin and Istanbul link the two countries' transitions in this era. Furthermore, the novel surpasses a mere Turkish-German connection by conveying the events from a global perspective. Similarly, in Akin's film *The Edge of Heaven*, what is presumably a Turkish problem, "the issue of Kurds and human rights," becomes not only a German issue but a European one, which Akin then also conveys in a humanist and globally-conscious manner. Similarly, we see characters move beyond a Turkish and German binary. While transitioning between these realms, with their identities of both Turkishness and Germanness, some characters develop transcultural identities. Along with Akin's films that suggest new routes of becoming in Turkey for second generation Turkish-Germans, these character portrayals enable states of openness for characters, allowing them to supersede fixated states of being. They can be both Turkish and German, and more. These examples also make up some of the many productive and positive effects the texts generate by portraying traveling protagonists.

Another important reason why I explained Şenocak's reported situation and his insightful remarks concerns how, in the primary literature for this dissertation, we also encounter portrayals of the "between two worlds" paradigm in varying ways. In the first chapter, the protagonist of the novel *Selim oder die Gabe der Rede*, Alexander, is shown to treat the Turkish culture through a lens of cultural essentialisms, inventing a cultural

fable about Turkey, while he writes about the country and its people. The second chapter includes an examination of *Selam Berlin*, which portrays the Turkish-German protagonist Hasan in a similar way to Şenocak's biographical situation—bounded by a fixed Turkishness in the way others treat him. He at first defines himself only as a Kreuzberger—his place of birth. However, later, he crosses even this kind of identification, and develops a fully open—transcultural—identity that is not connected to a singular cultural, national, or geographical location.

Kara shows that for Hasan it does not matter if he is Turkish or German; he lives comfortably in two worlds although each of these worlds resists this open identity. In the novel, Kara satirizes the behavior of a German film maker who still thinks within the confinements of the two worlds paradigm while creating a film about the Turkish people in Kreuzberg. Although Hasan defies the film maker's stereotypes, the latter imagines Turkish people as a large, homogenous group. In his production, Kreuzberg becomes the “authentic” place that represents pure Turkishness.<sup>33</sup> With narrative sarcasm and irony, Kara evokes the continuation of the “between two worlds paradigm” at this stage of a global world in which life in the midst of peoples from different backgrounds should enable us to transcend seeing cultures and peoples as homogeneous and stable entities.

With regard to the texts' problematization of the continued practice of the two worlds paradigm, it is important to note that the decade of the 1990's—a decade of global progressivism and reorientation caused by the end of the Cold War, and for Germany the beginning of a new era with the German unification—is in fact also a decade that witnessed turbulent events marked by the operation of a “two worlds” thinking. While the

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<sup>33</sup> Kreuzberg is an area of Berlin in which many Turkish-Germans reside, but as Kara's novel thematizes and my analysis in the second chapter discusses, the area has a diverse demographics, with residents from plural backgrounds.

Persian Gulf War beginning in January 1991 evidenced the binary between the Islamic East and the Christian West, another binary within Germany, between Germany's resident Turkish population and the unified Germans was constituted. In the wake of the German reunification, the Chancellor Helmut Kohl pointedly articulated the East Germans as the brothers and sisters of West Germans and urged to "let grow together what belongs together." In that particular socio-political climate, the cultural and ethnic differences of Turkish origin residents of Germany were accentuated once again along the categories of "them and us, self and other."<sup>34</sup> The appearance of the novels *Selim oder die Gabe der Rede* and *Der weinende Granatapfel* in 1990 then becomes particularly interesting as these novels both question essentializing discourses regarding cultural identities and deliberately utilize the two worlds paradigm to interrogate and destabilize the cultural fixations and oppositions generated by the paradigm.

The "two worlds" thinking in this period has serious results such as the xenophobic violence that rose up in 1991 and which gave way to the arson attacks in Mölln and the fire bombings in Solingen in 1992.<sup>35</sup> While Yade Kara's novel *Selam Berlin* in part evokes racism and alludes to the racist attacks in Mölln and Solingen, the novel actually thrives to subvert this exclusionary thinking and acting. Kara's novel maps the Turkish-German subject right on the map of German history as an integral part by not

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<sup>34</sup> Even further disconcerting about this time period is the way in which, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, based on the citizenship principle of *jus sanguinis*—defining citizenship through blood lineage and family ties—while ethnic Germans from Eastern European countries, such as Poland and Romania, were given citizenship rights, the Turkish origin residents of Germany still remained outside of the German nation. This paradox stemmed from the vexed citizenship law, *jus sanguinis* that defined citizenship through blood lineage and family ties.

<sup>35</sup> Although xenophobic violence prior to unification was disapproved by East and West Germans, Adelson cites the ten-fold increase of attacks against foreigners in 1991, Introduction to *Atlas of a Tropical Germany*, by Zafer Senocak, Univ of Nebraska P, 2000, xiii.

only portraying the protagonist Hasan at the borderline of German history as it unfolds but also by thematizing his parents' story as a connected part of Germany.

The years of 1998-2000 are especially important to trace as these years not only brought about a government change in Germany, and subsequently the heated debates of changing the citizenship law and the possibility of dual citizenship but also the accelerated military tensions between Iraq and the United States. It is then important to think of Kara and Özdamar's novels within this transitional context. These texts undermine divisions based on ethnicity and nationality with their portrayals of Turkish origin identities transgressing these borders. Özdamar's novel *Die Brücke vom Goldenen Horn*, published in 1998, portrays American imperialism at its height in the 1970s from a rather critical point of view. In addition, right about the time when the constitution of German nationhood was re-considered through the prisms of cultural and ethnic criteria, Özdamar problematizes not only ethnic and cultural exclusion in Turkey but also governmental persecution and injustice against the politically involved leftists in the seventies in both Turkey and Germany. Even as injustice and suffering are knocking on the door through the 1990s, the novel's representation of transnational connections between countries as well as revelations of human suffering in a globally connected way console the reader.

While the reformed citizenship law that came into effect in January 2000 no longer establishes citizenship on the basis of ethnicity, it nevertheless forbids dual citizenship.<sup>36</sup> Likewise, the July 2004 law that replaced the foreigner's law with that of an

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<sup>36</sup> Under the law, foreigners gained entitlement to naturalization after 8 years of permanent residency, in contrast to the 15 years previously required. For naturalization, it is necessary to prove adequate knowledge of German, a clean record and commitment to the tenets of the Basic Law as well as the ability to financially support oneself.

immigration law finally attested to Germany's evolution to an immigration country.<sup>37</sup> On the other hand, despite this reform and the relevant provisions that came into effect regarding dual citizenship, the new law still disfavors a fair dual nationality procedure. "Since January 2005, the German state has been actively identifying dual nationals, in order to threaten them with immediate loss of their German citizenship unless they relinquish their other passport."<sup>38</sup> The above events are particularly intriguing to consider in the light of Fatih Akin's films, *Head-On*, (2004), and *the Edge of Heaven* (2007), both of which portray second generation Turkish-German characters who chose Turkey as a new 'homeland' yet at the same time are conveyed void of struggles with national belonging via citizenship or otherwise. As Tom Cheesman observes that the complications of dual citizenship have been muted and replaced instead by the Turkish membership in the EU<sup>39</sup>, Akin's *the Edge of Heaven* thematizes the complications with regard to Turkey's Kurdish and human rights problems. With a critical look at the Turkish government, the film at the same time reveals a hopeful vision for the relationship of Turkey and Europe through the problematization of a Turkish political refugee's story and a humanist interconnectedness revealed throughout the film.

As the above detailed socio-cultural context indicates and the chapter descriptions below will reveal, the organizing principle and the pairing of works in each chapter is approximately linked to chronology; however, the organization is also motivated by the proximity of what each text handles and the subsequent effects generated by the texts. In the first chapter, "Relationally Constructed Worlds of Turkey and Germany," the

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<sup>37</sup> Now, people who hold a residence permit for five years can apply for a settlement permit.

<sup>38</sup> Tom Cheesman, *Novels of Turkish German Settlement*, 19. Particularly at stake are those naturalized Germans who re-acquired Turkish nationality.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

dissertation examines how Sten Nadolny's *Selim oder Die Gabe der Rede* (1990) and Alev Tekinay's *Der weinende Granatapfel* (1990) portray their protagonists' "two worlds" thinking, and at the same time destabilize the two worlds paradigm by showing the paradigm as fictional—a construction—functioning literally as a "cultural fable."<sup>40</sup> With my analyses of the novels' unique narrative structures and portrayals of cultural encounters by German protagonists in the Turkish cultural landscape, I explore how Nadolny and Tekinay thematize and problematize their protagonists' thinking within the boundaries of the two worlds paradigm and undermine the paradigm's essentializing and oppositional thinking about Turkey and Germany.

This initial chapter analyzes the significance of the novels' structures that create illusory effects around the protagonists' cultural fixations, revealing them as relational constructions. The distinct narrative structures illustrate that the Turkish world is not a fixed and stable reality. Instead, they reveal the ways in which the protagonists attempt to create a world of their own making in the way they relate to the foreign environment in Turkey. By revealing the protagonists' "two worlds" thinking as constructed, and by generating illusory effects surrounding their cultural fixations, the novels enable a deconstruction of the fable of two fixed worlds—East and West, Orient and Occident—as mapped respectively onto Turkey and Germany. Important to this destabilization effect is the way in which the texts reveal Turkish cultural and spatial landscapes as a mix of East and West, a co-mingling of both modern and traditional and so-called Asian and European elements, which Ferdinand and Alexander view through a "two worlds" lens. At the same time that the first chapter's novels destabilize the reality and the fixities of

the two worlds paradigm, they also portray their protagonists' transformations. Alexander, at the end of *Selim oder die Gabe der Rede*, and Ferdinand at the end of *Der weinende Granatapfel*, transform from their essentialist thinking into self-realized states about the falsity of their cultural fixations.

The texts analyzed in chapters two and three vary from the novels of the first chapter in the manner by which they characterize their protagonists' identities between Turkish and German cultural realms. The novels *Die Brücke vom Goldenen Horn* and *Selam Berlin* in the second chapter, and the films in the third chapter, do not portray their protagonists' thinking through the two worlds paradigm although there are episodes when the protagonists encounter situations of constricting in-betweenness caused by the paradigm. In both chapters two and three, we meet characters living between Turkish and German cultural realms in what we see to be 'transitional' states of mobility, change, and transformation. There are instances where the protagonists are subjugated to "in-between" positions that they transgress, and which I analyze accordingly. In fact, the varying and seeming "in-between" positions of the characters signify transitional effects, as well as lead to biographical thresholds in certain cases. For instance, Akin's films portray his characters' identities in and through transitions that I explicate as stories of "becoming." Hasan in *Selam Berlin*, the narrator in *die Brücke vom Goldenen Horn*, and Sibel in *Head-On*, through their experiences with binary "two worlds" situations, cross thresholds and attain new identities.

The second chapter, entitled "Multiply Layered Worlds," involves the novels *Selam Berlin* (2003) by Yade Kara and *Die Brücke vom Goldenen Horn* (1998) by Emine Sevgi Özdamar and explores how the novels map socio-political and historical events

onto their protagonists' biographical changes. While doing so, the novels depict the era in which these events occur—in *Selam Berlin*, the *Wende*, and in *Die Brücke vom Goldenen Horn* the politically distraught years of the early seventies—in a way that includes other layers of ‘worlds’ within the larger German and Turkish worlds. This is important for undermining the stability and homogeneity of each country, for unsettling fixities about East and West, and thereby for subverting the binary between Turkey and Germany.

Kara’s *Selam Berlin* narrates complex experiences between the East-Germans, Turkish-Germans, and West-Germans; Özdamar’s *Die Brücke vom Goldenen Horn* portrays harsh realities about the lives of Kurdish people as well as past histories of ethnic minorities within Turkey.

At the same time that this chapter explicates the impact of the above mentioned socio-political events for the protagonists’ transformations, it also analyzes the effects of the city-scapes that the protagonists traverse. While exploring the protagonists’ encounters in particular spatial locations, I explicate the narratives’ distinct character and space configurations with regard to their significant transitional and threshold effects. I highlight the motif of transition to designate on-going changes, movements, and forms of passing through, and treat the notion of the threshold in terms of crossing over borders and becoming someone new. While analyzing the impact of these spatial configurations on the protagonists’ identities, the chapter also explicates the various implications of socio-political transitions and geo-political thresholds—revealed through textual deployment of specific topographies, such as Kreuzberg and Potsdamer Platz in *Selam Berlin*, and Bosphorus and The Golden Horn in *Die Brücke vom Goldenen Horn*. For instance, while Kara thematizes Kreuzberg’s transitional state after the Wall, Özdamar’s

use of the Bridge of the Golden Horn points out a threshold that subverts presumed notions of Europe and Asia.

Further, I explicate how the novels map certain intersections during the two countries' transitions; this indicates points of intricate connections between Turkey and Germany. One such example is the narration of the student movements in both countries by Özdamar. Kara's narration of the character Hasan into the German present allows an even further connection between the Turkish world and Germany by thematizing the linkage of Hasan's parents' to German history. These examples of connecting points are important for the ways in which they also function to unsettle the binary of Turkey and Germany as exclusively divided worlds. It is particularly significant that at a time when divisional thinking persists between the two cultures, both Kara and Özdamar imaginatively allow a shared world by Turks and Germans.

The third chapter investigates how Fatih Akin's films, *Head-On* (2004) and *The Edge of Heaven* (2007), subvert the Turkish and German binary while representing characters who live fluidly in two worlds and two cultures. The chapter explores the ways in which Akin depicts newer trajectories within Turkish and German realms by portraying alternative 'homecomings' to Turkey by second generation Turkish-Germans. In *Head-On*, we see the characters Sibel and Cahit travel to and transform their identities in Turkey and in the *Edge of Heaven*, Nejat transitions into a new life—as revealed by depictions of him in relation to the openness of the Turkish landscape.

I devote particular attention to Akin's visual and spatial configurations because they are especially useful to understand the films' characters' transitional states as well as their transformations. In addition, by contextualizing Akin's portrayals of both first and

second generation Turkish-German characters, this chapter investigates the ways in which Akin destabilizes the notion of a fixed and authentic Turkish-German identity. Furthermore, the chapter explores Akin’s representation of a two-directional route of cultural contact and mobility in *The Edge of Heaven* by depicting German characters’ travels in Turkey. Through interwoven stories between Turkish, Turkish-German, and German characters, the film unsettles binaries and fixities about the two cultural realms, and thus portrays humanist moments of transcending differences—for instance, political, ethnic, and generational—by interconnecting the characters in unique ways.

As part of her argument against the “between two worlds” paradigm, Leslie Adelson criticizes how “Turco-German literature” has been seen as a tired, old bridge between the presumably separated worlds of Turkey and Germany; she calls Turco-German literature a threshold space in which more critical work needs to be done.<sup>41</sup> Accordingly, this dissertation follows on Adelson’s trail and responds to her insight about what contemporary Turkish-German literature and film after the 1990s show us beyond the narrow metaphors of “in-betweenness.” Particularly, I suggest the need to investigate the fabric of movements represented in literature and film that travel across Germany and Turkey’s borders. Narratives between Turkey and Germany that unsettle the “between two worlds” paradigm literally open up new routes for characterizing Turkish-German identities, and at the same time provide alternative depictions of Turkey and Germany, which reveal the changing and complex worlds in each country and indicate points of connections between them.

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<sup>41</sup> Against Between: A Manifesto,” 24, *New Perspectives on Turkey*. The phrase “Turco- German” is Adelson’s use.

In “Against-between: A Manifesto,” Adelson asks: “What does it mean to contemplate the Turkish presence in German culture today?”<sup>42</sup> My project, while validating the importance of this question, asks several interrelated questions: What does it mean to contemplate the German presence in Turkey and Turkish culture? What kind of representations do literature and film after the 1990’s offer in regards to the complex German-Turkish presences in both countries? What does it mean to contemplate Turkish and German presences as traveling and crossing over between the two countries but not claiming a rooted presence in either one? With these questions in mind, the following chapters show how contemporary examples of Turkish-German literature and film that utilize travel motifs and thematize lives between Turkey and Germany themselves function as a threshold—expanding beyond the bounded binary of Turkish and German cultures standing in opposition to one another.

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 20.

## Chapter 1

### Relationally constructed worlds in *Selim oder die Gabe der Rede* and *Der weinende Granatapfel*

In explaining the “cultural fable we like to tell about migrants between two worlds,” Leslie Adelson emphasizes not only the suspending effect of this oft-accepted paradigm—that “the space between” is “reserved for migrants inexorably suspended on a bridge leading nowhere”—but she also highlights the way in which the paradigm operates through a rhetoric that approximates what Samuel P. Huntington has called a “clash of civilizations”—that of “opposing worlds understood as originary and mutually exclusive.”<sup>43</sup> Hence, the “between two worlds” paradigm entails more than a metaphor that suspends migrants within a position of in-betweenness, but as Adelson stresses in her article “Against Between: A Manifesto,” also implies the notion of separation between Turks and Germans through an absolute cultural divide.<sup>44</sup> This divide operates with the supposition that the Turkish and German cultures are whole and respectively homogeneous worlds, “presumed to be originary, mutually exclusive, and intact” and that “the boundaries between them are clear and absolute.”<sup>45</sup> If the “between two worlds” paradigm is a “cultural fable” that “shadows much of the literature born of migration, and

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<sup>43</sup> Leslie Adelson, *The Turkish Turn in Contemporary German Literature*, 5-6.

<sup>44</sup> Adelson, “Against Between: A Manifesto”, *New Perspectives on Turkey*, 2003, 22.

<sup>45</sup> Adelson, *The Turkish Turn*, 4.

not merely discussions of it,”<sup>46</sup> Sten Nadolny and Alev Tekinay’s novels, appearing at the beginning of the 1990’s, can be seen as particularly significant to examine for the ways in which they both incorporate this paradigm as well as question its problematic thinking.<sup>47</sup>

The novels *Selim oder die Gabe der Rede* and *Der weinende Granatapfel* utilize travel narratives; in both *Selim* and *DwG*, the protagonists—Alexander and Ferdinand, respectively—travel to Turkey.<sup>48</sup> Whereas Turkish-German texts from earlier decades—between the 1970’s and the 1990’s—incorporate to a large extent questions of dislocation, migration, belonging, home, and identity with regard to Turkish characters in Germany, *Selim* and *DwG* represent a new pattern with their German characters’ travels to and their experiences in Turkey. Through this new form of representation, both novels replace the traditional depictions of Turkish subjects as displaced others in the land of the foreign, in Germany. In this sense, the novels destabilize that which has been figured as constituting typical Turkish-German narratives.

On the one hand then, *Selim* and *DwG* represent the advent of a new mode in Turkish-German narratives whereby German protagonists deal with estrangement and foreignness in a new country and cultural landscape. At the same time, both novels utilize the two worlds paradigm’s stereotypes and binary dualisms—for instance, East versus West, and Orient versus Occident—throughout the narrations of the protagonists’ travels.

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>47</sup> The temporality of the novels are important to consider in the context of Adelson’s inquiry about a Turkish turn in German literature, which, as Adelson points out, “began acquiring critical mass in German language fiction in the 1990’s.” *The Turkish Turn*, 14.

<sup>48</sup> Sten Nadolny, *Selim oder die Gabe der Rede*, 1990 Piper Verlag München. Alev Tekinay, *Der weinende Granatapfel*, 1990 Suhrkamp Verlag Frankfurt am Main. In the rest of my analysis, I refer to the texts in abbreviated forms, *Selim* and *DwG*.

While conveying how their protagonists cope with foreignness and alienation, the narratives portray the manner in which their protagonists continue to think with cultural essentialisms, binaries, and fixations. However, the protagonists are also seen to evolve as the narratives progress; the characters develop from viewing the Turkish culture as a separate world unto itself to the recognition of the falsity in such thinking.

In her “Against Between: A Manifesto,” Adelson suggests that “we do not need more understanding of different cultures if understanding only fixes them as utterly different. We need to understand culture itself differently.”<sup>49</sup> Adelson’s call for a new conceptualization of culture corresponds with her argument concerning the two worlds paradigm and the paradigm’s most basic and important flaw—the conceptualization of cultures, e.g. Turkish and German, as distinct and whole entities. Through the portrayal of their German protagonists’ struggles in the context of a different, ‘foreign’ culture, both *Selim* and *DwG* convey how cultures are not fixed and stable entities, and yet can be, and often are, imagined as such.<sup>50</sup> In the course of the novels, the protagonists’ own identities are seen to evolve and are transformed through their journeys and encounters with the Turkish culture. Through the narratives, the protagonists’ understanding and treatment of culture also changes. Therefore, both novels can be understood as performing a didactic function as well.

The present chapter explicates the various ways in which both novels portray their protagonist’s thinking with the cultural divides of the two worlds paradigm and at the same time create a destabilization effect by showing cultural differences and fixations to

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<sup>49</sup> “Against Between: A Manifesto”, 23.

<sup>50</sup> My own understanding and use of the term culture follows the conceptualization offered in the field of cultural studies, by critics such as Stuart Hall, James Clifford, and Homi Bhabha, acknowledging culture as a construction, an unfixed realm, constantly in flux.

be relationally constructed and illusory. With my use of the term relational, I mean the dynamic of negotiations between the protagonists and the Turkish culture. Although Turkish culture is an unfixed and heterogeneous realm, the protagonists think otherwise while they try to understand and position themselves in relation to it. During cultural encounters, we see how a fixed Turkish world and its cultural differences are constructed through the way the protagonists relate to the “foreign” environments that they traverse. By illusory, I mean that the reader recognizes the protagonists’ fixated “two worlds” thinking as construed just like a fiction—a “fable”—as Adelson names the paradigm. The coming analyses reveal how Sten Nadolny and Alev Tekinay deploy their characters’ cultural fixations and binary thinking purposefully; their narrative reproduction of polar differences between East and West and of cultural essentialisms function as important literary devices with which the texts problematize the two worlds paradigm.

In addition, the novels’ structures supplement the destabilization effect by extending a destabilization on the reader. Particularly, the novels’ unique structures strengthen the ‘illusory effect’ about the protagonists’ cultural fixations, revealing them literally as constructions. In that the texts generate an ‘illusory effect’ regarding their protagonists’ cultural fixations, the reader is able to realize that the authors do not necessarily agree with their protagonists. The positioning of the narrator within the novels contributes to the readers’ understanding of how the novels’ deployment of the two worlds paradigm is not be taken at face value. Additionally, the following chapter analyzes the depictions of the places, cities, and the spatial realms the protagonists traverse. Significantly, at the same time that the protagonists struggle with cultural differences and fixations, the depictions of Turkish spaces have a destabilizing effect on

these very fixities by revealing Turkish cultural and urban landscapes as a mix of both East and West, of both modern and traditional values.

### ***Selim oder die Gabe der Rede***

In Sten Nadolny's novel *Selim oder die Gabe der Rede [Selim]*, the main protagonist Alexander is writing a novel about his life, an autobiographical novel comprising his service in the German army, his involvement with leftist movements, his encounters with a group of Turkish guest-workers, an enduring close friendship with one of these guest-workers named Selim, and Alexander's travel to Turkey. This autobiographical novel forms a narrative inside of Nadolny's novel, and it involves a time span of 24 years—between 1965 and 1989. A thread of diary entries, written by Alexander in the first-person, accompanies the autobiographical narrative within the larger novel. In this bi-level textual and discursive space, the protagonist Alexander writes about his friend Selim and other Turkish guest workers' arrivals to Germany, portraying them as open and mobile characters, overcoming the typical two worlds paradigm of fixed cultures and the “in-betweenness” of the migrant experience. However, while these migrant figures transgress the suspended in-between rhetoric associated with the Turkish immigrants into Germany, the protagonist Alexander, through his own self-representations and the depictions of his travels, himself, takes on this role of liminal character—especially during his experience of ‘otherness’ while traveling in Turkey.

Nadolny's novel is of particular importance to this chapter for the way in which it displays the two worlds paradigm; specifically, Alexander's travels in Turkey enact the

cultural fable of two distinct, oppositional worlds.<sup>51</sup> The cultural encounters narrated in Alexander's autobiographical novel reveal his thinking within the framework of the two worlds paradigm. However, at the same time, his cultural oppositions and fixations are shown to be unstable and they are deconstructed. Significantly, Nadolny's over-arching narrative structure and the juxtaposition of Alexander's diary entries with excerpts from Alexander's autobiographical novel, show how the novel *Selim* destabilizes the assumed fixity and stability of cultures and identities as authentic wholes. The novel portrays these worlds and the two worlds paradigm as relationally constructed, as part of a textual and discursive project.<sup>52</sup> Particularly, in the way that the novel exposes Alexander's dilemmas and struggles in his efforts to represent Selim's culture, Nadolny conveys that there can be neither an authentic and real figure 'Selim' nor a whole and stable world to which such a 'Selim' might belong.

I begin with an example from Alexander's novel. The narrative illustrates a cultural encounter that displays a "two worlds" scenario, while simultaneously deconstructing the cultural divide and the generalized cultural differences . The exemplary passage begins with the third-person narrator Alexander opining that the Germans tend to believe their own stories about Turkey. He illustrates this with a recollection that involves Selim, his friend Vampirismet and a German man. As all three sit together at the bar, Ismet translates the German man's opinions to Selim. "Er meint, daß bei uns die Ehefrauen niemals neben ihrem Mann gehen. Er sagt, das sei keine gute

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<sup>51</sup> Similar to my leaving of the phrase two worlds paradigm unmarked with the understanding that the phrase implies the essentializing discourse of two fixed worlds, I am leaving the phrase cultural fable unmarked—given that the fable itself entails this paradigm.

<sup>52</sup> What I mean by this textual project has two levels; we are witnessing Alexander construct a novel and write about the Turkish culture, but in essence we are reading a project crafted by Nadolny. I explicate the implications of this bi-level project—in terms of Nadolny's creation of an author within the novel *Selim*—along with the implications of the level of the diary entries later in the chapter more thoroughly, especially in terms of the illusory effect it creates.

Partnerschaft.” Selim pretends to be thinking hard about the statement while he enjoys the fact that both of them are waiting expectantly for his answer. Instead of opposing the stereotype inherent within the German man’s statement, as it is especially strengthened with the addition of the adverb *niemals*, Selim replies with a tall-tale: “Wegen der Bürgersteige! Bei uns sind sie nur vierzig Zentimeter breit, sag ihm das! Eine alte osmanische Vorschrift.” After the German man inquires the logic of this Ottoman regulation, Selim replies: “Die Straße muß breit genug bleiben für die Esel!”(104)

In this scenario, we encounter multiple layers of differences that are articulated in the form of generalizations on cultural distinctions. First, the German man’s opinion that Turkish women never walk beside their husbands generalizes and passes an evaluative judgement on Turkish pairs. While the generalization implies that the Turkish women are all subservient to their husbands, it also judges this social or cultural difference as bad—obviously in contrast to the good relationship of marriage in German families, where the wives walk next to their husbands. The narrative puts into question the stability of this generalization and the difference that it articulates. The articulation of the generalized difference functions to rhetorically delineate an absolute cultural divide between Turks and Germans.

Second, Selim’s answer upholds the cultural divide implicated in the original utterance of the German man by further reproducing another ‘cultural’ difference: the lie that the streets must remain wide enough for donkeys, according to a supposed Ottoman rule. In Selim’s answer, meant to make use of humor and irony in order to ridicule and destabilize the original remark, what emerges is not only a neglect on Selim’s part to refute the idea that Turkish women are subservient and walk behind their men, but also

the implication that the Turkish culture lags far behind modernity in that it is still following the rules of the Ottoman Era. Selim's sarcastic retort positions him as knowing and speaking for the Turks. However, he does not oppose the generalized cultural difference inherent in the German man's comment. Instead of rejecting this fixation for the behavior of all Turks, Selim's answer ridicules the original articulation, implicitly mocking the questioner, while at the same time reifying the cultural divide. On the other hand, although this moment re-enacts the two worlds paradigm by exposing instances in which cultural fixations are reproduced, it is not to be taken genuinely and at face value. The narrator tells the reader how Selim and Ismet enjoy telling lies with which they make fun of the fixed beliefs underlying Germans' own stories about Turkey.

The instance examined above destabilizes both the cultural divide and the difference that it exposes. Similarly to the German man's opinion—one that implies an essentialized difference between the two cultures, but which does not have a real foundation—Selim's answer also articulates an absence of grounding, showing the cultural differences between characters to be instable as they are produced relationally in the dynamics of negotiation and play. Between the German man's fixation, which he seems to believe as truth about the Turkish culture, and Selim's answer emerges further differences. While a cultural divide is generated and uncovered, the reader is lead to understand that this divide is not to be taken at face value and instead functions to destabilize the fixed nature of the 'Other' culture. Through the process of this interaction, the fixed cultural divide no longer becomes the primary issue; it is made the target of irony. What this process produces, however, does matter; namely, the fixation of identity around the 'cultural world' of Turks is altered.

As we have seen, Selim's answer deconstructs the fixity of the cultural world for which he assumes the responsibility of representation, while the reader is shown how this process takes place. The complex cultural encounter between the German man and Selim entails a movement between identity and alterity, and it generates a destabilization of cultural identities as essential wholes. By alterity, I mean the alteration of the protagonist's fixed self or his presumed culture—perceived as an encompassing ‘world-view’—instead of implying exclusively the other as the equal of alterity. It is precisely through the interaction and the negotiative space with the other that the protagonist's identity undergoes an alteration.

The above example is particularly important because Alexander introduces Selim as a great story-teller. In fact, Alexander views Selim as someone he admires for his story-telling, so much so that Alexander confesses Selim as his teacher, “Selim studieren, er soll mein Lehrer sein, so etwas wie ein natürlicher Lehrer für Rhetorik” (8). What Alexander admires in Selim's speech is Selim's ability to tell stories without caring about their truth value. In fact, the illustration of Selim's story-telling exemplifies Alexander's writing—almost as an imitation of Selim's art of telling stories—and especially so during his narrations of his time in Turkey. Alexander in Turkey, similar in practice to the art of Selim's story-telling, performs the role of representing the Turkish world through the act of story-telling, while at the same time he is producing a cultural fable about the Turks. Although we witness Alexander's thinking with the two worlds paradigm, a close look at these instances reveals that Alexander's representations are a performance—like Selim's story telling—and not to be taken at face value. In order to further expand this examination, however, it is first important to re-visit how Nadolny structures the novel

*Selim* through the deployment of two intertwined narratives, with the protagonist Alexander as the author of both.

#### SELIM's STRUCTURE

The three pages of a Vorspann (prelude) at the beginning of *Selim* serve to introduce the reader to the overall narrative structure in which italicized intermittent diary entries—that either tell of events to come or comment on events that have already happened—accompany the autobiographical narrative of the novel that Alexander is in the process of writing. As this condensed exemplification of *Selim*'s structure illustrates, the intertwinement of the two narrative levels creates an unconventional flow and presents challenges to the reader in locating a sequential order of events. In a sense, the reader is obliged to carefully go back and forth between pages in order to put different pieces of information together to make sense of what is happening in the overarching temporal plot. In what follows, with brief examples, I illustrate how the side-by-side structure of the two narratives not only poses a challenge to the reader's comfort level in following the sequence of events, but also creates a destabilizing effect on the reader's ability to put the events and information together in a meaningful or accurate way. While the deployment of these two levels unsettles the reader's abilities to understand—by creating time gaps as well as reflecting dilemmas and contradictions—they also destabilize Alexander's narration's validity.

For a first example of the awkward juxtaposition of diary entries and novel excerpts, one need only look to the Vorspann. An entry dated 1972 and taken from Alexander's actual novel intimates Alexander's decision to stop attending his rhetorical speech courses where he is learning to tell stories and instead to begin studying Selim, his new teacher. The first diary entry in the Vorspann dated 1979, informs the reader of

Alexander's decision to write an autobiographical novel. However, later in *Selim*, two diary entries in 1980, along with the actual novel, convey contradictions about Alexander's pursuit of writing. In one of these entries, dated 1980, the reader learns that Alexander has been writing his novel for a week. When Alexander's girlfriend Gisela asks him why the novel is also about Selim, Alexander replies that the Turks interest him only marginally; instead, he is interested only in Selim. “*Die Türken interessieren mich mehr am Rande, wichtig ist mir nur er*”(31).<sup>53</sup> However, after some pages of the novel, as the narrative is broken with another diary entry, Alexander declares that ‘Selim’ is a story for which he is responsible. “*Selim ist eine Geschichte, die ich erzählen will. Selim ist einer, dem ich verpflichtet bin. In der Türkei Anarchismus und Terror, viele Tote*” (47). Thus, Alexander is not only interested in Selim and does not tell just Selim’s story as his initial response to Gisela implies. In addition, in contrast to his claims revealed in the diaries that Alexander is responsible for Selim’s story and that his novel is about Selim, the novel illustrates as much about Alexander, his life in Berlin, his depression, and his relation to Selim. Hence, the novel is also about himself.

Another diary entry reflects on Alexander’s friend Olaf’s reactions to Alexander’s novel, whereby Olaf remarks on the insufficiency and ambivalence of Selim’s narrative voice in the text: “*Du beschreibst ihn als Erzähler. Es ist aber erstaunlich wie wenig er erzählt. Beweis: dein Nichtwissen über seine Jugend*” (321). This is precisely why Alexander expresses afterward how he wants to know more about Selim’s cultural background in Turkey. In his reflections from the diary entry in 1981, Alexander confesses how little he knows about Selim’s background and Turkey: “*ich denke*

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<sup>53</sup> When she asks if he knows a lot about Selim, Alexendar says that he knows all Selim has told him—filling five full notebooks. With a few stories by another guest worker Mesut too, Alexander says that now they have reached until 1970.

*dariüber nach, ob seine Herkunft etwas Besonderes zu bedeuten hat. Aber ich habe keine Ahnung, weil ich von der Türkei keine Ahnung habe*" (294). Alexander is worried that he does not know enough about Selim and his background but at the same time, as his earlier reflection showed, he sees himself responsible for representing Selim and his Turkish world. By supplementing the narrative of Alexander's novel, the diary entries are especially important for revealing not only the changing reasons and the ambivalence in Alexander's writing but also for making the reader aware of the unstable grounds on which Alexander founds his project.

In his recent book *Cosmopolitan Claims*, Venkat Mani analyzes Nadolny's strategies of displaying Alexander's reliance on Selim; Mani emphasizes Alexander's unstable position as a narrator and his self-awareness thereof.<sup>54</sup> Indeed, while Alexander represents himself as reliant on Selim and tells others that he needs to hear Selim's story in order to finish writing it, the reader learns that the image of Selim in the novel is not real anyway. Selim invents stories about himself, changing facts about his family and events. For instance, Alexander's diary entry reflects on how Selim says his grandfather is from Datca and then says "*Da habe ich wohl mal Spaß gemacht. Meine Großväter stammen aus Istanbul und Diyarbakir*" (252). In addition, Alexander faces the dilemma that his novel is not portraying Selim himself but rather Alexander's own image of Selim and his world. He expresses in his diary entries his worries that Selim does not recognize himself in the novel: "*Ich hätte mir denken können, das ihn die Begegnung mit "meinem"*

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<sup>54</sup> Venkat Mani, *Cosmopolitan Claims. Turkish-German Literatures from Nadolny to Pamuk*, (Iowa: U of Iowa Press 2007), 86.

*Selim befremdet*”(252)<sup>55</sup>. Hence, in the discursive space between Selim’s telling and Alexander’s terrain of writing, a new ‘Selim’ emerges.

The narrative of Alexander’s novel, complemented by his reflections in the diary entries, reveals the production of Selim and his world as an invention—a relational construction of instabilities. Commenting on the aesthetics of hybridity within *Selim*, Manfred Schmeling observes that story-telling and representation serve as expressions of cultural hybridity and simultaneously reveal the constructed nature of differences: “Das Andere und Fremde manifestiert sich nicht mehr direkt, sondern erscheint als eine Funktion des Erzählens und Darstellens.”<sup>56</sup> The dynamic between the novel and the entries not only reveals that Selim is not the ‘real’ Selim but also represents a changing Alexander. Based on these points, it is important to briefly consider *Selim*’s unique structure that allows a destabilization effect on the reader.

First, as I have already mentioned, the diary entries, by introducing contradictions to Alexander’s novel itself, and also by creating temporal breaks in narration, work to unsettle the reader’s flow of understanding. Further, as Wolfgang Bunzel’s reading points out, *Selim*’s two levels create the “illusionsstörende Erzählen eines auktorialen narrators,” whereby the reader sees first “the construction of a fictional illusion” and second “the laying bare of that illusion” on the level of the diary entries.<sup>57</sup> Precisely through this metafictionality, the author Nadolny displays to the reader the dilemmas and inabilities of his aspiring authorial character, Alexander, in understanding and representing the Other

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<sup>55</sup> In another entry he writes:” *Selim erzählt mir weiterhin sein Leben, obwohl er sich, so vermute ich, im Roman nicht wiederfindet*”(253).

<sup>56</sup> Manfred Schmeling, “Poetik der Hybridität—hybride Poetik?,” *Komparatistik. Jahrbuch der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Allgemeine und Vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft*, (Synchron, Heidelberg, 1999/2000),16.

<sup>57</sup> Wolfgang Bunzel, “Sten Nadolny’s Roman *Selim oder die Gabe der Rede*,” *Sten Nadolny*, 1996, 149-50.

and his culture. The two narratives portray the emergence of his contradictions, frustrations and inventions. At the same time, Nadolny is able to disassociate himself from his protagonist's rhetorical production by giving authorial authority to an unreliable narrator. The emergence of another 'Selim' and particularly Alexander's inventions about the Turkish culture as well as the reader's position as witness of Alexander's altering position put the reader also in a destabilized position. This functions to deconstruct any chance that the reader might interpret Alexander's writing and his cultural fixations as substantially true.

#### ALEXANDER IN TURKEY

From a journal entry dated 1983, the reader learns that Alexander has lost contact with Selim after a quarrel. In a discussion with Alexander, Selim defends the Turkish government with the logic that Turkey's dilemma is that it faces too many problems at once.<sup>58</sup> When Alexander contests, "*Aber Foltern, Parteien unterdrücken, ganze Dörfer dem Erdboden gleichmachen?*," Selim becomes angry and calls Alexander a victim of Western propaganda for believing each bit of hysterical gossip, like a naive child. When Alexander gives Selim a speech about democracy and the freedom of opinion, Selim loses his nerves: "*Ich kenne euer System, und ich kenne unseres, ich habe unter beiden gelebt... Reiche Leute haben andere Sorgen als arme. Nur: Sagt uns nicht, was wir tun sollen, laßt die Besser-wisserei bleiben!*"(401) . Now, following the argument, Alexander expresses his wish to make peace with Selim. "*Ich werde Selim besuchen und ihn akzeptieren, wie er ist....er wird mir meinen kritischen Anfall verzeihen*" (427).

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<sup>58</sup> He reasons with the following problems: the terrorists, separatists, the fanatic neighbors in the East. He argues that only an Atatürk or someone of his level of reasoning can handle all this.

Alexander also confesses that he needs Selim, so that Selim might tell him the story of past years.

However, as the reader is able to understand, Alexander does not truly need to hear Selim's story because the figure 'Selim' changes repeatedly in Alexander's writing, regardless. Rather, it seems that by traveling and searching for Selim, Alexander wishes to experience and *learn* about Turkey, for Selim reproached him for his ignorant claims. As further evidence of this reading of Alexander's intentions—and, in a manner that serves to prove Selim's critique of Alexander as accurate—the novel that Alexander writes in Turkey conveys his own protagonist as a know-it-all [*Besserwisser*], trying ostensibly to understand and represent the Turkish culture, while at the same time approaching it with essentialisms and binary cultural divides.

Before further analysis, it is important to introduce the contours of a literary-critical debate that has developed around Nadolny's *Selim*, particularly as it concerns the novel's final chapter—which takes place in Turkey—and Nadolny's depiction of Alexander' character there. This debate began after Leslie Adelson's article "Opposing Oppositions" was criticized by Ülker Gökberk for the ways in which Adelson summarizes the Turkish history of the last several centuries, "in ein paar Seiten und als Einführung zur literarischen Analyse," as if these can be coherently conferred.<sup>59</sup> While Adelson criticizes the way in which Germany "figures itself around 1990 as a European nation, in part, by figuring Turkey as a non-European," she does so by summarizing a

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<sup>59</sup> Gökberk, Ülker. "Culture Studies und die Türken: Sten Nadolny's Selim oder die Gabe der Rede im Lichte einer Methodendiskussion". *The German Quarterly*. (70.2 ), 106.

supposed Turkish orientation toward Europe which started with Atatürk's foundation of the Turkish Republic and his implemented reforms.<sup>60</sup>

Gökberk is equally critical of Adelson's discussion and interpretation of Turkey's fundamental issues such as secularity, religion, modernization and the Armenian Genocide, which are communicated by Adelson to the reader as "differences." Particularly, while Adelson reads *Selim* as "shifting the focus from a German us and a Turkish them" in its focus on the narrative treatment of the German history of Jews along with the story of the Turkish guest-workers and their silenced stories, Adelson notes Selim's Europeanized Turkishness as bearing another silence, namely, the Armenian genocide.<sup>61</sup> Although the Armenian Genocide is absent in Nadolny's novel, Adelson draws the conclusion that *Selim* "bespeaks the need to explore more productive ways of knowing the relationship between the Turks' and Germans' silences."<sup>62</sup>

While Adelson's reading may present a relevant analogy, especially with regard to her larger argument about the destabilization of an oppositional German discourse by reading the hybrid nature of Alexander's story, along with the role played by Selim, I must also agree with Gökberk's criticism of Adelson's engagement with Turkey through themes that Nadolny does not actually thematize. I find it equally important to examine the ways in which the novel *Selim* itself engages directly with Turkey through

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<sup>60</sup> Leslie Adelson, "Opposing Oppositions: Turkish-German Questions in Contemporary German Studies," *German Studies Review* (17.2), 309.

Further, Adelson reads Selim's Turkishness as Europeanized: for instance, because Selim is not especially religious and he has a portrait of Atatürk. Also, she interprets Selim's championship in Greco-roman style wrestling as well as his name Selim, the name of a Sultan "who established permanent Ottoman embassies in European capitals," as signs that indicate Nadolny's creation of a Europeanized Turkish figure in Selim. 313. Gökberk's underlying criticism concerns how Adelson becomes a cultural communicator of Turkish differences in her attempt to oppose Turkish and German oppositions.

<sup>61</sup> "Selim's Europeanized 'Turkishness' thus bears the *unarticulated* taint of the Young Turks' bloodied hands in addition to the expressly and favorably articulated mark of Westernized secularism," 314.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 321.

Alexander's experiences there. In *The Turkish Turn*, Adelson disagrees with Manfred Durzak's and Gökberk's readings of the novel that emphasize the intercultural encounter presented by the final chapter that takes place in Turkey.<sup>63</sup> Adelson evaluates their recourse to Turkey as suggesting, "that the story the German narrator feels duty bound to tell is indeed a Turkish story, more specifically, a Turkish story emanating from the Republic of Turkey."<sup>64</sup> However, I do not find that particular attention to the last chapter necessarily makes the story a Turkish one.

Nadolny's own explication about his novel *Selim* in "Wir und Die—Erzählen über Fremde" conveys the sense that his project is meant to be about an exploration of alienation, estrangement and foreignness, not only with another culture but also within one's own self.<sup>65</sup> My reading stresses the significance of the last chapter because it is here that Nadolny not only portrays Alexander in a state of alienation in the Turkish world but also lets the reader witness his reproduction of the two worlds paradigm through his writing, while also displaying Alexander's hardest struggles to write about Selim and his "world."

During Alexander's experiences within the Turkish socio-cultural and topographical landscape, *Selim* displays Alexander's reproduction of the fixities of the two worlds paradigm—with his generalizations, clichés and reflections about cultural

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<sup>63</sup> Adelson, *The Turkish Turn in Contemporary German Literature: Toward a Critical Grammar of Migration*, (New York: Palgrave, 2005), 34. In contrast to her extensive reading of the novel in "Opposing Oppositions", Adelson's reading here is condensed and reiterates her point that the novel "renders the post-war German history intelligible in uncharted ways," 34.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., 34.

<sup>65</sup> Sten Nadolny, "Wir und Die. Erzählen über Fremde. Schreiben zwischen den Kulturen", *Beiträge zur deutschsprachigen Gegenwartsliteratur*. 1996. In this article, while explaining the autobiographical parts of his own writing in *Selim*, Nadolny explains "Fremdheit" as a crucial factor for him: "Fremdheit in uns selbst. Worauf es meinem Empfinden nach beim Schreiben, aber nicht nur beim Schreiben ankommt, ist der Mut und Fähigkeit , selbst "fremd" werden zu können...", 73-74.

differences. On the other hand, the reader is able to see that Alexander's writing forms a construction such as that present within Selim's story telling, and is therefore not to be taken at face value. The sarcasm, irony, and humor which the real author Nadolny imparts to his protagonist Alexander work to create an effect of ridicule similar to Selim's tone and effect, as I discussed earlier. In addition, Alexander's alienation, foreignness, his expectations, and his memories all combine to bring about his cultural fixations, as well as in certain occasions, to generate his self-awareness and self-criticism. In order to explicate more fully, I turn to the narrative level of the autobiographical novel that Nadolny has his protagonist create while in Turkey.

#### THE NARRATIVE OF ALEXANDER'S AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NOVEL

In Istanbul, Alexander discovers that Selim died in a car accident after their quarrel several years ago. After an ensuing psychological crisis, he decides to travel through Turkey and end his novel by writing the story of Selim with a different and happy ending: "*Das Leben steckt in den Geschichten. Also kann man jemanden durch sie am Leben erhalten. Jedenfalls ist Erfinden besser als Nicht- mehr- finden. Oder? Ich trinke raki*" (433). Drinking Raki and observing, Alexander not only invents a new end to Selim's story but also invents stories about Turkey. In a sense, Nadolny has Alexander act like Selim the story-teller, telling stories about Turkey, the Turkish people, their culture and their social behaviors. He composes one of these stories on the bus ride from Muğla to Adana after he has decided to travel through Turkey and write the novel to an end. Like his decision to re-invent Selim's personal story, Alexander creates a story that begins like a fairy tale, "Es war einmal ein großes Land namens Türkei... Spät, sehr spät wurde die feudale Türkei zu einem Industriestaat „(438). With the transition from a feudal to industrial world, and the Turks' uninterrupted move ever since, Alexander

narrates that they all traveled, “zu Fuß, mit dem Esel, einige sogar per Eisenbahn,” and most of them with cars, with motorcycles, and in busses, which were faster than any private autos.

The fast buses are driven by military-like captains wearing white shirts, ties, and sun glasses. Alexander’s story about the Turks’ transition to an urban and modern life associates this transition first with travel and with the modernization of transportation—from walking on foot, to travel by donkey, by train, to by bus, which here is the fastest mode. Second, his descriptions associate the captains of these buses with the military; this association, and particularly the emphasis on their modern clothes, invokes the formation of the Turkish Republic by Atatürk and the influential role of the military in Turkish modernization.<sup>66</sup>

However, while his references to travel, types of modern transportation, modern clothing and the military all allude to the contemporary Turkish nation’s passage toward modernity, Alexander next reflects that someday the Turks would all arrive at that place when they can settle and finally be able to feed their families, following this with a question, “aber, wann war das?” This reflective question is ambivalently posed in both future and past tenses.<sup>67</sup> While the reflection links how the Turks are still on the move and have not reached a satisfactory life standard, it ironically ends with an ambiguous question posed in the past tense—as if they have already arrived at such a place. The

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<sup>66</sup> Alexander’s observations in Adana invokes this more implicitly when he watches some fountain’s figures that tell the story of Republic’s victory and he reflects that wherever there is a statue of Atatürk, there is always a bank to sit upon. He also comments on the gaze of Atatürk as a mix of a cold English gentleman and a proud Pascha. 443.

<sup>67</sup> „Irgendwann würden alle dort angekommen sein, wo sie ihr Können entfalten und ihre Familien mit dem ernähren konnten, was sie gelernt hatten—aber wann war das?”(438).

ambivalent question in the past tense could imply the context of the Turkish migration to Germany given the fact that Alexander is well aware of the guest-worker presence there.

On the other hand, the semantics of the sentence inherently calls to mind a non-existent time and aesthetically strengthens the “fable” quality of Alexander’s story—a fairy tale—which begins with “once, there was a land.” Although we can extract through varying interpretations the meanings of the allusions Alexander’s observations and descriptions call forth—for instance, allusions to Turkish modernization or to Turkish worker migration to Germany—the style of his story telling builds an effect of distancing the reader from the “truth” or “reality” of what Alexander is narrating. The reader thus senses that what Alexander tells from this point onward can only be likened to Selim’s stories—an invention made up of Alexander’s observations, memories, perceptions within the Turkish culture’s spaces and his encounters.<sup>68</sup>

While driving through the dusty Turkish landscape in a bus that resembles an airplane, Alexander reflects with contempt on what he observes. The honk of the bus is like a sound from the underworld, and what is more, the buses also get stuck, like the one he sees “im Staub zwischen mehreren Haufen leerer Plastikflaschen” (439). In this excerpt, despite the speed and efficiency of the buses, their sound is connected with the underworld and, in the rest of the passage, with Turks’ careless driving. Additionally, when one imagines the bus with the proportions of an airplane, then one can imagine the huge dimensions of these plastic piles—a comparison that is purposeful and that reflects a criticism that Alexander’s observations constantly raise.

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Up to this point, this episode displays a satirical criticism about the Turks' transition to an industrial life that consists of two primary aspects: speed and modernity on the one hand, coupled with environmental corruption and reckless irresponsibility about human life on the other—which again will be revealed more transparently in Alexander's next observation. Alexander's descriptions reference modernity but in a critical way, namely, that the Turks have not really achieved an acceptable modern standard. Especially his descriptions in the next city that is portrayed, Adana, show how, while Turkey and the Turkish people are developing and modernizing rapidly, at the same time they lag behind Alexander's expectations of civil modernity, for example, in his expectations of being served his meal in the European way.

In this sense, as Adelson declares in “Opposing Oppositions,” “Germany figures itself around 1990 as a European nation, in part, by figuring Turkey as a non-European,” through the characterization of Alexander, Nadolny presents us with a figure who symbolizes his Europeanness in a similar fashion, by pointing out what is non-European in the Turkish spaces and peoples.<sup>69</sup> The portrayal of the Turkish socio-cultural and spatial landscapes through the eyes of a cynical German protagonist helps to reveal the way he thinks within the borders of the two worlds paradigm, as well as illustrating the conditions that bring about this cultural division: for instance, poverty, underdevelopment, and Islamic difference. While the larger issues of lagging behind modernity and poverty continue to appear in his travels through further Turkish cities, the point of Islamic difference, for instance, is illustrated during Alexander's talk with a Turkish engineer.

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<sup>69</sup> Leslie Adelson, “Opposing Oppositions,” 309.

Alexander is astonished by the Turkish buses that fly like airplanes, crossing over lane lines without noticing and braking unexpectedly (438). He asks an engineer why the drivers are so reckless. When the man answers, “Wir haben eine gute Reaktionsfähigkeit,” Alexander creates his own explanation: “die Türken versuchten nah am Risiko zu leben, damit die Gefahr, die Allah etwa für sie bereithielt, keinen zu langen Anlauf nehmen konnte.”<sup>70</sup> Alexander cannot understand the differences of Turkish mannerisms and wants to know the reason why Turks act in certain ways. However, his desire to comprehend the Turkish manners disguises his naïve generalization that all Turkish drivers are reckless. Upon the seemingly absurd answer he receives, he explains away what he cannot understand by referencing a seeming essential difference between the two cultures: namely, the Turks’ fear of Allah. Hence, although Alexander’s purported motivation is to understand, his situation resembles the earlier example of the conversation between Selim and the German man. Selim’s replies to the German man’s stereotyped opinions of Turkish culture, in a similar way to Alexander’s reaction to the Turkish engineer, merely work to reproduce further differences and to ridicule the cultural divide between the two characters.

Alexander’s generalizing explanation of the reckless Turkish driving, which follows a humorous, if unexpected answer to the initial inquiry, turns into a sarcastic reification of a divide between the two parties. The depiction of how this divide is constructed not only illustrates the larger question that underscores Nadolny’s project, namely, “ist es überhaupt möglich den Anderen adäquat zu verstehen?” but also

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<sup>70</sup> Alexander’s explanation continues: “Es war, als wollten sie ihr tägliches Quantum an Gefahr selbst erzeugen, damit sich höheren Orts kein tödlicher Schlag anbahnte,” 440.

destabilizes the fixity of both the differences and the divide created.<sup>71</sup> While in this example and in numerous occasions during Alexander's interactions in Turkey, he generalizes the Turks and explains their differences through ironic and sarcastic remarks that uphold a cultural divide, the reader is able to see that, in fact, these differences have no real substance and no reliability.

In Adana, while searching for the street, Manisali Ali Bey caddesi, a street on which Selim's trainer lives, Alexander is lost and instead finds Europastraße 5. He returns to the bus station to visit an archeological museum: for a small price, one could see “griechische, byzantinische, türkische Grabmäler”(441). Right after, while he cannot find the Ulu Cami or the Manisali Ali Bey caddesi, he stumbles upon a “wirklich orientalisches Viertel” where he observes men wearing the fez and traditional clothes. He notices how each corner of the district was busy producing something.<sup>72</sup> The district is plain and dusty, but instead of the homeless, there are many old, disabled people here. Alexander feels at home here: “Niemand starrte ihn an, aber es starrte auch niemand absichtlich an him vorbei. Es schien ihm die richtige Mischung von Beachtung und Unaufdringlichkeit zu sein, er kannte sie bisher weder aus Deutschland noch aus der Turkei”( 442).

In fact, Adana is the only city—despite his terrible experience at its hotel and the bad service there—about which Alexander speaks somewhat favorably. Interestingly, while Alexander reflects on the uniqueness of Adana's inhabitants as differentiated from the rest of Turkey and Germany, his descriptions of this location's spaces also portray a

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<sup>71</sup> Manfred, Schmeling, “Poetik der Hybridität—hybride Poetik,” 14.

<sup>72</sup> „Bettfedernreinigung, Motorradwerkstatt, Schreinerei, Bohrmachinenbesitzer, ein Laden für Holzkohle, die aus Ästen gebrannt war, ein Laden für gebrauchte Wasserarmaturen, Getreidemühle, Fahrradreparatur, immer mit uralten Maschinen, die gut in Schuß zu sein schienen“ (441-42).

hybrid mixture, making Adana not quite fit with either Europeanness or Turkishness. The European values of hard work and production mix hand-in-hand with the dust and untended houses within an Oriental district where the men wear the old fashioned fez and traditional pants.

In this passage, Manisali Ali Bey caddesi is coupled with the Europastraße; the Ulu cami with the archeological museum that contains graves from plural civilizations; Atatürk's gaze on the statue is a mix of an Englishman and a pasha. Alexander contrasts the city with the Irish city Athlone. In a following section, when he notices the walls around him, "an der gegenüberliegenden Mauer wurden bedruckte Tücher mit christlichen Motiven feilgeboten: Maria mit Kind, segnender Jesus mit Heiligenschein," Alexander can only jest sarcastically: "Ob vielleicht eine Hongkonger Herstellerfirma sich in der Adresse geirrt und die Südtürkei mit Süditalien verwechselt hatte?" (443). Alexander is certainly not clueless about the mixed cultural heritage in Turkey, which the museum also illustrates. But, his remarks make fun of the Christian patterns on these fabrics that he sees on the walls. A diary entry at the end of the novel comments that Alexander holds it against the Turks that they lived in the old civilizations of the Greeks and Romans. Hence, despite Alexander's proven awareness of the Western heritage present in Turkey, his sarcastic remarks disguise this fact.<sup>73</sup> His unmet expectations about finding a modern and Western world in his surroundings take the form of this ironic articulation, where he questions even the presence of most minute Christian elements in the surroundings.

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<sup>73</sup> "Ich habe wahrscheinlich mein Leben lang den Türken übelgenommen, daß sie im Lande Homers und Hesiods sitzen. Ich tue es nicht mehr," 493.

After he satirizes the Christian motifs on the walls, he next finds Ulu Cami and is able to orient himself back on his way to finding the Manisali Ali Bey caddesi; here, he takes notice of the Roman Bridge of “Sklavenarbeit.” (443) Each of these descriptions of Alexander’s surroundings conveys a constant oscillation between Eastern and Western, or Islamic and Christian sights and elements that Alexander crosses on his path and notices. There is also a change between the districts of the city. After Alexander crosses the Roman Bridge and reaches the other side, he finds groups of five children who throw themselves at the feet of the passers-by in order to sell their goods (444). It is here that Alexander begins to notice poverty and environmental corruption. On the longest street Alexander has ever crossed—on Manisali Ali Bey caddesi—he imagines that this was probably once a beautiful promenade, but now lies under the river’s stink.<sup>74</sup> He contemplates that although the Turks worked diligently, as if they were going to sell everything they produce tomorrow, they care little about the beauty of their city.<sup>75</sup> While he criticizes the untended, ugly houses and the dust, he thinks: “Aber auch Schönheit war schließlich eine Geldfrage.” Thus, Alexander’s reflection about money as a decisive factor reveals his agreement with Selim’s criticism against him—about how rich people have other concerns.

It is important to emphasize several points about the narration of Alexander’s encounters in the Turkish environment. First, as the Westernization or modernization is different from what Alexander had imagined finding in Turkey, he is not only critical of the Turks’ environmental corruption and reckless driving, but further of their uncivilized

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<sup>74</sup> “Sein Ufer bestand aus Geröll und den unvermeidlichen Plastikabfällen.... Auch hier schien jeder etwas herzustellen oder wenigstens zu stapeln, und wenn es alte Plastikkannister waren,” 444.

<sup>75</sup> „Um die Schönheit ihrer Stadt schienen sie sich weniger zu sorgen: Die Häuser zeigten Außenwände aus unverputzten Betonziegeln, Staub war der Herrscher über alles...“ 444.

manners. For instance, in Adana, although the waiters wait and stare at him “wie Hirten ein krankes Schaf,” they never recognize that he does not have a fork and that he has to get up for salt. Following a bad meal and while returning to the hotel, which he satirically describes as a four star hotel that could in fact, with changes, be brought to the level of a four star hotel, he feels ashamed that he is reacting like a spoiled tourist: “Er hatte Geld, Durchfall, schlechte Laune und von nichts eine Ahnung.”<sup>76</sup> Alexander’s characterization here is very similar to the German protagonist Ferdinand in the next novel that I discuss later in this chapter. As we will see, Ferdinand’s search for a Turkish poet gives him the chance to also travel through Turkey, and Ferdinand, as is the case here with Alexander, disassociates himself from the German tourists despite the fact that he is himself German and acts exactly like a tourist. Similarly, while looking for Selim and travelling through Turkey, Alexander is shown to act just like a tourist. He is even willing to admit this, but he also does not want to be identified with them—especially the Germans.

In Izmir, for instance — the industrial and touristic city from which he later flees — and during his climb up a mountain, when he is confronted about his climbing without a map, he writes, “Wenn jemand eine Landkarte hat, dann die Deutschen,” — but not he, not Alexander. I emphasize this because of the way in which Alexander’s realization that he is himself foreign and alienated within the Turkish culture and spaces, coupled with his unwillingness to associate with the German tourists, underscores how his trip through Turkey can be read as one that revolves around his own self-identity. His writing on his observations and experiences indeed reflects this on-going negotiation between his identity and his own alterity.

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<sup>76</sup> „...rasch die Teppiche gereinigt, die trüben Bierflaschen ausgemustert, den Kurzschluß im Fahrstuhl beseitigt...“ 447.

Manfred Schmeling explicates the manner in which the experience of foreignness during a trip abroad entails a balancing act between the self and the familiar.<sup>77</sup> “Fremdheit ist daher auch keine Eigenschaft von Dingen oder Personen, sondern ein Beziehungmodus, ein relationistischer Begriff. ,,”<sup>78</sup> We can see this dynamic not only in the Alexander’s realization that he is himself a tourist and in his disassociation from the tourists, but also in the novel *Selim*’s portrayal of Alexander’s cultural essentialisms and fixations that also then reveal his own shock and shame at the recognition of his opinions and behaviors. In this sense, as especially my later example of Alexander in Istanbul will reveal, Alexander’s self-alienation leads him to meet himself anew during his negotiations with the otherness of the Turkish culture.

Nadolny ends his commentary on the autobiographical nature of his writing in his novel *Selim* with a reflection on a rewarding consequence that can ensue from the experience of being estranged onto one’s self: “In eigener Person ein bißchen fremder sein zu können, das führt – ein erfreulicher Nebeneffekt—unter anderem auch zu größerem Respekt gegenüber den anderen, den *noch* fremderen Fremden.”<sup>79</sup> However, while this may be a joyful side-effect for the writer Sten Nadolny, his protagonist Alexander is only able to experience something of this side-effect at the end of the novel when we see him reach a deeper understanding about himself—due to the conversation he has with Ömer Bey. Nevertheless, in certain moments, Alexander is also shown to harbor more respect for the Turkish world—especially in instances when he looks at himself critically.

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<sup>77</sup> “Zum Beispiel bedingt die Erfahrung von Fremdheit während einer Auslandsreise notwendigerweise ein Abwagen mit dem Eigenen und Vertrauten,” Manfred Schmeling, „Interkultureller Vergleich und Moderner Roman,“ *Neohelicon*(2001), 262.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 262.

<sup>79</sup> Sten Nadolny, “Wir und die—Erzählen über Fremde,” 74.

In my analysis of Alexander back in Istanbul and Nadolny's utilization of the two narrative levels in *Selim*, we will see more transparently how the novel displays the dynamics of Nadolny's central themes—those of foreignness, cultural understanding, essentialisms, and respect – in terms of perception and contrast. How Nadolny reveals these larger issues regarding identities and cultures as relational, and how these issues all tie in with Nadolny's thematization of the acts of story-telling and writing, matter not only in terms of Alexander's self-transformation, but also with regard to the novel's destabilization of individual and cultural identities as fixed and mutually exclusive entities.

Concerning *Selim*'s destabilizing effect—one that undermines the treatment of identities and cultures as fixed wholes—it is important to consider another intricate dynamic that is created from within the protagonist Alexander's autobiographical novel. While Alexander's stories about Turkey and his travels there reflect the way in which his thinking is bounded by the two worlds paradigm, his spatial descriptions actually serve to illustrate neither an exclusively Eastern nor Western but instead a *both Eastern and* Western (both Asian and European) quality of the Turkish cultural and physical landscape.

Beginning with Alexander's fairy tale about the Turkish passage to modernity and the Turks' move between modernity and the 'underworld' — for instance, illustrated by his descriptions of Turkish driving habits and Turkish attitudes toward the environment — Alexander's comments on Turkey convey a mixture of both progress and backwardness, a co-comingling of East and West. On the longest street that Alexander has ever crossed, namely, Manisali Ali Bey caddesi, his depictions of the changing urban

landscape reveal a long line of co-existing opposites. While the city's inhabitants alternate from modern to traditional, the visual monuments change from Islamic to Christian. On the one hand, the surroundings exemplify a huge machine of production—each house and shop presenting a cacophony of hurried material production—but at the same time they also reveal a shabbiness, dust and dirt, homelessness, and childhood poverty.

The European street name mixes with the Turkish, the donkey carriages mix with Buicks, which have been converted into trucks—all of which conveys a panorama of old and new, modern and traditional, development and backwardness, “East and West.” In this sense, what Alexander describes about the places he traverses by no means indicates homogeneity, but rather depicts a hybridized reality.<sup>80</sup> Alexander's narrates his experiences in Turkish places and his encounters with Turkish socio-cultural world through stereotypes, essentialisms, and binary fixations of East and West. Yet, the actual descriptions of physical spaces in fact portray an inherently plural Turkish socio-cultural and physical landscape—for example, the changing architectural, geographical, and cultural landscape in Adana point to no exclusively Eastern or Western ‘world’ in Turkey. Hence, the depictions also enable the interrogation of any fixation of Turkey's identity in definitive and singularized terms.

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<sup>80</sup> In the second chapter to follow, an examination of Özdamar's narrations about the Bridge of the Golden Horn in Istanbul reveals a similar aesthetic – one that combines backwardness and development, East and West; I read her descriptions with regard to Turkey's transitions between modernities—between the past and the present. In contrast to Özdamar's protagonist however, the protagonist Alexander, whom we know is creating his own story, describes his feelings and relation to the physical as well as socio-cultural world around him through *personal* fixations, binaries, stereotypes—illustrating his thinking with the two worlds paradigm, and how his European self looks at the Other's culture from a distance, with contempt and criticism. In Özdamar's narrative, on the other hand, it is the narrator's circle of colleagues, parents or random people whose oppositions and stereotypes the narrator uncovers.

In addition to the above examples, another scene—when Alexander is on the European side of Istanbul—serves to illustrate the way that Alexander’s descriptions, while revealing the dependence of his thinking on the two worlds paradigm at the same time destabilize the binary of East and West, Asia and Europe in Istanbul. The scene also undermines the generalized conception of the European side of Istanbul as the portion of the city that most represents Europe and Europeanness. Within Alexander’s autobiographical novel narrative, in the same section in which Alexander harshly criticizes Turkish ways of life, particularly the men, and then begins to see Selim in each and every one, he also starts expressing his contempt for the European side of Istanbul. Alexander does so by asking whether things were any different from this European bank of Istanbul in the cities Bostancı, Muğla, and Adana. By further distinguishing the European side from these other places, Alexander paints a harsh picture of the European side as “das Bild einer gnadenlos heruntergekommenen Großstadt der dritten Welt” (466).<sup>81</sup>

What Alexander’s descriptions reveal is that, although this is the so called “European” side — because it literally lies on the geographical border of what is considered Europe — it does not, in fact, have much to do with Europe or the modernity associated with “Europe.” In this sense, by destabilizing the ‘Europeaness’ of the European side of Istanbul, Alexander’s criticisms also serve to destabilize the dichotomy of Asia versus Europe within Istanbul, the city itself. Just because this side of the city lays within the spatial boundaries of “Europe” does not mean that it is European. In this sense, Alexander’s criticisms of Istanbul’s European side—usually imagined as the

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<sup>81</sup> “... und nichts fehlte dazu: nicht die aberwitzige Verkehrssituation, nicht der Smog, nicht die gleichgültige Mordlust der Autofahrer, nicht die Hungernden und Bettelnden, nicht die einschüchternde Gegenwart von Uniformierten.... und auch nicht die Geschwader der Besichtigungstouristen....,” 466.

center of Europe in Turkey — destabilize the fixation and contrast that stem from its geographic location.

On the other hand, while revealing Alexander's perceptions of the European side of the city, Nadolny seems eager to question the very idea 'Europeanness' itself and to pose critically how one might judge a place and its people as part of or separate from Europe. Alexander's criticisms, through which he differentiates the European side of Istanbul from the rest of Turkey, actually condense all of those points of criticism that he has been making against Turkey throughout his travels — e.g. the traffic, bad air, the killer drivers, the homeless and the hungry, the uncivilized — all of which seem to gather now on the European side, where Alexander resides.

The reader recognizes how Alexander, in an extreme, exaggerated form, essentializes all of the European side of Istanbul in a manner that reflects non-European and non-civilized qualities. However, the characteristics—"die aberwitzige Verkehrssituation," "der Smog," "die gleichgültige Mordlust der Autofahrer," "die Hungernden und Bettelnden," "die einschüchternde Gegenwart von Uniformierten," "die Geschwader der Besichtigungstouristen"—in fact reflect the central points of the contempt and sarcasm that he expresses throughout the course of his time in Turkey. Although before he ticks-off his detailed list of exaggerated criticisms, Alexander questions whether or not it were different in other cities, even in Adana, he is shown to complain about the non-civilized ways of life there as well. In this sense, his opinions depict all of Turkey as non-European.

Therefore, although Alexander's observations on the European side of Istanbul enable a transgression of a fixed European/Asian divide in the city, Nadolny

simultaneously portrays the way in which Alexander views the entire country as backward and non-European. It is the same criteria on which he judges the European side of Istanbul to be non-European and not civilized enough that he deploys when complaining throughout his travels in Turkey. Alexander's perceptions are ambivalent and colored not only by his frustration that he has not found Selim, but also his own European background. In addition to not finding 'Selim' on his travels, he also has not found in Turkey what he had expected from its culture. Following yet another criticism and a generalization—this time, of the intellectuals in Istanbul—Alexander declares in a single sentence "aus diesem Land kam also Selim." This seeming epiphany illustrates how Alexander begins to identify the figure 'Selim' with a whole country.

So far, I have examined how Alexander's autobiographical narrative portrays his thinking with cultural divides, stereotypes, essentialisms, and fixations. Nadolny purposefully deploys the two worlds paradigm in order to interrogate the ways in which a hybrid space or culture might be perceived through a universalizing and European hegemonic gaze.<sup>82</sup> While revealing Alexander's cultural fixations through sarcasm and irony, the narrative exposes the illusory nature of Alexander's story telling and the relational nature of such fixations. In addition, as I have already explained, Nadolny's elevation of the reader to a privileged position from which to see the dynamics of this illusory construction forecloses the attachment of any truth content to Alexander's cultural fixations. In order to better explore this set of dynamics, in the next section, I will analyze more closely the ways in which Alexander's characterization of Turkey in the novel narrative connects and corresponds to the diary entries.

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<sup>82</sup> By hybrid, I imply the heterogeneous character of Turkey and the co-mingled states of Eastern and Western elements in the Turkish environment.

The inclusion of the entries allows the reader to more transparently uncover the relational and perceptual dimensions of Alexander's acts of writing. This is important because Nadolny's novel strengthens the 'illusory effect' of Alexander's writing and his cultural fixations through the level of the diary entries. The addition of the entries support a reading of Nadolny's project as a construction that deconstructs any assumed stabilities underlying cultures and identities. In the upcoming section, we will also see how the diary entries contribute to making manifest the fragmented and changing identity of the protagonist Alexander.

#### THE DIARY ENTRIES AND THE INTERACTION OF THE TWO NARRATIVES

A closer look at how Nadolny uses the addition of diary entries, and thereby deploys what might be read as a postmodern style and fragmented structure, will show more clearly how *Selim* produces the concept of 'culture' "als ein nie zu sich selbst findendes offenes System, oder vielmehr als ein strukturelles Dilemma, als eine sich perpetuierende Unentschiedenheit zwischen Identität und Alterität."<sup>83</sup> Through the use of diary entries, the novel *Selim* portrays how individual and cultural identities undergo alterations through exchange and negotiation as well as through the process of trying to understand and represent another culture. In fact, the level of the diary entries is an important component of the novel through which we can see Nadolny's overall narrative construction as a palimpsest. This palimpsest encompasses and exposes layers of Alexander's memories, his ideas about Selim and Turkey, Alexander's observations and imaginations about the Turkish world during his travels, his struggles to write about Selim, as well as reflections on his writing by other characters.

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<sup>83</sup> Manfred Schmeling, "Poetik der Hybridität—hybride Poetik?" *Komparatistik*, 11

Particularly significant about the entries in the section of Nadolny's novel located in Turkey is the way in which they enable the reader to uncover the gap between Alexander's desire to imagine a fictional, happy story for Selim in Turkey and his inability to do so. Specifically, the inclusion of the diary entries, while displaying this dilemma and Alexander's frustrations about the writing process, manifests how Alexander's fixations and his invented stories emerge from the imagination of a frustrated author as well as from that of a person who is suffering from feelings of guilt. Therefore, the gaps and ambivalences between Alexander's aspirations and actions within these two narrative levels allow Nadolny to destabilize any chance that his reader might take Alexander's thinking literally. One short diary entry, following Alexander's experiences in Adana, explains his frustration about not being able to write about a happy Selim: "*Herumzureisen, die Türkei zu besichtigen und eine Geschichte vom Wiedersehen mit Selim zu erfinden ist schwerer als ich dachte.... Selim in der Türkei, ein glücklicher, erfolgreicher, geachteter Selim – warum kann ich ihn mir nicht vorstellen?*"(448). Alexander's particular brand of self-questioning reoccurs frequently in ongoing diary entries, displaying him paralyzed and still not able to write about Selim as a happy person. Hence, in the novel narrative, the character Alexander — despite extensive travelling through Turkey and gathering experiences from diverse spatial and cultural landscapes — can still claim to not have found Selim.<sup>84</sup>

While the seeking character Alexander continues to ask where Selim is hiding, the diary entries express how Alexander actually wants desperately for his own autobiographical character to find Selim and thereby end the novel. Within Alexander's novel narrative, his frustrations about his writing are articulated as a matter of not finding

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<sup>84</sup> „Wer ist dieser Selim.... vor allem: wo? Wo treibt er sich herum, statt mir zu erzählen?“, 453.

Selim physically. But as we know, Selim does not exist physically anymore, and Alexander is also well aware of this fact.<sup>85</sup> Hence, the question that Alexander poses in his diary entry, “*warum kann ich ihn mir nicht vorstellen*” implies his authorial incapacity to imbue his autobiographical character Alexander with the ability to meet a Selim who is a happy man in Turkey. There are several reasons for Alexander’s incapacity and his problem of not finding Selim in the process of writing. First of all, Alexander’s stasis is connected to his psychological trauma as a result of Selim’s early death and the resultant guilt that he feels surrounding this event. Until a cathartic moment near the end of the novel, Alexander is not capable of overcoming his hurdle of guilt. Although he expresses in his diaries the desire to ‘invent’ a happy Selim in Turkey, he seems unable to achieve these aspirations in his novel. Instead, as I soon will examine, what Alexander finds in Turkey eventually turns out to be a particular figuration of “Selim”—a close association of ‘Selim’ with a stereotypical Turkish world.

Another reason for Alexander’s inability to imagine a happy ‘Selim’ figure in his writing concerns what I have previously explained in relation to his complete disillusionment with the Turkish world and the Turkish ways of life. After Alexander’s travels through Turkey, and upon his return to Istanbul with an attack of fever, several diary entries reflect Alexander’s growing unhappiness with his surroundings as well as provide commentary on Alexander’s illness and his inability to write about Selim. It is important to note that toward the end of *Selim*, the diary entries and the novel narrative illustrate a growing resemblance between the two Alexanders. For instance, one of the

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<sup>85</sup> As mentioned earlier, Alexander learns on his first day in Turkey that Selim died in a car accident after Selim and Alexander’s quarrel several years ago. Alexander has been travelling and trying to write a happy end to Selim’s story.

entries, written in Mesut's apartment and reflecting Alexander's unhappy feelings, almost mirrors the characterization of Alexander in the narrative of the autobiographical novel when he has a breakdown in the apartment.

Concurrent with these diary entries, within the autobiographical novel narrative, a longer excerpt explains his protagonist's growing alienation and feelings of hopelessness in his surroundings. "Je länger er hier blieb, desto fremder, hoffnungsloser und unglückseliger erschien ihm die Umgebung" (462). He decides that he could go back home if only he could free himself from Selim. As a consequence of this realization, he next expresses, "Und mehr und mehr schien die Türkei selbst ihn von Selim zu befreien; es war, als wollte sie ihm zumindest dabei helfen" (464). As Alexander's inability to find Selim mixes with his unhappiness in his surroundings, the urgency to finish the novel and to then leave Turkey cause him to find a quick outlet by equalizing Selim with the rest of Turkey. Alexander begins to recognize in each detail and face around him Selim's spirit — his lightness about things, his ability to live for the moment, his taking of risks, and his leaving everything up to Allah (464).

In the rest of the section that includes several pages of Alexander's largest generalizations and criticisms—ranging from topics of Turkish bureaucracy and the proud Turkish men, to the problem of environmental corruption and the third worldly life in the European side of Istanbul, and to the pretentious intellectuals—Alexander declares in a finalizing statement: "Aus diesem Land also kam Selim" (468). In contrast to his earlier thoughts about how Selim was not a typical Turk and how the Turks were therefore unimportant to Alexander, here he expresses the opposite: "Nein, er war nicht untypisch, von seiner Sorte gab es Millionen" (469). Alexander's conceptualization of

Selim changes from descriptions of him as an atypical to a typical Turk. Hence, the way in which Alexander associates Selim with his cultural essentialisms about the Turkish people makes Selim appear as the very representative of the differences that supposedly exist between Turkey and Europe.

However, to reiterate, the diary entries work to destabilize the reliability or validity of Alexander's reflections by uncovering not only Alexander's aspirations to imagine and write a happy Selim but also his frustrations about his inability to do so. Because of the reader's awareness of Alexander's psychological trauma surrounding the loss of Selim, as well as of his inner world as an author, which is shared through the diary entries, the reader is able to see through the character of Alexander and his generalizations from within the autobiographical novel narrative. His change in attitude toward Selim and the way that Selim then becomes associated with all other Turks reflect Alexander's motivation to simply do away with the story and to finally move on. By exposing the dynamics and the circumstances under which they come about, the intertwinement of the two narratives in the larger novel *Selim* plays an important role in destabilizing the validity of Alexander's fixations as well as any chance that the reader might take them seriously.

Toward the end of *Selim*, the entries and the novel excerpts become more and more temporally approximate in addition to the similarity of their content. While a changing Alexander perceptible through the diary entries, the novel narrative itself also conveys an altering Alexander. It is important to analyze how the characterizations of Alexander convey a change within this narrative; at the same time that his thinking with the two worlds paradigm is displayed, the narrative now also portrays the manner in

which Alexander critically self-questions himself for his European and hegemonic gaze. This creates a destabilizing effect on the substantiality of his fixations through the process of his own self-recognition. The following incident in the narrative illustrates this point; the excerpt takes place with Alexander in the character Mesut's apartment on the European side of Istanbul, and it is located in the novel after Alexander's crude generalizations of Turks and his declaration that Selim is a typical Turk.

One night, Alexander has been sitting in the balcony of Mesut's apartment at three o'clock in the morning. He cannot sleep because, for one hour now, he's been kept awake by the endless car honking he hears from the street outside and the words "gel, gel, gel" "komm, komm" (469). Two cars are trying to get out of a one-way street. His view from Mesut's apartment looks directly at an old villa in Bosphorus with a "Söfür Dikkat"—"chauffeur paß auf" sign on its house wall. He has often seen cars driving into the wall because their drivers failed to pay attention to the sign that is there in order to warn drivers that the tight street comes to an end. At one point, Alexander wonders what good this sign may be for typical Turkish drivers with lots of Raki, defective breaks, and out-of-control egos.

On this night, as Alexander is annoyed and cannot sleep because of the men screaming below 'komm', und 'weiter', his gaze falls on the 'söfür dikkat' sign; he loses his nerves and thinks that he just has to leave the city. But soon, the moment of anger gives way to a self-encounter as follows: "Er starre doch vor lauter Überheblichkeit, Verachtung, und Feindseligkeit! Hinter seiner Kritik an Rückständigkeit, an Not und Organisationsmängeln steckte nichts als sein selbstgefälliger Dünkel, ein höherer Mensch zu sein" (470). Alexander is aware that he judges Turkish ways of behavior from the

view-point of his own cultural background. In a similar way to how he earlier reproached himself for being just a tourist and accused himself of being too spoiled, Alexander's self-criticism here acknowledges his German preconceptions, which he carries with him in judging the Turkish world (447).

Alexander continues his reflection with the recognition that the economical urgency is to be criticized, not the style with which people lived in these circumstances: "Wie konnte er sich anmaßen, zu wissen, was in diesem Land falsch war! Die wirtschaftliche Not war das Übel, nicht die Art, wie Menschen mit ihr zu leben versuchten" (470). His reflections on the poverty he observes in Adana, and later in Izmir, as he watches kids throwing themselves at running autos to clean windows (446), along with this reflection in Istanbul portray an Alexander who sympathizes with the effects of poverty in Turkey. Therefore, Alexander seems to agree with Selim's earlier reasoning that it is the economic conditions in Turkey that make it incomparable with any other land. Jonathan Rutherford explains that "our struggles for identity and a sense of personal coherence and intelligibility are centered on the threshold between interior and exterior, between self and other."<sup>86</sup> Accordingly, Alexander's reflections on Turkish cultural differences, the conflicts that arise out of his non-understanding and his generalizations, as well as his later self-awareness about his crudeness of his judgements, combine to reveal Alexander's identity negotiation both in terms of Turkey's otherness and the otherness of his own self.

The above illustrated passage displays not only Alexander's cultural fixations but at the same time illustrate his own self-criticism as a destabilizing agent to the

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<sup>86</sup> Rutherford, "A place Called Home: Identity and the Cultural Politics of Difference," *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, p.24.

substantiality of these fixations. The Alexander who criticizes himself and takes a step back to look at himself anew, is a different Alexander than the one who creates fairy-tales at the beginning of his time in Turkey. Hence, in addition to the changing Alexander that exists between the autobiographical narrative and the diary entries, the novel *Selim* illustrates the author-protagonist Alexander's portrayal of yet another changing Alexander character for his own autobiographical novel.

Nadolny's representation of a changing and unreliable protagonist and narrator encourages the recognition of an ‘illusory effect,’ as concerns the cultural fixations and oppositions, by revealing his “Biographische Krise und Schreibkrise”<sup>87</sup> Alexander’s crisis, which causes the fragmentation in his identity, as well as his own production of an invented Turkey, proves ultimately to be constructive. Wolfgang Bunzel explices how Alexander’s crisis proves productive for Alexander in the sense that “Alexander gibt den Versuch auf, die Geschichte des ‚wahren‘ Selim zu erzählen.”<sup>88</sup> While he instead tries to create „seinen Selim“, the reader sees how he also constructs the cultural world of Turkey; just as with Selim, this ‚world‘ is also unreal and illusory. Hence, Alexander’s autobiographical novel narrative, coupled with the diary entries, manifests the process behind Alexander’s literal invention of *his* Selim and Selim’s world.

Overall, Nadolny’s construction of a character that the reader is able to witness at work, trying to construct a story of Selim and of his world, reveals the process of understanding and representing the Other’s world as one of a perceptual and subjective realm: “Nadolny weiß, daß die Wahrnehmung von Andersheit und besonders von Kulturfremdheit letztlich noch nichts mit Objektivität oder mit Wahrheit zu tun hat. Er

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<sup>87</sup> Wolfgang, Bunzel, “Sten Nadolny’s Roman Selim oder die Gabe der Rede”, 156.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., p.156.

betont im Gegenteil das perspektivische Sehen, die Möglichkeit des Vorurteils, der schiefen oder gar falschen Einschätzung „<sup>89</sup> Schmeling’s insightful emphasis on the subjective and perspectival characteristics of Alexander’s depiction illuminates Nadolny’s narrative well in the sense that *Selim* displays Alexander’s personal world and Alexander’s creation of Selim’s world like a palimpsest—comprising Alexander’s perspectives, his personal interpretations along with frustrations.

The reader bears witness to the manner in which Alexander is beholden to the two worlds paradigm during his period of foreignness and alienation. Alexander’s German background, which is shown to differ from the world around him, his expectation of finding the world of the Greeks and Homer in Turkey—in other words, a civilized culture that he does not find—and his experience of alienation all lead Alexander to portray what he sees in terms of essentialisms and cultural divides. However, Nadolny’s depiction of a self-reflexive protagonist enables the reader to uncover the various factors that affect Alexander’s writings; in doing so, *Selim* manifests that Alexander’s essentialisms have as much, if not more to do with his own identity, his European background, his alienation, and Otherness, and significantly, with his destroyed relationship with Selim than with any stable and fixed Turkish world to which ‘Selim’ belongs.

Furthermore, the manner in which the diary entries depict Alexander as a character disillusioned with his own self and his narrative creation conveys the ongoing negotiation between his identity and his alterity, while also enabling the reader to witness the transformation in the character that Alexander creates for his autobiographical novel. *Selim*’s textual use of a self-reflexive author-protagonist illustrates that “the interrelationships of differences are marked by translation and negotiation” and are

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<sup>89</sup> Manfred Schmeling, *Interkultureller Vergleich und Moderner Roman*, 272.

produced in perceptual and relational dimensions.<sup>90</sup> Specifically, Alexander's use of the diary entries as a terrain where he divulges other characters' reactions to his novel, displays how his own narrativization is marked by the negotiation and translation of Selim and Selim's world. In the following and final section, I turn to an analysis that focuses on the final diary entries; these are entries that take up a larger narrative space than the earlier, shorter entries. We shall see how their use enables Nadolny's project to reveal identities — both Alexander's own and the Turkish 'world' that Alexander represents — as unstable and as relationally constructed. I begin by examining the destabilizing effect present in the diary entry that tells of Alexander's encounter with the character Ömer Bey.<sup>91</sup>

Alexander's diary entry from 1988 recalls the visit of Ömer Bey at the German hospital in Istanbul. Their initial conversation is on a topic where their opinions divide, namely, Alexander's portrayal of Turkey. When Alexander asks Ömer Bey's opinion about what he has written on Turkey, he answers: "*Türkische Intellektuelle scheinen Sie wirklich noch nicht getroffen zu haben!*" Alexander writes: "*Wir lachen*" (473). Ömer Bey's remark and his laughing together with Alexander come about in response to a description from within Alexander's novel: "*Intellektuelle gab es hier auch, oder jedenfalls teuer gekleidete Menschen, die sich selbst so nannten.*" (467). Similar to Selim, who was not able to recognize himself in the novel, Ömer Bey does not recognize Turkey.<sup>92</sup> Alexander's Selim and Turkey are his subjective, perceived, and narrativized

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<sup>90</sup> John Rutherford, "A place called Home: Identity and the cultural Politics of Difference," 26.

<sup>91</sup> Ömer Bey is the mayor of Muğla; Alexander meets him there during his travels. When Alexander is paralyzed in Istanbul and in hospital, Ömer Bey comes to visit him.

<sup>92</sup> As I mentioned at the beginning of my analysis during explaining the unreliability of Alexander's writing, when Alexander has Selim read what he writes about Selim and his world, Selim does not recognize himself.

versions, oscillating between Alexander's own foreignness and otherness onto himself and the absence of Selim.

Ömer Bey's further remarks make Alexander feel ashamed: “*dieses Land kann niemand ohne Leidenschaft betrachten, nicht der Wissende und nicht der Unwissende. Auch wenn sie eines Tages alles kennen, die Leidenschaft wird geblieben sein. Sie wird sich allerdings nicht mehr mit Unbequemlichkeiten abgeben*”(474). While Ömer Bey emphasizes passion as the form of affection to conceive Turkey, his remark also implies how, in lack of appropriate passion, Alexander has attempted to depict Turkey through discomforts. The remark implicitly expresses that although Alexander pretends to know Turkey, Ömer Bey sees it otherwise. In a similar way to Selim, but much more politely, Ömer Bey also accuses Alexander of not knowing Turkey. Alexander immediately decides to remove the parts of his novel that evince Ömer Bey's complaints; in fact, he decides to write the offending chapter again (474). Alexander seems indirectly to accept that he does not know Turkey.

He has wanted to know the Turkish world, but in the process he has rather been describing it from the view-point of his own expectations and estrangements. Alexander's re-telling of Ömer Bey's reactions to his novel in the diary illustrates the significance of the entries. The conversations about the novel convey the idea that culture is a subjective realm, with differences that are rewritten and reproduced through personal narratives. The different reactions and reflections by other characters manifest the insecure grounds of Alexander's cultural endeavor. Therefore, the entries' inclusions provide a complementary effect to that present in *Selim*'s overall production—one in which cultures, differences, and cultural fixations are seen as unstable and relational constructs.

The entry with Ömer Bey is important also for illustrating Alexander's self-transformation. The conversation between the two characters reveals how Alexander's cultural essentialisms are generated at least in part by his conflict regarding his aspirations to represent Selim and his world, as well as the trauma surrounding Selim's death. Alexander writes that Ömer Bey intimates it wasn't Alexander's fault, but "*die Sache Allah's*" that Selim had to die after Alexander and Selim quarreled several years back. "*Daß Selim Ihnen nachfuhr und dabei mit seinem Sohn verunglückte, ist nicht Ihr Werk, sondern allein die Sache Allahs! Er beendet das Leben, nicht wir.*" This remark, ending as it does with the pronoun "we", brings the two characters together, regardless of Alexander's initial discomfort with this proximity.

Alexander characterizes Ömer Bey's comment as stereotypical and very oriental. But, in the same moment, he experiences a catharsis. He is not guilty in Selim's death : "*der Liebe leben, nicht den Schuldgefühlen! Hoffnungsvolle Gedanken. Sie werden zu meiner Verblüffung, fast Befremdung, ausgelöst durch nichts weiter als das Stichwort "Sache Allahs"*"...(475). Ömer Bey's remark represents a cultural difference and nuisance to Alexander because it explains events in terms of Allah; regardless however, it leads to the hopeful thoughts, as Alexander articulates. Following this encounter, he is finally able to write a different end to the novel. Before this moment, his feelings of guilt prevent him from imagining another end. He is now able to free himself from responsibility regarding Selim's death and thereby to overcome the writer's block to write a new ending for his story. Thus, the interaction and exchange between self and other produces a further exchange of Alexander's self with his inner self, which marks a significant turning point in Alexander's transformation and subsequent self-acceptance.

The discursive spaces of the diaries, complementing Alexander's story-world in the form of an autobiographical novel, manifest the unstable and constructed grounds of the Other, whether this be the image of Selim or of the Turkish world. Additionally, as the above-examined diary entry illustrates, the entries not only contain reflections on the novel by other around Alexander, but also depict Alexander's self-characterization in a more personal way than the autobiographical novel. The following entry, which tells of Alexander's final departure from Turkey, is another illustration of this.

On Alexander's departure flight from Turkey, the pilot announces that the left engine is broken; but, not to worry, the pilot will turn off the right one, and they can still land. Alexander is alarmed when he realizes that the pilot is turning off the working engine. The other passengers, however, try to calm him down. Alexander is reminded by the other passengers of a proverb that Mesut told him during their farewell: "takma kafana tokadan baska bir sey," which literally translates to English as "do not attach anything on your head other than a hairpin."<sup>93</sup> Alexander could not receive a German translation from the Turkish man sitting next to him on the plane, who instead simply translates it as "never mind." In a sense, the English translation of the phrase serves an instance of passing the Turkish and German binary. The rest of the passage further enables a unique twist to the opposition of cultural differences between Turks and Germans.

This particular moment, in which Alexander realizes the pilot's error and then attempts to warn the passengers and the stewardess that the pilot is switching off the wrong engine, creates a confrontation between the characters; the Turkish people tell

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Alexander to keep calm and remark on how Germans are always worried.<sup>94</sup> At this very moment, Alexander thinks of the Turkish proverb Mesut told him earlier and its meaning “never mind”—precisely what the other passengers seem to be doing—that is, not minding at all that the pilot is performing a costly, life-endangering mistake. Next however, his mind switches to a German saying, “Man muss mutig sein und gleichzeitig gescheit”<sup>95</sup>, a saying that, as the reader has learned from Alexander’s autobiographical novel excerpts, he had seen in a flyer during his second school year.

Finally in the scene, Alexander begins to tell the Turkish people around him a story, and he has the chance to give the debut speech he had been dreaming of. Alexander invents a story involving a pilot during the Berlin Airlift who turns off the wrong side engine. This pilot is left handed but in stressful situations, he tends to mix up his hands. With this tale, Alexander is slowly able to gain the attention of the other passengers. The pilot is then warned; he turns off the left side engine and they land safely in an emergency stop in Belgrade.

During the encounter between Alexander and the Turkish passengers, Alexander contemplates both the Turkish and German proverbs and he negotiates between the meanings inherent in the proverbs. While the Turkish one stands for taking things as they are without worry — an action that the other passengers also advise Alexander — the old German proverb that Alexander remembers delivers a contradictory message — namely, to take action. While he eventually acts according to the German proverb’s meaning and, in a decisive manner, takes action and gives his speech, his style of speech reflects his

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<sup>94</sup> “Entschuldigen Sie, aber der Kaptan Bey wird wissen, bitte! Deutsche immer hektisch, immer hektisch,” p. 496.

<sup>95</sup> Spelling of ‘mutich’ is taken exactly from the text.

adaptation of the Turkish proverb's meaning—"never mind." Alexander can write imaginative and fictional stories but what he admires most in others is the ability to tell stories in speech spontaneously and without worrying about the truth content of the story's events. He produces on the airplane, then, a tale similar to Selim's stories, made up of lies, yet effective.

The instance that generates the two cultural proverbs conveys a cultural difference through the opposing meaning of the proverbs that is also illustrated between the Turkish passengers' thinking, which differs from Alexander's thinking. The Turkish proverb invokes the Turks' submission to authority while the German one implies bravery and action. However, the way in which Alexander remembers, contemplates, and then acts in a manner that reflects his incorporation of both proverbs' meanings, illustrate a process of translation and negotiation. In other words, they depict a process of movement that destabilizes the essentially stable cultural differences that are at first invoked by the proverbs in the text. Hence, Alexander's speech, originating as it does in his application of both proverbs, destabilizes the chasm that seemingly exists between the different mentalities as well as the stasis between the two parties. In addition, out of this negotiation emerges a speech that carries within itself traces of Selim. Even if metaphorically embedded in Alexander's speech, Selim is not left out of the narrative; he is sustained in a dynamic relation to Alexander's identity.

After the plane lands in Belgrad, with the one right engine working, the final diary entry tells of how Alexander watches as the Turkish pilot seeks him out. As the pilot looks at him from 10 meters away, Alexander thinks: "*Was wird er wohl sehen? Er kennt mich nicht, aber oft ist das Sehen dem Kennen überlegen. Was sieht er, jetzt, während er*

*mich anblickt? Ich weiß über mich nicht alles, das ist eine meiner Chancen*“ (497). This final encounter between Alexander and the pilot’s gaze also produces a destabilizing effect. Alexander’s thoughts illustrate how he does not see himself as a fixed person and ponders what the pilot may be seeing in him. In that Alexander intimates a gap in self knowledge, through the effect of the pilot’s gaze, he articulates this to be a chance. The interpersonal expression of foreignness, as articulated by Rimbaud “je est un autre,” explicates the foreignness at the root of one’s own self as a rewarding experience. In a similar sense, Alexander’s reflection illuminates his discovery of the other within himself.

Otherness or alterity as an interactional and relational experience is based on the condition, “ich spiegele mich immer wieder im Blick der Anderen.”<sup>96</sup> Alexander’s thoughts during the silent encounter with the pilot express how he recognizes his own otherness in the pilot’s gaze. Alexander does not know what the pilot sees or thinks, but similarly, in his first encounter with Selim, he did not know that Selim recognized him to be naturally left-handed. He realizes what he had repressed about himself through his interaction with Selim. This final moment that ends the novel encapsulates in essence the long journey of self-transformation Alexander undergoes during his travels in Turkey and during his writing process, which afford him the chance to view himself through the gazes of others. This is the function of his autobiographical novel narrative, as well as Ömer Bey’s remarks. Nadolny portrays Alexander’s transformation through interactions between Alexander’s identity and other identities as well as through his on-going identity alteration illustrated in the discursive spaces of *narrative*. Consequently, not only does

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<sup>96</sup> Bernard, Waldenfels, “Zwischen den Kulturen” in *Grundmotive in einer Phänomenologie des Fremden*. Frankfurt am Main: Surhkamp, 2006, p.119.

Alexander realize how he cannot know Selim and his world, but as the last instance proves, he recognizes he does not know himself completely.

### ***Der weinende Granatapfel***

The protagonist of Alev Tekinay's *Der weinende Granatapfel*, a recently graduated German Orientalist known as Ferdinand Tauber, also confronts himself anew while his identity keeps changing through the course of the narrative. More specifically, Ferdinand's own mental construction of oppositions between an Oriental and Occidental world, mapped onto a binary between Turkey and Germany, East and West, is forced to undergo alteration in the course of the novel. Similar to Alexander's search for Selim and his subsequent inability to find him in his writing, Ferdinand's search in Turkey for his Doppelgänger—an "Oriental" Sufi poet—is also unfulfilled. At the same time, his searches for the poet illustrate the ways in which Ferdinand relates to the Turkish world also through a "two worlds" lens.

Ferdinand's trip through Turkey is significant because it illustrates his struggle with his identity, as well as the manner in which he views Turkey as a place divided between Europe and Asia, East and West. His trip importantly begins with a literal illustration of his "in-between" position; in the very moment he ponders his identity—where he is and who he is—he is on the Bosphorus Bridge: the bridge that connects West and East, Europe and Asia. Ferdinand's sense of himself as 'hanging' in between Europe and Asia, "jetzt hänge ich zwischen Europa und Asien und weiß nicht, wo ich bin. Und weiß nicht, wer ich bin" immediately evokes the much used metaphor of the bridge [here, the iconic Bosphorus Bridge] and of the particular city Istanbul, both of which are located between two continents. "Auf der Bosphorus Brücke....über die Meeresenge zwischen

Asien und Europa... Ein Weg von Ost nach West, von West nach Ost” (66). As the reader soon discovers, Ferdinand embarks on his journey to the East of Turkey in order to search out the man whom he feels to be his Doppelgänger and who, Ferdinand hopes, may reveal to him the mystery surrounding his identity.

On the one hand, then, Ferdinand’s illustration of ‘hanging’ between continents, and the way he questions who and where he is, indicates the manner he conceives of a separate and fixed ‘Europe’ and ‘Asia.’ As intimated by the omniscient narrator, Ferdinand thinks, what lies beyond Istanbul is considered the East — the world in which he hopes to find answers regarding his identity. Hence, the passage is particularly significant for conveying Ferdinand’s identity dilemma as closely linked to his conception of a stable division between East and West. In addition, the aforementioned passage significantly twists the ‘bridge’ metaphor in that it portrays a German protagonist caught between Europe and Asia. This deployment of the metaphor diverges from the traditional, hackneyed conceptualizations in which Turkish migrants are depicted as suffering from this particular separation. On the other hand, as mentioned above, and as further examples will reveal, Tekinay’s narrator portrays Ferdinand’s “in-between” position as stemming from his own notions about East and West, and not by a societal imposition of identity. This early passage ends with Ferdinand’s words, “Und weiß nicht, wer ich bin. Aber Ferdi T. weiß es” (66). This may be interpreted as yet another instance where Tekinay reverses the typical, expected ethnic roles; instead of the European or German figure ‘knowing’ and ‘speaking’ for Turkish subjects, here the German protagonist Ferdinand’s identity shall be revealed by a Turkish character’s knowledge.

Tekinay develops his German protagonist's search for identity by deploying a number of literary motifs.

First, in a similar fashion to the protagonist in Novalis' *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, Ferdinand discovers an illustration of himself in a book he is reading; from the image in the book, he recognizes his own recurring dream, a dream comprising a garden, pomegranate trees, rubies and a girl (45).<sup>97</sup> In the book called "Der weinende Granatapfel", written by the Sufi poet of Azarbeycani heritage, Ferdinand not only sees himself and a parallel of his own dream, but he also finds a message "Ferdi T. schrieb diese Zeilen , damit du erkennst, wer du bist"( 46). And, hence, Ferdi's question "Wer bin ich" underscores the purpose behind the rest of his trip that portrays the journey of a protagonist in the midst of self-search. Petra Fiero points to the identity question "Who am I" as "the main theme of the Bildungsroman." Ferdinand's search for himself—through his journey to find the Sufi poet — and the recognition of himself in the illustration, as well as his career transformation into a poet serve to build close affinities with Novalis' Bildungsroman *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*.<sup>98</sup> In addition, Ferdinand's story fulfills the basic premises of Bildung in the sense that after his searching, failures, and learning experiences, the reader sees him transform into a newer person.<sup>99</sup>

Significantly, Ferdinand's search for the poet after he encounters an illustration of 'himself' in the poet's book brings together two literary motifs—the presumably European motif of the 'Doppelgänger' with the Eastern/ Oriental one of Sufi mysticism. I

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<sup>97</sup> Novalis' Heinrich also finds a book written in another language, in which, he recognizes his own image. Heinrich von Ofterdingen, 92-3.

<sup>98</sup> Petra S Fiero, "Eichendorff and Novalis Revisited: Phantastic Elements and Intertextuality in Alev Tekinay's Works," p. 418

<sup>99</sup> It is noteworthy, however, that Ferdinand's 'Bildung', while entailing a self-transformation and the learning experience of looking at the world beyond dichotomies, does not necessarily constitute it as a 'Bildungsroman' in the sense of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*.

will soon explicate the significance of the mingling of these two motifs; however, it is also important to point out how these two motifs, creating as they do a ‘fantastic’ element in the novel, generate a crucial mystery that drives the protagonist to travel through Turkey. During his search Ferdinand is shown to think with the two worlds paradigm. We have already seen an explicit illustration of this with Ferdinand on the Bosphorus. Similarly, Ferdinand’s further travels in Turkey portray how his German Orientalist positioning insists on a Turkish ‘Oriental world.’ Hence, Tekinay’s *DwG* handles and problematizes the dichotomies between the Orient and the Occident, between East and West, as they are associated with Turkey and Germany.

The preface to the 1990 Suhrkamp edition of the novel explicates the Orient/Occident dialectic as follows: “In der Odyssee des Helden nach Selbsterkenntnis wird die Vereinigung von Orient und Okzident symbolhaft dargestellt.”<sup>100</sup> Although the end of the narrative constructs a temporary union between the two poles of the dichotomy, the claim that Ferdinand’s journey throughout the entire narrative represents a harmonious union begs further investigation because of the fact that the majority of the narrative actually avoids representing such a harmonious rapprochement. It is also important to point out that the preface to *DwG* interprets the use of the literary motifs of the ‘Doppelgänger’ and the ‘dream’ within the narrative as associated with German romanticism; ‘mysticism’ is associated with Oriental mysticism. Yet, this interpretation overlooks the manner in which the narrative’s intertwined use of the various motifs exposes Ferdinand’s identity crisis and a shattering of his self-hood. Instead of a harmonious intermingling of the Oriental and the Occidental, the protagonist Ferdinand’s

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<sup>100</sup>Alev Tekinay. *Der weinende Granatapfel*. Suhrkamp, 1990.

trials portray his oscillation between an Oriental world he associates with Turkey and a Western and German world as its polar opposite. Moreover, an evaluation of the novel's literary motifs as distinctly German or Oriental reifies the very dilemma experienced by Ferdinand, which Tekinay, on the other hand, wishes to critically expose.

Erica Greber contextualizes *DwG* as written by an Oriental author and from within this context she looks at the 'Ost-Westliche' dimension in Tekinay's novel.<sup>101</sup> According to Greber, the novel is about Eastern spirituality as experienced by a Western character. She proposes that Tekinay, who has left her home country in the East, goes back to Turkey through her characterization of Ferdinand. She finds that Tekinay's Oriental perspective leads the narrative toward a mystification of the East through the protagonist's supposed achievement of spiritual unity. Greber's analysis of Tekinay as an 'Oriental' author returning to the East indicates that her critical inquiry already begins with preconceived notions about what constitutes the Orient.

Although Greber's interpretation validates the bi-culturality within the narrative structure, her categorization of the 'Doppelgänger' motif and the Oriental thread of the novel as exclusively Western and Eastern, respectively, and her approach to the biography of the author Tekinay uphold the Orient/Occident divide as given and fixed within her analysis. Contrasting with Greber's analysis, I suggest rather that the novel in fact reveals how Orient and Occident, East and West are constructed notions that Tekinay wishes to uncover as subjective, relational, and practiced realms instead of pre-given and determined entities. Greber's analysis, as regards the shortcomings I outlined above,

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<sup>101</sup> Greber, Erika. "Öst-Westliche Spiegelungen. Der Doppelgänger als kulturkritische Metapher". Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für LiteraturWissenschaft. 1999. 66: (540-584).

upholds precisely what Tekinay writes against: the binary of Orient and Occident as mapped onto East and West, and then associated in the novel with Turkey and Germany.

On the other hand, I do agree with Greber's criticism of the novel's ambivalent ending: "ein optimistisches Konzept der Auflösung von Gegensätzen," which I view as a utopian moment and will discuss accordingly. By asking about Ferdinand's own construction of the oppositions between East and West, as well as about Tekinay's use of intermingled literary motifs, I inquire about the special dynamics that the novel generates. Greber explains the novel's use of the 'Doppelgänger' motif in referencing its likeness to E.T.A Hoffman's 'Doppelgänger' figures and she proposes that it is the underlying German romantic thread of the narrative. However, the 'Doppelgänger' motif, as it here manifests in the form of twins, cannot be seen as unique to German romanticism; rather, this motif can be found as well, for example, in the 1001 Arabian nights.<sup>102</sup>

In a like manner, I observe that the philosophy of 'spiritual unity' that is represented by the Sufi poet is not exclusively Eastern/Oriental but symbolizes mysticism and spirituality at large. Greber interprets the narrative's mystical union as an example that sends a distinctly "Eastern" message of unity. However, the transcendental tradition by the New England authors, such as Emerson, as well as the romantic writings of Goethe and Novalis about nature and God may also be considered as "spiritual" or "mystical" in the sense that approximates the Eastern tradition. Therefore, while I validate the significance of the 'Doppelgänger' and 'mysticism' motifs within the novel,

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<sup>102</sup> The stories also thematize a doubling of figures as well as romantic visions. The stories from this collection, *1001 Arabian nights*, were translated into foreign languages, including German, as early as the 18<sup>th</sup> century. According to Wikipedia, the first European translation into French was in 1704; Zinserling's first German translation appeared in 1823. With this note, I am not suggesting that the roots of the doppelgänger motif in the German romanticism are rooted in mystical literature from the East. Rather, it is a suggestion to consider how what we assume to be literary traditions that are exclusively Western or Eastern may in fact have influenced their respective developments.

instead of treating them as exclusively Western or Eastern, I suggest an investigation of their specific functions, their melding within the narrative, and the dynamism they produce in the novel.

The narrative use of the ‘Doppelgänger’ motif and the ‘mystical’ thread presented by the figure of the Sufi poet reveal negotiations between Ferdinand’s identity and the Turkish culture—an ‘Oriental world’ as Ferdinand identifies it. Tekinay’s use of the two motifs that have influentially crossed the borders of Eastern and Western literary ‘worlds’ is not without purpose in a work that criticizes dichotomies of East and West. In doing so, Tekinay’s text conveys at once an ‘illusionary’ or a ‘fantastic’ world in which the reader meets an ambivalent German character struggling between the constructed notions of his Orientalist profession and his German identity, and the identity of a Sufi poet — his Doppelgänger. In this ‘fantastic’ world however, the text sustains a real, physical world—the Turkish world that Ferdinand traverses during his search for the poet.

While Ferdinand does not succeed in finding the poet, the text displays two ironies. First, although the Sufi poet exists somewhere in Turkey, he is shown to be by no means a typical representative of Turkey; second, Ferdinand’s struggles to meet the poet display how the Orient in Turkey is a construct of Ferdinand’s own imagination and fantasy. The sections that follow explore first the dynamics of the ‘fantastic’ as created through Ferdinand’s identity doubling with the Sufi poet. Secondly, I explicate how through this doubling, the narrative on the one hand portrays Ferdinand’s cultural fixations and oppositions, and on the other hand destabilizes what the poet stands for. This serves to uncover the falsity of ‘Turkey’ as only an Eastern and Oriental world.

Rather, Ferdinand's fixation of his own identity as a German Orientalist and the way he relates to the world around him function to create the 'Orient' in Turkey.

### THE FANTASTIC

When Ferdinand discovers the poet's book and his own image in the book, in the process of deciphering his own dream from within it and interpreting the poet's words as speaking to himself, Ferdinand expresses his shock with the words, "Dieser Dichter, der bin ich," thereby introducing the 'fantastic' element in the novel (47). Tzvetan Todorov describes the presence of the 'fantastic' as follows: "In a world which is indeed our world, the one we know, a world without devils, sylphides, or vampires, there occurs an event which cannot be explained by the laws of this same familiar world."<sup>103</sup> At first, the reader has the sense that the concurrence—the parallels between the protagonist Ferdinand and the Sufi poet of the book—is mere illusion, a creation of the protagonist's mind, to his imagination's desire for a likeness of himself in the book's image. Because of this, the reader is apt to doubt the fantasy; "we wonder if what we believe we perceive is not in fact a product of the imagination."<sup>104</sup> Yet Ferdinand not only recognizes himself in the Sufi poet's illustration, but is also soon misrecognized by other people as the poet. Hence, in a seemingly 'real' world, Ferdinand — as well as the reader — is faced with a mysterious situation.

In defining the characteristics of the 'fantastic' element in a narrative, Todorov emphasizes that besides "the existence of an uncanny event," there is a distinct feeling of

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<sup>103</sup> Todorov, Tzvetan. "*The Fantastic. A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*. Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1975. p.25.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., p. 36.

“hesitation” experienced either by the character or the reader, or both.<sup>105</sup> In Tekinay’s implementation of the ‘fantastic’, the reader ponders Ferdinand’s situation, and hesitates between choosing “a natural and supernatural explanation of the events described.”<sup>106</sup> Additionally, the reader also often witnesses how Ferdinand himself experiences this hesitation of interpretation. The protagonist’s hesitation “becomes one of the themes of the work.”<sup>107</sup> This hesitation, an ambiguity surrounding Ferdinand’s identity, while working to drive the narrative forward through Ferdinand’s search for the poet, also puts the reader in an ambiguous position. Similarly to Ferdinand’s vacillation between truth and illusion, the real and the imaginary, the reader also hesitates regarding Ferdinand’s search and about the very existence of the Sufi poet.

At first, the reader believes that Ferdinand wants to find the poet in order to gain a better or deeper understanding of his self: “ich werde ihn, meinen orientalischen Namensvetter, finden, Ferdi T., der mich besser kennt als ich mich”( 63). Although Ferdinand believes in an Oriental poet, the reader wonders if this could all be merely a product of Ferdinand’s imagination. However, later in the narrative, the townspeople of Bursa begin to recognize Ferdinand as the poet Ferdi T. Hence, there indeed exists somewhere an Oriental poet and Ferdinand looks and talks just like him. In this way, the text creates the ‘fantastic’ effect, as described by Todorov, in terms of “the possibility of a hesitation” between “natural and supernatural causes” as the underlying root of “an uncanny phenomenon” for the reader, as well as for the protagonist.

If the poet was a mere product of Ferdinand’s imagination, then the explanation could be one of natural causes; it is merely an illusion in Ferdinand’s psyche.

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<sup>105</sup> Todorov, p. 32-33.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., p.33.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., p.33.

Nevertheless, there is a supernatural incident here that shakes the reasoning to explain the occurrence as simply the protagonist's psychological disturbance and his mental creation. Hence, the reader is forced to acknowledge the all-knowing, powerful, omniscient third-person narrator as the agent in charge of the supernatural event at stake. The effect of the 'fantastic' on the reader in this way reveals two important points. First, while the reader, similar to the protagonist, oscillates between the real and the imaginary, his position is not stable and he has an ambivalent relation to the character. As I will discuss in a later section, the surreal and the fantastic nature of the story not only creates a powerless protagonist but also inhibits reader identification with him.

Second, on the one hand, the reader is able to observe that Ferdinand is constantly changing and that his position is insecure. On the other hand, the reader's recognition that it is the narrator who controls the element of the surreal generates an illusory effect about the protagonist's identity dilemma and thereby also about his cultural fixations of 'Turkey'. The creation of a 'fantastic' effect and Tekinay's representation of an oscillating character—one who moves between his German identity and that of a Sufi poet—implies, then, a didactic effect as well. This didactic effect enables the reader to recognize the manner in which the protagonist's identity conflict supersedes the problem of finding his Doppelgänger. Through the implementation of a fantastic event, Tekinay reveals a German protagonist's preconceptions about his identity and the Turkish culture. In the process, the novel shows the protagonist learning from his struggles and frustrations and ultimately transforming his self.

## THE ORIENT

Ferdinand's dream of the garden and his discovery of the Sufi poet's existence both create a split and fragmentation, as well as a doubling of Ferdinand's identity. On the one hand, Ferdinand welcomes the mystery that enables him to become doubly foreign. He views the poet as an embodiment of the Oriental philosophy that he associates with Turkey. The situation provides Ferdinand the occasion to be a part of his imaginary 'Orient in Turkey' through his likeness to and doubling in the figure of the poet. Through his identification with the Sufi poet, Ferdinand finds himself in a privileged position to pursue the "Orient" in all the places that he searches for the poet, and this subsequently allows him the opportunity to talk to the people who know the poet.

On the other hand, in the course of the narrative, Ferdinand, like the reader, finds himself in a position of questioning his situation. He is similar to Giglio Fava in E. T.A Hoffman's "Princess Bambilla," who believes he has become a prince. While Giglio's dilemma is that the world around him tells him that nothing of the sort has happened, Ferdinand's problem is that the world around him, which otherwise seems quite real, tells him he is the embodiment of the Sufi poet.<sup>108</sup> While Ferdinand is assumed to be the poet, despite the fact that he enjoys his travels through the Orient, the problem that he faces regards the question as to how he can be both his German self and the Sufi poet at the same time. During his journey, he travels in and out of truth and illusion, in and out of the real and the imaginary. For instance, in the moment that he recovers his identity as a German man, someone immediately identifies him again as the Sufi poet Ferdi T.

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<sup>108</sup> When Ferdinand visits Bursa, where he hopes to find Ferdi Tabrisi, he is asked in the 'Karawanserei': "Mein Sohn, bist du noch nicht fort?" When he replies that he is not Ferdi Tabrisi, he is then further asked "wer sind Sie dann?"

Hence, the “subjective doubling” of the ‘Doppelgänger’ image, as it is “associated with conflicts with an individual” leads Ferdinand to attach himself to his German Orientalist identification ever more during his search for the poet.<sup>109</sup> For instance, after he seeks for the poet in Bursa, he finds himself in Ankara, speaking German at the Goethe Institute, and is overjoyed to return to the self-recognition that “Ich kann niemand anderer sein als der Deutsche, der promovierte Orientalist Ferdinand Tauber”(75). His interactions in Ankara and the difference made by his speaking German help him to differentiate himself from the Turkish poet and to temporarily reconstruct his ‘German’ identity. However, because he is never able to reach the physical figure of the Sufi poet, the narrative keeps Ferdinand’s identity negotiation ongoing. The Turkish poet Ferdi Täbrisí never appears in person; he is present in the narrative, but only through his physical absence. Although he has been in all the cities that Ferdinand visits, the text defers their union. Tekinay uses precisely this characteristic of uncertainty until the end, which lies at the core of the ‘fantastic’, in order to display her protagonist’s relation to the world around him. While Ferdinand cannot find the poet, he actually practices an ‘Orientalization’ of Turkey; he looks for an ‘Orient’ in his surroundings and interprets what he perceives around him as the ‘Orient’.

As the following examples will illustrate, Ferdinand’s approach to Turkey is one where he wishes to find the embodiment of an ‘Orient’ in Turkey, as based on his pre-given ideas about the contours of a supposed ‘Orient’. First, the “promovierte Orientalist” Ferdinand (75), travels to Turkey already in possession of images and

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<sup>109</sup> William Sewell, “Doppelgänger Motif and Two-voiced Poem in the Works of Hans Magnus Enzensberger,” *German Quarterly*. Vol. 52. No. 4 , pp. 503-517, p. 504.

impressions of an Orient in Turkey; however, he is interested in “weder das Kriegswesen oder das Steuerstystem der Osmanen noch ein festes Gehalt...”(12). When the Orientalist Professor in Turkey turns down Ferdinand for an assistantship position because the professor needs someone interested in the “Regierungsstruktur und das Steuerstystem der Osmanen,” Ferdinand is actually relieved. The reader sees Ferdinand experiencing this relief while he notices a poster of Istanbul in which the blue mosque is shown under sunset. Ferdinand has his own fantasies of the Orient in Turkey. The sights of Galata Bridge, the mosques, the sounds of Oriental music, and different tastes such as the Turkish tea and sesame bread constitute in part Ferdinand’s Orient. When he is in his friend’s Mercedes, he feels like a prisoner and wants to get out of the car in the middle of the Galata Bridge in order to see, smell and hear the “Oriental” world around him (33). “Am liebsten wäre Ferdinand hier, mitten auf der Galata-Brücke ausgestiegen und hätte sich in den Menschen und Autostrom werfen und in der Musik schmelzen mögen, in diesen geheimnsvollen orientalischen Klängen”(34). Ferdinand’s disassociation with the Mercedes and instead his identification with the Oriental sounds around him convey his desire to escape the “German” or “Western” aspects of his self.

Through the course of Ferdinand’s travels, and beginning already on the plane from Germany to Turkey, the narrator tells of the way Ferdinand does not want to be identified as typical European. He dissociates himself from the German tourists in Turkey and wants instead to affiliate himself with the elements of the ‘Orient’ in the Turkish world. For instance, he criticizes the German tourists he observes on the plane, “die in einer Tausend-und-eine-Nacht-Erwartung nach Istanbul flogen” (30). Despite his criticism of the tourists, he soon finds himself in the middle of his own 1001 Arabian

scenario due to his experience of a doubling with the Sufi poet. In fact, Ferdinand desires no less from such a scenario than the tourists; the poet becomes the means through which Ferdinand experiences the Oriental world he seeks and expects to find in Turkey.

Just as Eric Leed, in *The Mind of the Traveler*, describes the traveler's need for change as linked to the notion of the "need for boundaries, for markers between East and West, for difference," Ferdinand's travels in Turkey also depict him as a tourist, looking for himself and for change while distinguishing between East and West.<sup>110</sup> His literal 'hanging' over the Bosphorus, as discussed earlier, and his demarcation between East and West illustrate this. Yet the change and alteration that he experiences through the narrative come about precisely through his oscillation between a Western identification and the Turkish culture — between the German identity that he seeks to escape yet also ironically still holds on to in his confrontation with the 'Eastern/Oriental' world. In what follows I will explicate the narrative portrayal of the way that Ferdinand insists on the 'Otherness' of Turkey in the process of trying to stabilize his own identity. As the examples will illustrate, the 'Otherness' of Turkey as the Orient and East, springs from foremost out of Ferdinand's self-identification as an Orientalist.

Ferdinand's feelings of elation surrounding the Galata Bridge illuminate his fantasy of an Orient in Turkey: "Ferdinand war jetzt im Orient. Im Orient mit sich allein"(42). Through the course of the narrative, his experiences oscillate between his self, the German Orientalist, and the Turkish cultural landscape in which he finds the Orient. While disassociating with the Western tourists around him, and especially Germans, and while associating instead with foreignness, Ferdinand identifies himself as

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<sup>110</sup> Leed, Eric. *The Mind of the Traveler: From Gilgamesh to Global Tourism*. New York: Basic Books, 1991, p. 291.

an Orientalist. He insists on the distinction between East and West, and wants to fixate and name the cultural differences he observes in Turkey. On the one hand, Ferdinand takes notice of the cultural diversities that make the Turkish culture heterogeneous and his observations depict Turkey as mixed and diverse, associated with both East and West. Nevertheless, Ferdinand identifies with the Turkish culture based on the differences he associates with the Orient. For instance, he thinks that his friend's wedding in Istanbul is completely different than the other weddings in Anatolia: "Da hatte es keine europäische Musik gegeben, sondern nur anatolische Paukenklänge"(37). In those weddings, folk dances were danced and tea and kefir were served. But, he observes at the wedding in Istanbul an abundance of alcoholic drinks.<sup>111</sup> After the "Schmuckansteckungszeremonie", he thinks that "die Szenerie wurde noch Orientalischer" with the appearance of a belly-dancer. Ferdinand associates the 'non-European' signifiers—those that differ from his own cultural background—with the Orient.

The depiction of Ferdinand in the part of Istanbul surrounding the Galata Bridge further illustrates his perceptions of cultural differences as Oriental. The area impresses Ferdinand because of its special mix of stores, where people work in traditional ways, and old wood houses that stand next to more modern, concrete buildings; "Sesamkringel" scents mix with the machine oil smells of the subway.<sup>112</sup> He admires the narrow streets and balconies with clothes hanging all over them: "Diese halbdunklen Gassen.... voller

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<sup>111</sup> "Hier...strömten aber Getränke, alkoholische .... wie ein Fluß..." p.37.

<sup>112</sup> Describing the area, he notes, "In winzigen Läden arbeiteten nach uralten Methoden Handwerker, Tischler, Hufeisenschmiede, Baumwolleschläger, und es knisterte...", "Holzhäuser mit Gitterfenstern und Betongebäude in europäischem Stil standen dichtgedrängt nebeneinander. In den Duft frischgebackener Sesamkringel, der aus einer Bäckerei herausdrang, mischte sich der Maschinenölgeruch der U-Bahn..." p. 41.

Staub und Vergangenheit: hier schien die Zeit stehengeblieben zu sein”(41). To Ferdinand, the dust and the elements out of the past reflect a time that has been somewhat preserved here, and “Noch geheimnisvoller und verworrender klangen die orientalischen Töne hier.” Why does this area fascinate Ferdinand? The description portrays a mix of modern and traditional elements in a district on the European side of Istanbul.

This is the same area of Galata and Pera, a space that Nadolny’s Alexander also harshly criticizes for its third-worldly qualities; however, he does not fail to mention its European past. In Özdamar’s *Die Brücke vom Goldenen Horn*, to be discussed more thoroughly in the next chapter, Özdamar’s protagonist describes this area in a manner that conveys the space as a mixture of both Europe and Asia. By contrast, Ferdinand’s perception of the unmoving time here and Oriental sounds invoke the Orient; the question remains whether what Ferdinand hears is not merely a figment of his imagination. Ferdinand’s descriptions of the scenery in this part of the city, similarly to Alexander’s observations of the area, reflect a common third-worldly depiction; however, Ferdinand’s perceptions highlight primarily the ‘Oriental’ in what he sees: “Noch geheimnisvoller und verworrender klangen die orientalischen Töne hier” (41). How Oriental is the Turkish world really? Is Ferdinand identifying the old, and that which is different from his own world as Oriental?

Edward Said’s description of Orientalism “as a system of thought” that “approaches a heterogeneous, dynamic, and complex human reality from an uncritically essentialist standpoint,” serves to highlight the constructed and fixated nature of the Orient. I use the terms *Orientalism* and *Orient* as relational notions in the sense Said explains; the system of thought that Said names ‘Orientalism’, not only presumes “an

enduring Oriental reality” but also “an opposing but no less enduring Western essence, which observes the Orient from afar and from, so to speak, above.”<sup>113</sup> Orientalism as such is a relational practice entailing observations about a place and fixating of it as the ‘Orient’, which in essence does not exist. I suggest that this is Ferdinand’s position in Turkey. Surely, Turkey exists, and its differences from Germany exist, but Ferdinand’s naming of these differences as Oriental fixates Turkish culture based on a binary construction. His identification of himself as the German Orientalist and his fixation of Turkey as the Orient also fixes a Western world and identity from which Ferdinand wishes to disassociate.

In addition, Ferdinand’s search for the Sufi poet—the embodiment of the Orient—entails an underlying paradox about the origins of the poet, Ferdi Täbrisí. The poet does not exist in his “authentic” or “original” form. Ferdi Täbrisí is a Turk with Azerbaijani heritage. The book by the poet which Ferdinand finds is written in Azerbaijani, a mix of three languages: Turkish, Arabic and Farsi. On the other hand, his poetry is not included in the corpus of contemporary literature; his performances on the radio are in Turkish. He is not known with the original form of his last name, ‘Täbrisí’, but instead by the official Turkish Tobruk. This is one reason, for instance, why Ferdinand is not able to find him when he searches for him by the ‘Täbrisí’ name at a Turkish hospital. Just as there is no authentic Ferdi Täbrisí, there is also no original Orient in the way Ferdinand expects to find it. During Ferdinand’s search for the poet, the narrative exposes the practiced and constructed dimensionality of the ‘Orient’.

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<sup>113</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism*, London: Routledge& Kegan Paul, 1978, p. 333.

The performance of the Sufi dance in Konya exemplifies this in a particularly striking way. The Oriental philosophical meaning of the dance concerns oneness and the unity of all things, of self and other. Ferdinand expresses early in the novel his deepest wish to experience this event. However, when he finally reaches Konya for the event, he finds out that he has once again missed the poet. He finds himself in front of the spectacle that symbolizes love and oneness within one's self and with everything, but Ferdinand feels the opposite: not knowing who he is, feeling desperate and separated from his self and from all that is around. He feels pity for himself in not having met the poet, nor having achieved the unity this dance symbolizes, and he is critical of the German tourists who are spectators at the event. At the end of the performance, the overexcited tourists are taking pictures frantically, in a state of neither peace nor unity. The dance of the dervishes does not deliver to Ferdinand the Oriental Sufi feeling and oneness of which he had dreamt. Even in its “original” and “authentic site,” the performance is a spectacle that serves mass tourism.

The third-person narrator—a “heterodiegetic narrator”, “standing outside the story-world”—reserves an all-knowing position, at times critical and cynical of Ferdinand.<sup>114</sup> For instance, while the narrative characterization of Ferdinand differs from that of the typical tourist, at the Sufi Dance, the narrator depicts him as an outsider, just like the other tourists. In this way, the narrator critically uncovers Ferdinand’s fixations of himself as an Orientalist. More than several times, the narrator describes Ferdinand’s fascination with the oriental sounds. But, when his friend asks him if he understands the lyrical line, “Beni biraz anlasaydin,” from a song that Ferdinand perceives as Oriental

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<sup>114</sup> Porter, Abbot, “Story, Plot and Narration”, *Cambridge Companion to Narrative*. Ed. David Herman. Cambridge University Press, 2007, 42.

and repeatedly hears, Ferdinand says that the singer is telling of “Trennung”(134). This sentence, while not translated in the text, means, “if only you understood me a little.” Ferdinand claims to understand everything in Turkish, but the text leaves the reader unsure of the truth content of this claim. In a sense, the text’s non-translation of this sentence into German also could be seen as placing the non-Turkish reader in a similar situation to that experienced by Ferdinand. The non-Turkish reader can understand nearly everything in the text with the exception of this sentence. It is an ambiguous non-translation and could be interpreted as a criticism of Ferdinand’s Orientalized understanding of the Turkish world.

Jim Jordan discusses how postmodern literature in Germany uses new forms of aesthetics that diverge from previous dutiful, multicultural representations. He points out that the authors who do not seek to prove and to appease the expectations of a multicultural society’s readership feel free to be ‘players’ themselves: “Autoren begannen damit, die Orientalistischen *idees recues* ihrer deutschen Leser in Frage zu stellen.”<sup>115</sup> Accordingly, Tekinay’s non-translation of the phrase above, which follows a German protagonist throughout the narrative—a protagonist who claims to understand the Orient in Turkey and is there to consume it—provides a disguised criticism of German expectations about an Oriental Turkey. At this point, it may be helpful to think about the narrator’s position in the text more closely with regard to the text’s third-person narration, and how it contrasts with the narrator’s position in the novel *Selim*.

In both texts, the protagonists grapple with the two worlds paradigm’s fixations, but there are several differences regarding the position of their narrators. First, while both

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<sup>115</sup> Jordan, Jim. “Spieler, Mitspieler, Schauspieler: die Postmoderne Interkulturelle Literatur in Deutschland.” (118-133), p. 119.

narratives construct and destabilize essentialisms and cultural oppositions, *Selim* portrays Alexander as critical of Turkish differences, while Ferdinand idealizes them as Oriental. Whether criticized or idealized, the cultural fixation of differences is shown to be relational and instable. On the other hand, Nadolny's *Selim* contains both first and a third person narration. These two narrators enable Alexander's self-critical and analytical characteristics to be observed by the reader.

However, the use of the 'Doppelgänger' figure, which makes *DwG*'s narration romantic, poetic, and surreal, also causes its protagonist to be less self-reflective and less in charge within the narrative. In other words, as contrasted with Alexander, Ferdinand in *DwG*, as the hero of a partly surreal story-world, is less in control and aware of his actions. In addition, the reader is also more ambivalently positioned through the narrative of *DwG*, a fact that is detectable in the verbal aspects of the 'fantastic' narrative, particularly suited to the use of simple figurative expressions for the sake of conditioning the reader to believe the supernatural causes the hero undergoes.<sup>116</sup>

The most distinct example of such verbal aspects, as Todorov describes, is the verbal turn "it was as if," which appears repeatedly in Tekinay's text. In Istanbul, "Es war ihm, als wäre er nun, nach einer endlosen langen Reise, zuhause angekommen" (39); Ferdinand feels 'as if' he had found in the dervish museum, "etwas gefunden zu haben, das er von früher kannte" (43), and in Bursa, "kam es ihm vor, als ob er immer schon hier gelebt hätte" (67). These instances support the mystical doubling of Ferdinand with the Sufi poet and lead the reader to share Ferdinand's belief that he must indeed have lived as the poet in a former life. "Ich muss früher schon einmal gelebt haben"( 47). On the one

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<sup>116</sup> Todorov, *The Fantastic. A structural approach to a literary Genre*, 79-80.

hand, through the effect of these formulations, the reader vacillates between belief and disbelief of the mystery Ferdinand lives.

Nevertheless, despite the fact that the reader is pulled into Ferdinand's world and shares his hesitation, the reader never completely believes the mystery due to an inherent understanding of the 'fantastic' effect under which the protagonist's situation is cast—particularly generating the sense that the 'fantasy' is cast by the all-knowing narrator. Accordingly, the effect uncovers Ferdinand's cultural oppositions and fixations, showing them under an illusory light. Moreover, the manner in which the narrative depicts Ferdinand not only in a 'mystery' world, but how it also portrays Ferdinand's experiences in a 'realistic' Turkish landscape, work to strengthen the 'illusory' effect by juxtaposing this 'real' world with the 'fantastic' perspective. The next example illustrates this effect as well as depicting the powerless position under which the narrator portrays Ferdinand.

The all-knowing narrator describes Ferdinand in Bursa as follows: "Er kam sich wie der Held in einer Geschichte vor, die Jemand anderer geschrieben hatte... wie ein passiver Held kam er sich vor.... Nicht er beherrschte seine Rolle, sondern seine Rolle beherrschte ihn"(67). The reflection appears right before Ferdinand enters the mosque in Bursa. Upon entering the mosque, he forgets the very reason for coming there which is to find the poet, but he finds himself instead transfixed by the wondrous interior, the "Fayencen und Fensterscheiben", "die Wasserfäden, die kleinen Kaskaden...weichen Teppiche"(68). His feelings in the mosque convey that, as the hero in someone else's fantastic story, he is in a position where the role that he plays has control over him. This is the role of his Orientalist profession, which Ferdinand performs through his travels in Turkey. The example portrays how Ferdinand is overcome by the mosque and its

Orientalist trappings; his reflection indicates that he is partly aware of his role as the Orientalist, but that he is not in control. He is fascinated to the point of temporarily forgetting his search—the very basis upon which his entire journey is founded. By utilizing the figure of the poet and Ferdinand's search for him, the narrator conveys how Ferdinand relates to Turkey on the basis of his Oriental fantasies. The dusty and antique atmosphere in a street, mosque minarets, turquoise colored water, folk singers, hand-crafted ceramics, Oriental sounding tones, a belly dancer... Do these elements constitute the Orient? Or, are these simply cultural and landscape differences that Ferdinand idealizes as the Orient?

Ferdinand tells his roommate in Germany early in the novel about his desire for an “Orientreise,” ideally “von Istanbul bis Indien,” but at the very least until Erzurum (18). His expression of these desires indicates the way that Ferdinand presupposes these territories to entail the characteristics of the ‘Orient.’ The narrator indeed portrays the manner in which Ferdinand enthusiastically consumes the differences of the Turkish culture though a practice of Orientalism during his travels. The poet is certainly the main symbol of Ferdinand’s idealized Orient. Despite the poet’s marginal physical existence in the narrative as well as the commercialization of the poet’s philosophy in Turkey, Ferdinand associates the difference and the almost exoticized tradition that the poet represents with an entire country.<sup>117</sup> In this way, Tekinay’s use of the poet figure as a ‘mystery’ enables an interrogation of Ferdinand’s fixations of an Oriental world that he associates with Turkey.

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<sup>117</sup> The Professor of Orientalist studies tells Ferdinand about the existence of folk singers like Ferdi Täbris in referring to Turkey as the Orient: “ja, so etwas gibt es hier im Orient heutzutage noch,” 60.

Although Ferdinand fixates Turkey as an Oriental world, the narrative in fact conveys Turkey more complexly than an Orientalist like Ferdinand might expect. For instance, the portrayal of Konya and the whirling dervishes there reveal the city in its realistic condition — as a place of touristic consumption by displaying the Sufi event as experienced by the tourists. Similarly, Ferdinand's Orientalization of Istanbul's Galata and Pera in fact reveal how the region symbolizes a mix of modernity and tradition, composed of both Eastern and Western elements. At the end of the novel, Ferdinand's last destination in Erzurum — a city that ironically lies in the very Eastern region of Turkey — is a Dervish cloister, a formerly Christian building in the city, that symbolizes the Western heritage there as well. In this sense, the novel portrays how Turkey has been shaped continuously, up to the present day, by Western as well as touristic influence and intervention.

On the other hand, the reader witnesses how Ferdinand associates the diversity within Turkey simply with an 'Oriental' world. Nevertheless, similarly to Alexander's fixations of Selim's world in Nadolny's novel, which the reader was able to distinguish as concerning Alexander's own identity and the conflicts he experiences than any underlying 'reality', the reader of *DwG* is able to interpret Ferdinand's fixations as generated from his own identity positioning. The reader understands that Ferdinand's use of cultural fixations stems from the constructed separation between the Eastern and Western, Turkish and German worlds, as well as Ferdinand's disassociation from a Western and German world. While Tekinay displays the dynamics of Ferdinand's identity position and critically exposes his cultural fixations, the portrayals of Ferdinand's encounters with the other tourists and the Germans also support the text's representations

of a mixed reality in the present day Turkey. I now turn to Ferdinand's encounters with the tourists and his compatriots, his subsequent identity transformation, and the end of the narrative.

At the Sufi Dance, Ferdinand is appalled by the loud and frantic tourists and he does not talk to them. Later, as he sits again in the same café where the Sufi Dance was held, and after overhearing that the German tourists are driving to Ankara, he finally validates their existence and overlooks their tourist styles by addressing them directly. Although he initiates the encounter out of pure necessity, after some time, those characteristics that had formerly irritated Ferdinand—their constant laughing, finding everything “çok güzel” (very beautiful) and their hysteria for taking pictures—no longer seem to matter to Ferdinand: “er fühlte sich irgendwie wohl in dieser Gesellschaft, die ihn von der Gewalt des Rätsels, das sein ganzes Ich beherrschte, ablenken konnte.”(106). His fellow citizens help Ferdinand to escape the mystery of the poet, which by now is making him physically sick.<sup>118</sup> The Germans' subsequent behavior also destabilizes Ferdinand's initial stereotypes about them and conveys to him in fact another side of the 'Turkish world', in which Ferdinand then willingly participates.

First, Ferdinand is proven wrong about his previous assumptions regarding the tourists; the German tourists are not in Turkey in order to experience a 1001 Arabian Nights trip and to take rolls of pictures. In contrast to pure touristic intentions with which Ferdinand had previously prejudged them, he instead discovers that they are actually in Turkey researching the reintegration of Turkish-German migrants back into Turkey and their problems with the Turkish language. The translator position that Ferdinand adopts

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<sup>118</sup> This is another parallel to Alexander—in similarity to Nadolny's portrayal of Alexander's fever attack because of not finding Selim.

for these compatriots, his teaching of the language to children born in Germany of Turkish origin, and his job at the Goethe Institute provide him with chances to experience Turkey in alternate ways than as the poet's 'Doppelgänger' and the German Orientalist. The combination of Ferdinand's experiences within the Turkish socio-cultural landscape in this way impacts the resolution of his identity conflict caused by the fixated view of himself as a German Orientalist, therefore both distinct from and superior to these other Germans.

#### UTOPIA

The final scene of *DwG* exemplifies the meaning of Ferdinand's journey as one of transformation. In contrast to Ferdinand's total alienation at the Sufi Dance, the ultimate scene depicts Ferdinand as attaining a state of oneness upon hearing a lyrical poem on the radio by the Sufi poet he had sought out. The message of the song "Wenn es mich nicht gibt, wird es dich geben, Bruder, in deinem oder in meinem Land, in dir lebe ich weiter, meine Liebe gilt in dir jedem Menschen, der mächtig ist, als irgend jemand."(146), allows Ferdinand to think that the poet is finally speaking to him for the first time in clarity.

On the one hand, the poet's lines erase the dichotomy between body and soul and express that the speaker's soul will live forever everywhere, in everyone, and therefore the lines represent metaphorically divine love. Thus, we see Tekinay's use of a utopian universalism at the end of the novel in order to erase the fixations between set entities such as East and West, Orient and Occident, through her protagonist's perceptions of the poet's transcendental message. Through this message, Ferdinand feels released from his inner conflict: "Es gibt keinen orientalischen Dichter namens Ferdi Täbris und auch keinen deutschen Orientalisten ..., sondern nur den Menschen in seinem oder in meinem

Land, nur den menschen voller Liebe und Friede, und wie mächtig bin ich als irgendjemand. Ich weiß jetzt, wer ich bin.”(147).

Ferdinand’s epiphany as experienced through the Sufi poet’s words leads him to drop the fixations he had previously attached to an Oriental poet and to instead state that there is no German Orientalist. As we have seen, Tekinay’s narrator reveals how Ferdinand’s identity conflict is shaped by his fixations of an Oriental Turkey and a Western world. The poet’s song allows Ferdinand to rid himself of the divide between East and West; he feels empowered by being just ‘anyone’ — by thinking of himself without any preconceived, constructed identity fixations. The reader finds out in the second chapter that Ferdinand’s name — in its shortened version ‘Ferdi,’ the same name as that of the poet — means simply “Person oder Mensch. Oder einfach jemand. Irgend jemand”(36). Indeed, after hearing the poet’s final message, Ferdinand lives up to the inherent meaning of his namesake in the manner that he articulates his cathartic experience. Ferdinand articulates a view of his self without identifications with either the Oriental poet or his pre-given “Orientalist” identity.

While the message of the poem impacts Ferdinand deeply, he is profoundly moved by the magical tone and the melody as much as the content. He perceives that the sound in the poet’s voice brings all polarities into a unity.<sup>119</sup> It is open to interpretation whether this is a closed ending. In contrast to the novel *Selim*’s ending, Tekinay’s novel ends on an opposite note. In *Selim*, the end finds Alexander facing the Turkish pilot in Bükresh; in this face-to-face and distanced meeting of two separate persons, Alexander is also able to recognize himself anew through the understanding that he does not and is not

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<sup>119</sup> Nein, keine Stimme, sondern ein Klang, der wie ein zarter Silberfaden Gott und Mensch, Mensch und Natur, Vergangenheit und Zukunft, Nord und Süd und Ost und West miteinander unlöslich verband.(146).

able to know himself completely. His experience, then, also conveys how he acquires new learning through the other's difference. The moment of disappearance of all polarities into unity ending DwG differs from *Selim* in the manner that this moment also lets the difference of the poet disappear.

On the other hand, as the Sufi poet was never physically present in the text, but was utilized more as a figure that embodied the message of the Orient fantasized by Ferdinand, the final moment displays an additional didactic message. The Sufi poet's words constitute a learning experience for the protagonist Ferdinand in the sense that he rises above his previous limited way of seeing through a binary lens of Orient/Occident. Most significantly, the reader witnesses the way that Ferdinand accepts and articulates his identity simply as 'just anyone,' but no longer as identified with the confining etiquette of an Orientalist. As Petra Fiero emphasizes in her reading, this move points to the "dissolution of the self, rather than an affirmation" of the self, and the move is not only about the dissolution of Ferdinand's fixed identity of his self but also a dissolution of the fixity of an 'Oriental' world in Turkey.<sup>120</sup>

Furthermore, in the very moment that follows Ferdinand's articulation of his transcendence of all differences, he again takes notice of the streets, "in denen barfüßige Kinder spielten, und Hühner scharren und streunende, magere Hunde herumliefen" (147). Thus, Ferdinand is still able to see the differences presented by the Turkish surroundings, yet he may no longer perceive them as distinctly Oriental. The phrase "Er war eins mit sich selbst," indicates his oneness with himself rather than in unity with the poet figure; his revelation concerns his own selfhood. His epiphany regards his own recognition of his

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<sup>120</sup> Petra Fiero. Eichendorff and Novalis Revisited: Phantastic Elements and Intertextuality in Alev Tekinay's Works.

fixed oppositions. Therefore, while the end seems ambiguous in its erasure of polarities, it can be interpreted as the author Tekinay's conscious decision to cope in a utopian manner with the oppositions and essential cultural differences inherent in the Orient/Occident dichotomy, as well as in all other pre-given fixations.

Zafer Şenocak's criticism of "thought patterns which distinguish between an enlightened West and an archaic Orient" suggests that "we must risk a renaissance of universalism" in order to go beyond the very fixations of two cultural worlds, "between Orient and Occident."<sup>121</sup> In this sense, Alev Tekinay's novel creates a "Berührungsgeschichte" that allows Orient and Occident touch each other in a narrative that reveals how these entities are indeed subjective and perceptual constructions that are relationally formed.<sup>122</sup> Further, at the end of the novel, Tekinay risks a form of universalism that is purely utopian; the end represents a naïve Utopia in the sense that it portrays another 'fantastic' incident that can only be imagined optimistically: the vanishing of all fixed differences and polarities into unity.

In the reality of the world we live in, still operating as it does on thought patterns that insist on fixed identity formations and distinctive binaries between incongruent 'worlds'—precisely the core of Tekinay's interrogation in *DwG* — the authorial alternative presents us with a Utopian universalism that overcomes differences of all kinds. This Utopian message dictates: 'There is no separation between you and me, and between our worlds. We are all one.' Although this is configured as a Utopia, its presentation in a fantastic narrative is fitting to the novel; in this sense, Tekinay presents her reader with yet another literary moment of the 'mysterious'—a moment that calls the

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<sup>121</sup> Zafer Şenocak, *Between Orient and Occident*, Atlas of a Tropical Germany, pp, 64-65.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.,p. 64.

reader to ponder its Utopian peaceful message, and whether or not such a resolution might indeed ever come into existence.

I would venture to say that Tekinay's naïve Utopian ending may be more desirable as contrasted with alternate representations that serve to uphold the binaries and cultural fixations while the characters remain unchanging between distinct, isolated worlds. In other words, despite the possible naïveté of Tekinay's use of Utopia, the author's ending in fact imagines a new way of thinking about the separation of worlds; if the choice is between war and peace, between two distinct worlds or a Utopian universalism, Tekinay urges us to opt for the latter.

A more recent novel by Dilek Zaptçioğlu, *Der Mond isst die Sterne auf*, from 1998, provides a similar instance of Utopian resolution, in which the protagonist, also expresses his convergence and oneness with the rest of the people of the world.<sup>123</sup> While looking up at the stars and imagines flying to them, he laughs endlessly, remarking on the triviality of every-day deeds and the relativity of each person's existence.<sup>124</sup> Similarly to Tekinay's Ferdinand, the experience of Zaptçioğlu's protagonist conveys on the one hand the character's similarity to and oneness with all the people and the insignificance of their differences. At the same time, the experience enables one to imagine rising above the limitations of every person's bounded and relative existence—in a fleeting moment of utopia that entails a more 'literal' flight to the stars. If Utopia might indeed be considered a metaphoric thread that substitutes the constricting metaphor of "two worlds," then one

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<sup>123</sup> Dilek Zaptcioglu, *Der Mond isst die Sterne auf*, 1998.

<sup>124</sup> The protagonist laughs, here, with a recognition "about the many people spending their time on the most unessential things in the world, about their disputes, the bits of paper they chase after, the names they give themselves, by which they divide themselves, and over which they make war; he laughs about his fears, and all the other trivialities that wouldn't even fill a fig seed, no, not even a fig seed." Translation, Tom Cheesman, *Novels of Turkish German Settlement. Cosmopolite Fictions*, 257.

can consider Tekinay's passage as one early instantiation of this metaphor within Turkish-German literature.

To conclude, the travels of the German protagonist in Turkey portray on the one hand the protagonist's practice of Orientalization in the way he perceives Turkish culture. On the other hand, the utilization of a unique narrative structure with a 'fantastic' story at its core enables Tekinay to reveal and interrogate her protagonist's cultural fixations. In addition, while mixing presumably Eastern and Western literary motifs within the construction of the narrative, just as these motifs cannot be exclusively distinguished as either Eastern or Western, Tekinay's novel portrays the past and current Turkey as composed of both Eastern and Western influences. Similarly, one sees in Nadolny's *Selim* the manner in which the narrative both manifests Turkey's landscape as a mix of East and West and as inherently changeable, while also portraying the protagonist Alexander's struggles with his own cultural fixations.

My aim in this chapter has been to explicate how these two novels, appearing as they do at the turn of the last decade of the century, before the new millennium, can be seen to have pioneered alternative approaches to the two worlds paradigm. Both novels uncover the ways in which this paradigm comes into existence and they both undermine the validity of the paradigm's underlying assumptions. *Selim*'s bi-leveled narrative structure conveys the nature of Alexander's fixations as relational and it generates the 'illusory' effect of his cultural oppositions. The reader is therefore able to see Alexander's essentialisms as stemming out of his own alienation, foreignness, and significantly, resulting from his biographical and authorial frustrations.

In a similar way, Tekinay's use of the 'fantastic' through doubling of the German protagonist/Turkish poet generates an 'illusory' effect. The narrator in *DwG* has control over Ferdinand and retains a distance from the protagonist; hence, the reader is capable of telling how Ferdinand fulfills the role of an Orientalist. Similar to the unreliability of Alexander's character — uncovered as part of a fictional construction — Ferdinand, as part of a fantastic, mysterious and surreal story, is a powerless protagonist. The manner in which Ferdinand is portrayed in a surreal story, therefore less in control of his actions, as well as the way in which his fixations of the Turkish culture as Oriental are conveyed, together reveal that Ferdinand's thinking is not to be taken at face value, but instead comprise Tekinay's critical interrogation.

## Chapter 2

### Multiply Layered Worlds

This chapter analyzes portrayals of multiply layered worlds and transformations of the protagonists in the novels *Selam Berlin* (2003) by Yade Kara and *Die Brücke vom Goldenen Horn* (1998) by Emine Sevgi Özdamar.<sup>125</sup> Instead of a binary between homogeneous and stable Turkish and German worlds, the novels display Turkey and Germany as comprised of multiple layers. For instance, in *Selam Berlin*, Kara displays the dynamic between East Germans, Turkish-Germans, and West Germans in portraying post-Wall Berlin. In *Die Brücke*, Özdamar thematizes layers of ethnic diversity in Turkey, especially the contemporary experiences of the Kurdish people. Both novels' protagonists, while travelling and gathering experiences in diverse city landscapes, develop new identifications and experience transformations.

While they narrate the travels and on-going transfigurations of their protagonists, the novels also portray the social, historical and political changes that took place during the time period in which the stories are set. Throughout my analysis, I explicate the social and historical transitions—in *Selam Berlin*, die Wende; in *Die Brücke*, the politically distraught years in Berlin and Istanbul—in terms of the significant impact they have on the protagonists' lives. At the same time, I analyze the topographies the protagonists

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<sup>125</sup> Yadé Kara. *Selam Berlin*. Zürich: Diogenes, 2003.

Emine Sevgi Özdamar. *Die Brücke vom Goldenen Horn*. Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witch, 2003.

traverse. Particularly, I study the texts' spatial configurations in terms of their transitional and threshold effects.

A common significant theme in both novels is their portrayal of characters as seemingly 'in-between', as subsisting between two worlds or boundaries. In this sense, they illustrate the "between two-worlds paradigm," which construes worlds, cultures and identities as stable wholes. For instance, in *Die Brücke*, the Bosphorus and the narrator's commentary on her ferry commutes between the Asian and European sides of Istanbul evoke a sense of being 'in-between.' In *Selam Berlin*, Hasan is seemingly in "between two worlds," reducing his identity to an either/or position: in Istanbul as "Almancı", and in Berlin as "Kanacke."<sup>126</sup> While the novels represent the in-between positions to which the characters are partially subjected, they also reveal how the characters themselves only partially partake in the perpetuation of the paradigm, as they are also able to challenge it. Hence, their in-between positions are integral to the transformative process each character undergoes. Analyses will illustrate the ways in which the protagonists transgress stagnation and suspension in between two cultures or worlds. Specifically, in my close readings, I analyze the protagonists' transformations through a focus on transitional sites and landscapes as well as the use of thresholds, which I explicate both in literal and metaphorical senses.

My use of transition implies the term's literal meaning, "a passing from one condition, form, stage, activity, place, etc. to another," as well as movement and

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<sup>126</sup> The term Kanacke, originally derogatory, is used against immigrants of Turkish descent, as well as other foreigners in Germany. It has evolved a more positive meaning through its adaptation as a self-identifying appellation of differentiation, connoting empowerment. This empowering use of the term is exemplified in its use by the author Feridun Zaimoğlu in his book *Kanak Sprak*, 2005. However, in Kara's novel, it carries a negative connotation because of the text's portrayal of how everyone with a dark skin becomes identified as Kanacke.

change.<sup>127</sup> For instance, when I write about the transitional *period* in *Selam Berlin* as I discuss the time period between the Wende and re-unification, I mean that this is a period of passage, a period which, as the novel shows, is marked by a different sense of movement and change in Berlin than before. Looking then, for example, at a transitional *space* like the subway, I analyze the changes the city is undergoing as well as their effects on the character Hasan. In *Die Brücke vom Goldenen Horn*, the Bosphorus and the Bridge of the Golden Horn signify transitional sites of passage and change.

By threshold, in addition to the literal sense of crossing over the “border” of a spatial space, I imply the biographical and metaphorical implications of a transformational experience. This further aspect through which I explicate thresholds originates from my adaptation of the term from Bernhard Waldenfels to signify an “experience”, namely, the assumption of a new identity, or the assignment of a new significance.<sup>128</sup> Through the protagonists’ special interactions in specific spaces and places, such as the Bosphorus in *Die Brücke* or Potsdamer Platz in *Selam Berlin*, the narratives map *threshold experiences*, by which I mean that the protagonists undergo significant decision-making processes and attain new identities. In *Die Brücke*, Özdamar portrays her narrator/ protagonist’s overcoming of a particular in-between position during her ferry rides across the Bosphorus, thereby revealing a significant threshold moment for the protagonist’s biography. Hence, the chapter analyzes specific spaces such as the Bosphorus also for the threshold experiences they make possible for the protagonists.

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<sup>127</sup> This is the dictionary meaning of transition as it appears in Webster’s New World. 2000.

<sup>128</sup> Waldenfels explices how crossing over a threshold implies much more than simply crossing the lines of a physical border – i.e. arriving somewhere: “Die Schwelle ist eine Grenze besonderer Art. Wer eine Schwelle überschreitet, gelangt nicht nur anderswohin, sondern wird ein anderer.” Bernard Waldenfels, “Schwellenerfahrung und Grenzziehung,” *Grenzgänger zwischen Kulturen*, Ed. Monika Fludernik, (137-153), 152.

Similarly, in *Selam Berlin*, the Potsdamer Platz provides the context for a threshold experience for Hasan: he claims a new identity there at the same time that the country experiences a threshold during East and West Germany's official re-unification.

### ***Selam Berlin***

Yade Kara's debut novel *Selam Berlin* begins with the news of the opening of the Berlin Wall which the main character Hasan and his family receive over the television in their apartment in Istanbul. Nineteen-year old Hasan, born in Kreuzberg, Berlin, had lived there for thirteen years before being sent to Istanbul where he attends the German school and lives with his mother and brother. His father works in Germany at a travel agency and commutes between Berlin and Istanbul.<sup>129</sup> When Hasan hears about the fall of the Wall, he decides immediately to leave Istanbul for Berlin. The novel ends on the night of German re-unification, with Hasan standing at Potsdamer Platz. While Hasan grows into maturity between these two major events, Kara's narrative depicts changes and transitions in Berlin as well. In fact, the changes in Berlin's spatial and cultural landscape are mapped onto Hasan's story and transformation. Petra Fachinger characterizes *Selam Berlin* as the first Turkish-German 'Wenderoman.'<sup>130</sup> Although the scope of the genre 'Wenderoman' is wide ranging, with variations such as Thomas Brussig's *Sonnenalle* and *Helden wie wir* to Christa Wolf's *Medea* and *Was bleibt*, my reading of *Selam Berlin* according to this genre-concept follows the theorization of the 'Wenderoman' as a text that grapples with the phenomenon of the fall of the Berlin Wall

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<sup>129</sup> Hasan describes his father's life as follows: " Baba lebte auf gepackten Koffern. In Berlin hatte er seine Arbeit und in Istanbul seine Familie. Keines von beidem wollte er aufgeben. Er wurde zum Stammpassagier auf der Fluglinie Berlin-Istanbul-Berlin. Mit den Jahren bekamen wir Übung. Die Pendelei ging uns ins Blut über" (17).

<sup>130</sup> Petra Fachinger, "A New Kind of Creative Energy: Yade Kara and Fatih Akin," *German Life and Letters*, 60:2 (April 2007), 247.

and its ongoing consequences for the protagonist and the society.<sup>131</sup> *Selam Berlin* is a special kind of ‘Wenderoman’ because it tells the events of the *Wende*, between 1989-1990, with the narrative focus on Hasan and his family, and significantly writes the Turkish German subject into a very specific historical and social juncture.

In the popular press, *Selam Berlin* was celebrated for telling the events around the *Wende*. As the *Welt* literary supplement had it: “der Roman dekliniert die unterschiedlichsten Umgangsweisen mit dem Leben im Transit durch, aber er beschränkt sich nicht nur auf die Menschen. *Selam Berlin* ist auch das Porträt einer Stadt im Übergang.”<sup>132</sup> And the Vienna *News* dubbed it “a felicitous portrait after the fall of the Wall and a tragicomic novel about love, identity, adolescence and home. A distressing debut.” The *Hamburger Abendblatt* was even less reserved: “Wir haben jahrelang auf den großen Wenderoman gewartet, und schließlich hat ihn eine junge, türkische Autorin verfasst. Ein wunderbarer Roman.”<sup>133</sup> Although these critics touch upon the novel rather superficially, what interests me is their mutual praise of the novel as a portrait of Berlin after the Wall. The last endorsement, however, though it validates the novel as a Wenderoman, call attention to the author’s Turkish heritage, a point on which Yade Kara herself has taken a strong position. She asks specifically, “Ist es nicht egal, ob jemand deutscher oder türkischer Abstammung ist?” She is also perturbed by the question of home, and argues against the question itself: “Wer fragt denn nach Heimat? Werden Sie

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<sup>131</sup> Susanne Ledanff’s article on the wide interpretations of Wenderoman: [www.dickinson.edu/glossen/heft2/wende.html](http://www.dickinson.edu/glossen/heft2/wende.html).

Leslie Adelson in *The Turkish Turn* (15) also explicates that the German literature reflecting on the structural transformation and cultural consequences of the *Wende*, is commonly called *Wende-Literatur*.

<sup>132</sup> Iris Alanyali, “Ein Leben im Transit,” *Die Literarische Welt*, Beilage, *Die Welt*. Berlin. 24.5. 2003.

<sup>133</sup> Annemarie Stoltenberg, “Die türkische Antwort auf die *Wende*,” *Hamburger Abendblatt*. 30. 8. 2003.

gefragt, was Ihre Heimat ist?”<sup>134</sup> The questions about heritage and home, with which Kara’s protagonist Hasan also grapples, have made Kara face inquiries into *Selam Berlin*’s status as an autobiographical work.

Kara defies reductive questions about autobiography: “Das ist ein Roman. Ein Roman ist erfunden,” yet she acknowledges that the book is “emotional autobiographisch,” and that the atmosphere during the time in which the novel is set, when she herself was studying English and German at the Freie University and working at the Schillertheater was a crucial factor. “Ich habe diese Zeit rund um den Mauerfall ja selbst in Berlin erlebt. Aber erinnern ist erfunden.”<sup>135</sup> Yade Kara, a traveler figure like her protagonist Hasan, attests to the impromptu genesis of her novel in a café in Hong-Kong. The author (born in 1965 in Turkey) has lived in Berlin, London, Istanbul and Hong-Kong and worked as actress, teacher, manager, and journalist before taking up writing. Although I agree with Kara that her own autobiography should not be the decisive factor in our critical readings, I believe that it is important to keep in mind the distinct perspective brought to the narration by the heritage of its protagonist.

The fall of the Berlin Wall symbolizes a new beginning as the historic event heralded the end of a cultural and political divide and the beginning of a new era. Hasan’s arrival in Berlin from Istanbul also marks a new beginning for him. In my analysis, I read these two beginnings, for Berlin and for Hasan’s new life in Berlin, as well as the changes that follow in the transitional period of transformation until the German reunification hand in hand. Since the fall of the Wall is really the beginning of re-

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<sup>134</sup> Cornelia Geissler, “Damals im Westen,” *Berliner Zeitung*. 11.03. 2003.

<sup>135</sup> Cornelia Geissler, “Ein Leben im Transit,” *Die Literarische Welt*. 24. 5. 2003.

unification, by a transitional period in Berlin, I mean that these two major historical events tie an on-going transformation that entail the implications of the end of a Cold-War constellation and the complications involved in the coming together of East and West Germans.

I investigate the transformations Berlin and Hasan undergo through the novel's use of specific spaces and places in Berlin's topography, i.e. the subway, Kreuzberg, a travel agency, and the Potsdamer Platz. I explicate the first three spaces as transitional because of the novel's portrayal of changes and a new sense of dynamics between the diverse inhabitants of Berlin on the subway, in Kreuzberg, and at the travel agency. The narrative brings East and West Germans and Turkish-Germans, who are also West Germans, into close contact and complicates the Istanbul-Berlin binary with the addition of a different, but equally complex binary: that of East and West Berlin. With my analysis of Hasan's and the city's transitions in the period between the Wende and re-unification, I propose a site that does not *mark* a definitive border between two distinct worlds but instead, is composed of strips of borders between multiple worlds. I differentiate the Potsdamer Platz as a threshold because of how we see both Hasan and Berlin crossing a threshold, and attaining a new identity at this location.<sup>136</sup>

In addition, between the two major moments that convey transformations for Berlin and Hasan, the novel presents instances in which Hasan and other characters grapple with the absolutist thinking of the two-worlds paradigm. The narrative's most striking examples of the continuation of the paradigm in the transitioning world of Berlin

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<sup>136</sup> Although the Potsdamer Platz also went through significant changes that I discuss accordingly in that section, and hence is certainly a transitional space, Kara's portrayal of Potsdamer Platz in the novel conveys Hasan's and Berlin's biographical thresholds, instead of thematizing transitions.

are the depictions of Wolf's ideas and Hasan's parents. Further, Hasan's own stories of his parents occasionally fall prey to the false cultural fable of the "between two worlds."<sup>137</sup> In the chapter, I inquire what these examples that portray the paradigm may mean for the narrative of *Selam Berlin* and what purpose they serve.

The theme of travel plays a complex role in the novel. First, Hasan liberates himself from Istanbul's suffocating atmosphere by traveling to Berlin. At the same time, the freedom to travel between East and West Berlin creates a number of problems for Hasan. One of these problems concerns Hasan's father, whose secrets—a lover and a son from his travels to East Berlin—come out in the open when everyone travels freely between the two sides of the city. Second, although it may seem different from travel between countries, Kara portrays Hasan constantly travelling and on the move in Berlin—on the subway moving in between places and traversing Kreuzberg, Schöneberg, Spandau, Alexanderplatz, Nollendorfplatz, Potsdamer Platz. His various encounters and stories in these places with different people, for instance, with the film director Wolf, with the woman (Cora) whom he loves, with a racist house-owner, with his cousin Leyla, with his father and uncle, and with his "multicultural" roommates, not only depict the significant effects of the encounters on Hasan's personality but also they portray the changes in Berlin as a city.

In the context of a changing and new Berlin, on certain occasions, Hasan is estranged, isolated and excluded, and he contemplates the Wall's fate with a nostalgic tone.<sup>137</sup> Earlier in the narrative, Hasan explains his personal relationship to the Wall in a

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<sup>137</sup> "Ich dachte an die Zeit, als wir nachts Dosen leer sprühten. Träume, Visionen, Stimmungen an der Mauer entwarfen. Jetzt rissen sie sie einfach ab. Ich fand es Scheiße, daß diese lange Leinwand einfach verschwand. Schließlich war sie ein Teil unserer Straße"(305).

similar manner to Brussig's Micha in *Sonnenallee*. Hasan, like Micha, lives on a street with an Eastern and Western part, directly at the Wall. And, similar to Micha who calls the Wall a Spielplatz, Hasan also remembers fondly the times he played ball at the Wall, "ein Spielplatz"(48). While both novels portray the Wall as a symbolic space of escape, transgression and play for both characters, Brussig's invocation of the Wall as a play-ground is representative of the Ostalgic sentiment for the GDR, which is not present in the case of Hasan. In fact, Hasan's further reflections reveal an irony in Kara's gesture of parody.

As Hasan remembers his childhood, he asks why one could not leave the wall there: "Schließlich hatte sie doch immer da gestanden. Oder?" (305). Hasan's question indicates his ignorance about the Wall's past. Hence, the two characters' longing for the Wall represent different reasons; Micha's longing is generated by an attachment to his past in the GDR, which the novel serves to help him remember. For Hasan, however, the present conditions—"der Einbruch einer verwirrend fremden Dimension, die alles Bekannte und Gewusste durcheinander wirft"—bring about his wish for the Wall to come back.<sup>138</sup> Whereas Hasan was safe in Berlin's familiarity before the Wall, afterwards, he feels alienated and estranged. During his crossings in a Berlin without the constraints of the structure of the Wall, Hasan and his friend Kazim encounter *racism* as a new wall. Hasan does not tell of any experiences of racism prior to the Fall of the Wall and describes his life in Berlin before as quite and safe.<sup>139</sup> Hasan's depiction of the time after

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<sup>138</sup> Bernadette Conrad, "Ein Blick auf die Wendezeit aus Turkish-Deutscher Perspektive. Der Sound des neuen Berlin," *Der Landbote*, Winterthur. 26. 4. 2003.

<sup>139</sup> "Alles war übersichtlicher und ruhiger... die Leute ignorierten sich gegenseitig und ließen einen in Ruhe"

the fall of the Wall, however, depicts a Berlin filled with on-going negotiations and conflicts around social and cultural as well as spatial borders.

*Selam Berlin* utilizes the defining features of a satire such as irony, parody, and sarcasm, although what it satirizes takes on several layers. Similar to *Helden wie wir*, which imposes an ironic and satirical account about the ideological prohibitions of the GDR paralleled with a satire on the inhibitions of the protagonist Klaus' personal home life<sup>140</sup>, Kara's story about Hasan reflects a satirical account on multiple levels: first, the novel seems to satirize the Turkish-German subject's position in German society during the Wende and the prohibitions that the new Germany imposes on the Turkish-German subject. In a changing Berlin that brings East and West Berliners together, the Turkish-Germans like Hasan and Kazim, who are also from West Berlin, experience exclusion. Hence, the novel can be seen as a form of writing back against exclusion.

In addition, given the ironic and self-satirizing tone of the first person narrator, the narrative equally satirizes the conditions of the Wende and the ways in which Turkish-Germans, East and West Germans interact and encounter each other. For instance, although Hasan encounters exclusionary clichés against him and his Turkishness by both East and West Berliners, Hasan himself passes on equally stark clichés in his encounters. This satirizes the circumstances of coming together after the Wende, and not only the clichés. On another level, with its illustrations of the metaphors of in-between and the “between two worlds paradigm,” especially in portrayal of Hasan's interactions with the film director Wolf, and in the depiction of Hasan's parents, I argue that the novel enacts the paradigm and makes it a part of the narrative, and at the same

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<sup>140</sup> Brad Prager, “The Erection of the Berlin Wall: Thomas Brussig's *Helden wie wir* and the End of East Germany,” *The Modern Language Review*. 99.4 (Oct 2004): 17

time exposes it with irony and satire. Particularly, it imposes a satirical outlook on Hasan's home life and his parents' legacy in Germany. Especially, the portrayal of Hasan's father conveys an irony about his relation to the GDR and his situation after the fall of the Wall. I discuss this further in the section that analyzes the narrative depiction of Hasan's parents.

The novel deploys a first person narrator, Hasan, as a figure who experiences and tells the changes in Berlin from multiple locations and perspectives, for instance, in Kreuzberg with his family, in the film industry with Wolf, and in the subway with East Berliners and against neo-Nazis. The dialogues and conversations provide an expansion of perspectives and multiple points of views. Hasan's parents, his uncle and aunt, his friends Leyla and Kazim, his father's East-German wife, and the film director Wolf are the other main characters. These character portrayals and their detailed conversations enable the reader to see how invisible borders and boundaries are re-generated and produced in a changing Berlin. While the narrative establishes an empathetic relationship with the main character Hasan, the self-ironic narrative style and the satirical tone avoids a direct identification with him and enables the reader a critical outside look.

#### HASAN'S ARRIVAL IN BERLIN and THE SUBWAY:

Hasan's decision to go back to Berlin and leave his education and life in Istanbul happens on the night he watches the opening of the Wall: "Trabis fuhren durch den Grenzübergang Bornholmerstraße nach West Berlin. Eine Frau im Pelz schüttete Sekt auf die Motorhauben. Dicke Männer in Volkspolizei-Jacken umarmten und klopften sich auf den Rücken.... Massen an der Mauer; auf der Mauer; auf meiner Graffitimauer"(8).

Hasan expresses his relation to the wall in possessive language because of having spent

his childhood in close proximity to the wall on a street directly by the border. While he stares in astonishment at the happy people, Trabis in the West, East Berliners going through Checkpoint Charlie and masses of people at the Wall, he calls the scene “eine Revolution” (8), and immediately decides to be a part of it, leave Istanbul and go to Berlin, where he claims to be more at home.

Upon Hasan’s arrival in Berlin, his very first encounter at the passport control at the airport already indicates a welcomed change. In contrast to earlier incidents of checking his passport five times, the officers greet Hasan with a smile. As he smiles back, he thinks that “die Löcher in der Mauer hatten Wirkung! Sogar die pingeligen Beamten waren freundlicher geworden”(20). From this moment on however, with his first step into the new Berlin, a city without the divisional marker of the Wall as a defining border, Hasan steps over a threshold and begins to encounter and experience another Berlin, much different than the “übersichtlich” and “ruhig” Berlin he had known.<sup>141</sup> In contrast to the routine, punctuality and order of former West-Berlin, Hasan perceives a sense of disorder that disorients him.

The new order in Berlin is most visible on the level of the sub-way system and its new mapping that includes the stations of former East-Germany. However, more alienating to Hasan is the extension of the changes to the social realm: the flood of East-Germans on the S-Bahn, the long lines at Aldi, the overcrowded shopping centers in the West and the rushing of West Germans to the old, rundown streets of East Berlin. Where is Hasan in the midst of this? On his first day in Berlin as Hasan leaves the airport excited

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<sup>141</sup> When he is still in Istanbul, Hasan reflects on how people in Berlin ignore and leave each other alone; he expresses that he feels safe and serene there. “Alles war übersichtlicher und ruhiger. Die Geschäfte schlossen um achtzehn Uhr, die Busse waren pünktlich, und die Leute ignorierten sich gegenseitig und

and ventures into the city, the first thing that takes his attention are the flood of East Berliners and the disappearance of West Berliners. In the overcrowded subway, he observes the East Berliners and takes notice that they are not fat like the West Berliners, and their eyes are awake.

Sie sahen sich alles genau an. Den Bahnhof, die bunte Sexreklame von Beate Uhse, die freien Marlboro Männer... Als die U-Bahn in den schwarzen Tunnel fuhr und die Marlboro Cowboys verschwanden und es nichts mehr zu sehen gab, schauten sie auf mich. War mein Hosenschlitz auf?.... Ich fühlte mich begutachtet wie ein Kamel im Berliner Zoo (21).

As Hasan observes the East Berliners' curiosity for western/capitalist images, suddenly he becomes the center of their curiosity. And ironically, as he feels himself to be observed like a camel on display, he is also watching the East Berliners as if they were in a show. The encounter with the East Berliners reveals the borders of differentiation that mark identity formation: "Ohne begrenzende Unterscheidung gibt es keine Identität, keine Form [...] ja nichtmal eine reale Existenzmöglichkeit".<sup>142</sup> Hasan identifies and differentiates the East Berliners by recognizing what makes them different while at the same time realizing how their gazes differentiate Hasan too.

Only at the very moment that his gaze is returned, does he feel utterly discomfited, and questions what may be wrong with him: "Waren es meine schwarzen Haare? Oder mein Charlie-Chaplin Koffer? Was gab es da zu glotzen?" (21). The moment that makes Hasan feel like a camel on display makes him conscious about his own looks, possessions, and in a sense his own identity. Hasan questions whether his black hair or his Charlie-Chaplin suitcase generates the differentiating gaze of the East-

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ließen einen in Ruhe. Das war O.K für mich. Vieles lief nach Routine und Plan. Ich fühlte mich sicherer und gelassener als in Istanbul"(12-13).

Berliners. His black hair evokes associations with Turkishness, and the reference to his Charlie Chaplin suitcase evokes an association with a Western/ American idol as well as the figure of the travelling tramp. Both characteristics become indicators of a self-conscious questioning in the face of being watched by the East-Berliners, and they reveal Hasan's complex identity.

The encounter leaves Hasan alienated. Although he has lived in Berlin in his childhood and thus knows the subway stations quite well, his encounters with the East Berliners estrange him and make him feel like an outsider. "Ich kam mir plötzlich so fremd vor in der Berliner U-Bahn, mit der ich praktisch aufgewachsen war. Ich kannte jeden Bahnhof, jede Brücke und jedes Kurvengeräusch... Ich hatte mir sogar den Berliner U-Bahn-Plan ins Gehirn tätowiert"(21). In the face of estrangement, Hasan's reflection on knowing every turn, bridge and station as if it was tattooed on his brain, thus, pointing out his thorough knowledge of the subway system, puts himself back not only in the subway's territory but also symbolically in Berlin's uncanny old-new spatiality as an insider.<sup>143</sup> Yet as his thoughts here as well as his thoughts about Berlin at the beginning of the narrative prove, Hasan is indeed an insider, a West-Berliner, who feels as an outsider under the current changes. At the same time, Hasan's reflections on the subway convey the East Berliners as the outsiders, the newcomers who are foreign and must still learn about the West. For instance, when the street singer, the "Italosänger"

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<sup>142</sup> Claudio Magris: *Wer Steht auf der anderen Seite?* Grenzbetrachtungen, Salzburg, Wien 1993. qtd in Dirk Hohnsträter, "Im Zwischenraum", 237.

<sup>143</sup> On the other hand, while Hasan negotiates his identity and affirms his belonging in Berlin through spatial inscriptions, namely through his familiarity with the subway, which is the connecting system of all Berlin, the subway system itself has changed. Later, Hasan remarks how he has to adjust to the extended new subway plan that is changed and involves more color, more lines, and more stations like Marx-Engels-Platz and Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz. Thus, the subway at large represents a double metaphor for the threshold in Berlin: both its space and its map have changed.

appears singing in the subway and Hasan gives him a German Mark, against the astonished faces of the East Berliners, Hasan thinks: “Was soll’s, dachte ich, die Ost-Leute müssen noch viel lernen. Willkommen im Westen!”(23). Hasan plays the role of welcoming the East Germans and thereby claims an insider position not only in the subway, but also in the “West.”

The dynamic negotiation of identity in these encounters illustrate the unsettling effects of East/West encounters after the fall of the Wall, which are often discussed, both in literary and social documentations, as a phenomenon of East and West Germans. These discussions focus on how the opening of the Wall reconfigured the postwar German identity, which had developed during the forty two years of political separation along an ideological axis and was articulated in terms of binary opposites (BRD/DDR; Wessis/ Ossis; Bundis/ Zonis, drüben/ hüben). 1989 unsettled the “essentialized categories of East/West, us/them; here/there; order/disorder that the Wall had seemed to contain”.<sup>144</sup> *Selam Berlin* conveys the disruption of these dichotomies, with depictions of the subway, the disorderly streets of West Berlin, the complaints of Hasan’s West-Berliner neighbors about transportation and shopping, Hasan’s own experience of long lines in front of shops in the West. However, it also adds a layer of disruption by involving a Turkish-German subject, who is at the same time, a West-Berliner, a West-German. Although Yade Kara expresses her disinterest in the issue of *Heimat* (home or native country), and has indicated that she wants her reader to take the story for what it is and not merely read it for Hasan’s Turkish heritage, the character Hasan’s portrayal from the very beginning as a West-Berliner with Turkish heritage means that the novel

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<sup>144</sup> Mary Beth Stein. “The Banana and the Trabant: Representations of the ‘Other’ in a United Germany”. in *The Berlin Wall: Representations and Perspectives*. 1996. (333-46), here: 334.

constructs a mixed and complex identity and reveals a distinct perspective on the events of the period.<sup>145</sup>

Kara's portrayal of the subway as a space of *transition* reveals how the diverse residents of Berlin, who used to be separated by demarcated borders, now come together and negotiate complex experiences within the no-longer demarcated borders of the city. Hasan's experiences on the subway portray his entry to what has now become a foreign territory to him as well as convey in an encapsulated illustration the dynamics of his grappling with the transformation in the city. In other words, the first subway episode in the novel provides to see the dynamics of transformation in Berlin and in fact encapsulates this transitional period: the transformation is not only about East and West Germans uniting; it is also about the ways in which Turks as the other "West Germans" also experience and encounter the changes and negotiate their places in the new Germany. While the first encounter on the subway depicts Hasan negotiating his identity as a West-Berliner and West-German by differentiating himself from the East Germans, the larger transition in the novel reveals the ways in which Hasan is also being excluded and differentiated for his mixed identity, namely for his Turkish heritage, by both West Germans, like his roommates and the film director Wolf, but also in more extreme form, by the East Berliners and the neo-Nazis. As such, the novel portrays the phenomenon of the Wende in terms of multiple spheres of peoples and indeed breaks down the dichotomy of the East and West.

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<sup>145</sup> Yade Kara expresses her disease with the interest in a home country or the question as to whether Hasan is a Turkish, a German or a German-Turkish as follows: "Da leben Leute bald vierzig Jahre hier, und die Deutschen machen immer noch so ein Heckmeck um die Herkunft. Ist es nicht egal, ob jemand deutscher oder türkischer Abstammung ist?" The article points out Kara's wish, "dass man sich für die "Story" in ihrem Buch interessiert und nicht für Hasan's Wurzeln". "Damals im Westen" in Textarchiv. 11 März 2003.

## THE CHANGING SPACES OF BERLIN: KREUZBERG AND THE TWO WORLDS PARADIGM

As has already been seen, *Selam Berlin* depicts the new and changing city as structurally borderless and open. At the same time, though, new invisible borders are in the process of being constituted along cultural, ethnocentric, and national lines. In this section, I first analyze the ways in which the narrative grapples with the city's new spatial and cultural borders. Second, I explicate the narrative enactment and satire of the two-worlds paradigm. As an illustrative example of what I mean by Berlin's new face and the production of some of these borders, I take a close look at two incidents: first, the trip by the film producer Wolf and Hasan to Kreuzberg to select a site at which to stage a stabbing scene for Wolf's film, and second, the dialogue between Hasan and Wolf on the same night initiated by Wolf's request.

Wolf and Hasan drive through a Kreuzberg inhabited by "Autonome, Asylanten, Studenten, Türken, Wehrdienstverweigerer, Punks." "Ein Reservat", Hasan calls it as he thinks that for him and Kazim, Kreuzberg was 'out': "Es war jetzt der Ort, wo die Eltern wohnten" (238). After a short walk in the area, Wolf enthusiastically calls out: "Düfte, Gerüche, Kebap und Knoblauch, schnurrbärtige Männer, Marktschreier, das ist Kreuzberg! Es hat was von Asien, von Märkten, von Gewürzen, von Cafes. Das ist ein Stück Istanbul pur!" (239). On top of the authenticity he finds so exciting in the area, his further description exemplifies how he sees the area with a film-maker's eyes, in terms of what the images could be made into:

Türken, Anarchisten, Hausbesetzer und diese Mischung macht es so... so... na, so einmalig, so originell, so authentisch. So was gibt es kein zweites Mal in Deutschland.... Das ist ein melting pot. Es hat alles: a. Türken, b. Ausländer c.

Autonome d. Zündstoff. Es ist filmreif. Ich mag keine falsche Harmonie. Ich mache gern Ärger (239-40).

Hasan is quiet during Wolf's excited speech about his findings. He thinks that Wolf acts as if he were the first to discover Turks although they had been living there for over thirty years. Because of his need for the film job and his caution not to fall into one of Wolf's index cards, Hasan remains silent.<sup>146</sup>

Hasan's and Wolf's experiences in Kreuzberg illustrate another transitional space in Berlin in which complex negotiations around cultural borders and individual identities occur. First, although at the beginning of the novel, Hasan calls himself a Kreuzberger, he does not identify with Kreuzberg anymore. His reflections on the district reveal that Kreuzberg itself plays a crucial role in Hasan's identity transformation. He circumscribes and fences off Kreuzberg by naming it a "Reservat", or a wild-park, and its inhabitants the outsiders. By describing Kreuzberg as a ghetto and at the same time a display for the "Provinzpunker" and by identifying it as the place where his parents lived, Hasan differentiates himself from the area and the resistance to change with which he associates it.<sup>147</sup> He sees himself better and notes that the young people like him have moved toward Schöneberg. His reflections are self- reassurances that he has passed beyond the cultural borderline of Kreuzberg.<sup>148</sup>

Second, despite Hasan's ideas on Kreuzberg's stagnation, with its changed position after the Wende, Kreuzberg is indeed a space of transition. Wolf's

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<sup>146</sup> Lieber die Klappe halten, dachte ich, man weiß nie, wie diese Künstlertypen so reagieren. Und außerdem dachte er wie ein Buchhalter oder Bibliothekar. Er katalogisierte alles" (240).

<sup>147</sup> He notes that people living there have stayed behind time: "Hier trugen türkische Frauen immer noch Kopftuch... Deutsche Männer trugen immer noch Irokesenschnitt". Therefore, the ghetto that Hasan perceives in Kreuzberg by no means implies a "Turkish" ghetto.

<sup>148</sup> In this sense, Kreuzberg also signifies a spatial threshold—by Hasan's departure, in other words, by his leaving behind its physical and cultural borders.

instrumentalizing (and Orientalizing) approach to Kreuzberg, along with Hasan's own descriptions of the area, reveal how this district with a high population of Turkish people receives extra attention after the fall of the Wall. Certainly, Kreuzberg's changed relative location, which comes with the opening of the Wall, plays a role in Kara's portrayal of Hasan's and Wolf's relative positions on the district. After the opening of the Wall, Kreuzberg moved to the center and shifted its position from being a desolate margin next to the Wall to "a ceremonial ghetto for the metropolis" (67), which Hasan and Wolf's observations and reflections on the district also convey.<sup>149</sup> While Hasan critically distinguishes himself from Kreuzberg and at the same time ventures out into the metropolis, Wolf fetishizes the area in his enthusiastic response. His perception of the area initially conveys interest and attraction. His enthusiastic response to Kreuzberg is especially ironic because just as Hasan calls the area a Reservat, a wild-park and space of interest to odd visitors, Wolf plays the role of the provincial film maker, coming to observe the specimens in the wild-park. However, although he takes notice of the mix of peoples residing there, he nevertheless fixes the place as strictly Turkish and "authentic".

Most ironic and significant is the notion Wolf introduces with regard to the film he wants to make about the area: anger in a melting pot. However, a melting pot generally implies a neutral type of co-existence and erasure of differences between diverse groups. Levent Soysal emphasizes that "in its ghetto guise, Kreuzberg is cast not as a zone of excessive criminality and utmost poverty but one of cultural pluralism and alternative lifestyles."<sup>150</sup> Kara depicts the uniqueness of the area with its mix of diverse

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<sup>149</sup> Levent Soysal, "Rap, HipHop, and Kreuzberg: The Institutional Topography of Migrant Youth Culture in the WorldCity Berlin," *New German Critique*, Spr-Sum 2004. No 92. 62-82. (here p. 67)

<sup>150</sup> Ibid. 67.

peoples; this portrayal is commensurate with “a popular and quasi-official” vision of Kreuzberg as described in a youth guide “as a multicultural mix of Turks (living) along with students, alternatives, punks, perfectly normal Berlin families, and off movie houses and theaters....”<sup>151</sup> Wolf also notices the uniqueness of the area, especially its mix of peoples. But by listing the different groups as if they were ingredients, and then adding an explosion to the recipe, he reveals that anger is the intention of his film; thus, he views this multicultural mix for its potential to be exploited, instead of depicting it as the harmonious melting pot.

Kara satirizes Wolf’s attempt and his fantasy related to Kreuzberg by conveying the way he reinvents the space. Wolf’s later ideas about a Jewish film he wants to make in Berlin portray him as a director who wants to make big hits. Hence, Kara reveals how first Kreuzberg and then Berlin’s history is reinvented during Wolf’s intentions to tell stories that would sell. While uncovering Wolf’s motivations and simultaneously characterizing him with humor and exaggeration, Kara’s portrayal interrogates fictional and reinvented ideas about Kreuzberg and Berlin. Wolf’s further interactions with Hasan supplement Kara’s satirization of him, thereby illustrating how Wolf thinks with the “cultural fable of two worlds.”<sup>152</sup>

A dialogue between Hasan and Wolf about Kreuzberg illustrates Wolf’s thinking with the two-worlds paradigm and Hasan’s seeming in-betweenness. Wolf asks Hasan why it is the brother and not the father who saves the sister’s honor in the film. When Hasan simply answers that it is expected of him, Wolf unleashes a barrage of stereotypes.

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid. 67.

Wolf is a pompous character from the province, pretending to know not only Berlin but also Turkey and the Turkish culture better than anybody. So, he says that as the head of the family, it is the father's responsibility among Turks to protect the honor of the family. When Hasan is at a loss for an answer, pondering how he could explain "The Turks" to Wolf, he thinks to himself: "... Wie sollte ich Wolf 60 Millionen Türken nahebringen. Ich meine, da war alles dabei. Vom alten Schäfer auf dem Berg Ararat bis hin zum New Yorker Yuppie mit Büro am Bosporus" (244). He says that although it is also expected of the father, the young son does it so that his father will avoid jail. In response, Wolf indicates that he now understands why the youth in Kreuzberg all walk around with knives. Hasan is skeptical and disagrees that this is the case at all, but Wolf insists: "Die Jungs, die da rumlaufen, haben ein Messer in der Tasche, im Schuh, in den Haaren...." (245). Though Hasan cannot think of any "harte Jungs" like the ones Wolf describes, he lets Wolf's further generalization, "Erstens Mann, zweitens Ehre, drittens Waffen—das ist doch typisch bei euch?"(245), go unchallenged. In these dialogues, the 'native,' the Kreuzberger Hasan, is not only given a lesson about Kreuzberg but also about how Turks are.

Wolf's re-invention of the cultural spatiality in Kreuzberg and his reductive portrayal of the Turkish culture draw borderlines and erect boundaries. They highlight and essentialize difference. His approach to Kreuzberg, characterized by his construal of the Turkish culture and the Turks as a homogeneous and predictable whole, puts Hasan in an in-between position. Hasan knows otherwise about the Turks and Kreuzberg, but he

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<sup>152</sup> In a similar fashion to the way I used Adelson's terminology in Chapter 1 with regard to how Alexander was seen to create fictional stories about Turkey and to enact the two worlds paradigm, Kara portrays Wolf as he creates a 'cultural fable' around the distinct and exclusive world of the Turkish people.

ends up agreeing with Wolf's stereotypes for the sake of keeping the film job. Wolf is in charge as the director and Hasan realizes he cannot change Wolf's mind and ideas: "die Bilder in seinem Kopf sind wie in Beton gegossen" (245). There is an irony at play in Hasan's situation. While he literally moves out of Kreuzberg and leaves it behind, the film role puts Hasan back into Kreuzberg and casts him in a "Turkish" role with which he does not identify. Through the novel, he moves in and out of similar scenarios in different parts of Berlin where other characters' ascriptions of "Turkishness" to Hasan put him in conflicts with the free and open identity he claims for himself.

Hasan's role as a knife-wielding Turk—a role with which he does not in the least identify—depicts Hasan as a victim of 'in-betweenness.' On the other hand, Hasan criticizes Wolf's mentality, and the reader can see that this is part of a game Hasan has to play. As Kara says too, "Er glaubt ja nicht daran, was er spricht"<sup>153</sup> We can see this also in Hasan's gesture of swearing off Wolf's generalizations. Hence, Kara does not portray him as powerless; in response to Wolf's hard-headed stereotypes, Hasan swears in Turkish: "siktir lan." The author steps in and gives a translation of the phrase into German in a footnote: "verpiss dich" (245). The Turkish swear-word serves as a means of transgression against Wolf's thinking.

The utterance of the phrase in Turkish—in the language of the culture Wolf stereotypes, and not in German, which Hasan and Wolf use—not only disrupts the narrative language of the novel but performs a transgression. This gesture empowers Hasan and ridicules Wolf. Kara does not depict Hasan in a fit of anger, aggressively confronting Wolf, which would have only confirmed Wolf's stereotypes. If Hasan had

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<sup>153</sup> Cornelia Geissler. "Ein Leben im Transit". *Die Literarische Welt*. 24. 5. 2003.

sworn at Wolf in German, he would have also displayed a direct form of aggression. Instead Kara's gesture of having him swear mentally in Turkish allows the reader to see Wolf in a ridiculed position while having Hasan rise above Wolf's limiting views. Hence, with the use of a single phrase, Kara enables Hasan transgress the "in-betweenness" assigned to him. It is also another instance where Kara portrays the complexity of Hasan's identity. He definitely does not fit any of Wolf's stereotypes about the Turkish people, yet his mental swear in Turkish—in a subtle and natural form—displays the Turkishness in him.

In addition, Kara's narration gradually develops the figure of Hasan into a character beyond the two-worlds paradigm: a transcultural character beyond a fixed Turkish or German identity and who by no means suffers from a split between the two cultures. By using this term for Hasan, I mean that Kara portrays him above the restrictions of identifying strictly with either German or Turkish culture. In fact, Hasan represents a generation of German-Turks in Germany with the "flexibility and mobility a transnational and post-ethnic society demands".<sup>154</sup> I find Fachinger's use of the term post-ethnic apt for envisioning contemporary German society, as well as for characterizing Hasan's identity.

First, the term encourages the possibility of a society that transcends the importance given to the ethnicity of diverse peoples living within it—in other words, a society able to operate in spite of ethnic categories. Second, post-ethnic is an apt description for Hasan who is able to act unbounded by his Turkish ethnicity. This is

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<sup>154</sup> Petra Fachinger.. "A New Kind of Creative Energy: Yade Kara and Fatih Akin" *German Life and Letters*. 60:2 April 2007: p. 253

exactly what I mean by Kara's portrayal of Hasan as a transcultural character. Devoid of a bounded identification to Turkish ethnicity and to his Turkish cultural heritage, Hasan is able to live both as Turkish and German. Hasan's reluctance to contest Wolf's stereotypes reveals how he is not attached strictly to Turkishness. For Hasan, his job and settling into a new life in Berlin prove much more important than defending the Turks and Turkish culture.

#### INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION IN THE CHANGING BERLIN

At the end of the novel, Hasan approaches Wolf about making a film on the racist attacks experienced by his best friend Kazim, but Wolf simply ignores him. Kazim and Hasan had lived as neighbors in Kreuzberg before Kazim's parents moved back to Turkey and Kazim stayed behind in Berlin. When Hasan meets him again, Kazim works in Wolf's film – a film in which Hasan also takes a role. Wolf therefore knows Kazim personally, but is completely indifferent to the racist attacks on him. Wolf wants to make a hit film. He describes Berlin positively as a sort of Paris – a city with magnetic pull, and a city within which the Jewish people and culture have remained always influential: "Klezmer hat Tradition und Wurzeln, auch in Berlin. Und diese tiefe Leidenschaft, die Dynamik dieser Musik hat Klasse" (372).

Despite his producer's comments that the Jewish people have not even had a life in Berlin over the last forty years and that "Nachkriegsdeutschland ist nicht jüdisch, sondern türkisch", Wolf insists that the Jews are now 'in' fashion and the Turks are 'out'. He wants to portray "Ein jüdisches Leben in Berlin...!" which would make "den neuen Bombenfilm ...! Die Leute werden es fressen!"(372). Wolf re-draws new cultural boundaries in Berlin through his filming: just as he re-narrates Berlin's past and present,

and those of its inhabitants, in ways which suit his current interests, Wolf rearranges the cultural landscape in the city according to his current desires. The fact that Turks have been a defining part of post-war Berlin is transformed instead into a myth about a supposed Jewish life in the city.

Kara's portrayal of Wolf is almost comic in the way it conveys his exoticism for the Jewish people and their music, as well as his simultaneous, complete overlooking of Berlin's history. Furthermore, he describes the undesirability of the Turks in harsh clichés, "Die Leute wollen nicht mehr hammelschlachtende Väter und Gemüsebruder sehen," and defines them as "nicht integrierbar, noch zu anatolisch in den Köpfen," in contrast to the Jews: "diese Juden aus Riga haben Pep, die sind westlich im Kopf" (373). Wolf's generalizations once again evoke the "two-worlds paradigm," by revealing his fixation of the Turkish people as unworthy outsiders, invading from the world of Anatolia. By satirizing Wolf's thinking and his filmic creations with irony and exaggeration, Kara interrogates the implications of Wolf's cultural fixations. Wolf leaves out real Berliners, like Hasan and Kazim, along with their experiences, by focusing his attention on what he thinks the audience wants to see. With the power that he holds as a film maker – i.e through his images – Wolf decides who is included and excluded.

In accordance with Wolf's production of a new Berlin through stories which exclude Hasan and those like him, life in Berlin's streets gradually becomes more threatening and estranging to Hasan. On the night of the world-cup finale (Germany against Argentina), he encounters Neo-Nazis on the subway. They scream, "Heil, Heil, Heil", and "Wir sind das Voooolk.... Unser Vaaaterlaaand...Doooiiitschland...." (334). Hasan realizes that one of these kids is Rick, his uncle Breschnew's wife's cousin Rick

from East Berlin. Rick throws a beer bottle in Hasan's direction, and as they begin to scream at him, Hasan jumps out of the subway. These scenes contrast with Hasan's initial experiences on the subway and his experiences with the East-Berliners, when Hasan and the East-Berliners gazed and scowled. Here, the subway instead becomes a much more divided, confrontational, and contested border area. The subway's hostility conveys how the social circumstances and changes intertwine with and impact boundaries in Berlin. In a city now ostensibly borderless, the new political circumstances which bring the East-Berliners to the West impact the spatiality of Berlin in crucial ways which not only estrange Hasan, but also make him feel attacked as an outsider. In the new social spatiality of Berlin, Hasan does not feel safe and at home anymore.

He realizes that the sound of Berlin has changed. In contrast to the "Gleichgültigkeit und Ruhe" of the sounds by "Straßenfesten, Parties, Punks und besetzten Häusern" which all moved toward East Berlin, Hasan notes that "Westberlin war so muffig, piefig und ostig drauf und hatte jetzt einen neuen zackig aggressiven Sound"(348). He perceives that this sound roars as if it was the harbinger of a time yet to come, and fills Hasan with fear. Hasan proclaims, "Ich lebte gegen meine Zeit"(348). Paradoxically, imagining a new and better life there than Istanbul, Hasan came to Berlin precisely to live in 'his time', and in Berlin's time as history happens there. He wanted to live and participate in the celebrations of the Wall's opening but the changes implicated by the Wall's fall actually lead to his rejection from the space and time of Berlin. He realizes he must do something, and his decision that Kazim's incident must be heard, on the radio and in the papers, is an attempt to re-position himself actively in the time and space of Berlin.

However, when he tells Wolf about the racist attack on Kazim, Wolf's ignorance denies Hasan and Kazim their places in Berlin. The Italosänger tells Hasan that in Berlin there is no more life for dark skinned people like them, for the Kanacken: "Als Kanacke kann man in dieser Stadt nicht mehr durch die Bahnhöfe gehen.... So einer wie ich landet dann gleich hinter Gitter, und so ein Adolf-Hitler- Maskierter schlägt mir mit seinem Stock über die Birne," and shows Hasan the long scar over his eye (34). On the same night, after his conversation with the Italosänger and a street fight from which Hasan escapes to the subway, he feels like a Jewish woman who had to hide on the subway during Kristallnacht. "Mir fiel die Frau ein, über die ich mal gelesen hatte, daß sie mit ihrer Familie die ganze Nacht von einer Endstation zur anderen U-Bahn gefahren war..."(347). This allusion to the Jewish woman, Wolf's insistence on portraying Jews in Berlin as *belonging* instead of Turkish-Germans, and the Italosänger's speech about the Kanacken build narrative parallels between the Jews and the Turkish Germans. What do these associations between Turkish-Germans and the Jews mean? Do the Turkish-Germans, in a changing Berlin, assume the status formerly accorded to the Jews?

I do not think that Kara intends to equate the Turkish-German with the Jewish subject, because although the subway represents a space in which Hasan ends up stuck, he certainly has power and agency and roams the streets of Berlin freely. The last section, in which I discuss Hasan's walk and experience in Potsdamer Platz, will serve to illustrate Hasan's freedom and agency. By mapping the landscape of Berlin, and tracking its transformations—where West and East Germans and Turkish-Germans come into contact—the novel's portrayal of Berlin's transitional period exposes some exclusionary borders shaped in the shadow of the Wall as it fell. While the Wende led the way to the

East Berliners' re-entry to the German nation and space, the subway episode reveals the implications for the Turks, who became outsiders.

As the subway episode illustrates, through Hasan's experiences and his reflections on them, Kara invokes the Berlin Jews' past while revealing the difficulties of the Turks' presence. She also writes the Turks' 'near future' by alluding to the hate attacks in Hoyersweda, Solingen and Mölln of 1993 in a passage where Hasan's mother reflects on the fall of the Wall. Her thoughts on the events are expressed tersely: "Wölfe aus dem gleichen Rudel beißen sich nicht," she says, "aber sie töten Wölfe aus anderen Rudeln" (120). Hasan recalls these lines years later, when the flames went up in Germany and burnt whole families. Although the novel's events are framed between 1989 and 1990, this reference significantly connects the fall of the Wall and the hatred Hasan begins to perceive in Berlin with the attacks that will occur subsequently. Despite the allusions to the Jews' past and the Turks' future, instead of relying on a simple equation of victimization between the Jews and Turks, I believe that Kara wants to indicate the complications produced by the historical moment with regard to the Turkish-German subject's position. The novel counter-narrates the glory of the fall of the Wall; it shows that despite the harmonious overtones of a unification that brought together the two sides of Germany, the event also generated unrest and conflict, with major consequences for the Turkish Germans.

It is important here to consider Kara's portrayal of the Turkish people's experiences and her allusions to the Jewish past as regards Leslie Adelson's criticism in her article "Touching Tales." There, Adelson criticizes how in the 1990's, "current political tensions between East and West are frequently recounted in a German-German

narrative”, and that while Germans and Jews are customarily expected to meet in narratives of German history in “ghastly and then ghostly ways”, within this “interpretive landscape”, “Germany’s resident Turks have tended to figure only indirectly, if at all,” and are “rarely seen as intervening meaningfully in the narrative of postwar German history”.<sup>155</sup> Kara’s allusions to the experiences of the Jewish people and the difficulties of Turkish people after the Wall do not equate the respective histories through analogy, but instead they are seen to “touch” one another.<sup>156</sup>

Furthermore, viewed in the light of Adelson’s observations, Kara’s work, in allowing a Turkish-German subject to tell the story of Germany’s most recent and important historical event, indeed intervenes “meaningfully in the narrative of postwar German history” — at the very least, by creating a story that ironically thematizes the link for instance “between the raising of the Berlin Wall in August 1961 and the signing, in October 1961, of the temporary labor recruitment between the Federal Republic of Germany and the Republic of Turkey.”<sup>157</sup> Through the narrative, the reader sees the complications Kara intertwines around this link in the story of Hasan’s parents, a link to which I turn in the following section.

## THE DEPICTIONS OF HASAN’S PARENTS’ GENERATION

Hasan’s parents play an important role in Hasan’s transformation. Moreover, their status in the novel can tell us about the place of the parent generation in Berlin. In

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<sup>155</sup> Leslie Adelson, “Touching Tales of Turks, Germans, and Jews”. pg: 95-96

<sup>156</sup> See Kader Konuk’s “Taking on German and Turkish History” for her analysis of literature that conveys complex analogies. In an analysis of how Emine Sevgi Özdamar’s *Seltsame Stern*, transnationalizes cultural memory and engages with the Holocaust, thereby becoming “involved in acts of Vergangenheitsbewältigung,” Konuk discusses two other novels, by Zafer Şenocak and Dogan Akhanlı, for the ways in which their novels also engage in a similar process — which is not exclusively meant for the case of German history, as Konuk’s discussion of Şenocak’s *Gefährliche Verwandschaft* illustrates.

addition, through Hasan's stories about his parents, the narrative enacts the two-worlds paradigm, whereby the parents' polarized views about Turkey and Germany, Orient and Occident, and Istanbul and Berlin are exposed with irony and satire. Significantly, while the narrative exposes the parents to be in an in-between state, it also poses a critical outlook to Hasan's own thoughts about his parents and his portrayals of them. Thus, on the one hand, Hasan's parents' views and his portrayals of their lives enact the in-between paradigm and the cultural fable which situates migrants as suspended or 'stuck' subjects, and on the other the novel troubles the paradigm through the deployment of irony and satire.

First, Hasan's parents' reflections on Istanbul and Berlin reveal the paradoxical thinking that upholds a logic of culture/s and identities as bounded by notions of *time* and *place*. According to Hasan's parents, Istanbul has stayed the same in the last thirty years, and they still think of the grandiose Istanbul, "die Stadt der glitzernden Lichter, Tavernas und Open-air-Kinos, wo Moslems, Christen und Juden nebeneinander lebten. Eine Stadt auf zwei Kontinenten, sieben Hügeln und mit einer Million Einwohner"(11).<sup>158</sup> The parents remember the city and associate their memories with specific places and imagine a time that is long gone. In return, their local affinities and memories attached to Istanbul become the means by which the parents define and position themselves in Berlin. Hasan's mother attests, "Wir sind nur Gäste hier," and lives in Istanbul. Hasan says that although his father knows Berlin's West and East sides better than any Turkish city (67), his father never felt at home there, "Baba lebte und arbeitete in Kreuzberg, und den

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<sup>157</sup> Ibid. 96.

<sup>158</sup> Hasan, on the other hand notes the inexistence of this Istanbul today and expresses his own dislike for the city by describing it as a city with 12 million people, bombastic, chaotic and irritating to live in (11-12).

ganzen Tag über sprach er türkisch, trank türkischen Tee und verdrückte Köftes und Kebaps” (67). The parents’ portrayals convey that they are both unhappy with life in Germany and an in-betweenness, in between Turkey and Germany, a position which Hasan does not share with them. Hasan’s ironic tone toward the way in which his parents view Istanbul and Turkey through unchanging nostalgic lenses, as well as his criticism about their seemingly static lives in Germany are illustrative of the way in which Hasan differentiates himself from his parents.

A conversation with Hasan’s uncle Breschnew is the most illustrative example of the diverging positions between the two generations. When Hasan asks his uncle what is wrong with his father, his uncle gives him a long speech about their lives in Berlin. He complains about life in the cold, wet and gray city, listing its imperfections: “Kein Meer, keine Berge, noch nicht mal einen verdammten Hügel hat diese flache, platte Stadt...”(125). He then expresses that the only reason Hasan’s father and he could handle it all these years is the travel agency, which gives them the chance of a ‘transit’ life:

Hier im Reisebüro bist du direkt an der Quelle der Tickets. Hier hast du immer das Gefühl, jederzeit abzufahren, weit weg von dieser Mauer.. Verstehst du? Du siehst die Abflüge und weißt, in drei Stunden bist du in Istanbul. Nur verdammte drei Stunden trennen dich von der Stadt der Städte. Du siehst es jeden Tag auf dem Bildschirm. Da bist du im Transit (125).

Hasan reflects on his uncle’s words with the critical remark that while his father and uncle never leave the travel agency, they somehow have a feeling of being away, being in *transit*. Hasan understands and lives transit differently than his uncle, who understands and uses the notion ‘transit’ as an imagined concept of freedom and movement rather than to denote an actual experience. Significantly, the direction of the imagined

movement is toward Istanbul, the city that the uncle's words idealize. Hasan's uncle's depiction of their lives at the agency focuses on the hours that separate them from Istanbul and demonstrates that they look at Istanbul from a distance, by reference to posters. This is different than Hasan's own daily practice of literally traversing the districts of Berlin and living in transit. It also differs from Hasan's fantasy of travel and movement to multiple destinations in the East and West. As Hasan's criticism of his uncle's use of the word 'transit' also reveals, sitting at the travel agency and looking at the flights in the direction of Istanbul is but a suspending effect, a deferral.<sup>159</sup>

*Selam Berlin* evokes this sense of motionless suspension in relation to Hasan's parents. It does so through the ways with which Hasan tells about his parents' lives and stories. These narrations enact the cultural fable of the "between two worlds" paradigm. To reiterate, Leslie Adelson explicates the "between two worlds paradigm" as a conceited and ill-suited cultural fable in our increasingly transnational times that "shadows much of the literature born of migration and not merely discussions of it."(5). Adelson debunks the "between two worlds" paradigm for the problematic configuration with which it situates migrants in a space "in which nothing happens,"(3) where "worlds remain stable while unstable migrants are uncertainly suspended between them" (4).<sup>160</sup> At first, Hasan's views about his parents seem to fit into this description. The portrayals of Hasan's father's generation deploy typical assumptions about immigrants' lives: they are not at home at either place; they are in between Berlin and Istanbul; frozen in time in both

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<sup>159</sup> Nevertheless, it is also important to note that the agency symbolizes the *possibility* of travel, and even if in imagination, Hasan's uncle's word "transit" is a term that implies movement, yet differs in nature than Hasan's. Although, currently not happy in Berlin, Hasan does not imagine or dream of going to Istanbul either.

<sup>160</sup> *The Turkish Turn In Contemporary German Literature*. Palgrave, 2005, 3 -5.

places. In other words, they have missed time or they are living behind the times, both in Istanbul and Berlin. For instance, while Hasan defines Kreuzberg as “Reservat”, he also identifies it as the place where his parents lived. He disassociates himself from the area and its residents, who, he feels, have resisted change and have stayed the same in the last thirty years.

While Hasan’s reflections about his parents criticize them for not having gone forward and having stayed the same all these years, have they really? Hasan actually realizes toward the end of the novel that he never understood what their parents’ legacy in Germany meant. After his dream vision of flight (which I analyze in the following section), and after flying over the cities that his parents have travelled through all these years, he thinks: “Mich verblüffte jede Meile, jeder Kilometer, jede Strecke, die Baba und Onkel Breschnew von Mersin bis hierher hinter sich gebracht hatten” (380). Hasan is amazed by their courage, power, strength, ambition and enthusiasm. To this point, although Hasan interprets his parents’ lives as motion-less and suspended, he seems to realize after his vision that they have indeed been in constant (forward) motion.

In addition, although the lives of Hasan’s uncle and father, in between dreams of Istanbul and the Reisebüro in Berlin, differs from the transit Hasan personally lives, I suggest that the travel agency has a liberating function for the uncle and the father. I interpret the travel agency as an important transitional space and a crucial depiction of the on-going changes in Berlin. Before I explicate the ways in which the travel agency plays a liberating role especially for Hasan’s father, I want to underline the significance of the agency to the transformation in Berlin. When Hasan initially arrives in Berlin and goes to the agency, he is shocked by the site of “eine Schlange von Menschen in grauen Jacken

und Mänteln am Eingang des Reisebüros”(25). His father and uncle have transformed the agency into a fruit store and they sell fruit because of the madness of East-Berliners rushing to the West to buy fruits. After the mania passes, the agency goes back to the normal, but after a while, goes through another important transition with the intervention of Rosa, Hasan’s father’s lover from the East coming to work at the agency.

When Rosa takes over the agency’s management, she changes its service rationale to more capitalistic ends, and moves away from only serving “Turkish” customers. Hasan confronts Rosa, pointing out that the agency has regular customers with trust in their business. But Rosa stresses the importance of “Neue Zielgruppen, neue Märkte und ein neues Image” and “Konkurrenz” for the success of the business (338). Hasan is taken aback by the speed of her transition from a socialist system into a capitalistic one, as he decides that she is the only adult whose ambition he wants to imitate.<sup>161</sup> The travel agency serves as a site of multiple transitions. And, the border-work therein, as in the example of Rosa and Hasan, exemplifies another layer in Berlin’s transformation, namely with regard to the end of communism and the transitioning parameters of capitalism for the East-Germans.

While these examples illustrate that the agency carries a symbolic meaning of social “transit” in Berlin, I now go back to the more literal transit which the travel agency makes possible for Hasan’s father. First, the father traveled to East Berlin freely on business trips due to his agency’s partnership there. “Auf seinen Geschäftsbesuchen in Ostberlin stopfte er sich mit Eisbein, Schweinshaxe, und Sauerkraut voll. Dort war er frei, denn es gab keine Türken, keine Moslems und keinen Allah in der sozialistischen

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<sup>161</sup> “Ich nahm mir vor, ihren Ehrgeiz zu meinem zu machen, ihren Willen, ihre Zielstrebigkeit zu haben” (338).

DDR” (67). The father thus takes on another identity through his travels to the East-Berlin. He has been living the freedom and unattached life, existing in a Utopia, which Hasan himself wants. Moreover, his father enjoys the privilege of crossing to the other side of Berlin; this provides him with two lives, and in a sense, two identities.<sup>162</sup> However, with the end of the GDR, not only can the father no longer live this double life, but is also confronted with the emergence of secrets from his life there.

*Selam Berlin’s* incorporation of Hasan’s parents’ stories performs an important role in the novel—both with regard to Hasan and Berlin. Hasan’s parents’ stories along with the ways in which they have for many years crossed and lived across the border allows *Selam Berlin* to historicize two generational stories within Berlin’s cultural landscape. As my analysis in the next section will illustrate, in *Selam Berlin*, the Turkish-German subject claims his place in German history just as it unfolds. However, this subject does not appear out of nowhere without a background. Hasan’s crossing of his own maturity-threshold is largely influenced by his relation to his parents, and to his understanding of their pasts. By not leaving their stories out, the narrative not only validates the parents’ significance to Hasan, but also portrays the ways in which they have been part of Berlin in the last several decades. Therefore, Kara’s portrayals about Hasan’s parents reveal them as a connecting link to Germany’s past and present, and point out how their Turkish world has been a part of the changing German world.

#### HASAN AT THE POTSDAMER PLATZ

*Selam Berlin* ends on the night of German re-unification with Hasan standing at the Potsdamer Platz. The episode symbolizes the major transformation Berlin has been

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<sup>162</sup> Hasan’s father has an East German lover and an East German son, named Adem.

undergoing and Hasan's own transformation reaching its full fruition. As Hasan stands at the Potsdamer Platz, he notes that he feels like a nomad and desires to travel to big cities in the West and East: "London, New York, San Francisco oder nach Osten? Nach Tokio, Teheran, Taschkent.... Nicht hier, nicht da, einfach fort sein. Ja, das wollte ich, hey, ho. let's go" (382). He lingers at Potsdamer Platz, watching the sky: "Über mir die Lichter von Kränen und Baustellen, unter mir die Trümmer vom Weltkrieg". At the same time as he prepares himself to take off and make a new life elsewhere, he hears the rockets take off from the direction of Reichstag. The euphoric moment thus symbolizes the beginning and the end of an era both for Berlin and Hasan. Before I come back to address this moment and its significance for the novel, I want to sketch how Hasan ended up in Potsdamer Platz on this particular evening.

After Wolf's party for the film in which Hasan acted, Hasan drinks lots of Raki with his cousin Leyla on the terrace, and complains about Wolf's provincial behavior. Wolf refuses to listen to Hasan's story about the racist attacks against Turkish people, and instead talks up his new film about Jews in Berlin. Hasan criticizes Wolf for excluding Turks and favoring Jews in Berlin, in which Wolf himself is practically a foreigner. He and Leyla drink more Raki, and the conversation moves on to Hasan's parents' separation, which is even harder for Hasan than Wolf's behavior. In a little while, first Leyla and then Hasan begin to whirl around in circles on the terrace. Hasan senses an immense sense of euphoria: "Ich fühlte mich leicht, einfach federleicht, so, als würde ich davonfliegen, ja genau, fliegen über Dächer und Bäume dieser Stadt, über weite, weite Strecken" (380). Momentarily, Hasan imagines transgressing the limitations of physical boundaries. This light feeling of flight is fleeting and is effected by the Raki

and the whirling. Nevertheless, in contrast to his earlier sense of depression and inferiority, here he transcends all the borders and boundaries—whether physical and emotional. This is an instance in which the text depicts the movement between here/now and *beyond*; it is a threshold moment.

The importance of threshold is reformulated by Waldenfels' citation of Paul Valéry's perspective on losing control: "Es handelt sich um die fundamentale Diskontinuität im Bereich Sensibilität."<sup>163</sup> Through the momentary sense of losing one's continuity in the present moment and space, one reaches another level. Thresholds generate passings between one state of being and another, and they enable crossing from one place and time to another. Flying euphorically, Hasan transgresses the boundaries Wolf's racism sets, and leaving his depression over his parents and his encounter with his half-brother behind, he moves onto another level. He crosses, from here, and what this here and now prescribes to another place: an imagined space which nevertheless includes existing places. The cities over which he flies are the same cities to be found on the route from Mersin to Berlin, and are the cities his father and uncle passed through in their migration to Berlin: "Mersin-Istanbul-Edirne-Sofia-Nis-Belgrad-Wien-München-Leipzig-Erfurt-Berlin-Westberlin-Kreuzberg-Adalbertstraße..."(380). When Hasan falls back on the ground in exhaustion, he is overwhelmed by the distance his father and uncle have covered. But not only the distance plays a role; a temporal movement takes place, as well: Hasan's imagined flight evokes the past travels of his father and uncle. It is their past and Hasan's present that are at play in this moment.

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<sup>163</sup> Bernhard Waldenfels, Schwellenerfahrung und Grenzziehung, *Grenzgänger Zwischen Kulturen*. Band Monika Fludernik und Hans-Joachim Gehrke. (Ergon Verlag. 1999), 152-3.

For the first time in the novel, Hasan actually thinks on the courage and strength of his father and uncle. Reflecting on their power, he finds himself lacking in enthusiasm and ambition, and missing “de[n] verdammte[n] zähe[n] Biß” (381). Hasan’s self-realization indicates that he goes through a change. Here, the threshold clearly implies more than the dissolution or disappearance of the borders and boundaries. Rather, as Waldenfels explains, “Wer eine Schwelle überschreitet , gelangt nicht nur anderswohin, sondern wird ein anderer.”<sup>164</sup> Though Hasan ends up falling on the same ground as that upon which he began spinning, we ask: is it still the same for him? More significantly, is Hasan still the same person as he was when he began spinning? After his experience, he realizes that he must move and do something, “Alles in mir schrie nach AKTION!”(381). Hasan’s first action is running over to the Potsdamer Platz. It has just rained, and Hasan describes: “Die Lichter der Stadt spiegelten sich auf den Pflastersteine, die Straßen hatten mehr Raum, mehr Weite. Alles war heller und klarer, und die ganze Stadt gewann an Glanz”(381). This description, which conveys Berlin with more room and space, more light and clarity, indicate Hasan’s arrival at a new experience and place: a Berlin that shines. And accordingly, Hasan’s perception of the city to be more liberating, with more light and space, runs parallel to his state of a new realization and clarity of purpose.

While with the imaginary flight, the moment of threshold can solely be read with regard to Hasan’s change, the scene at Potsdamer Platz serves a larger function of portraying Berlin at the threshold itself. Potsdamer Platz, historically developed around the Potsdamer Gate, symbolizes the point of entry to Berlin. Its rich history dates to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Its forty years of divided limbo as no-man’s-land between East and West

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<sup>164</sup> Ibid.,152.

Berlin, makes Potsdamer Platz metaphorically a threshold. First, as the entry point to the city, it symbolizes giving way. Then, being blocked off, left to decay, and observed from afar, from the West, it becomes associated with the border. After the opening of the Wall, Potsdamer Platz becomes the symbol of a new beginning in Berlin by regaining its fame as a rich site which hosts Daimler Benz, Arkaden Shopping Mall, and Europe's largest casino. And it also once again became an important site of intersection in the centre of Berlin. Hasan's presence at this specific site is particularly important because of these qualities. I analyze the narrative spatial configuration of Hasan at the Potsdamer Platz as the most illustrative example of the transformation at work in the novel. When Hasan expresses his desire to let go of the past and go anywhere, he is right in the middle of Potsdamer Platz.

Hasan's attention to where he stands almost builds a point of identification between him (and his personal transformation) and the Potsdamer Platz on the one hand, and between him and the German re-unification and Berlin's transformation on the other. His stand there conveys him as if he is standing in the middle or at the border line of Germany's past and present: “Über mir die Lichter von Kränen und Baustellen, unter mir die Trümmer vom Weltkrieg. In *mir wühlte und drängte* sich diese Stadt, diese flache Stadt, die ich zugleich liebte und haßte”(emphasis mine). At a time when provincial film-makers like Wolf exclude Hasan from Berlin and thus Germany, Hasan's stand at the Potsdamer Platz puts him right back in the middle of Berlin and the whirlwind of its history. The description shows that Hasan is now more aware than before of the implications of Germany's past and present. The city's effect on him is described physically and felt literally in his body, and creates a deep level of connection with

Berlin. This connection is worth a closer look. While it puts Hasan in the middle or border-line of Germany's post-War history and its current transitional state, the depiction at the same time constitutes the Turkish-German subject almost as a connecting middle-ground between Germany's past and present. What kind of explanatory work does this do? Given that the history of Turks in Germany began after the post-War destruction and Germany's need for labor, Kara's portrayal of Hasan standing above the remnants of the war argues for the symbolic significance of Turks' place in German history.

When Hasan hears the rockets and knows the two Germany's are becoming one, the threshold is fulfilled; a new Germany and a new Hasan emerge. Hasan rejoices at his own freedom: "Ich wärmte mich an der Kippe und wußte plötzlich, wo es langgeht in meinem Leben (382)". It is unclear what Hasan's future holds, or what may happen to him. What exactly is the new beginning for him? He grows into a more mature and aware person. Perhaps the threshold is his attainment of adulthood; whereas at the beginning of his time in Berlin he was willing to provisionally take on the roles with which he least identified (as a stabbing Turk in Kreuzberg), now he has a goal in mind: to film Kazim's story. His decision not to complain and instead to take action is the starting point. He may follow through on his earlier plan to film Kazim's story, or he may indeed take off, leave Berlin and go to other places.

As with the two Germany's re-unification, for Hasan, reconciliation is the operative motif, possibly with all the different sides in him with which he has been coping since his arrival in Berlin. In the next novel of this chapter, we shall see another young protagonist's personal transformation during another significant historical era—not only for Germany but also for the world. During the turmoiled years of the student

movements of the early 1970's, Özdamar's protagonist is a traveler, moving in between Turkey and Germany and traversing through Istanbul, while in the meantime reconciling opposing world views and achieving political, artistic, and personal maturity.

### ***Die Brücke vom Goldenen Horn***

In contrast to Kara's *Selam Berlin*, in *Die Brücke*, we meet a female protagonist whose relation to Germany differs from Hasan's. Unlike Hasan, born in Kreuzberg, and is essentially both Turkish and German, Özdamar's first person narrator initially goes to Berlin as a guest worker, and then as an artist. It is also important that, differing from *Selam Berlin*, Özdamar's novel portays her narrator's experiences not only in Berlin, but also in Istanbul. In fact, while depicting "1968 from the perspective of a Turkish heroine who changes from curious, but unaffected observer of the demonstrations in Berlin to persecuted political activist in Istanbul," the novel links the two cities.<sup>165</sup> At the same time, *Die Brücke* maps the protagonist's changes and her formation of a new identity onto the historical and social transitions which took place in Berlin and Istanbul between 1965 and 1974.<sup>166</sup>

Although the novel connects Berlin to Istanbul (and thus Turkey to Germany) by its linkage of the student movements active in both countries, the events of these politically distraught years are presented as European and global phenomena. The

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<sup>165</sup> Monika Schafi, "Talkin' 'bout my Generation," 20, *German Life and Letters*, 59:2, 2006. It is noteworthy to highlight that although Özdamar's narrator is certainly *uneffected* from the movements in Berlin—for instance, in contrast to how she is directly effected by her activities in Istanbul—Özdamar certainly portrays her as more than a mere observer from the side; in fact, she is portrayed rather affected emotionally. And she indeed walks with the demonstrators and goes to the cafes for meetings and discussions.

<sup>166</sup> Three experiences have powerful effects in the protagonist's process of maturation: the narrator's second stay in Berlin and her contact with the leftist movements there, her return to Istanbul and her travels between the European and Asian sides of the city, and her involvement in the leftist Turkish political activities.

narrative tracks the global political turmoil and large-scale socio-political transitions through the narrator's steady logging of world events and her personal reflections. Running parallel to the protagonist's transformation into a more politically aware and mature person are world-wide transitions and the progression of a politically contested, divided and problematic era: the cold-War and Viet Nam war, which impinge on the narrative in the form of conflicts between left and right wing parties, anti-Americanism and anti-capitalism, and the communist/ socialist ideologies and activities of the students, leftists and workers in Berlin and Istanbul. Accordingly, the narrative is about more than Turkey and Germany. Özdamar utilizes the categories of work, the proletarian class, migration, art, modernity and world-wide transfigurations to point beyond the cultural and national borders of Turkey and Germany. In a like manner, the protagonist's transformation, from a young girl between tradition and modernity illustrates crossings beyond the boundaries of stable national cultures; she attains a transnational/ transcultural character.<sup>167</sup>

My analyses begin with the narrative representations of Berlin's topography during the representation of the leftist movements; Özdamar's narrator, telling the events of this transitional period from the perspective of a Turkish guest worker, reveals the transnational nature of the events and the atmosphere in the city. Then, I focus on the narrations of Istanbul's topography; specifically, the Bridge of the Golden Horn and the ferry through the Bosphorus are important to analyze for showing the transitions in the city also in a transnational context. With the narrative depictions of Istanbul and Berlin and

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<sup>167</sup> My uses of the term transnational and transcultural for the narrator imply her unboundedness from a single national or cultural identification; instead, although they are from different generations, Özdamar's narrator also likens to how I described Hasan—attaining a level of freedom from being rigidly identified with either Turkishness or Germanness.

of specific sites in the cities, Özdamar narrates a re-configuration of borders between individual personal identities, cultures, cities and countries. For instance, the narrative transforms the city of Istanbul from being a city in between two *true* or essential cultures or civilizations, namely between Asia and Europe, particularly with the configuration of the Bridge of the Golden Horn.<sup>168</sup> In addition, experiences in these spatial configurations transform the narrator. Although, in Berlin and in Istanbul, she is at first in between two cultural and social worlds, she has threshold experiences in both cities and becomes a new person.

Therefore, my analysis explicates the ways in which the narrative portrays, satirizes, transgresses, and re-configures the limitations of presumably fixed identities and cultures. While doing this, the narrative enables an exposure of the fixities. Indeed, as she problematizes discourses of polarization which split Europe from Asia and civilized from backward, Özdamar writes at the same time against conflation on which the discourses rely: the conflation of Europe with modernity and progression, and Asia with the backward or the traditional. On the other hand, the narrator's Anatolian trip seems to uphold this opposition by presenting the disparity of living standards in Eastern and Western Turkey. However, rather than an opposition between Turkey and Germany, Özdamar portrays the gap between the more modern Turkish cities in the Western part of Turkey and those cities lagging behind normal life standards in the East due to governmental ignorance.

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<sup>168</sup> While the bridge and the narrator's crossing over it have significant effects to her transformation, the narrative uses the bridge as a threshold configuration, in the sense of plural encodings with which Özdamar depicts the bridge, and enables to arrive at a changed meaning and status about Istanbul.

Özdamar decides the imperialist political regime in Turkey (which sided with the United States) is to blame for the unfair and unequal living conditions in the East and directs criticism at the Turkish military and government for their treatment of the Eastern part of Turkey. Yet even this criticism is a component of the primary criticism in the work. This is a critique of unruly dogmatic regimes, such as imperialism—whether manifested in the war of Viet Nam or in Istanbul and Berlin while the leftists are killed by the government and police – and of fascism under Franco in Spain. Özdamar asks: ‘What generates polarities and unequal living between peoples and cultures to begin with that can sustain two oppositional worlds even within a single country?’ This matters, because although the novel initially strikes the reader as being about Germany and Turkey, the exposure of life in Anatolia and a criticism aimed at the hegemonic powers worldwide illustrates that neither the transformation of the protagonist or the changes in Turkey and Germany implicate only these ‘two worlds’. Significantly, the bulk of the narrative focuses on the proletarian class and the notions of ‘work’ and ‘poverty’ along with global political transitions that connect peoples worldwide.

To sum up, my analyses focus on two distinct properties of the narrative. First, there is the novel’s exploration of its protagonist’s social situation. During her coming-of-age and her evolution into a transnational figure, the protagonist is in between two worlds. At the same time, her in-betweenness is particularly productive; she transgresses the inhibitions of authentically stable and true Asian and European worlds, and through her actions and personal growth, the limitations of standard ‘in-between’ tropes are inverted. Specifically, the spatial topographies of Bosphorus and the ferry, and the Bridge of the Golden Horn serve as spaces signifying the crossing over of personal boundaries

and national and cultural borders.<sup>169</sup> Second, by following the state of political events in Europe but also in the world, *Die Brücke* situates the changes in Germany and Turkey in relation to the changes underway in world nations that are linked to larger global concerns like the Cold-War, Viet Nam War, and fascist regimes.

The novel begins with its female protagonist's departure from Istanbul to West Berlin for work in 1966. The protagonist lives in Berlin as a worker for a year, and shares a dormitory with other guest-workers. Here, she is initiated to left-wing politics and Marxist ideologies, encounters the student movements, visits East Berlin and the Berliner Ensemble, and struggles to learn German. When she returns to Istanbul after a year, the communist "Heimleiter" of the Berlin dormitory advises her to lose her virginity, and after some time in Istanbul at her parents' house, she goes back to Germany with this pursuit as one of her goals: "Ich wollte Deutsch lernen und mich dann in Deutschland von meinem Diamanten befreien, um eine gute Schauspielerin zu werden" (108). During her second stay in Berlin, while learning German and working as a translator at Siemens, she liberates herself sexually and engages more consciously with the student movements in Berlin. After the end of her contract with Siemens, she returns pregnant to Istanbul, where she struggles to abort the baby without her parents' knowledge. She works in the drama department at the Istanbul University, participates in local left-wing political

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<sup>169</sup> The Bosphorus and the ferry form a transitional site because of the passage they enable between the two sides of Istanbul. However, because of the metaphoric in-betweenness the protagonist experiences in Istanbul, and which she transgresses right on the Bosphorus—exactly when the ferry crosses between Europe and Asia—the site of Bosphorus is also a threshold, both signaling 'in-betweenness' and the narrator's transcendence of it.

activities, and travels to Eastern Turkey. After the military coup in 1974, she leaves Turkey once again for Germany.<sup>170</sup>

## THE STUDENT MOVEMENTS IN BERLIN:

The section “Die Freilaufende Hühner und der hinkende Sozialist” tells of the protagonist’s second stay in Berlin. The narrative focus shifts from the events of the women’s dormitory and factory in the first Berlin episode, to the cafes of Berlin and the student movements. During her second stay in Berlin, after some time working at Siemens, the protagonist is not an outsider to Berlin anymore living at a worker’s dormitory like she did in her first time. She is much more of an insider, as she finds a private room with the help of several leftist students, who also find her a job working at a hotel.<sup>171</sup> As Monika Schafi proposes, Özdamar’s narrator’s extensive observations on the movements present the events “as formative experiences of her youth that happen to coincide with fundamental upheavals across Europe.”<sup>172</sup> In this way, not only do we see how the protagonist interprets the events in their intertwinement with the worldwide ongoing political turmoil, but we see how they indeed effect her identity formation. Her

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<sup>170</sup> Özdamar’s novel is underlined with autobiographical tones because of the similarities between the first person narrator/ protagonist and Özdamar’s own life. Özdamar also went to Germany in 1965 as a guest-worker. While working at a factory, she too learned German and was introduced to plays by Brecht. After her return to Turkey in 1967, she attended drama school in Istanbul. Like the first person narrator in the novel, Özdamar left Turkey for Germany due to political turmoil and persecution in Turkey, and she resides in Berlin today. This brief biography reveals how travel plays a crucial factor in both the author’s life and in the development of her novel’s character. Some noteworthy works by Özdamar is her play *Karagöz in Alamania*, a collection of short stories, *Mutterzunge*, and two other novels, *Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei* and *Seltsame Sterne starren zur Erde*, and her story collection *Der Hof im Spiegel*. She received the Ingeborg Bachmann prize in 1991 and the Chamisso Prize in 1999.

<sup>171</sup> The student movements are of significance on two levels: first, through her involvement with the movements, the narrator has become involved in something that the ‘native’ population is focusing on, so in this sense, they signal her assimilation. On the other hand, given Özdamar’s portrayal of the movements’ transnational nature, by illustrating diverse nationalities’ involvement in them, the section can also interpreted as Berlin being less at ‘home.’

<sup>172</sup> Monika Schafi, *Memories of 1968*, 214

return to Berlin and particularly her entry into the student movements transform her position in Berlin and at the same time her character.

The narrator witnesses student demonstrations at the time of Benno Ohnesorg's death and the Iranian Shah's travels through Germany. In a café called Steinplatz, "die gemeinsame Küche aller", where the leftists meet and see films like "Das chinesische Mädchen"; the narrator at first listens raptly to the students' endless discussions about bourgeoisie, Marxism, Leninism, and socialism (155-56). She then participates in them. From a window of the hotel in which she works, she hears the protestors' cries (Killer raus aus Vietnam, Ho-Ho-Ho-Chi-Minh) mixed with police shoutings. On the Kurfürstendamm, she sees puddings all over the street, left over from when the American vice-president was pelted. On the radio and on television, she hears the senate discuss the leftists, (die Hühner) running around in Berlin, now a chicken coop. "Die Politiker waren Hühnerstallbesitzer, und die Polizei rupfte den Hühner tagsüber auf die Straße, und abends tranken sie von der Polizei halb gerupft am Café Steinplatz Coca, Dünnbier, Kaffee" (157). The narrator herself becomes a chicken, and spends all her time outside the hotel, in the streets or at the café with the activists. The chickens smoke, go to see films by Godard, Eisenstein and Kluge, and sometimes she sees a famous chicken named Günter Grass (157).

Though Özdamar's tone is humorous in re-membering the student movements and their dynamics, the analogy of the students as chickens works to point out the hopelessness of the movements against the power of the bureaucracy, the government and the police. The starker illustration of this is the murder of Benno Ohnesorg by the police, which the narrator witnesses directly and describes as: "Die Polizei hatte ein Huhn

erschossen, aber es lag ein Mensch da” (170). As one critic points out, the sentence closely resembles of Max Frisch’s sentence about how one called guest-workers but people came.<sup>173</sup> Just as the humanity of the “guest-workers” was obscured by their profitability, the dehumanized and second-class status of the leftist students registers in Özdamar’s language an extended barnyard metaphor whose playfulness gives way to a stinging ethical rebuke at the point where it fails: the street corner where Ohnesorg lies shot. Hence, a guest-worker protagonist telling the dehumanizing events of the era reveals a further affinity between the Frisch and Özdamar observations.

In this manner, while Özdamar brings the guest-workers and the student and leftist movements into proximity with one another, another significant connection is between different nationalities of leftists, like the Greeks and Turks, who befriend each other and set aside national and historical boundaries through their leftist solidarity. In the Greek bar to which the Turkish chickens go, “Türkische und griechische Hühner tanzten zusammen griechischen Sirtaki, tranken Ouzo, sprachen zusammen gegen die griechische Militärjunta...”(161). The scene shows that the Turkish and Greek leftists are bound together by analogous histories of military dictatorships and coups. During the narrator’s stay in Berlin, the Greek chickens escape from military regime and torture to Germany; during her stay in Turkey, a similar historical trajectory forces many like the narrator to flee to Germany. Özdamar narrates the involvement of diverse groups in Berlin’s transitional topography during the swell of the leftist movements, while at the same time tying the personal trajectories of each group to one another by reference to larger, transnational currents in the history of the twentieth century.

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<sup>173</sup> qtd In Venkat Mani, “The Good Woman of Istanbul.” : Man hat Arbeitskräfte gerufen , und Menschen sind gekommen,” 84.

The narrator joins a socialist group led by a worker sent to Berlin by the socialist-worker party in Turkey. Through this experience, in addition to her involvement with her German leftist friends and her time at the Café Steinplatz, she is also active with the Turkish socialists in Berlin; goes to East Berlin with the group, buys Brecht recordings, and meets a man whom she will force to have sex with her in order to lose her virginity. The protagonist's self-willed, even forced and consciously planned loss of virginity is also a politicized sexual act by which she claims her liberation and a sexual subjectivity. At the very beginning of the novel, the communist director in Berlin advises her to lose her virginity if she wants to be an intellectual and an artist. Of course, sexual freedom is also a part of the student movements. The narrator is determined to free herself of her virginity, and when she meets a socialist disabled man in Berlin, she decides: "Du Nutte, wenn du dich nicht heute abend von deinem Diamanten befreist, wirst du dich nie retten, dann wirst du als Jungfrau heiraten und dich als Jungfrau einem Mann verkaufen" (162-63). Her use of the word "diamond" in reference to virginity conveys the immense value attached to being a virgin in the Turkish culture.

The narrator's decision, though seemingly easily taken and followed through, is not without significance. While the narrator frequently identifies her virginity as an inhibitor of her political and artistic goals, she testifies at the same time to the importance of virginity in Turkish society and to her parents: for instance, after her return from Berlin pregnant, her mother says: "Auch wenn eine Birne vom Baum herunterfällt, fällt sie nicht weit weg von ihrem Baum. Sie hat sicher dort auf unsere Familienehre keine Flecken kommen lassen" (179).<sup>174</sup> The first sentence is a direct translation from Turkish

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<sup>174</sup> The first phrase in fact implies the same meaning as the German phrase: "Ein Apfel fällt nicht weit vom Baum."

and means that even if children go away and leave their families or countries (like pears falling off of trees but not landing too far from the trees), they would not diverge from traditional values learned at home. The daughter—the pear fallen off of the tree of family and tradition—is thus expected not to have marked the family honor with the loss of her virginity, as the second sentence implies. The mother’s words exemplify the significant attachment between virginity and honor in the Turkish family and tradition.

On the one hand, the narrator’s thoughts about getting rid of her virginity reveal how necessary the act is: she thinks that she would be forced to marry on unequal grounds and (in effect) sell herself to a man, unless she can save herself from her virginity. In this sense, “sexuality becomes a turning point for the registering of personal history”.<sup>175</sup> Losing her virginity thus serves a symbolic function, as a declaration of her freedom, her sense of personal dignity, and gender equality. On the other hand, as the mother’s reflection reveals, the interconnectedness of virginity, marriage and honor in Turkish tradition is crucial; the narrator’s transgression stands against “Turkish” cultural and traditional values and can even be interpreted as a symbolic act of leaving her ‘Turkishness’ behind. Indeed, as Silke Schade emphasizes, “sexual experience is an important part of the protagonist’s personal identity creation away from the traditional notions of family and nation.”<sup>176</sup> Hence, the narrator’s rational act of sexual liberation is at the same time an act of border-crossing between cultures. As it is immediately linked to her personal, political and artistic maturity, her decision is a key component of her

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<sup>175</sup> Venkat Mani, “The Good Woman of Istanbul: Emine Sevgi Özdamar’s Die Brücke vom Goldenen Horn”. *Gegenwartsliteratur* 2 (2003), 41

<sup>176</sup> Silke Schade, “Emine Sevgi Özdamar’s Berlin,” *Focus on German Studies*, 2006, 27.

larger story of transformation; it signifies her selection of a modern and Western life style over a traditional one that is imposed upon her in Turkey.

To conclude, I want to briefly summarize and highlight two important aspects of the protagonist's transformation and the leftist movements in Berlin. First, the narrator's entry into these movements and her freedom on Berlin's streets contradicts typical expectations for and representations of Turkish women, who are usually inscribed to traditionality, domestic values, and even victimization. These expectations are not only sustained in public discourse but have been supported in the Turkish-German context by literary works, such as Saliha Scheinhardt's books and Tevfik Baßer's films in the late 1980's.<sup>177</sup> Özdamar's protagonist exceeds this paradigm of victimization; she transcends borders of gender, tradition and national attachments. Of course, as the examples illustrate, her transformation is largely influenced by her travels and the political climate of the era.

The narrator's expanding political consciousness is indeed at the core of her transformation. It is in the student movements that Özdamar's protagonist supersedes "the original bonds of national identity and family, providing her with different modes of belonging, home and self-awareness".<sup>178</sup> From a level of raised consciousness, above the boundaries of national and cultural limitations, Özdamar's transcultural/ transnational narrator tells the leftist movement through the eyes of a guest-worker, bringing not only the guest-worker perspective to the picture, but she also illustrates the transnational quality of the movement. While the Greeks identify with the movement through their

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<sup>177</sup> Scheinhardt's *Frauen die sterben ohne daß sie gelebt hatten* (1983), and *Drei Zypressen* (1984), and Tevfik Baßer's *40m2 Deutschland* are key illustrations of victimized women.

detestation of the Greek military regime, and the Turks seek to strengthen the socialists' and workers' solidarity, they all come together in Berlin's streets and erode national boundaries with their protest against an international complex of fascist regimes and imperialism. I find the novel invaluable for bringing out this transnational quality under which the leftist movements were characterized, and thus its narrative can be said to provide an alternative of, or supplementary narrative about, the movements themselves and the important transitional period in Germany during which they took place.<sup>179</sup>

#### ISTANBUL, THE BOSPORUS, AND THE BRIDGE OF GOLDEN HORN

As the narrator returns to Istanbul following a year in Berlin, she notices there is a different quality to the light in Istanbul, and that the city itself seems darker. Her mother explains: "Nein, meine Tochter, Istanbul hatte immer dieses Licht, deine Augen sind an deutsches Licht gewöhnt" (107). Similar to the mother's idea about a brighter German light, a woman's reflection on experiencing Germany and Turkey opposes progress to backwardness in its assessment of the two countries: "Europa gesehen zu haben ist eine feine Sache. Man sieht einem Menschen im Gesicht an, daß er Europa gesehen hat. Die Europäer sind fortschrittlich, wir treten mit unseren Füßen auf der Stelle und bewegen uns einen Schritt vor und zwei Schritte zurück" (107). The narrator's own perceptions of Istanbul include a mix of "Esel, Lastträger, Autos, Schiffe, Möwen, Menschen, scheißende Pferde, das Meer, der Straßenschmutz" and dirt on even the rich men's shoes.

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<sup>178</sup> Monika Shafi. "Joint Ventures: Identity Politics and Travel in Novels by Emine Sevgi Özdamar and Zafer Şenocak," Comparative Literature Studies 40.2 (2003), 202.

<sup>179</sup> Two articles in particular approach the novel exclusively from the angle of its engagement with the movements. See Monika Schafi's "Talking 'Bout my Generation: Memories of 1968 in Recent German Novels" for an analysis of Özdamar's novel for the ways in which it unsettles normativities of generational and German mainstream discourses about the movements. See Mahmut Karakus' "E.S Özdamars Roman, *Die Brücke vom Goldenen Horn: Auf der Suche nach einer verlorenen Generation*" for an analysis on the

She conjures images that indeed depict a city on the path of development. While the donkeys and the horses denote backwardness, and the ship and the cars denote progression, the dirty shoes of the rich marks the combination of both in Istanbul, presumably the most Western and modern city in Turkey.

In what follows, I analyze how Özdamar grapples with the Europe and Asia binary invoked by those around her and by her surroundings generally. With a close look at the narrative representation of two geographical phenomena which register as spatial metaphors—the Bosphorus and the Bridge of the Golden Horn—I analyze the narrator's situation in between the worlds of Asia and Europe, along with its disruption. This is especially important because Istanbul itself is usually thought of as an in-between city, which connects Europe and Asia, and has often enough been taken to evoke the dichotomy between two disparate continents and cultures. I illustrate how Özdamar uses the narrator's ferry rides through the Bosphorus and the Bridge of the Golden Horn to thematize thresholds, thereby indicating a transgression of the stable, and authentic entities often assigned to Europe and Asia.

When she returns to Istanbul for the second time, now pregnant, the protagonist lives with her parents in their apartment on the Asian side of Istanbul. During her stay there, the narrator depicts both her parents' and her neighbors' fascination with things European. The three neighbors and her own mother have all died their hair blonde, because they want to be European after a Turkish pop-singer touched off a trend when she dyed her hair blonde, and had a nose operation. The women push hard on their noses with their index fingers and compare the narrator to a European since she has lived there.

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distinct characteristics of the movements in Berlin and Istanbul, explicating their similarities as well as how they differed in terms of political and intellectual motivation and their participants.

However, the narrator does not “pass” because of the big bones on her feet and her thick eyebrows: “Du warst lange in Europa. Man kann dich zu den Europäern zählen, aber das geht nicht mit deinen dicken Augenbrauen wie von einer Bäuerin” (180). The ridiculous portrayals of these women reveal the fantasy or the idealization of ‘the European’, and at the same time satirize the associations with which these women imagine a European.

Looking for consolation to her boredom on the Asian side, the protagonist begins to visit a Kiosk and reads the left-wing newspaper *Cumhuriyet*. Given the headlines about the demonstrations of socialist students and workers across Europe, and the Turkish youth’s revolt against the fascists, the narrator feels that she is missing out on the events that are near her: “Die streikenden Arbeiter und demonstrierenden Studenten waren irgendwo in meiner Nähe in Istanbul, und ich bewegte mich nur zwischen meiner Elternwohnung, dem Zeitungskiosk und dem Kastantinentunnel” (185). In contrast to the quiet Asian side, the European side is the center of action, where workers strike and the students protest. In addition to the differential tenor of events on the Asian and European sides of Istanbul, the narrator’s depiction of her parents’ and her neighbors’ fetishization of the Europeans and of European life-styles work satirically to reveal a dichotomy between the worlds and values associated with Asia and Europe. On the other hand, she also encounters an obsession with European styles on the European side, for example at the drama school.

The students talk for days about (popular German dramatist) Heinrich Kipphardt’s impending visit—the visit of “ein Mensch aus Europa” (249). During these discussions, anyone who had studied in Europe had the first place at table and the authoritative voice in any discussion. “Europa war ein Stock, mit dem man sich gegenseitig die Köpfe

einschlug. Wir sind zu sehr a la Turca sagten die Türken und wußten nicht, daß selbst dieser Ausdruck aus Europa kam” (250). The Turkish students see themselves as too Turkish in the light of the “European” things, European culture and people with which they compare themselves; however, the narrator’s scrutinizing point about the phrase’s origin in Europe ironically exposes how Europe or the West has already insinuated itself to everyday. A number of other examples in the narrative allude to the intensified fascination with the West, particularly, by the intellectuals and the secular middle-class, who look up to Europe and the West as a model to be copied. Another example which depicts the overall fantasy and fetishism with Europe and the European ideas is constituted by the Turkish students who wrap their naked bodies in bed-sheets and take lessons on surrealism from a woman who has studied in Paris (194-197).

Özdamar mocks these pretensions by revealing their ambiguities and conflicts. First, Europe has long been a part of Istanbul and of Turkish culture. I will discuss this more thoroughly in my analysis of the Bridge of the Golden Horn’s narrative representation and its cultural history. Second, the same people who criticize the United States’ imperialism and capitalism imitate and take on European values as if these were not capitalist or Western. Additionally, even if the ideas imported from the West are not imperialist and carry tones of socialism (here one thinks of the existential or surrealist philosophies), what meaning or applicability do they have other than being practiced on a superficial level, discussed in movie theaters and cafes? Significantly, the protagonist’s travels in Eastern Turkey exemplify the backward life styles there, which are incompatible and out of sync with the rest of Turkey, and provide a critique on the vain

use of Western ideals (cf. the narrative's self-satirical exposure of the narrator's attempts to provide the farmers and Anatolian women with western-liberal advice).

The narrator's parents' and neighbors' views, as well as the intellectuals' obsessive turn to the West for ideas, illustrate the role of dichotomization in their lives. The narrator is also influenced by the Western and European ideals herself; particularly, her preference for the European side of Istanbul, which provides her the advantages of the theater and the leftist movement, upholds an opposition between the two sides. Her frequent remarks about the Asian and European sides of Istanbul and especially her complaints about her lack of freedom and action on the Asian side seem at first glance to locate her between the two sides. However, the narrative use of the transitional site of the Bosphorus as a productive spatial metaphor disentangles the in-betweenness of the protagonist by portraying her threshold experience on the ferry through the Bosphorus, and just like the very fluidity of the water between the continents, exemplifies the fluid and co-mingling aspects of European and Asian, traditional and modern. In order to situate this contextually, I like to take a close look at an important passage in *Die Brücke* while the protagonist travels on the ferry.

#### THE PROTAGONIST'S THRESHOLD AND THE FERRY RIDES THROUGH BOSPORUS:

The narrator takes the ferry daily to go to the European side where she attends the drama school. However, the passage I will analyze depicts a significant moment which follows several trips to her old childhood friend who is now schizophrenic and wants to marry the narrator. When the narrator is invited to do so by the friend's mother, she accepts to do it. She also befriends a socialist intellectual named Hüseyin, who loans her

a book about a French woman in the eighteenth century who sacrifices herself for a man. Hüseyin compares the narrator to the French woman in the book. However, upon returning back to the European side after reading the book, she tells Hüseyin that she is not like this French woman. She says that she only wants to save the friend, and not *really* to marry him. Hüseyin tells her that he is too sick to be saved, and that if she goes away after two days, she would be at fault. In response to this possible marriage and the encounter with Hüseyin, the narrator experiences a significant transformative moment on the ferry, as she returns to her parents' home on the Asian side of Istanbul.

When she reads a news headline about Berlin, the narrator remembers how Berlin had been for her like the street of childhood, which she had loved and where she had played until midnight. “Von Berlin war ich in mein Elternhaus zurückgekehrt, aber jetzt war es für mich wie ein Hotel, ich wollte wieder auf die Straße”. (193). After a short time in Istanbul with her parents, the protagonist’s longing for Berlin and her earlier boredom with the Asian side reveal that she feels trapped in Istanbul. Not only does she miss the free and exciting streets of Berlin, but she is also confronted with expectations from the people around her, who pretend to be European but at the same time assign, accept and fit into traditional roles and expectations: virginity, marriage and motherhood entrap women in a life, which for the narrator falls short of the equal and liberated life-style she experiences in European countries like Germany. As the narrator feels watched by men on the ferry, she imagines herself on stage, watching as all these men fall in love with her. She then imagines that she dies on the stage, leaving behind no children to cry after her; right in the middle of Asia and Europe, the actress inside her comes out and throws a man and a child out into the sea. “als das Schiff auf der asiatischen Seite ankam, wusste

ich , dass ich in meinem Leben niemals heiraten wollte” (194). The protagonist’s decision to reject traditional matrimonial expectations constitutes a threshold, a moment where possibilities open up, which occurs exactly at the moment of crossing between Asia and Europe and is completed when she arrives to the Asian side.

The narrator’s transgression against conventional values and the traditional life-style of a woman, which she completes on the Asian side, points up a contrast and codes the European side as modern and the Asian side as backward and traditional. In fact, the narrator’s experiences in European cities (initially in Berlin, then in Paris), along with her European contacts have had large influences on her choices of a liberating life-style and decisions of living as a modern, free and unmarried woman. On the Asian side, she calls her mother on the telephone to tell of her decision. The mother accepts the news with an intriguing remark, “Du kannst Deutsch sprechen, warum willst du heiraten?”(194). Her mother’s question lifts the burden from the daughter’s shoulders to obey and fit into traditional roles assigned to Turkish women. Her remarks also illustrate the immense significance a European language and Europeanization carries. On another occasion, the parents point out to their neighbors that their daughter has learned a language and has gained another personality: “Sie hat Deutsch gelernt. Eine Sprache ist ein Mensch, zwei Sprachen sind zwei Menschen” (179). Therefore, the parents support the progression and westernization which learning a European language symbolizes. On the other hand, the parents’ expectation of virginity, especially as it affects her predicament regarding the baby and abortion, makes possible her cathartic and decisive moment on the ferry.

The narrator’s portrayal through Bosphorus exemplifies Özdamar’s alternative use of the bridge metaphor, as Moray Mc Gowan has very aptly analyzed with regard to its

enablement of a new kind of crossing—transgressing the polemics of “the imaginary bridge, between two worlds”.<sup>180</sup> With Mc Gowan, I read Özdamar’s use of the in-between metaphor as a productive practice: “Das Zwischen kann aber auch als Metapher für Zustände der produktiven Erfahrungen und des Bewußtseins funktionieren, die in ihrer vielseitigen Widersprüchlichkeit einheitliche und eindimensionale Weltbilder jeder Art erschüttern oder sprengen”. Mc Gowan’s explication, “Zwischen nicht als Grenze sondern als Schwellenerfahrung” resonates with my own inquiry into the liminal spaces which, through their transitional and not strictly defined and defining border like quality, generate transformational experiences. This allows to view the emergence of a new consciousness for the protagonist (as a conception of herself), and at the same time about Istanbul and the Turkish culture.<sup>181</sup>

In fact, as Mc Gowan explicates, the choice of Bosphorus for the narrator’s transgression of fixed identifications about her identity is especially significant, considering this site as “a place where Europe and Asia rub up against each other, wash each other, co-mingle; the Bosphorus is a site of trans-humance and flux, neither one nor the other firm, immovable bank”.<sup>182</sup> The way how Özdamar portrays her narrator’s

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<sup>180</sup> While interpreting Özdamar’s alternative use of the Bosphorus, Adelson’s argument “Against-Between” is quoted in Moray Mc-Gowan’s article, which discusses the different uses of the bridge as a metaphor in Turkish-German literature. Mc-Gowan sites examples of the limitations of the bridge metaphor, used either as a model of bridging the cultures of Turkey and Germany, or as a place of victimization where migrants are seen with one foot in Turkey, and the other in Germany, but somehow immobilized between the two. In: “Brücken und Brücken Köpfe: Wandlungen einer Metapher in der türkisch-deutschen Literatur.” Die Andere Deutsche Literatur: Istanbuler Vorträge. Eds. Durzak and Nilüfer Kuruyazici. Würzburg, (2004, 31-39), 33.

<sup>181</sup> Leslie Adelson explicates threshold through reference to Yoko Tawada’s interpretation of Celan’s writing as a Zwischenraum, particularly a threshold, and that at this productive site, consciousness of something new emerges. in Adelson’s “Manifesto,” 24; cited in Moray Mc. Gowan’s “Brücken und Brücken Köpfe,” 32.

<sup>182</sup> Moray Mc Gowan, The Bridge of the Golden Horn: Istanbul, Europe, and the Fractured Gaze from the West in Turkish Writing in Germany. Yearbook of European Studies. (2000),58.

identity flourish beyond the immovability of cultural fixities about Asia and Europe illustrates the unstable, fluid and co-mingling characteristics of the terms ordinarily opposed to one another: Turkey-Germany, Asia-Europe, traditional-modern. I contend that the narrator's friend in the European side, who reads French books, and the mother, who represents conventionality in the Asian side, add a twist to the Asia and Europe dichotomy. The book that the modern friend loans the protagonist to read is a French book, but it is out of the 18th century, and its main conceit, the sacrifice of a woman's self to a man, is retrogressive as the pre-Revolutionary epoch of the book itself. Additionally, in a move which contradicts the narrator's expectation, her "traditional" mother now tells the protagonist that there is no rush to marry, because she has learned German. Thus, her own mother, who is presumably much more traditional and lives in the Asian side, appropriates European ideas to favor her daughter's independence.

The friend's and the mother's actions, along with the narrator's decision on the ferry display an ambiguity which undermines binaries and complicates the interpretation of the narrator's development, as well as of Istanbul and its residents. In doing so, it is important to emphasize the spatiality of The Bosphorus again, as well as Özdamar's use of the image of the ferry, which together convey a fluid transitional topography—a "site simultaneously of conjunction and separation, the synapse of two worlds, and itself a place of hybridity, where the Black Sea and –via the Sea of Marmara- the Mediterranean, intermingle."<sup>183</sup> Identified as a symbol of Istanbul and Turkey, the use of Bosphorus in the novel signifies a conjunction and a co-mingling of Europe and Asia—which in turn, is mapped onto the narrator's own identity formation.

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<sup>183</sup> Moray Mc Gowan. "The Bridge of the Golden Horn: Istanbul, Europe and the Fractured Gaze from the West in Turkish Writing in Germany". Yearbook of European Studies 15 (2000), 58.

Another action on the ferry provides the topography of the Bosphorus with an additional complex meaning. During the ferry rides she takes between the drama school on the European and her parents' house on the Asian side, the narrator watches the people who read newspapers. She describes the photos, and she cites important headlines that catch her attention. For instance, a photo of “[der] rote Rudi Dutschke” is captioned “Tausende Studenten sind in Westberlin auf der Straße mit der Polizei zusammengestoßen” (193). Numerous other headlines from the world, such as: “Amerika schickt noch 10.000 Soldaten nach Vietnam,” and “Che Guevara ist getötet”(199) interpolate world-events into the story, and serve the function of exposing the global context through multilayered worlds and widen the lens from Berlin and Istanbul’s stories to the rest of the world.<sup>184</sup>

During one of these crossings, the narrator experiments with the newspaper headings by paying extra attention to the photos and imagining the feelings they communicate. One picture shows a man standing next to his illegally built shack with a knife in hand, threatening to cut his son’s throat if the police continue to tear his house down. She sees the sweat on his shirt and his child’s pyjamas. But, there is no sweat visible in the photographs of the Turkish ruling-party boss Demirel’s, and the American president Johnson’s. The American soldier’s shirt, however, who runs, gun in hand, through the jungle in Vietnam, is soaked with sweat like the shirt of the desperate Istanbul slum-dweller. Another picture shows a Vietkong fighter shot by an American soldier, also with a sweat soaked shirt; often she also sees photos of Palestinians and Jews

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<sup>184</sup> By multiple layers and connection , I mean that Özdamar’s selection of headlines reveal the layers of a particularly troubling era , that is, of the Cold War, in related ways through the world, and as such the events and the countries seem to be connected through this display of headlines. The US sending more

with sweaty shirts, standing next to dead bodies in the streets (207). The photos depict sufferings in different parts of the world, and the narrator associates suffering and war with sweat. Through the body of water that flows between two continents, Özdamar's narrator's readings of the world events connect people dispersed around the globe, with her contemplative mind acting as the catalyst. In this instance, the unifying factor is sweat; later in the novel, it will be the scream.

When one considers the historical transitions Istanbul symbolizes and continental exchanges that pass through the waters of Bosphorus, Özdamar's creation of global connections through peoples' sufferings from various corners of the world at this site is of apt significance. The narrator's crossings and experiences between the two sides of Istanbul, her practice on the ferry through Bosphorus explicated above, and my concluding investigation about the narrative use of the Bridge of the Golden Horn, undermine the polarity of Europe and Asia, and positions of East and West. Particularly, Özdamar's narrative use of these spatial configurations conveys how Europe/Asia, East/West, tradition/modernity, and backwardness /development are relative and linked not only to one another but also to larger movements of nationalization, modernity, and migrations.

#### THE BRIDGE OF THE GOLDEN HORN

Özdamar's use of the Bridge of the Golden Horn is important to analyze for the ways in which this structure reveals the intertwined and mixed characteristics of Asian and European in Istanbul, in the form of a literary topography that emphasizes the hybridity and heterogeneity of the narrator's built environment. Hence, in this section, first I explicate the significant use of the bridge with regard to its destabilizing effect of

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soldiers to Vietnam has a lot to do with the news from Germany, as Viet Nam is one of the reasons why the students protest.

the Europe and Asia dichotomy. In addition, I investigate undercurrent meanings of Özdamar's use of this specific bridge with regard to Turkish modernization and to larger concerns of work, migrations and losses at the expense of modernization processes.

Instead of the Bosphorus Bridge that literally connects the continents of Europe and Asia, Özdamar uses the 'Galata Bridge', the Bridge of the Golden Horn that connects the two European sides of Istanbul. On the other hand, the bridge in fact connects 'Europe' in Europe and 'Asia' in Europe. The linkage of Europe and Asia is inherent in the distinct geographical position of the bridge between a *more* European side to the North of the bridge, which includes the former districts of Galata and Pera,<sup>185</sup> "where the European embassies, architecture, shops and night-clubs are still primarily to be found", and the southern side of the bridge, which is more Asian, and includes districts and monuments which were at the heart of Ottoman Empire and Islamic tradition.<sup>186</sup> This topographical constellation is unsettling: while the bridge lies geographically on the European side, it nevertheless has the symbolic task of connecting Asia and Europe within Europe. Yet "Europe" and "Asia" bear closer scrutiny. The Asian looking southern side's Aya Sofya mosque, which had been the Christian church Hagia Sophia, exemplifies the mixture of European, Christian, Ottoman and Islamic and is one of many exceptions to the generalizing Europe/ Asia dichotomy. Thus, the Bridge of the Golden Horn on the so-called European side of Istanbul connects two banks, but the complex mixture of Asian and European architecture on these banks contradicts the contention about the separation of an authentic Asia from an authentic Europe.

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<sup>185</sup> Galata is today the district of Karaköy, resembling nothing of its days in the past as Galata. And today, Beyoğlu is the district that makes up the area that was Pera. *Galata ve Pera*, Nur Akin, Literatür Yayınları, İstanbul, 1998.

On the other hand, by paying close attention to the narrator's lived experience and her perceptions of the bridge, I will emphasize several other levels with which Özdamar's use of the Bridge engages with the concepts of European and Asian in Istanbul. More specifically, I view Özdamar's use of the bridge as a symbol of transnational connectivity; according to this reading, the bridge represents the transnational/transcultural aspect of Istanbul, and is linked to modernity, migration, and work. To this end, to better explicate the ways in which the structure becomes a textual spatial threshold on multiple levels, I turn to the first textual use of the bridge.

Özdamar's narrator decides to go to the European side of Istanbul to visit a friend who once lived next to her parents' apartment on the Asian side. She believes that this friend can help her to abort her baby. After she disembarks from the ferry, the narrator passes the bridge of the Golden Horn on the way to her friend's house. However, what the narrator notices first—"die Männer kratzten sich wie früher auf den Straßen zwischen den Beinen"—indicated to be common place here, is hardly something one sees in public in Europe. The narrator notices the big ships next. The shadows of the people, stray dogs, and donkeys on the bridge intermingle and fall on the ships, "Schwarz auf weiß"(187). These shadows further mix with the shadows of the seagulls and all fall together on the water after the last ship. The seagulls' screams complement the ships' sirens and the street-sellers' cries. Then, the narrator also hears the cries of old men and children who carry Ottoman-era water canisters (187). Thus, not only do the shadows and screams mix on the bridge, but in essence, natural elements (the seagulls and the water),

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<sup>186</sup> Moray Mc. Gowan, "The Bridge of the Golden Horn," 66.

progress and the continental travel and commercialism (the ships) and the bodies of men symbolizing work.

During the narrator's passage over the bridge, what she sees impresses itself upon her as a slow-motion, black and white film. By associating the narrator's passage through the bridge with the qualities of a black and white, slow-motion film, Özdamar evokes the past of the bridge along with the present. Particularly, the Ottoman canisters introduce a quality of the old and the long-past into the present. On this strip of slow-motion film, the mixture of shadows conveys modernity and backwardness hand in hand. While the black shadows of the street dogs and the donkeys invoke backwardness, they fall on the white inter-continental ships, which symbolize modernity. The film that brings together images of old-times, the non-modern and backward along with symbols of modernity is, however, not quiet. Everything has a sound. The workers, the ships' sirens and the seagulls all scream.

The scream, along with the sweat analyzed before is a common thread which runs through the novel and connects workers, left-wing activists and drama performers who all scream, sweat and smoke. More specifically, the narrator observes and comments frequently upon the screams and sweat of the street sellers on the Golden Horn. At one point, she sees a water-seller die on the bridge: "er trocknete gerade mit einem Tuch seinen Schweiß ab, fiel um und war tot" (208). The narrator comments that the water sellers have come from the East to Istanbul for work. Özdamar's association of the Bridge with the sweat and screams of the workers who have come from the Eastern part of Turkey to the Western city of Istanbul generates the East/ Asia/ backward, and West/progressive/ Europe dichotomy with a rather disturbing effect: Here, on the Bridge

of the Golden Horn, in the supposed European, Western and progressive city of Istanbul, the Anatolian workers are screaming, sweating, and even dying, as the above example illustrates.

A closer look at the history of the bridge is necessary; indeed, the rich history of the Golden Horn further illuminates the various intricate symbolisms of screams, cries and sirens, along with the mixture of present and past, progression and backwardness captured by the narrative portrayals of the bridge. First of all, the bridge conveys a metaphorical meaning related to Turkey's position with its European neighbors. For instance, the design of the structure which opened in 1912 and persisted until its burning in 1992, was handed on to the German construction firm M.A.N as a symbol of Ottoman-German friendship.<sup>187</sup> As a result, built into the bridge itself is a Turkish-German connection. Besides this, the bridge has long carried a larger meaning in relation to Western civilization since its days in the Byzantine and Ottoman Empires.

After the first bridge, which had been built by the Emperor Justinian of the Byzantine Empire back in the 6<sup>th</sup> century, attempts were made to construct different types of bridges on the Golden Horn. During the reign of Beyazit 2, both Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo were involved in plans to re-construct the Bridge.<sup>188</sup> Especially significant though was the completion of one version of the bridge in 1836. Between Tanzimat (1839), which advanced the modernization of the Ottoman Empire by organizing the army and educational system according to Western models, and Islahat (1856), which granted rights to non-Muslims, the districts around the bridge were settled

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<sup>187</sup> Refik Durbas, *Galata Köprüsü*, Iletisim Yayınlari, (1995),16.

<sup>188</sup> Eser Yüçeturk, *Halic. Siluetinin Olusum-Degisim Sureci*, Halic Belediyeler Birligi, Istanbul, (2001), 51-52.

by an ethnically diverse population, and the Golden Horn became a gateway to the world.<sup>189</sup> With the Tanzimat and Islahat reforms, non-Muslims, (and in particular, Jews, Greeks, Armenians, and Levantines) enriched the districts around the bridge culturally, and also boosted the economy with the ship agencies, trade and insurance firms, and banks they built.<sup>190</sup> In addition, since at this time other forms of transportation were not available and goods from distant countries reached Istanbul through the seas, the Golden Horn served as a major door opening to the world.<sup>191</sup> As a stopover and point of arrival for the ships coming from the Mediterranean, the Aegean, the Marmara, and the Black Sea, the bridge enabled Aegean wines, Russian wheat, Romanian wood, and French furniture to find markets in the districts of Golden Horn.<sup>192</sup> Thus, the area flourished financially, and it ethnically diversified.

Özdamar's narrator emphasizes the site's status as a transnational gateway to the world in one episode. She and her lover wait on the bridge, while it is pulled high up and "die großen russischen Schiffe durchfahrten ... auf dem Weg nach Arabien" (227). The bridge of the late sixties, then, still constitutes a link to continental and world-wide commercial trading. However, what has disappeared is the financial success of the Golden Horn and the bridge, as well as the multi-cultural, multi-ethnic quarters which had over the decades established themselves on its two sides.

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<sup>189</sup> *Galata ve Pera*, Nur Akin, 12-14.

<sup>190</sup> *Galata'dan Karaköy'e*, Orhan Türker, Sel yayincilik,(2000), 11.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid., 12

<sup>192</sup> Ibid., 12.

A picture taken of the Galata district during the Empire's second constitutional period shows Greek, English and Turkish flags all hanging together on one street.<sup>193</sup>

After the formation of the Turkish Republic, the districts around Golden Horn and the bridge itself underwent negative transformations; with the so-called modernization and the nationalization of the country, most of the rights granted to the non-Muslims were reduced. In the new political climate, non-Muslim inhabitants of the area who had lived and worked just like Turks became foreigners again. During Vice President Adnan Menderes' government (1950-1960), many houses and work places were demolished in the name of modernizing Istanbul. The demolitions, especially heavy in Galata, were meant to open up the area to public transportation: this changed the demography of the district, and resulted in the destruction of the two most important churches in the area, which caused many Greeks and Armenians to leave.<sup>194</sup>

In addition, the infamous Istanbul pogrom of 1955—during which a Turkish mob attacked Greek property causing a loss of 12 lives—accelerated the emigration of ethnic Greeks. As the novel recalls, “daß viele Istanbuler Griechen, als in einer Septembernacht im Jahre 1955 nationalistische Türken die Läden, orthodoxen Kirchen und Friedhöfe der Istanbuler Griechen zerstört hatten, aus Angst nach Athen gegangen waren” (221). One family was forced to throw all its vinyl records into the Marmara Sea; these LP's float for many long days over the water, and now, sitting by the Bosphorus the narrator imagines Greek songs among the waves. Although this thought is couched in a light and nostalgic tone, the narrative nevertheless evokes some of the Turkish republic's darkest chapters.

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<sup>193</sup> Ibid., 101.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid., 105-106.

Later, the narrator's own socialist books swim on the same body of water. The leftists and socialists become minorities like herself, are attacked and must also escape.

In addition to these events, the large migrations from the East to the West and the settlements of slum-houses around the Golden Horn caused the area to lose its glamorous multi-ethnicity, multi-culturalism and financial fervor<sup>195</sup>. Galata, which had long been linked with Pera lost its name due to the problems with Greeks over Cyprus in the sixties, and was re-named Karaköy. It also became a run-down district of slum-houses. When Özdamar's narrator crosses the bridge from this side, she observes the prostitutes in Karaköy, who symbolize the degeneration in this district of past financial and cultural success. However, not only Galata on the southern, seemingly European side, but also the northern side has undergone tremendous change; for instance, numerous small yet significant non-Muslim religious monuments have disappeared.<sup>196</sup> Several scholars consider the fate of the bridge and the Golden Horn a loss to Istanbul's cultural heritage.

<sup>197</sup> Thus, Özdamar's narrator's observation of the bridge is much more explicitly and complexly conceived than an exploration of essentialisms.

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<sup>195</sup> Ibid., 10-12.

<sup>196</sup> Jak DeLeon in *Ancient Districts on the Golden Horn* tells the stories of four districts, Balat, Haskoy, Fener, Ayvansaray, which were all on the northern side (not the side where Galata was) and which were also all inhabited by large number of Jews and Armenians. His account of the rich past of these districts gives a detailed account of the historical degeneration and deterioration of the districts, and particularly the disappearance of the multi-ethnic composure with its non-Muslim inhabitants as well as the destroying of numerous small yet elegant churches and synagogues that were a significant part of Istanbul. *Ancient Districts on the Golden Horn*. Gözlem Yayınlari. 1992.

<sup>197</sup> Orhan Türker, in *Galata'dan Karaköy'e* tells the transformation most particularly of the district of Galata to Karaköy, from the most multi-culturally and financially rich district of Istanbul to the darkest and one of the most unfavorable part of today's Istanbul which he interprets as a great loss of Istanbul. He tells the stories of disappeared / demolished monuments of the area, such as synagogues, churches, and the stock-exchange.

Though the geographical location of the bridge between two European sides does indeed unsettle the dichotomy of Europe and Asia in Istanbul, the bridge also serves as an explicit metaphor about the Turkish Republic's nationalization and modernization attempts. In the light of Özdamar's larger concerns in *die Brücke* about imperialism, wars, and inequality between peoples, her portrayal of the bridge poses questions of Istanbul's transition between 'modernities': between the modernization of Islahat, which promoted understanding and heterogeneity, and the (nationalist) modernization after the foundation of the Republic, where prejudice undid the work of Islahat. Özdamar uses the bridge to ponder the losses and sufferings during these transitions.

While doing so, the novel reveals a critical look at the injustices the bridge's current day depreciation conveys. The narrator recalls the long-gone richness of the bridge, and of Istanbul, when she tells a story about a worker, one of many, who has come from the Eastern part of Turkey believing that, "Die Straßen von Istanbul sind aus Gold". So, when he stumbles upon a piece of gold, he throws it at the sea.<sup>198</sup> In contrast to the bridge's rich past, which has now become mythic, the narrator's observations of its present paint a very different picture: the street sellers on the bridge all scream, and one dies. The narrator sees that they are from the Eastern part of Turkey and have come to Istanbul, with their beds rolled up on their heads, looking for wealth, or better said, a better life: "die niedrige Brücke wackelte durch das Meer unter ihren Füßen, und sie gingen, als ob sie durch eine Wüste liefen, deren Ende niemand sah, die aufgerollten Betten über ihren Köpfen und als ob sie von der Ankunft an einer Wasserstelle träumten"

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<sup>198</sup> "Ein armer Bauer kam in Istanbul an und stieß mit seinem Fuß sofort auf einen Klumpen Gold, groß wie ein Ziegelstein. Er hob das Gold auf und warf es in Meer, weil er glaubte, alle Straßen seien aus Gold, warum sollte er das erste Gold aufheben?" (212).

(212). However, as the desolate image on the bridge invokes, their dream is unfulfilled; these men walk and scream as if dreaming of an arrival at a water fountain.

The depiction is rather ironic; the sellers are on the lower portion of the bridge, which used to have two levels. Thus, they are basically right at the water, but can't drink it. They have arrived at the place where they imagined they would live better lives, but they have no realization and even hope of doing so. Thus, Özdamar shows that the bridge to a better life, in the late sixties and seventies, has become a bridge to destitution whose occupants are the street sellers and workers from Anatolia. The Bridge of the Golden Horn is significant to the narrator's personal transformation because of her experiences which appropriate and expose connections between herself and her position as closely connected to that for which the Golden Horn currently stands. The narrator has special compassion for the workers, and although there are huge differences between her life as a worker and these workers' lives, her own migration to Germany for work and her sensitivity to political brutality and economic inequalities make the bridge an important site to understand the narrator's position. Like the workers from Anatolia who are treated as foreign minorities in Istanbul, the narrator herself lives almost like a minority. As a leftist participating in socialist/communist activities, she is arrested by the government. And even among the leftists, because she is a woman, she is a "minor".<sup>199</sup>

To sum up, Özdamar creates a subtle yet significant metaphorical threshold by titling the novel after the once renowned, yet today much less known and popular Bridge of the Golden Horn—a historical site of transnational processes. First, the use of the Golden Horn subverts the common view of Istanbul as a city between two disparate

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<sup>199</sup> At the leftist intellectual gatherings in a restaurant, she is the only woman there and she is welcomed not so much for her ideas as much as for her beauty and singing.

continents connected by the Bosphorus Bridge, by pointing out how untenable assumptions about the “disparity” between the sides really are. In addition, as I have illustrated, the Bridge of the Golden Horn is a threshold of complex layers, of arrivals and departures; its depiction problematizes not only the dichotomy of East and West, but also further illustrates the instability and changing qualities of Europe and Asia, East and West as they undergo modernizations, economic prosperity and decline, and the migrations of people across their borders. On the one hand, as I have explicated with the transnational history of the Golden Horn, the structure symbolizes how Europe and the West have long interacted at the symbolic center of Istanbul. On the other hand, here on the “European” Bridge, which represents the long and rich history of the intertwinement of European, Asian, Eastern, Western, Muslim, non-Muslim elements, Özdamar thematizes the persistence of backwardness and more importantly the effects of backward decisions which have set back the rich diversity and heterogeneous composition of the area—ironically all in the name of its becoming more modern and Western.

#### ANATOLIA:

The narrator’s trip to Anatolia is an important part of the novel that portrays the protagonist’s transformation and her decision to leave the country. However, more important are her descriptions of Anatolia, the lives of the people living in the Eastern part of Turkey, and the way they are treated by the army and government. The Eastern part of Turkey to which the narrator travels is largely Kurdish. For the Turkish government, the Kurds have long been an ethnic concern, and the object of a xenophobia focused on threats to national borders and security. Hence, among other crucial political issues, *Die Brücke* criticizes Turkey’s treatment of Kurds. While in Istanbul, the

narrator's experiences recall the disappearing rich past of ethnic diversities there, the narrator, here, observes the injustices under which the Kurdish people in the East live. In this way—by thematizing layers of plural worlds within the country, the novel undermines the notion of a homogeneous Turkish world.

Although the novel portrays Turkey as heterogeneous, it critically conveys the disparities between the landscape of Eastern and Western Turkey, and between the inhabitants' lives. Descriptions of the inequality of life standards in Kurdish regions and the landscape that reveals a stark contrast to the rest of Turkey portray two worlds within Turkey; however in doing so, Özdamar points not so much to an East /West binary as much as positing a political criticism that she situates in the context of global developments. The narrator's travels in Anatolia that portray the stagnation in the area and suffering of the people in the East, who are ignored by the government, complements the larger concerns in the novel about hegemony and inequality between people, which the narrator contemplates during her travels in Berlin and Istanbul.

The narrator decides to go to Anatolia after she sees a photo of a Turkish village right under the picture of the Apollo 7 and the moon; the fields of the village were destroyed during a snow-storm and the starving inhabitants cannot reach the nearby main city. The narrator and her friend Haydar decide to go to the Persian border to make a report about the starving workers' situation.<sup>200</sup> On the bus to their first stop in Kapadokia in middle Anatolia where Haydar's parents live, as the narrator tells a worker "Amerika beutet uns aus, und seine Knechte in dieser kaputten Gesellschaft beuten euch auch aus", the worker replies, "Meine Schwester, Amerika geht zum Mond. Amerika hat keine Zeit,

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<sup>200</sup>The caption under the photo is: "Sie gehen zum Mond, und wir leben noch in der Dunkelheit des Mittelalters" (264)

sich mit uns zu beschäftigen”(267). Later, when Haydar’s father invites them to have dinner at the military casino and they are asked why they are travelling through Anatolia, they say that they are studying the different cultural landscapes of the country upon which the officer says: “Wir hoffen, daß, junge moderne Menschen wie ihr uns das Milieu der modernen Länder und Amerikas bringen werdet. Atatürk hat dieses Land der Jugend überlassen. Wir erwarten, daß ihr die Türkei zum Mond bringt” (268). This analogy between Atatürk’s youth, modernity, and going to the moon evokes the idea that the youth should be following the United States just like the Turkish government has been doing. But, in accordance with the land-worker’s reply to the narrator about ‘Amerika not having any time for the workers because it is going to the moon,’ the narrator’s travels through Anatolia prove to her that the Turkish government and the bureaucrats who are in dreams of going to the moon have also completely ignored looking after the people in their land, living right next to them.

The idealistic and nationalistic propaganda about modernity and going to the moon stands in stark contrast to the narrator’s observations in the next city Diyarbakir, a city largely populated by the Kurds. Here, the first thing the narrator and Haydar encounter is a family on the side of a dirt road of filth—next to a dried up river. A woman sleeps on the road with her kids all over her in dust; one of her kids searches the road for something to eat and eats dirt. A Coco-Cola bottle with street dirt, the heads of the children covered with mosquitos, a cow covered with dust in the dried up river, half-eaten figs by birds falling on the corpse of a dead dog portray the stagnation in the area. The narrator notes that “Die staubigen Kurden sprachen sehr leise miteinander, es gab fast keinen Baum, alles nur Staub und trockener Schmutz, aus denen auch ihre kleinen Häuser

, halb in der Erde, gebaut waren, wie Höhlen, in denen Menschen mit Fliegen, Schlangen, Moskitos, und Ratten wohnten (273).

While these reveal the terrible dwelling conditions of the Kurdish people, Özdamar reveals a harsh criticism on the bureaucratic government as well as the military that supports the system of inequality and inhumane conditions under which the Kurds live. After the dusty and dirty living environment of the Kurds, when the narrator and Haydar are invited to a military casino, she takes notice: "Der Staub der Stadt hörte im Garten diesen Kasinos sofort auf" (275). What is more ironic is that when they talk to the higher military officer in charge because they need a ride to Hakkari on the Persian border and they tell him that they are going there to study the different people in the country, he praises them:

Schaut euch diese Jungen Menschen gut an. Sie werden die Türkei in das Milieu der modernen Länder bringen. Sie sind unsere Augenlichter. Europa wird vor Staunen in seine Finger beißen. Vorwärts. Marsch, Kinder. Was unser Land leidet, leidet es wegen der unmodernen Köpfe. Wenn alle modern wären, gäbe es weder Mord noch Totschlag (276).

Despite this proudly idealistic talk about modernity, not only the Kurdish people in the village where this general is positioned are dying under poverty, but also in contradistinction from his claims about modernity and progressivity, only months after, two leftist students will be hung through the military putsch and army decisions.

Once the narrator and Haydar reach Hakkari after going up steep mountain streets and feeling like they were reaching the moon, they meet a worker who has come on foot from the starving village to Hakkari to buy some wheat. He looks like a skeleton and says:

Wir haben die Blätter von den Bäumen gegessen, wie die Tiere, aber jetzt sind auch keine Blätter mehr da. Wir sind tot, meine Tochter. Keiner gibt uns eine Hand.... die Kinder sind gestorben wie Blüten, die der Wind von den Zweigen

weht. Sagt dem Staat, er soll uns aus den Helikoptern Gift herunterwerfen. Wir werden es essen und dann alle sterben (281).

These words illustrate the Kurdish man's suffering as well as the government's indifference to all that has happened in the Kurdish village. The Kurds who are in the stormed out village are left to die. In the East, the concerns of the suffering Anatolian people, particularly of the Kurds, are obviously not Europeanization or modernity, but normal, humane living standards per se.

Özdamar's depiction of the Kurdish lives in the Eastern part of Turkey not only portray another layer in the Turkish world, but in doing so, reveals the inequalities about this ethnically marginalized group in Turkey. In these episodes, Özdamar criticizes all the groups involved in sustaining the inhumane living conditions in Eastern Anatolia. While she poses a harsh criticism against the Turkish government and the army, she situates the problems about the region from a larger perspective. In a sense, similar to the narrator's mapping of the political clima in Berlin from a transnational perspective, here, the narrator reflects on the inequalities against lives also from a global angle. Özdamar portrays the government and army corruption along side inspirations to follow the path of modernity—particularly Americanization. Hence, the image of Apollo 7 on the moon beside the image of the Kurdish worker with nothing to eat expands the criticism beyond the Turkish government. However, including a self-aware criticism by the narrator at her own intellectual positioning, as the next episode will reveal, Özdamar implies not so much to criticize America as much as portray the conditions themselves. Hence, the Anatolian travels of the narrator work to complement Özdamar's larger concerns about poverty, inequality between peoples, classes, and powers, and particularly her concerns about the suffering of the working class.

Özdamar reveals the narrator's intellectually motivated political actions not to be of any effective value; at best, they remain as socialist attempts at changing the consciousness of the people. It is not the consciousness of the workers or the Kurds that need to be changed; but rather the conditions. The rural topographical description of the Kurdish region with barren dust and dirt, with no electric, telephone and street connections exposes one of the changes that is urgent. For instance, the narrator tells of an extreme case about a river which was famous in the worker's party in Istanbul because many workers died each year while crossing the river:

Über einem verrückten Fluß hatten die Bauern von Ufer zu Ufer ein dickes, langes Kabel gezogen, an denen alte Lastwagenräder hingen, in die man sich hineinsetzte. Wenn die Bauern in die Stadt wollten, mußten sie so diesen verrückten Fluß überqueren. Sie setzten sich in die Lastwagenreifen und zogen sich mit ihren Händen zum anderen Ufer herüber (284).

The narrator who tries to cross the river injures her arm and has to go to the hospital in Hakkari. At the hospital café, she sits next to street workers and asks them about their wages and when they say that they must usually wait for their money for extended time, she advises them to march to Ankara for their rights. Yet they laugh and say that they have shoes with holes that would never make the long way to Ankara. As the narrator tells slogans from Istanbul, the workers laugh at her. And indeed, her attempts at change stay as socialist slogans and she has to escape the region due to the pressure by the civil police agents' threats.

The narrator's Anatolian experiences have a significant role on her awareness of her own (somewhat idiosyncratic) position as an intellectual. She realizes that her idealism and advice do not help the suffering and cannot bring about change. When she returns to Istanbul, the turmoil in which she finds herself between the right and left group clashes, the ensuing army putsch, her own arrest and her witnessing of torture in prison

confirms her realization in Anatolia that she is not able to do anything for the country's people. She takes her mother's advice, and saves her life by going back to Germany. At first, her move can be interpreted to set Turkey against Germany. However, in the light of the narrator's political experiences and observations about the inequalities in Berlin as well, I suggest that the interrogation of political systems and power structures—as situated particularly at this very fragile moment of history in the world—underscores Özdamar's intentions through the novel. During this interrogation, her affinities side with the working class as the depictions of the Golden Horn illustrated.

The naming of the book after the Bridge of the Golden Horn embodies this affinity as well as Özdamar's larger criticism in the novel, which is accentuated particularly in her depictions in Anatolia. On the one hand, with its transnational past, the bridge on the European side of Istanbul symbolizes the Western and European heritage in the city. However, while the bridge is a symbol of modernity, it is also a representative of the effects of political events that have damaged the ethnic diversity and transitions of modernization that have eventually shaped the current depreciation the narrator observes in the area. The sweating workers are the new inhabitants of the Bridge and they are screaming and suffering. The narrator's Anatolia trip, at first seemingly creative of an East and West binary, reveals in essence a situation similar to that of the Golden Horn. In the East, the narrator meets army and government officials as well as townspeople such as Haydar's father, who dream and theorize about modernization and going to the moon. Yet her narrations reveal that another ethnic group is ignored and the working class have no roads, no education, and no food. These depictions, themazing the transitions in

the country, suggest a complicated view about the nation's modernization path, which then again, is situated in relation to other sufferings and inequalities in the world.

This chapter analyzed the ways in which *Selam Berlin* and *die Brücke vom Goldenen Horn* undermine the binary thinking of "two worlds" through portrayals of multiple layers of worlds and through specific uses of spatial topographies. Acknowledging the differences between the historical eras in which the novels' narratives are set, the chapter explicated how Kara and Özdamar map their protagonists' transformations onto the larger historical and political changes. Portraying the time period of 'Wende' in *Selam Berlin* and the student movements in *Die Brücke*, Kara and Özdamar disrupt the binary between Turkey and Germany as well as subvert the stability of the entities East and West, Asia and Europe.

Özdamar's *Brücke* unsettles the two worlds binary in multiple ways. First, the narrative portrayals of Istanbul and Berlin's student movements are contextualized transnationally; second, the novel thematizes lives in diverse ethnic worlds; and third, a larger global connectedness between political events and problems destabilizes the binary between two stable and homogeneous worlds. The analysis showed how the use of the Bridge of the Golden Horn on the European side of Istanbul functions to destabilize the binary constellation as well as the meaning of what constitutes Europe and Asia. As significantly, the chapter explicated the ways in which Özdamar maps the notions of Asia and Europe, tradition and modernity, East and West as more fluidly existing and changing than fixated states; her use of the Bosphorus and the narrator's portrayals across what is presumably European and Asian illustrated this. Further, Özdamar uses this site as a unique place to reveal world events and human suffering interconnectedly.

In *Selam Berlin*, while narrating the significant socio-cultural changes in the country from the perspective of a second generation Turkish-German subject, Kara undoes binary constellations and in-betweenness also in multiple ways. First, while complicating the Istanbul-Berlin binary with that of East and West Berlin, the novel brings East and West Germans as well as Turkish-Germans into close contact in Berlin. Hence, the chapter illustrated how the novel unsettles the Post-Wall discourse from an East and West German dichotomy by portraying layers of Turks, East and West Germans in a transitioning Berlin. By exploring Kara's depiction of spaces and locations Hasan traverses, such as the subway, Kreuzberg, and Potsdamer Platz, I analyzed the ways in which Kara generates transitional and threshold effects that undermine the stabilities attached to fixated "two worlds." In doing so, Kara also allows her protagonist to break away from the narrowness of the in-between mode. Further, through the link of Hasan's parents to the history of the Wall—ironized in Hasan's father's double life between East and West Germany—Kara reveals the Turkish-Germans as intricately connected to, in essence, as a part of the German world. With my turn to two films in the next chapter, where I analyze portrayals of characters moving in between Turkey and Germany, I investigate further destabilizations of in-between positions about identities as well as the subversion of the binary between Turkey and Germany.

## Chapter 3

### Moving Pictures in Between Cities

This chapter focuses on the critically acclaimed film director Fatih Akin's most recent feature films *Head-On* (*Gegen Die Wand*, 2004) and *The Edge of Heaven* (*Auf der Anderen Seite*, 2007). *Head-On*, Akin's fourth film, made him the first German winner of the Golden Bear Award in the last 18 years. In 2007, *The Edge of Heaven* won the prize for best screen play in Cannes and was awarded the first edition of the Lux prize for European Cinema by the European Parliament.<sup>201</sup> In *Germany in Transit*, Katja Nicodemus praises Akin's success with *Head-On* by acknowledging that "the jury referenced a migration cinema that has been representing Germany as an immigration country for the last 20 years, despite its unwillingness to become one."<sup>202</sup> I believe it is improper to categorize Akin's films under "migration cinema" as Akin's portfolio is highly diverse, with themes ranging from love and road trips to journeys between Turkey and Germany, from music to political criticism. Although Nicodemus is right in her comments about his cinema moving intentionally between worlds, her following words about *Head-On* achieving a wonderfully free perspective on its own community

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<sup>201</sup> Akin's other noteworthy accomplishments are his debut film *Kurz und Schmerzlos* (*Short Sharp Shock*) which won the Bronze Leopard in Locarno in 1998 and the Pierrot at the Bavarian Film Awards. His road movie *Im Juli*, 2000, and a film about an Italian family, *Solino*, 2001 as well as his music documentary *Crossing The Bridge*, 2007, were international successes as well.

<sup>202</sup> *Germany in Transit, Nation and Migratio*, Eds. Deniz Göktürk, David Gramling, Anton Kaes, U of California, Berkeley, 2007, 466.

inherently emphasizes the Turkish community as Akin's own. On the other hand, as my investigation of *Head-On* and *The Edge of Heaven* in this chapter will reveal, Akin is a director who subverts precisely the idea of ours and theirs, us and them—the minor versus major paradigms.

Given that Akin is born in Germany to Turkish parents, it may however be proper to contextualize his films that incorporate the two culture's languages and cultures as part of a genre which Hamid Naficy names “ accented cinema”—a cinema that does journey between worlds and conveys a unique style.<sup>203</sup> What is of most relevance about the concept of accented film and its illumination of Akin's films is what Naficy describes as a special aesthetics generated by the accented cinema's directors' double consciousness.<sup>204</sup> Akin agrees that his films embody such a consciousness, comprising influences from both Turkish and German cultural realms, and significantly from both nation's cinematic traditions in his acknowledgement of his affinities for the German Rainer Werner Fassbinder along with the Turkish Güney Dal in his making of *The Edge of Heaven*: “I'm a Turkish-German film-maker and Fassbinder and Güney are heroes.” As he further notes, “because I'm a son of both cinemas, I could bring the two together”; one indeed sees in this film how he brings his cinematic forefathers' actors and actresses together—Hanna Schygulla and Tuncel Kurtiz.<sup>205</sup>

However, Akin's double consciousness and his films' incorporation of an accented cinematic style goes further than a mere casting issue. Significantly, both films

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<sup>203</sup> Hamid Naficy, *Accented Cinema*, Exilic and Diasporic Film Making, Princeton University Press, 2001.

<sup>204</sup> For detailed explanation on the differences between the styles of accented cinema, and double consciousness, see Naficy, 19-33.

<sup>205</sup> Ali Jaafar, Interview with Fatih Akin, *Sight and Sound*, 18/3, 9.

comprise the following aesthetics, sketched by Naficy as some of the most defining aspects of accented cinema: open, closed, and third-space spatio-temporal forms, fragmented and multilingual narratives, portrayals of crossed and lost characters, struggles of identity and displacement, liminal structures of feeling, and most significantly, the theme of journeying—which Naficy underlines as a central motif.<sup>206</sup> Indeed, while *Head-On* deploys travel for its second generation protagonists Cahit and Sibel, *The Edge of Heaven* utilizes stories of travel for Turkish, Turkish-German and German characters. In addition, with some of their characters' travels originating in Germany and ending in Turkey, both films break away from the conventional pattern of Turkish-German films that have stories about Turkish characters in Germany. Although Akin's *Im Juli* in this sense is the originator of Akin's series of films with characters going to Turkey, the reason for my focus on his most recent two films concerns how these two later films undo the Turkish-German binary, and transcend the static of “in-between,” while at the same time portraying their characters in constant negotiations and movements between two cultural realms.<sup>207</sup>

As I already mentioned, *Head-On* and *The Edge of Heaven* surpass the binary of a dominant German culture and Turkish victims. This chapter investigates how the films, while subverting the Turkish/German binary, and undoing the theme of victim subjects by the dominant German culture, represent characters living in two worlds and two cultures in a rather fluid way. On the other hand, the chapter also investigates the ways in which Akin's character portrayals reveal conflicts and “in-betweenness” within the

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<sup>206</sup> Naficy, 4.

Turkish culture—between genders and generations—and within the Turkish people with differing points of views rather than between a Turkish world opposing a German one. Therefore, analyses will explicate these “in-between” situations as well as the transitions they undergo and thresholds they cross.

In *Head-On*, we witness the transformations of Sibel and Cahit, two Turkish-German characters living stagnated lives in Hamburg. Although Akin portrays them partially in situations of “in-betweenness,” their overall characterization supersedes stasis and indeterminacy between the two cultures. Instead, we see how the two characters’ mobility and transformations are inflected precisely by their complex identities, comprising Turkishness and Germanness, and their ability to live and negotiate comfortably in both cultural realms. *The Edge of Heaven* also shows the travel and transformation of a second generation Turkish-German character named Nejat. In this sense, both films convey a new trajectory for their Turkish-German characters of the second generation. By showing their characters’ travels to Turkey as discoveries and new beginnings, the films narrate “becoming” stories—homecomings to a new land, instead of a return to home. In addition, while they subvert audience expectations of “in-betweenness,” they deconstruct presumptions about a stable and original Turkish-German identity. *Head-On* and *The Edge of Heaven* destabilize what constitutes a stable and predetermined Turkish-German identity by portraying characters with complex identities, performing and taking on diverse roles on a wide spectrum, with varying degrees from Turkishness to Germanness.

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<sup>207</sup> *Im Juli* depicts a journey through Europe and a love story by a German man toward a Turkish woman during their trip to Turkey; however, for the larger issues at stake in this dissertation, its narrative offers less investigative value than Akin’s latest films.

While sharing the above mentioned themes and issues with *Head-On*, *The Edge of Heaven* supersedes Akin's work in his former film by way of incorporating German characters' travels to Turkey and by intertwining all stories with each other, and with a political issue. The film reveals diverse identities from different backgrounds in transitions, moving in a fluid and mobile way between Turkish and German cultures. This chapter will explicate how the intertwinement of stories and shifting relations between characters in this film convey transgressions of national and cultural binaries and boundaries. Further, I will explicate how by interconnecting its diverse characters' stories and revealing their crisscrossing paths, with this film, Akin presents us with a humanist message of inter-connectedness.

### ***Gegen die Wand/Head-On***

*Head-On* portrays the love story between two second generation Turkish-German characters and their transformations from stagnating, drifting and lost identities at the beginning of the film to characters with self-respect and responsibility for life at the end. Analyses will explicate their transformations particularly in light of their journeys to Turkey. In contrast to their closed character types and the depiction of their seemingly meaningless and dark lives in Hamburg, their depictions in Istanbul point to transformed characters having found some meaning in life.<sup>208</sup> The female protagonist Sibel has a family. The male protagonist Cahit is beginning on his own—the last scene in the film

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<sup>208</sup> I borrow from Hamid Naficy's conceptualization of the feeling structures associated with his definition of accented cinema in my observation of Sibel and Cahit as closed characters. Naficy explains that while homelands "emphasize boundlessness and timelessness," and hence characters portrayed in the homeland's open landscapes are imbued with a feeling of openness, life in exile and diaspora "stress claustrophobia." In line with this explanation—although not fitting with the paradigm of home and exile—Akin's portrayals of Cahit and Sibel in closed, dark, and claustrophobic places in Hamburg depict closed characterizations. See Naficy for closed and open chronotopical representations, *Accented Cinema*, 5-26.

shows him on a bus to Mersin, where he was born. In a sense, they cross thresholds and become new people after their journeys to Turkey.

The beginning of the narrative in *Head-On* shows Cahit and Sibel meeting at a psychological institution after their failed suicide attempts. The reason for Sibel's stagnation is clearly illustrated as due to her desire to live a lifestyle that conflicts with her parents' wishes; she is in-between the life she wants to live and the life of a Turkish woman imposed upon her by her parents. In the face of her helplessness against her parent's pressures, she finds the solution in asking Cahit to marry her. Cahit is depicted as a dark character; he has lost his wife under tragic circumstances, and he drinks heavily. Since Cahit is of Turkish background, Sibel's parents would accept him as a husband, and thus she would escape the imprisonment of her life with them. Upon the fake marriage with Cahit, she indeed escapes her parents and enters the realm of life which she has longed to live: dating freely and doing whatever she wants. However, after some time, Cahit and Sibel indeed fall in love—only cut short by Cahit's murder of an ex-lover of Sibel's. After Cahit goes to jail, Sibel goes to live with her cousin in Istanbul because her parents disown her. When the two lovers meet again in Istanbul, Sibel is married and despite their continued love for one another, Cahit will continue his journey to Mersin alone.

This chapter analyzes Sibel and Cahit's complex characterizations—as identities engaged in constant negotiations between the Turkish and German cultural realms—as well as the effects of their journeys to Turkey. I explore the destination and nature of their transformational journeys with regards to their personal relations to their own selves as Turkish-Germans. Thus, I ask, 'How are their transformations through the journey to

Turkey inflected by their identities informed by both Turkishness and Germanness?’ I observe that their moves and negotiations across the two realms, the Turkish and the German, in a flexible and mobile way before their departures to Turkey are highly relevant to understanding their journeys to Turkey as transformational cross-over of their former selves. Significantly, Sibel in Turkey lives the “normal” life, with one man and a child, a life from which she escaped in Germany, and Cahit is on the way to his Turkish “roots,” something which did not at all interest him before. The fact that Akin’s characters end up and transform in Turkey, the country not of their own birth, but of their parents, and a country which they do not necessarily know, illustrates a new or alternative form of “becoming” in Turkish-German narratives. However, first, it is important to examine how the film portrays their transitional movements and identity performances between Turkish and German cultures in their lives in Hamburg.

As already mentioned, the audience first meets Sibel after her suicide attempt when she asks Cahit to marry her. The next scene in which Sibel appears, while introducing her family and the subservient role she must play, portrays her as an “in-between” character because of gender and generational differences within the Turkish culture. The scene, shot in the cafeteria of the psychological institution, is a long take that involves Cahit in the background of the frame. The scene actually begins with Sibel’s father’s words about “the sin of throwing away a life God has given” overheard as Cahit gets a cup of coffee. As Cahit sits down, the camera comes closer to the whole family sitting together. The shot shows the father facing and talking to Sibel. She is facing down, her head bowed and her hands held together. She does not face him the whole time. The mother is also looking down. The camera takes them all into view from Cahit’s point of

view, as if he is hearing the father as well. After the father leaves, the brother substitutes for the father—except at first, he talks in German. Because Sibel still looks down, he says “look at me” at which point a close-up brings Cahit to the foreground in the scene. After cutting back to the family, the brother says that Sibel will be dead if something happens to the father. As the brother gets up to leave, the camera moves back toward Cahit’s seat and positions the audience with him. Through the scene, the audience sees how Cahit intently watches the family; the long shot makes him an intimate part of this family talk while the several close-ups simultaneously illustrate his interest and suspicion. The close-up of the family intensifies the stressful mood imposed by the patriarchs of the family. As the brother leaves, the long shot that still includes Cahit in the frame is replaced by a close-up between Sibel and her mother.

The mood of the above scene is dark and heavy, demonstrating that in this family, the men say the big and first words, and only after they leave can the women lean toward each other and talk comfortably. Sibel takes her hair band out of her hair, shakes her head, lets her hair fall free, and lights up a cigarette, as if to lighten the mood. The mother also asks for one. These simple actions and Sibel’s facial expressions invite the spectator into her relief that the men are gone. In fact, when the mother is brought into focus and asks in a much gentler and friendlier voice what Sibel thought she was doing by trying to commit suicide, Sibel utters her first words: “I thought they would leave me alone.”

The above scene clearly portrays Sibel as a victim of her family and Turkish traditions as well as it upholds the role of the oppressed Turkish woman, both in the representations of the mother and Sibel. In the following scene in which Sibel appears with Cahit in a bar, she tells Cahit that her nose was broken by her brother because he

caught her holding hands with a guy. On the one hand, Sibel is positioned as in-between her parents' and brother's dogmatic minds and rules; on the other hand, through the fake marriage with Cahit, she is given the agency and freedom to break with victimization and live openly. I am particularly intrigued with this ambivalent picture Akin creates about second generation Turkish-Germans, and especially about female Turkish-Germans, through the ambiguous characterization of Sibel. I explain this ambivalence in the context of other Turkish-German films and how characterizations of women have generally tended to be rather closed and victimizing. For instance, Deniz Göktürk, in reference to two earlier films, *Yasemin* and *40 Square meters of Germany*, rightfully observes that both films "define the Turkish woman as a victim of relationships."<sup>209</sup> In *Yasemin*, the female protagonist must threaten to commit suicide so that she can break free from her father's pressures, and at the end she takes off on a motorcycle with a German man.

I generally agree with Göktürk's analysis of the 1990's Turkish-German cinema's liberation from trapping women in scenarios of imprisonment. Particularly, scenes such as one showing Sibel walking freely in the street on the morning after her wedding day—after having spent her wedding night with a bartender—defy old characterizations of imprisonment. Sibel breaks the ties and gains her freedom. The lingering question, however, is whether this freedom, which comes through trials of suicide and a fake marriage, transcends imprisonment.

In this sense, Akin's characterization of Sibel is ambivalent. Although we see her family's pressure on her, other scenes visually invoke her as an open and free character. For instance, another scene shows her at an amusement park happily going on rides. She

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<sup>209</sup> Deniz Göktürk, "Beyond Paternalism: Turkish German Traffic in Cinema," *The German Cinema Book*, ed. Tim Bergfelder, Erica Carter, and Deniz Göktürk, London: BFI (2002): pp. 248-256, p. 251.

is alone; she walks in a mini-skirt, striding freely through the park—all along smiling. This image deliberately brings one other much discussed scene and film to mind, namely Tevfik Başer's *40 Square Meters of Germany*. In that film, the female character, literally trapped in the house, dreams of going to the amusement park and begs her husband to allow her, and yet despite all the promises, she never is able to see the park. Hence, I agree that the newer films and especially *Head-On* no longer depict such closed characters as Başer's film. Nevertheless, the depiction of Sibel's confinement by her parents partially draws a picture of her as an “in-between” character—between the German world and free life style that she wants to live and the Turkish one to which she is supposed to belong.

Katie Trumpener's criticism of the film *Yasemin*, which made “the patriarchal structure of Islamic culture, embodied by the male heads of the family” the central problem and the cause of trouble in the film, illuminates my observation of similar traces in *Head-On*.<sup>210</sup> In comparison, *Head-On* also poses the central problem as stemming from Turkish cultural and traditional ways of life. Trumpener's insight with regards to *Yasemin* that in today's Germany, in terms of Turks' place in the German society, the “main source of conflict and tension appears to be the ethnic family,” is enacted in Akin's production. Similar to *Yasemin*, Sibel too is shown as a victim or “in-between” character, not due to the German society's exclusion or marginalization of her, but rather because of her family's refusal to accept her Germanness and her desire to live as both German and Turkish. The rigid or confining way in which Sibel's family is portrayed and her characterization as a victim of her family and Turkish values seem to perpetuate the

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<sup>210</sup> Trumpener, Katie. “On the Road: Labor, Ethnicity and the New ‘New German Cinema’ in the Age of the Multinational.” *Public Culture* 2, no. 1 (1989), 20-29.

existing discourse about a gap between the two cultures and the in-between discourse about Turkish-Germans.

Therefore, on the one hand, Akin's characterization of Sibel's family and portrayals of impositions upon her by her father and brother leave intact the patriarchal structure of the Turkish family as a problem. On the other hand, as I have already begun to explicate with several scenes that visually portray Sibel as an open character, Akin's overall characterization of her in the film overhauls and transgresses an indeterminate identity and constraints imposed by this seeming two worlds paradigm. Akin achieves this by granting Sibel the agency to transgress "in-betweenness." *Head-On* surpasses victimization and the "in-between" formula of the old films by showing the consequences of Sibel's escape and her transgressions. Although the audience sees Sibel partially as an "in-between" character—a victim of her family relations—we also see that she is by no means suspended. She has the freedom and agency to find an outlet in Cahit, and she breaks away from suspension. Significantly, the film does not end with Sibel's escape where *Yasemin* ends; in fact, that film displays Yasemin's entire existence in terms of "in-betweenness" and escape, from which she is rescued at the end of the film with her final escape. By contrast, in *Head On*, most of the film deals with changes Sibel and Cahit experience after their marriage.

Sibel and Cahit's fake marriage places them in a transitional phase and is especially important to their performances of multiple identity roles, constantly going back and forth between presumably Turkish and German ways of "being." They are not confined by a stasis and a fixed mode of "being"; rather, they take on, fit in, or negotiate

forms of “being,” “in the process of becoming.”<sup>211</sup> For instance, Cahit has to perform Turkishness through his marriage with Sibel. What are the effects of Cahit’s re-encounter with his Turkishness? And how does the film portray him handling Turkishness? After the marriage, Sibel accesses a new life-style and explores new roles too. Especially with her entry into the spaces of Hamburg’s night life, in the bars and discos, she exposes her freedom from her family’s inhibitions and the impositions of conventional Turkishness on her. Yet, these roles constantly shift, conveniently altered depending on the situation. Sibel, for instance, tells Nico, the German man with whom she had been sleeping, that she is a “married woman,” and specifically “a Turkish married woman,” when Nico wants to see her again. She has fallen in love with Cahit though and taking on the role of a married Turkish woman seems fit.

Similar to the protagonists Cahit and Sibel, Akin is himself a Turkish-German— informed by Turkishness and Germanness, granting him a quality which Hamid Naficy calls double consciousness.<sup>212</sup> Stuart Hall argues “the process of ‘becoming’ rather than ‘being’: not ‘who we are’ or ‘where we come from,’ so much as ‘what we might become’” as relevant to understanding identity.<sup>213</sup> Akin’s “double consciousness” allows him powerful performances of identities in the sense of Hall’s explication—performances by characters of “becoming,” as well as of “being.”<sup>214</sup> In the process of becoming, the audience witnesses how Cahit’s and Sibel’s roles of “being” and forms of belonging shift

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<sup>211</sup> Hall, Stuart. “Introduction: Who needs Identity?” *Questions of Cultural Identity*, eds. Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay, 2.

<sup>212</sup> Hamid Naficy, *An Accented Cinema*, 22.

<sup>213</sup> Hall, Stuart. “Introduction: Who needs Identity”, 4.

continuously. Their complex identity formations and particularly their thresholds in Turkey reveal them to be on a continuum of becoming and “identity positioning”: “cultural identities are the points of identification, the unstable points of identification or suture... not an essence but a positioning” (395).<sup>215</sup> *Head On* illustrates that this positioning entails fluid movements across multiple cultural realms. However, as my further analyses will explicate with particular examples, in certain scenes, we see the characters as confined to essential forms of “being,” and to role formations which they partially know and can play, and at the same time detest.

Although Randall Halle in his insightful commentary on the film is right to point out that “the conflicts” both characters experience “do not derive from their relationship with Germany,” I depart from the way Halle considers characters’ status as outsiders exclusively in terms of “humanization,” and set apart from “ethnoization”: “The problems they confront are not tied back to their being Turkish as such. Sibel suffers from a conservative patriarch as father but the film does not link this directly to their ethnicity.”<sup>216</sup> However, as the scenes which I have already discussed also illustrate, Sibel’s family’s rules and the oppression by both her father and brother depict her as the troubled daughter of a Turkish family, and not just any family.

From the very beginning of the film, Sibel is shown in conflict with her family; the Turkishness of her family and its rules stand out in Akin’s picture. Although Akin

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<sup>214</sup> Naficy confirms that accented films are special in their abilities to convey identity performances: “in the best of accented films, identity is not a fixed essence, but a process of becoming, even a performance of identity,” 6.

<sup>215</sup> Hall, Stuart. “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford, (London: Lawrence& Wishart, 1990), 395.

<sup>216</sup> Randall Halle, *German Film After Germany*, ( University of Illinois Press, 2008) ,167.

does not portray the Turkish ethnicity in conflict with the German, the film's portrayals of Sibel's struggles with her "ethnic background" need to be considered. My insistence to keep our attention on the film's portrayal of Sibel's ethnicity and her family seeks to illuminate in fact the relations between Sibel's Turkish heritage and her identity transfiguration as a mobile, hybrid, and transcultural character. By hybrid, I mean that Akin portrays her as a subject with an open identity, able to live her Turkishness and Germanness comfortably. Following this line of thought, by observing her as transcultural, I mean that she is not bound by identification to either culture in rigid terms; she can live and negotiate in both cultures without a definitive attachment to either.

In Cahit's case, Halle's remark about the insignificance of ethnicity rings partly true because Cahit does not even have a family. However, his Turkish background is also brought to the foreground from the very beginning when the doctor at the psychological institution asks him about his name. In agreement with Halle, I also do not claim the film to be about "ethnoization"; however, I suggest that the path of "humanization," which the two characters follow must be seen in the light of their identity negotiations linked to their Turkish heritage. Otherwise, how can we even begin to talk about Cahit's trip to Turkey in the sense of a "larger re(dis)covery" and "a form of catharsis," as Halle himself insightfully observes? As Halle acknowledges, Cahit is "German, Turkish-German, his linguistic skills in Turkish are weak, and he expresses himself through both languages."<sup>217</sup> We need to consider all of these factors in trying to make meaning of Akin's depiction of Cahit.

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<sup>217</sup> Ibid., p.167.

Hence, in numerous scenes, we see fluid ways in which Sibel as well as Cahit live comfortably within their multiple identifications; for instance, the scene in which Sibel cooks Turkish food at Cahit’s house reveals how they enthusiastically live a form of Turkishness through Turkish food and music. When they eat and drink Raki, and Turkish music plays in the background, Cahit says that it was a good idea to marry Sibel. Although, certain scenes place Sibel and Cahit as seemingly in-between, nevertheless, their overall characterization in the film transcends the discourse of outsider characters with one foot in one culture and country, and one foot in the other; Cahit and Sibel are not suspended in between Turkish and German cultures. Thus, instead of “in-between,” their complex identities of Turkish and German composure reveal mobility—generating explorations, negotiations, and plays between multiple identity roles.

Before I analyze the significance of Cahit and Sibel’s fake marriage as a transitional phase where the couple plays with various identity roles of Turkishness and Germanness, it is important to view the ways the film characterizes Cahit and how his characterization compares to Sibel’s. Cahit is characterized, both visually and formally, as a closed character; yet he is shown as open at the end of the film, during his time in Turkey. I understand and use the terms *open* and *closed* in relation to Hamid Naficy’s explication about open and closed chronotopes—both in terms of the film’s utilization of open and closed spaces and in referral to emotional states of characters.<sup>218</sup> Naficy explicates a relationship between structures of feelings such as openness, boundlessness and timelessness created by depictions of characters in open landscapes and a contrastive

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<sup>218</sup> Naficy, *An Accented Cinema*, 2001.

relationship of claustrophobia, alienation, and sadness created by character depictions in confining and enclosed spaces.<sup>219</sup> Akin characterizes Cahit through closed chronotopical configurations of space and feeling. The initial bar scene and Cahit's suicide scene in his car support this reading.

The first scene of the film—after the opening framing scene in Istanbul—shows Cahit in a club where he is picking bottles off the floor. In the next shot, he is talking to his friend in Turkish; the shot is a close-up of the two men, yet it is very dark. Nevertheless, one sees Cahit's unshaved face, messy long hair and his brooding expression. Cahit downs a beer, and his friend asks if he is thirsty. When Cahit says yes, his friend tells him to drink water if he is thirsty, to which Cahit says: "I am not an animal." At the end of this scene, the audience already learns about Cahit's lifestyle, his moods, and the Turkish-speaking audience notices that Cahit speaks Turkish with an accent. The nervous movements of Cahit's hands while he holds the beer bottle, his posture at the bar stool, the dark lighting, his refusal to even look at his friend, his few words uttered in low voice create a closed character portrayal. In the next scene, Cahit is in another bar, sitting quite the same way, except that his company is a woman and the language is German. After Cahit tells her to disappear, a man at the bar calls Cahit a faggot for insulting a woman like that; we then see Cahit calmly stand, beat up the man, and get kicked out of the bar.

In the next scene, Cahit is driving. The scene is again very dark; all one sees is Cahit's profile in the car; one does not actually see the car, but one knows that it is

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In a wide range of films, Naficy discusses the uses of close and open chronotopes in relation to the films' formal and visual structures that expose phobic, oppressive, depressive, and claustrophobic spaces contrasted with open structures of natural locations. 189-217.

moving quickly. The music speeds up the adrenaline that the scene creates. The camera movement along with the car produces in the spectator the feeling of being a passenger and traveling with Cahit in the car. The music is very loud, and one sees Cahit's face off and on, never fully shot, and one has no idea what is coming until finally the scene ends with Cahit hitting a wall. The scene's sudden and abrupt end with full darkness completes the feeling of rush, danger and madness that begins these series of scenes, which collectively helps to establish the character of Cahit.

Significantly, the visual darkness, the dark music, Cahit's attire and tone of voice all contribute to his depiction as a dark, and in Naficy's terms, a "closed" character. The above scenes depict categories of closed cinematic style, namely, closed interior settings with "dark lighting schemes" affecting the audience with moods of "constriction and claustrophobia."<sup>220</sup> Further into the film, Cahit is shot more than once in his filthy apartment, no more than a hole in the wall. By drawing on visually closed, claustrophobic, and dark spaces in shooting Cahit, the scenes characterize him emotionally as closed—depressed, moody, and angry.

While the above scenes, along with the scene of Cahit's manslaughter, seem to portray an image of Cahit as the aggressive, angry, and criminal Turk, which seems to reify "the long-running image of the Turk as criminal and/or drug dealer,"<sup>221</sup> Akin positions the audience in an empathetic relationship with Cahit's complex character and his personal story. This is especially evident in scenes that convey Cahit as a non-typical Turkish-German, and one detached from his Turkishness, thereby minimizing the role of

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<sup>219</sup> Naficy, *An Accented Cinema*, 5, 26-27.

<sup>220</sup> Naficy, 153

Turkish ethnicity as a reason of Cahit's actions. The first scene at the psychological institution shows Cahit's disinterest in his Turkishness. Here, the portrayal of Cahit's meaningless and bleak life seems at first linked to his "Turkish" ethnicity especially due to the doctor's questioning about Cahit's name. But a closer analysis, I suggest, illuminates instead how Akin portrays Cahit as a common drifting character whose reasons for depression stem from merely leading a meaningless life.

This scene begins with the doctor looking down when Cahit enters the room. The reverse shot shows Cahit for an instance; with his glance moving out of the window frame, the camera moves along the trees and landscape outside—as the doctor's words about "the possibility of thousand other ways to kill oneself besides running against a wall" is heard. When the shot returns to Cahit, he asks 'who says that he wanted to kill himself'; to the doctor's reply about no skid marks, in the next shot, Cahit is taking out a cigarette. While the doctor says he is not allowed to smoke, Cahit lights a cigarette, and in a shot that includes both men facing one another, Cahit provokingly exhales the smoke. Next is the doctor's cool voice asking from where the name Tomruk originates. When Cahit says it is from Turkey, the doctor says that he meant to ask about the meaning. However, his initial question was really about where Cahit's name comes from. Upon the doctor's further inquiry about the meaning, when Cahit says that he has no clue about its meaning, the doctor says, "they" have such beautiful names. As Cahit is shown with a sign of disinterest, saying "ist das so?", the doctor replies that at least the first names have much more meaning than they do in Germany. The reverse shot shows Cahit

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<sup>221</sup> Halle, 143.

simply nodding; he has no clue but he looks somehow impressed by the doctor's knowledge and interest.

These alternating shots and the dialogue between the doctor and Cahit so far introduce the spectator to a cool and soft spoken German psychologist, who, instead of showing offense at Cahit's behavior, brings out the issue of his heritage. His remarks differentiate between Turkish and German names and thus create a differentiation of Cahit's background. The scene portrays the doctor trying to find hints in Cahit's heritage for his behavior, but Cahit's answers do not allow any room for further elaboration. By now, the audience has learned that Cahit has a Turkish heritage, yet nothing else—no stories similar to Sibel's about his Turkish background or family ties that can be pinpointed for his destructive and depressive actions. In fact, through the course of the film, the spectator only learns that Cahit comes from Mersin; his parents are dead; he has suffered a tragic loss of his first wife.

Returning to the scene with the psychologist—a crucial scene in the film's characterization of Cahit—the doctor can also be seen as attempting to build a common ground or understanding with Cahit by asking him about his name and his background. He continues, in the next shot, in a much more serious tone, by saying that if Cahit wants to end his life, he can do that, but he does not have to die in order to do so; he can do something useful, for instance, go to Africa. The reverse shot shows Cahit simply sighing at the comment. Then, the doctor asks if Cahit knows the band, "der der, die die, das das." When Cahit says in surprise, "bitte," which shows that he has never heard of this funny sounding band's name, the doctor continues to explain that in one of their songs, they sing, "If you cannot change the world, change your world." When the shot returns to

Cahit, the doctor's voice is heard, asking whether he should bring the record to Cahit; but Cahit replies that he already has it, which is obviously a lie. After the doctor's sigh, Cahit asks for permission to say something, and in the second shot in this entire scene, Cahit says that the doctor is totally crazy. The last shot shows the doctor with a gentle smile that grows on his lips; next, Cahit is leaving the room.

This ending shot of the authority figure with his empathetic smile to Cahit's reactions manages to build an empathetic relation between the spectator and Cahit. One realizes that Cahit escapes from the truth; he indeed lacks a meaning in life. However, the scene does not attach this meaninglessness to the loss of his heritage, or the commonly presumed "in-between" status of Turkish-Germans. There is no evidence to assume that Cahit's problems are at all related to his Turkishness. Yet his encounter with the doctor is not only significant for revealing his complex identity—one that displays his Turkish background as well as his disinterest in it—but also for his character transformation at the end. In Turkey, Cahit is shown as a new person, as someone having crossed a threshold—someone sober looking for a new meaning in life. Intriguingly, instead of in Africa as the doctor had suggested, Cahit seems to have found this temporary meaning in looking after his *roots* in Mersin, Turkey. On the other hand, in Cahit's situation, the idea of "a coming-to-terms-with" one's "routes" seems more appropriate.<sup>222</sup> After all, as I discuss in my section on the characters' portrayals in Istanbul, instead of Cahit's "Turkish roots," Cahit's love story with Sibel, a woman of Turkish heritage, brings him to the routes of encountering Turkishness and performing Turkish identity roles as well as bringing him to his specific route to Mersin in Turkey.

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<sup>222</sup> Stuart Hall, "Introduction. Who needs Identity," 4.

The two scenes at the psychological institution, of Sibel with her parents and of Cahit with the doctor, portray the two as “drifting protagonists” in the sense of art cinema’s practice. Akin, who has studied New German Cinema (NGC), seems to follow the footsteps of NGC in so far as *Head-On* builds a complex relation of “experience” with its audience through what Thomas Elsaesser explices as a dominant characteristic of NGC films, namely, to “address the spectator in the triple register of identification, distanciation, and otherness.”<sup>223</sup> On the one hand, Akin creates skillful audience involvement and identification—on the level of empathy—with the characters’ psychological states by sharing with the audience the intricate dynamics of protagonists’ personal lives and problems.

On the other hand, the audience is split and divided through multiple identification processes projected through reverse dialogue shots and close-ups. While the spectator feels empathy for Cahit, this empathy is accentuated by the last authoritative shot on the doctor and his smile and divides the audience positioning; the spectator is simultaneously distanced by identifying with the doctor’s smile that illuminates an insight through Cahit’s frustrations, insecurities and depression. In other words, the audience is distanced from Cahit’s position in the sense that they do not agree with him that the doctor is crazy and, like the doctor, they can see through Cahit’s escape.

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<sup>223</sup> Thomas Elsaesser, *New German Cinema*, (Rutgers University Press, New Jersey, 1989), 158.

While Elsaesser’s explanation of ‘experience’ (*Erfahrung*) involves the notions of “social relevance” and “consciousness” with regards to meeting audience expectations by the films of NGC, his further explanation about the term’s implications of “distance” and a “self-reflexive dimension,” opened up by films of ‘experience’ resonate with how *Head-On* attracts different groups of spectators with differing backgrounds exactly by replying to the “tension of realities between different kinds of realities ‘in the spectator’s head’: “that of wanting to experience social emotions (solidarity, empathy, memory) and other ‘essentially asocial feelings (melancholy, aggression, frustration) or, “a recognition of radical otherness” (158).

In addition, Akin distinctly leads the audience to share in the split, doubled, and/or divided positioning of the characters. For instance, the scene that shows Cahit asking the family for their daughter's hand for marriage, as is done in Turkish tradition, puts the audience in a split position, similar to that of Cahit's own unstable position. The marriage between Sibel and Cahit is initially artificial. The spectator knows this and all the details surrounding the contrivance, whereas her family is clueless. Thus, the scene in which Cahit must ask the family for Sibel's hand positions the spectator as a spy to the action. This scene illustrates how Cahit performs Turkishness while helping Sibel. Cahit's best friend pretends to be his uncle and must perform the speech of asking for Sibel from the father. But, before this, both Sibel's father and brother ask many questions about Cahit's background. They are all sitting in the living room, drinking Turkish coffee. Cahit is wearing a suit and looks very orderly compared to the previous portrayals of him in the film. Cahit's Turkish in answering the questions is rather broken, and finally the brother says that Cahit's Turkish is very poor; he asks what Cahit did with it. Cahit says that he threw it away.

The Turkish role-performance which Cahit plays here in order to pass as a Turkish man, his dress and attire, his lies about his job and trying to speak the best Turkish he can muster, continues also during the wedding ceremony. Similar to the above episode at the house, the audience's awareness about the fake reality of the action at stake encourages both identification and distance. The long take at the wedding gives a close up of the mother, and then the father, shown in both sadness and happiness, but also doubt. During one-close up, the protagonists are sitting at a table when Cahit says he does not dance. Next, the camera captures the faces of the wedding guests, who are all

expecting them to slow-dance. Then, the camera returns to Cahit. Sibel is looking at him, and then, Cahit stands up coldly to dance. By distinctly positioning the camera to capture their emotional states, and specifically conveying their facial expressions, and the insecure manner in which they act, Akin encourages audience participation that empathetically identifies with the protagonists. Cahit ends up dancing not only “the slow dance” with Sibel but also later the more traditional Turkish dances. Because he has done cocaine though, he seems to enjoy these later dances more or dance much more comfortably—as if he were now comfortable in his own skin.

Thus, in the scenes above, the spectators, as in Naficy’s terms, “are placed in a split position,” in an unstable situation, in a similar way to Cahit and Sibel. We are made witnesses to the inauthentic role of Turkishness Cahit plays. However, despite the audience’s special knowledge about the fake nature of the wedding, which distances them from the “authenticity” of the action, the scene, nevertheless, provides the audience with identification with the protagonists’ circumstances and how they cope with them. The scenes reveal the complexity of the characters and their position; for instance, they expose Cahit’s particularly ambivalent “in-between” position: he is expected to be Turkish, to speak normal Turkish and to act according to Turkish norms, yet in reality, he embodies no more than his name to account for his Turkishness. However, beginning with Cahit’s step outside of the doctor’s office, and Sibel’s question to him in the corridor, “Are you Turkish?” Cahit begins to encounter and experience Turkishness, something which he seems to have put aside or simply ignored.

It is also important to note that the above acts represent codings and repetitions in the sense of Judith Butler’s explication of performativity as “a matter of repeating the

norms by which one is constituted.”<sup>224</sup> In other words, we witness how Sibel and Cahit’s identities constituting some type of Turkishness undergo voluntary or involuntary performative acts of Turkish norms, caused in part by societal and conventional impositions of their Turkishness—as illustrated, for instance, in the expectations by Sibel’s family from her and Cahit. In other words, their taking on a Turkish performative role conveys how they are actually repeating only the norms or conventions of a presumed, or better said, imagined Turkish identity. Another crucial scene in which Cahit feels obliged to perform Turkishness occurs when he plays a game with Sibel’s brother and his friends. Cahit does not want to go to Sibel’s brother’s house and says that he hates this Turkish stuff. Once again, Cahit’s remarks convey that he does not identify with things Turkish, yet because one sees earlier in the narrative that Cahit plays Tavla—a typical Turkish game—with his lover Maren, Cahit’s dislike of things Turkish may have more to do with whom he engages than the activity itself. In fact, the café scene portrays exactly the differences between so-called Turkish-Germans. After Sibel says that they must go to the gathering because they have been married for six months and adds that Cahit’s Turkish has been improving, in the next scene, we see Cahit, Sibel’s brother, and two Turkish men playing a game.

In the first shot, one of the men insults Cahit by asking Sibel’s brother how they could even give a girl to Cahit because he does not know the game’s rules. Cahit keeps his cool and keeps playing. Next, one man says that last week he was at Pasha’s and they had African and Scandinavian women there. After a short conversation between the two, the brother tells Cahit that he must go along with them. When Cahit asks to where, and

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<sup>224</sup> Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, 22.

they answer a brothel, Cahit asks what he should do there. The answer from one of the men is a tasteless and bad joke, explaining—in what these men consider to be very funny—to Cahit what one would do in the brothel. They laugh at Cahit and give each other high fives. Doubtless, Cahit knows what one would do there too; thus, his next question: “Why don’t you fuck your own wives?” reveals what he had meant in his initial question. The moods of the men change; one man asks what Cahit had said, and Cahit repeats his exact words. Then, another man in extreme anger tells Cahit never to use that word in connection with their wives; the scene which can easily turn into a fight is broken by the entrance of one of the women into the room. The brother calms down his friends, and somehow, without a fight, but with great anger and contestation, the scene ends.

While revealing the divergent points of views between these men of similar ages, at the same time, this scene portrays Cahit as more honest and cool-headed in contrast to the macho men with their double standards. Their position proves their double standard in the sense that they ask for respect and seem to defend the honor of their wives without considering whether their act of going to the brothel itself may be disrespectful. In contrast, Cahit’s disinterest and different approach to the issue comes across as respect for his wife, even if they have yet to be intimate and he has continued to sleep with Maren. The scene creates a differentiation of attitudes and illustrates Cahit’s atypical behavior. Particularly, the spectator can observe how Cahit sees and feels himself different from the other men with Turkish heritage, which the next scene also illustrates.

On a night Cahit goes to Taksim—a club which seems to be the hot spot for Turkish-Germans—after Turkish men beat up Cahit, he says that he hates these “scheiß Kanaken.” Yildiz defines *Kanake* as an “ethnic slur primarily directed at migrants from

Turkey or those presumed to be from Turkey,” associated with negative notions of “criminality, violence or sexism.”<sup>225</sup> Sibel challenges Cahit and says that Cahit is one of them. However, is Cahit a Kanake? And what would this term even mean for his characterization in the film? In the sense that Cahit is an angry outsider figure portrayed in acts of criminality and violence, he partially fulfills this stereotype. However, by characterizing Cahit’s non-Turkishness and his divergence from other Turkish-Germans, Akin defies the stereotype of the Kanake in Cahit’s characterization. Further, as previously mentioned, the film is able to decouple Cahit’s ethnicity from his actions by Akin’s unique style of characterization and audience positioning. For instance, when Cahit kills Nico, the man with whom Sibel no longer wants to sleep, the spectator sees that Cahit had no intention of killing him; he hit Nico in anger and not only because of jealousy, but rather because of Nico’s extremely harsh sexual insults of Sibel. In a sense, the portrayal of intense verbal abuse already anticipates such aggressive reaction from the recipient Cahit—regardless of his ethnicity.

Furthermore, the term or notion Kanake also informs Turks who define themselves as Kanake because they know themselves to be different and live with this difference proudly. Cahit does not pass as a Kanake in this sense either. Rather, through the course of the film, as I have illustrated in the scenes at the wedding ceremony and at the café, he is portrayed in situations that confront him with his supposed Turkishness—making him perform it as a role. On the other hand, Akin represents how Cahit takes on the Turkish role or position more freely as well; for instance, when he goes to Taksim and dances on the stage the Turkish way, after having fallen in love with Sibel. He has

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<sup>225</sup> Yasemin Yıldız, “Critically Kanak; A Reimagination of German Culture,” *Globalization and the Future of German*, 2004, 320.

cut himself with beer bottles, and with blood running over his arms—somehow an expression of his happiness—he dances happily at Taksim’s stage. Akin’s visualization of Cahit in this shot portrays Cahit as having gone out of his mind. The picture of Cahit is rather ambiguous not so much for his irrational characterization but more so for Cahit’s choice in dancing at this specific location, Taksim, and further, his way of dancing, the conventional Turkish way.<sup>226</sup>

Stuart Hall answers his question “if identity does not proceed, in a straight unbroken line, from some fixed origin, how are we to understand its formation”<sup>227</sup> with the “play of ‘difference’ within identity”<sup>228</sup> and “a conception of ‘identity’ which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by *hybridity*.<sup>229</sup> Thinking of identity in terms of ‘difference’ and difference as “positional, conditional and conjunctural”<sup>230</sup> allows us to ask whether Cahit’s visualization at Taksim invokes his acceptance, and in fact his willingness to live and show his difference? Although before he disliked Taksim and its associations with “Kanaken” and Turkishness, now he does not care, and dances there the Turkish way. In this sense, the scene reveals a conjuncture in Cahit’s identity formation.

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<sup>226</sup> In addition, the scene shows Cahit’s irrationality, similar to Sibel when she cuts her wrists in the middle of a bar, which can all too easily bring up stereotypes about Turkish people and their comfortable proximity with blood. Yet the fact that Akin exposes the social circumstances that shape the characters and the relations which bring about their dramatic and aggressive actions still arouse empathy in the audience for the characters and thus may prevent from associative interpretations of these actions through mainstream stereotypes.

<sup>227</sup> Hall, “Cultural identity and Diaspora,” 395.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid., 396.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid., 402. When I discuss Sibel and Cahit’s identities through hybridity, I observe that neither side is fixed and homogeneous (explained also in footnote 39) as well as that there are different kinds of hybridities, variable by differences such as gender and ethnicity. I explicate the concept of hybridity more thoroughly in the latter part of the chapter, in my discussion of *The Edge of Heaven*, when I discuss Akin’s undermining of a stable and authentic Turkish-German identity.

<sup>230</sup> Hall, “New Ethnicities,” 226.

Akin defies the stereotypical Turkish-German in the characterization of Cahit by showing points of Cahit's non-Turkishness and his divergence from the dominantly presumed Turkish-German norms; yet, his portrayals involve the ways in which Cahit performs Turkishness under imposition, as well as self-willed and freely. Particularly, as the above example illustrated, after meeting Sibel, Cahit's positioning of his identity changes. Akin's representational strategies thus display difference in accordance with Hall's explication—in productive terms, which illustrate the complex and unfinished, ever-changing qualities of identities. And, as the scenes I have analyzed so far already show, after their marriage, Cahit and Sibel merge into a constant play and negotiation of multiple identity roles which they sometimes more readily take on and freely play, and other times, as the scene at the café and with the Turkish men illustrates, they are confronted with confining in-betweenness and contestation. The effect of their short-lived marriage on Cahit and Sibel, and their transition to a new world of play around identity roles is worth looking into further, at least for the ramifications of these performances for their larger transformations at the end.

Cahit's apartment is the best example of a space where we can see the effect of changes on both characters. For Sibel, the transformative meaning of the apartment is obvious: she enters freedom by leaving her parents' house and entering this one. While the house itself is literally a physical threshold, and Sibel even asks Cahit if he will not carry her over the threshold after their wedding night, what I am concerned with are the personal changes they experience there while we also see the space literally transform from a dump to a livable realm. Hence, for instance, for Cahit, the entry of Sibel to the apartment changes his life there as well as the apartment itself. After a few days of the

marriage, a shot shows the apartment perfectly cleaned up, tidied, and looking like a normal place. In contrast, many previous shots characterize Cahit's bleak and closed life in there by showing the apartment to be filthy, strewn with beer bottles and unwashed dishes. The apartment thus visually signifies change, exposing the transitions both characters experience. In one scene, Cahit and Sibel dance like punk rockers and do cocaine. Sibel yells out how she will have piercings and tattoos. She can leave behind the impositions of Turkish norms and behave as she wants. Yet in another scene, first we see how Cahit watches Sibel's enthusiastic Turkish cooking, and then they eat Turkish food and listen to Turkish music together. In this way, the apartment is shown as the place in which they most comfortably live and be who they want to be; while leaving out societal, and specifically for Sibel, her parents' pressures. We see how they also incorporate Turkish cultural ways of living there as well.

As the examples and the space of the house illustrate, while their marriage allows Cahit and Sibel to experience and take on new identity roles—Cahit becoming more familiar and even at times comfortable with his Turkishness and Sibel living the hedonistic life she wanted—they are still depicted to a large extent as closed characters, especially as characters with no real meaning in their lives except partying, doing drugs, and drinking. At the point that one thinks the narrative will portray them as settling down—after their falling in love with one another—Cahit's action of man-slaughter ends their story in Hamburg. While Cahit goes to prison, Sibel is rejected by her family and goes to Istanbul to her cousin Selma to escape. In what follows, I trace each protagonist's depiction in Istanbul and observe the visual openness with which Istanbul scenes are shot; shots that are lighter and taken in places that show Sibel and Cahit in the outside

world—in taxis, on streets, on balconies, looking out windows, and in the last scene, in a café, and on the bus, with Cahit’s departure to Mersin—give the picture a tempo of movement and a sense of lightness that differs from the dark and closed moods of the scenes which show Cahit and Sibel in Hamburg.

Before Sibel arrives in Istanbul, a Turkish musical ensemble which opens the film in a framing shot, and which is projected in the film in intervals—after life changing events through the course of Cahit and Sibel’s stories—appears again. The ensemble scenes that frame the film are completely shot in the open air and in front of the water. While these close-up and deep-focus shots infuse a sense of “naturalness,” they are in fact completely staged. In other words, one would not see an ensemble like this anywhere in Istanbul except in a music studio.<sup>231</sup> However, given that the performance occurs in the midst of a melodramatic narrative to begin with, the audience—instead of pondering the authenticity of the scene—is drawn to enjoying the sad and nostalgic music and the exotic scenery. Hence, Akin’s utilization of the ensemble generates a specific effect. The way the ensemble is seated, in front of the water, in an exotic part of Istanbul, from the beginning of the film sets a contrasting mood to the dark and closed lives of Cahit and Sibel. Thus, the shot that begins the film serves like a teaser, in the sense that, the audience, having been introduced to a completely different and open spatial landscape at the beginning, expects a return there.

The shot before Sibel’s plane lands in Istanbul shows the ensemble again, this time with the camera moving to the completely open sea; right above is Sibel’s plane

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<sup>231</sup> For instance, Akin’s later film *Crossing the Bridge*, a music documentary, has street musicians and rappers, all of which one could indeed encounter in Istanbul, yet he introduces a classical ensemble like this only in a studio.

arriving. Next, she walks through the airport with her new hair cut like a boy's. Sibel lives like a boy in Istanbul too and continues the free life that she had begun to experience in Hamburg with Cahit. In one of her letters to Cahit, she mentions how wonderful and full of life Istanbul is, although she is not living it. She asks for drugs; gets into trouble; is raped and stabbed. In fact, one does not know of Sibel's major transformation until Cahit arrives in Istanbul. After Sibel is stabbed, the spectator is unsure as to whether she can even survive. There is a break in Sibel's story; leaving out how she manages to straighten her life, the film introduces the audience to a mature Sibel, with a partner and a child.

In contrast to Sibel, Cahit's arrival to Istanbul reveals a mature and transformed person. When he first arrives, he gets in a taxi and tells the driver to go straight. Cahit looks out the window the whole time the driver is talking to him. It is a bright day. This scene is special because so far the only other times Cahit is shot outside are when he goes to the wedding ceremony and on the way to visit Sibel's parents. However, although we see him on the street, both occasions portray him neither pleased nor as part of an outside world. He is involved in fulfilling a role that he has promised. Here, however, even when he is in the taxi, we see how he attentively watches outside, and once outside, he looks content and is actually shown in touch with the outside world, showing interest in the surroundings.

The first thing he does when he arrives to the Grand Hotel London is to open the windows; he looks out from above to the wide, open sea, and the silhouette of Istanbul.<sup>232</sup> This shot, coupled with several others showing him gazing outside windows, portrays

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<sup>232</sup> This is a hotel which Akin seems to be particularly fond of, since Alexander Hacke in *Crossing The Bridge* also stays there.

Cahit is enthusiastic about the world around him. A similar shot is provided from the Marmara Hotel when Cahit talks to Sibel's cousin Selma about seeing Sibel. When the audience sees Sibel again for the first time after her stabbing, she is also standing in front of large windows at her current apartment. She looks out at the city and the water as well. I suggest that these shots that depict the two characters looking far out to the openness reveal something similar to the sense of feeling which the ensemble shots in the wide open provide—a sense of vast space, open possibilities, looking out to the future.

The most spectacular window shot which exposes the openness of Cahit's character through the metaphor of the open window is the one after Cahit and Sibel have met again. Sibel asks what Cahit will do, and Cahit replies that by no means will he stay in Istanbul; he will go to Mersin, where he was born. As they lay on the bed, the shot moves out to the city through a single open window that shows the ships on the sea, with houses and cars in the distance. There is a world out there into which Cahit and Sibel have stepped, a world illustrating Cahit's words that 'he is not worried.' Sibel is already settled in this world; Cahit is taking steps into his future by journeying to Mersin. Later, in another shot on the balcony as they both look over to the wide open space of the city and the daily prayer 'Ezan' is heard, Cahit asks Sibel if she wants to go along. She seems to contemplate this, but in the end, she does not go. However, Cahit continues his journey to Mersin. He says to Selma that Sibel is the reason why he is alive; she gives a meaning to his life, but interestingly this meaning is not entirely about love anymore. Through meeting Sibel, Cahit encounters his self that includes his Turkish heritage in a new way, as well as by following her to Istanbul, now he discovers a new meaning for his life, even though Sibel will not be a part of it.

How can one interpret then the fact that while Cahit and Sibel are really from Hamburg, here they are in Istanbul, looking out of a hotel window, contemplating their futures in this country? The scenes in Istanbul show the characters as transformed and open characters, having found new meanings in their lives. In his interpretation, Randall Halle attributes the “transnational normalcy of the film” to its depiction of new migrants: “Unlike in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when emigration generally meant the loss of engagement with the country of origin, the new transnational migrants are no longer forever dislocated from their homelands.”<sup>233</sup> While Halle’s observation of the film’s transnationality and acknowledgement of Cahit and Sibel as transnational migrants is remarkable, it is questionable whether one could call Turkey their homeland. Rather, drawing upon Deniz Göktürk’s insightful question, “How do transnational cinemas create imaginary homelands?” I suggest that, Akin’s filming of Cahit and Sibel creates an “imaginary homeland” in Turkey for them.<sup>234</sup>

Cahit and Sibel are born in Hamburg and except their Turkish linguistic and familial ties, they have no previous experiences there; in this sense, their journeys allow them to go to a foreign country, which, however, is the “home” of their parents—hence an “imaginary homeland.” Sibel is most likely staying; as Selma tells Cahit, she lives a happy life there, which seems entirely different than the life she desired when she was under her parents’ imposition. Will Cahit stay in Turkey? Does it matter? What is of importance is the fact that the film depicts Turkish-German characters going from Germany to Turkey who find new meanings in their lives there although they are not

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<sup>233</sup> Halle, 167.

really from Turkey. *Head-On* breaks away from representations in earlier films that depict return stories to Turkey; here we cannot talk of a return, but rather new beginnings. Further, as Halle observes, the film exposes “a routine of travel and contact that is not a matter of being in-between” and appears as “a new order of cultural and geographic mobility.”<sup>235</sup> Akin’s film *The Edge of Heaven*, which I discuss next, embodies the characteristics of travel and contact, cultural and geographic mobility even more prevalently while continuing to fascinate the spectator with further new beginnings and transformations.

#### ***Auf der Anderen Seite (The Edge of Heaven)***

Fatih Akin’s *The Edge of Heaven*, a skillfully structured ensemble film, displays Akin’s most complex and sophisticated work yet by embedding a Turkish political issue within a narrative of interlocked stories and journeys between Turkey and Germany. While Turkish, German, and Turkish-German characters from three single-parent/ child pairs move between Turkey and Germany, their relations shift continuously, forming new pairs across generations and genders. For instance, the Turkish female character in Germany, Yeter, becomes a surrogate mother to a second generation Turkish-German man, Nejat; a German female student, Lotte, becomes the lover of a Turkish political refugee, Ayten, in Germany, while at the end of the narrative, Lotte’s mother, Susanne, acts as the surrogate mother to Ayten. By way of incorporating multiple interlocked plots of cultural contact and journeys by Turkish, Turkish-German and German characters, *The Edge of Heaven* significantly transgresses the between two worlds paradigm. The

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<sup>234</sup> Göktürk, “Turkish Delight-German Fright: Unsettling Oppositions in Transnational Cinema,” in *Mapping the Margins*, edited by Karen Ross and Deniz Derman, pp.177-192. (New Jersey: Hampton Press, 2003),180.

<sup>235</sup> Halle, 167.

characters' stories of mobility between ethnic, national, and cultural boundaries subvert the Turkish/German binary, as well as reveal Turkey and Germany and individual identities as inter-connectedly evolving.

*Auf der Anderen Seite* challenges themes of victimhood and stereotyped notions of ‘Turkish-Germaness,’ and renders intelligible a “process of becoming” for the individual characters—similarly to what I have already demonstrated in my discussion of *Head-On*. However, in addition to “performance” which highlights the identity formations of Akin’s Cahit and Sibel in *Head-On*, *Auf der Anderen Seite* highlights the characters’ identity developments and changes through the thread of shifting relations and inter-connections between the three pairs. The changes the characters undergo and the thresholds they cross amidst shifting familial and generational relations expose how they move across and transgress boundaries of national and cultural affiliations of being Turkish, German, or Turkish-German.

Akin’s portrayal of his characters’ identities through their shifting familial and generational relations across ethnicities and nationalities enables him to reveal them in their human likenesses and similarities instead of distinguishing ethnic or cultural associations. In addition, through the story of the political activist Ayten, the film exposes Turkey in an on-going process of becoming as well. Although Akin’s project is far more complicated than a mere criticism of Turkish political issues, Ayten’s case at the heart of the main plot shows that Turkey is not a stable world, but one in transition that stands in relation to Europe instead of a directly oppositional stand to Germany.

As I have already mentioned, *The Edge of Heaven* interlocks the stories of three generational pairs. Yeter, a Turkish prostitute in Germany, and Ayten, her political

activist daughter in Turkey, forms the first pair although they are separated from each other. The plot evolves through the involvement of Ayten with the mother and daughter pair, Susanne and Lotte, and the involvement of Yeter with the father and son pair, Ali and Nejat. In the beginning of the film, Ali, a retired and single Turkish man living in Bremen, offers to a Turkish prostitute, Yeter, the salary she makes if she lives with him. Soon after, Yeter dies when Ali hits her in a drunken state. Ali's son, Nejat, disowns his father, and goes to Turkey to Yeter's funeral and attempts to find her daughter, Ayten. However, at the same time as Yeter's coffin is sent back to Turkey, Ayten gets into trouble during political demonstrations in Istanbul. The protesters in the scene carry placards in the name of Öcalan—the Kurdish leader of the group PKK and other general placards about the Partisan fight.<sup>236</sup>

Although Ayten is not caught by the police, she feels very threatened and leaves for Germany in hope of finding Yeter, who now is dead and buried in Turkey. This crisscrossing exchange of places—Yeter's coffin on board to Turkey and Ayten's arrival in Germany—leads to a web of shifting interrelations and crisscrosses involving the other two pairs. While Ayten searches in vain for her mother and has no place to live, she meets Lotte who invites Ayten to where she lives with her mother, Susanne. After a dispute with Susanne at the house, Ayten decides to leave. Afterward, she is caught and deported from Germany because her case for asylum is not granted by the courts. In the meantime, Nejat's journey to Turkey originated by Yeter's death turns into his relocation in Istanbul after he buys a German bookstore there. With Lotte's journey to Istanbul to

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<sup>236</sup> Although we do not learn about Ayten's direct involvement with the group PKK, the fact that the investigators tell Lotte how the Turkish government identifies Ayten's group of affiliation as a "terrorist" group, and the threats on Ayten about group members coming from Eastern Turkey who want to have the gun back – which Ayten hid – all give clues that she is most probably involved with the PKK.

help Ayten, Nejat's and Lotte's paths cross and connect. Lotte meets Nejat at the German bookstore and rents a room at his house. Nejat wants to find Ayten and assist her with her education as this was Yeter's wish. When Nejat inquires about Lotte's friend in prison, Lotte is prevented from telling Ayten's real name because of the prohibitions she received from Turkish officials. Thus, despite the intersecting mission in their crisscrossed paths, the encounter fails to bring Ayten's identity into open.

The plot this far shows how the characters from the children generation become separated from their parents and build new relations. In a way, the already separated pair of outsider figures, Ayten and Yeter—the former, a terrorist who cannot live in Turkey and cannot receive asylum rights in Germany; the latter, a prostitute forced to move into a relation of convenience with Ali—destabilize the lives of the characters in the other two pairs and lead to configurations of new ties among them all.

After Lotte's death in her attempt to help Ayten,<sup>237</sup> the film displays another crisscross; while Lotte's coffin goes back to Germany, in the next shot we see the arrival of her mother Susanne in Istanbul. The pairs shift once again; Susanne and Nejat meet and become a pair. In the same frame that shows Susanne's arrival, we see Ali's return to Turkey as well. After Susanne's and Nejat's meeting, Susanne almost takes her daughter's place while staying at Nejat's place. During one of their talks at Nejat's apartment, Susanne prompts Nejat to search for his father. While Nejat leaves to find his father, he leaves the bookstore to Susanne. In the meantime, Ayten breaks away from the group with which she was affiliated, is released from prison, and comes to visit Susanne at the bookstore. Upon Susanne's offer, Ayten goes to stay at Nejat's apartment until his

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<sup>237</sup> Lotte dies while trying to retrieve the gun which Ayten had hid on the rooftop of a building; I will explicate this point in my analysis.

return. Thus, although Nejat and Ayten never meet through the course of the film, the end leaves the spectator with the idea that they will meet. At the end of the film, all characters cross thresholds and experience transformations, something I will explicate in detail. Yeter and Lotte have also metaphorically crossed thresholds—by their deaths, having literally crossed to the other side.

With the detailed summary above, I want to highlight both the shifting relations among the pairs as well as the many connections and parallels among the characters' experiences. Their paths sometimes crisscross and connect the characters, reconfiguring new relations between them as in the case of Lotte and Nejat, and Susanne and Nejat—despite their unawareness about the intersecting connection between their stories. And, although other characters' paths cross, they never actually meet through the film, as in the case of Susanne and Ali, and Ayten and Nejat. Nejat is the only character who meets and has a relation with every other character except for Ayten. However, as my analysis will explore, on two occasions in Germany, we see Ayten and Nejat's paths cross, without connecting.<sup>238</sup> The film portrays several moments of missed or failed connections while showing the characters' transitions. In other words, although they fail to literally connect, Akin's positioning of them in the same frame visually creates a connection. What kind of implications and affects do these scenes of connected “non-connections” create?

In addition, occasionally, the sharing of individuals' personal stories reveal crisscrosses that connect them, while at the same time leading to further reconfigurations. Two particular instances I analyze occur at the bookstore between the bookstore owner

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<sup>238</sup> This first occurs at the university when Nejat lectures and Ayten sleeps through one of his lectures. The second time is a scene that shows in a single frame Lotte and Ayten driving in the car—before Ayten is caught by the police—and Nejat riding the bus as Yeter sits across from him although at this point in the film Yeter has died.

and Nejat, and at Nejat's apartment between Susanne and Nejat. These crisscrosses along with spatial crossings and transitions—at borders, airports, and on the road—show that our ways and routes are related, and that we are intricately connected.

The opening scene conjures this inner connectedness and humanism that marks the film on the whole. Here we see Nejat's arrival at a gas station in a Turkish village. We see old unpaved roads; we hear Turkish music and Nejat's conversation with the merchants about the sad song. Nejat inquires about the Turkish song he hears; when he is told that it is by a man who died due to Chernobyl-related illnesses, tears come to his eyes; one guesses he is somewhere at the Black Sea. In the next shot, Nejat is driving on the open road. We cut from Nejat passing through a tunnel in his car into the next scene that shows big buildings, a church, and demonstrations in Bremen. The demonstrators walk with placards about the unity of proletarians worldwide and shout for proletarian rights. These two scenes, referencing Chernobyl in the first, and the proletarian demonstrations in the second, set the international and bilingual context for the film, as well as setting a tone for the humanist and partially political thread woven into the larger narrative.

The man at the gas station tells Nejat that Chernobyl's truths recently came out into the open. In a similar way, through Ayten's story, *The Edge of Heaven* brings out to the international community truths about Turkey's political problems. While I do not suggest the film's portrayal of Turkish political issues as the goal of the film, I consider the political thread and the diegetic clues such as the proletarian demonstrators and Chernobyl in relative terms to the implications of the crisscrosses that underscore the film. Akin provides an interconnected and global perspective—best illustrated by

interweaving a German daughter and mother and their tragic story with the dynamics of Turkish political issues. Just as a mistake outside of Turkey's borders, in Chernobyl, has had tragic spillover effects on Turkey and the surrounding regions, *The Edge of Heaven* shows that, in the global world in which we live, what happens in Turkey can have tragic effects for a German family.<sup>239</sup> Akin's own words about his project, "There were so many political aspects I wanted to touch on" and yet how he also "wanted to tell a story about mothers and sons, fathers and daughters—and about hope as the last refuge we have as human beings," speak to the film's intertwinement of the political and humanist aspects that my own analyses will explore. I begin a more in-depth analysis of the film with a close-up characterization of each character, starting with the portrayals of Ali, Nejat and Yeter. Then I follow a chronological order in analyzing characters and their relations in order to not lose sight of the interlocked plot and the intricate ways in which their paths cross and their relations shift. This is important because these shifting relations not only reveal the crisscrosses and the connections that I have mentioned, but in doing so, help us understand the transitions and thresholds the characters experience.

Ali- Nejat-Yeter:

An important feature revealed by the portrayals of Ali, Nejat and Yeter regards the destabilization of the Turkish-German identity as original and authentic. The various performances in the film show how the Turkish-German identity transcends the confines of a singular and general model, usually associated with an "indeterminate hybridity" and

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<sup>239</sup> Akin counts numerous examples about the current Turkish political climate in his interview, talking about the rising insecurity and doubts about the country's future, the Kurdish separatism, the resurgence of the Turkish state, to name a few. See "Flags and our Fathers," interviewed by Ali Jaafar, *Sight and Sound*. 18.3, 2008, p.9.

explicated through “in-betweenness.”<sup>240</sup> While Ali, Nejat and Yeter, similar to Akin’s characters in *Head-On*, are marked by hybridity, in the sense that their identities comprise a cultural multiplicity of Turkishness and Germanness, what does this show us about Turkish-German identity?<sup>241</sup>

Analyzing their characters and diverse performances in the film is significant because, on the one hand, we see how performance—in the sense of taking on an identity role— influences their identities, and on the other hand, in certain instances, we can see familial and gender influences that configure their identities’ crossings between Turkishness and Germanness. In explicating Akin’s portrayal of his Turkish-German characters and the ways in which their hybrid identities complicate the category of Turkish-Germanness, I consider the differences their portrayals expose with regards to gender. Because of the varying role gender plays in the characterizations of Ali, Nejat and Yeter and because of the differences in Akin’s portrayals of his male characters from different generations, I begin with a close look at Ali and Nejat and the film’s portrayal of Turkish-German masculinity.

Ali is a Turkish-German retired widower with a stable salary and a house. At the beginning of the film, he is looking for fun in the red light district of Bremen and meets

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<sup>240</sup> See Arif Dirlik’s article “Bringing History Back In,” where he explains how abstract hybridity reduces identities to “in-betweenness” by ignoring types of “in-betweens”, for instance, of “class, gender.” Later in the chapter, I explicate the importance of Dirlik’s point with regard to “significant distinctions between different differences” that must be accounted for in understanding hybridity. In *Beyond Dichotomies*, pp. 106-108.

<sup>241</sup> My use of the word hybridity acknowledges the multiplicity and inherent plurality on each side of the Turkish-German identity—that is, Turkish and German cultures are hybrid within themselves—instead of hybridity as a matter of a mixing of two fixed and homogeneous sides—one Turkish, one German. This is another reason—besides the variable differences —why speaking of one, singular, original Turkish-German identity is impossible,

Yeter. Nejat, a professor of German, lives with his father.<sup>242</sup> Although the father and son cook and eat as well as go to horse races together, their characters differ greatly. After the horse race in which they together place a winning bet, they celebrate with ice cream, and Ali asks Nejat whom he is screwing, a question which Nejat hardly can believe, and he flees the uncomfortable conversation by telling his father to read the Turkish book Nejat gave him the night before. The German professor of Turkish heritage reads Turkish books while his Turkish-born father could not care less.

Compared to his father's hot temper, Nejat is a calm and cool person. His father drinks without control, speaks in a harsh tone, and swears while Nejat is soft-spoken, easy going—an intellectual gentleman. In his talks with Yeter—on the bus after Ali's heart attack when Nejat and Yeter are returning home and when they are having dinner on the porch—Nejat's kind and soft nature generates moments of personal confessions by Yeter about her life, her longings and sadness about her daughter. I return to these moments later for the ways they reveal Yeter's complex identity, but for now I want to bring them up in the context of Nejat's character as a genuinely caring person—not only in his interactions with Yeter but with other characters as well.

In order to explore Akin's portrayal of Turkish-German male identity in various roles and what this shows, I will briefly trace the evolution over three decades in the production of a special figure—an “icon” as Tom Cheesman names it—by the representations of the Turkish male figure “Ali” in Turkish-German literature and film. Cheesman explains that especially in the early years, “Ali” was a figure whose

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<sup>242</sup> The audience does not know for sure if Nejat really lives with Ali but we never see Nejat in an apartment of his own; he goes to his father's apartment after the university and stays there. He might as well be periodically visiting his father. The portrayals at Ali's house though show how close the two men are.

subjectivity is underrepresented by repetition and his objectification in German society, creating a character suffering “from a multiply compounded lack of cultural, social and economic resources.”<sup>243</sup> The most iconic representation by a Turkish-origin author, Aras Ören’s first Ali figure, “Ali Itir,” not only represents quintessential victimhood but also non-subjectivity. Ali Itir becomes a “non-person” as his last words “What can you do in this Germany, when they kick your personality to bits” indicate.<sup>244</sup> Yet Ali not only returns in Ören’s own narratives, but he returns in many forms, repeatedly, in Turkish-German narratives of film and literature to this day.

Among contemporary attempts to challenge the victimhood of “the iconic Ali figure” exist the creation of figures called Ali “who defy the Ali stereotype,” as in Özdamar,<sup>245</sup> representations by non-Turkish origin authors whose creations of figures with other proper names for the “Ali figure” question received images,<sup>246</sup> announcements of “the death of Ali, both as subject and as object” in Zaimoğlu, creation of “a megalomaniac Ali” proclaiming symbolic power against “Germany for the Germans” in Senocak, and a division of Ali as object and as subject in Ören’s recent writing.<sup>247</sup> How successful are the differing ways of coping with the mega-stereotype or the epitome of

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<sup>243</sup> Tom Cheesman, *Novels of Turkish German Settlement. Cosmopolite Fictions*, 245.

<sup>244</sup> Aras Ören, *Bitte nix Polizei*, 112

<sup>245</sup> The alternative Ali in Özdamar’s novel *Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei* is a “complex, sensitive character who takes a transnational path to higher education, not menial labor.” In Cheesman, 146.

<sup>246</sup> Selim in Sten Nadolny’s novel is a figure that challenges the narrativization of the Ali figure as the “epitome of non-cosmopolitan victimhood”; instead Selim’s character comes quite close to the cosmopolitan identity Tom Cheesman (in *Novels of Turkish Settlement*) and Venkat Mani (in *Cosmopolitan Claims*) have been charting for the migrant characters of recent Turkish German literature—except that it would be open to debate whether Selim’s nationalistic Turkish pride would allow him to live as a true cosmopolitan in Europe.

<sup>247</sup> Tom Cheesman, *Novels of Turkish German Settlement. Cosmopolite Fictions*, 146-173.

“Ali”—not only as the figure of victimhood but also in its birth of newer forms, as the power holder, or power ridden maniac?

While trying to challenge and/or defy the Ali figure by re-writing and re-representing forms of Ali, what these different literatures have achieved is a figure born of, and related with, things Turkish and German, and a figure sometimes equalized with “Turkish-Germaness,” and other times ranging from Turkish to German to any other figure like Zaimoğlu’s ‘Kanake.’ Ali is no longer the victim or the object but rather a mysterious figure with many extensions. Is he Turkish? Is he first generation Turk? Is he German and Turk? In other words, as significant as overhauling the once universalized vision and imagination of the objectified Ali, these diverse representations have revealed Ali to be a composite figure and have broken down the myth of an original and authentic Ali. In fact, the contemporary works, by creating a diversified Ali figure, reveal this figure as signifying more than the first generation of migrants.

While “Ali” is a construction and no male figure would truly qualify as Ali, the above trajectory about this figure’s utilization in conveying Turkish-German identities is relevant to Akin’s films which contribute to the discursive making of Ali by illustrating diverse creations of Ali’ness. What do the Ali figures in *The Edge of Heaven* convey about this once universalized figure as well as Turkish-Germaness? First, although the father is from the first generation, his representation breaks away from the original image of a personhood in clash with the German dominant culture. Nejat’s father Ali goes to German horse races, drinks at a German sports bar with the locals instead of at a Turkish café, talks both Turkish and German; in other words, he is assimilated, living at ease with

two languages and with both Turkish and German cultural realms.<sup>248</sup> While Akin's Ali in this sense represents an evolved picture, his heavy drinking, his jealousy, and his anger that lead to his murder of Yeter downplay his positive image. After spending time in prison in Germany though, we see him return to Turkey. He has the book Nejat had lent him and is reading it. He goes out to the sea for fishing; he has a life again. Akin allows him to cross a threshold, become a new person, and not merely disappear and vanish as would have been the case in the former representations of first-generation migrants.

*Germany in Transit* acknowledges that “second generation immigrants like Akin have established affiliations across ethnicities that have transformed the image of what and who is German.”<sup>249</sup> In this sense, Germanness is no longer an exclusionary category to Turkishness. In other words, being German does not necessitate German ancestors and blood ties. Not only Akin but his characters also confirm this new and transformed Germanness—especially in the characterizations of both Cahit and Nejat. There are two considerations necessary to the above insightful reflection on the transformation of Germanness by Akin’s second generation characters. First, although Cahit and Nejat are certainly Germans, they are also more than Germans, with Turkish linguistic and cultural affiliations. On the one hand, it may seem more accurate to identify them as German Turks primarily because they are born in Germany—unlike the father character Ali, born in Turkey. But since this would mean yet another category—also by no means originally set and definitive—instead of applying another term, I find it proper to acknowledge the

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<sup>248</sup> This idea is the same one I introduced in my introduction about Zafer Şenocak’s explanation of his own situation—as an assimilated Turkish-German with German citizenship—to comprise an existence of living in two languages and two bodies: Turkish and German.

<sup>249</sup> *Germany In Transit. Nation and Migration*, Eds. Deniz Göktürk, David Gramling, Anton Kaes. U. of California, Berkeley. 2007, p. 15.

individual differences among characters of Turkish heritage while using the term Turkish-German for them.

Second, as I have already mentioned, while Ali's characterization starkly differs from Nejat's, Nejat's differences from Cahit's characterization in *Head-On* enable us to approach performances of Turkish-German identities apart from the lens of generations. In so far as personalities are concerned, Cahit is more like the father Ali than his generational partner Nejat. Hence, while Akin's hybrid characters and their performances of multiple identity affiliations and roles challenge what constitute Germanness, they also pose a challenge to homogenized views of Turkish-Germanness.<sup>250</sup> The two films and the portrayal of their male characters, and specifically, of Cahit and Nejat, illustrate that "Turkish-Germanness" or as I have explicated above, Turkish-Germanness among second generations is also varied. Through various and diverse performances, what Akin's characters reveal is the non-existence of an authentic or original Turkish-German identity.

If the figure "Ali" is a discursive product born of things—cultural, social, political, ethnic—involving Turkish and German identities, characterizations of Ali, Nejat, and Cahit reveal this subject in terms of Turkishness, Germanness, and both, as well as in certain scenes what Randall Halle names "more than either"—more than Turkish and/or more than German.<sup>251</sup> The "more" in Halle's formulation exclusively takes the shape of performance in Akin's *Head-On*. The portrayals of Cahit and Sibel reveal how depending on their circumstances, they engage in *roles* of Turkishness or

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<sup>250</sup> Akin's films themselves, in their visual optics and lingual stylistics already achieve a destabilization of "German national cinema as well.

<sup>251</sup> Halle, *German Film After Germany*, University of Illinois Press, 2008, p.167.

Germanness while the spectator can see that they are more than the role that they take on. The most dominant example of this is Cahit's role of playing Turkishness at Sibel's parents' house and at the wedding. In contrast, *The Edge of Heaven* highlights the complexity of its characters' identities as well as their changes by also generating the *more* at the intersections of identities that are construed crisscrossing and/or familial. The only exception to this is Yeter's identity, portrayed through both performance and role-taking and her natural familial role.

I have already discussed how Akin's picture of the "Ali" in the father character does not destroy the subject of Ali and instead enlivens him and his life in Turkey. What about the "Ali" figure conveyed through its variation in Nejat? What does his characterization reveal about his identity as both Turkish and German—and more? Before his decision to go to Turkey, we see Nejat as a German professor lecturing on Goethe, cooking with his father and drinking Raki, talking in both languages, as a melancholic wanderer on the train to Hamburg, and at his office in the middle of books eating the "börek" Yeter gave him. Like his father, he is at ease living in the realms of two languages and cultures—of Turkish and German. Nevertheless, Nejat's characterization, particularly his profession and his perfect German—the language he usually speaks except when the others speak to him in Turkish—portray him more as German.

It is particularly important to explicate Nejat's relocation in Turkey. While Yeter's death originates Nejat's journey to Turkey, he decides to move to Istanbul after his decision to buy a German bookstore from a German man who has owned it for ten years. The scene of their exchange at the bookstore, a transitional space where

trajectories are exchanged, creates another crisscross, revealing similarities between the owner and Nejat. This exchange and particularly the space of the bookstore are important to look at for the crisscross motif and Nejat's characterization in the film. The scene begins with Nejat's entry to the bookstore after seeing the for-sale sign outside the window. The distinct classical German music immediately sets the location as German. As Nejat walks beside the aisles of books, with each step and breath looking more overwhelmed that he has found such a place, while turning a corner, he greets a man in German. The owner seems exhilarated to have been greeted in German. After looking a little while longer in fascination, Nejat initiates a conversation with Markus Müller by asking him if he owns the store. After his compliment about the store, and Markus' invitation for tea, in their ensuing conversation, Markus says that after ten years, all of a sudden, he is homesick for Germany, especially the language. Nejat answers that he understands. Is Nejat homesick for Turkish? What does his understanding imply? Because Turkey is not a home to Nejat and rather a place of discovery, there is a subtle difference between him and Markus as the rest of the conversation between them also reveals.

When Nejat asks about the price for the store, Markus asks about Nejat's profession and when Nejat says that he is a professor of German, Markus is ever more exhilarated and replies how funny and fitting this exchange would be: '*a Turkish* professor of German lands in Turkey at a German bookstore.' In the reverse shot, Nejat is seen contemplating for an instant, pausing before answering "Maybe." While Markus's naïve and simple statement associates Nejat with the category of Turkishness, at the same time, it points out an interconnecting point on their crisscrossed paths. They both want to

dislocate from where they are and the space of the bookstore allows them to do this. On the other hand, Markus sees an exact connection, a perfectly fitting intersection in their rather similar situation: Markus as a German returns back home to Germany because he is homesick and misses his native language, and it would be fitting for the Turkish professor to land in Turkey. But, as Nejat's somewhat surprised look and answer illustrate, there is a subtle difference in their scenarios. Nejat is not from Turkey, but rather has strong familial and linguistic ties with the country. And, precisely for this reason, the uneven exchange with Markus is important—for its generation of an introspective moment about Nejat's identity between Turkish and German cultural realms.

In the bookstore, the scene with German music, books and the excitement we see in Nejat delivers his performance as a German, but all of a sudden, one definitive remark about his identity foregrounds his Turkishness. Nejat's ambiguous answer illustrates that he has not thought of himself this way before: as a “Turkish” professor of German. He is not upset; his look is puzzled. His answer “maybe” to the reflection that it is fitting for a Turkish professor of German to move to Turkey partially agrees with Markus' idea while his facial expression of puzzlement leaves open for contemplation—and also for the audience—not so much about the properness of the scenario as much as the subtle nuance in Markus' remark. Nejat certainly knows he is Turkish, but the remark, a *Turkish* professor of German in the way it is expressed, makes Nejat more than before—enabling him to think of his Turkishness in a different way.

Nejat's dislocation from Germany and his relocation in Turkey, like Cahit and Sibel's journeys, is not a return to a homeland, but rather a discovery and a new

beginning. In fact, his journey and stay in Turkey can be seen to represent his explorations around his identity comprising Turkishness. For instance, the following sequence of Nejat's drive on the open road after his talk with Markus, in view of Markus' remark and Nejat's contemplation, shows an exploration of his identity via the open landscape. After Nejat decides that he will stay, a long scene, a scenic long take, similar to the one at the end of the film, but of longer duration, shows Nejat driving on a winding road—with Turkish instrumental music, and a wide open road without an end alongside the mountains and the day turning to night.

We do not know where Nejat is and where he is going. This is a significant transitional scene of open spatio-temporality as Naficy defines the open form with its “mise-en-scene that favors external locations and open settings and landscapes, bright natural lighting, and mobile and wandering diegetic characters.”<sup>252</sup> The visual openness in which we see Nejat situated—with an expression of contentment—along with the introspective sounding instrumental music symbolize the transition and the newness in Nejat's life. The scene symbolizes Nejat's journey and relocation in Turkey—a driving through, a new beginning. The scene's representation of Nejat's mobility and contentment speaks for a second-generation Turkish-German person's ease at leaving Germany and beginning a new life in Turkey. The scene of a drive on an open road without a beginning and end destination symbolizes Nejat's willingness to take his journey to Turkey and his relocation there as an open road—a symbolic sign, I would venture to say, for the openness of his identity. In this scene, similar to Cahit's characterization in *Head-On*, Akin represents Nejat's “Turkish-German” identity in and

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<sup>252</sup> Naficy, *Accented Cinema*, 153.

through “a performance of identity”—in terms of a “process of becoming,” thereby revealing Turkish-German identity in its openness and constructed nature.

As in *Head-On*, Akin represents yet another *newer* form of relationship—between a second generation Turkish-German person and Turkey. It is important to note that although this relationship is new in the sense that it is not a return, it is nevertheless not without nostalgia. Or rather, Akin colors it nostalgic. Although this is not the same sort of ‘homesickness’ about which Markus speaks, Nejat’s drive to find his father at the end of the film delivers a nostalgic feeling of returning to a new place. A similar road trip by Nejat shows the audience where Ali comes from. The beautiful green and lush rolling hills at the edge of the Black Sea, Nejat’s drive on the open road, the Turkish music all along, his talk with a farming woman on land almost exotically represent Ali’s native home. How can we interpret the effect of longing or, as Naficy names it, the nostalgic and fetishistic effect revealed through the picturesque shots of Turkey’s natural landscape and mountains, which fulfill the category of the openness of homeland films which “emphasize boundlessness and timelessness”?<sup>253</sup> Since we do not even see Ali, the longing is not his. I suggest that the effect of longing created through Nejat’s trip belongs partially to Nejat—yet extended to and shared with the audience.

Thus, Ali’s journey back to Turkey, a homecoming journey, takes on a completely new level and meaning; this traverses the original homecoming journey narratives whereby we do not see Ali’s return to the beautiful landscape; we do not see his joy of arriving his home village; we only see him when he crosses the border at the airport. Only through Nejat and our journey with him, we now see where Ali comes from.

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<sup>253</sup> The longing effect the scenery creates is what Naficy calls an effect of ‘fernweh,’ or the longing to escape the homeland for another place. *Accented Cinema*, 228.

What I am pointing out is the skillful reversal of Ali's homecoming, his "return journey" to his village in the Black Sea to a journey of discovery and new experience for both Nejat and the audience. However, the scene slightly differs from the scene which I discussed earlier with regard to Nejat's performance of an open identity. Although the end scene also does not close off Nejat's identity or make him a closed character, and rather symbolizes a metaphorical threshold in the sense that Nejat chooses to find his father and goes back to his father's village to do this, here his performance of "homecoming"—as secondary to the aspect of a familial reconciliation—transcends a performance of his open identity.

In the three scenes that I have explicated with regard to Nejat's identity, we see his identity in fluid transitions between Turkishness and Germanness. First, at the bookstore—at the intersection with Markus—we witness how his German identity is construed as more than German—in terms of Turkishness. Second, on the open road, we see him welcome and perform his open identity as an adventure, a discovery and a beginning, and third, during his trip to find his father and his wait at the sea, we see his joyful arrival to his father's home and thus to Nejat's ancestral origins, to Turkishness, construed as part of a familial reconciliation. These scenes along with his overall characterization in the film, while exposing the ways in which Nejat moves easily between Turkishness and Germanness, portray his identity unbounded by these cultural categories, displaying his identity as transitional and open.

The portrayal of Yeter, a first generation Turkish-German woman, also undermines an essential and authentic form of Turkish-Germaness. Particularly, Yeter's portrayal overhauls the stereotypes associated with the closed and victimized Turkish-

German female figure. However, similar to Sibel's portrayal in *Head-On*, scenes of constraint and confinement on Yeter illustrate how differences of gender subdue her identity's openness, conveying simultaneously what she is not and does not believe in. After the first scene in which the spectator meets Yeter as a prostitute with blonde hair, we next see her getting on a bus. She has brown hair and looks quite different in her daily clothes. Two men sit next to Yeter and greet her with "selamunaleyküm." Yeter looks at both of their faces and says "nix verstehen." The camera focuses on one man, sitting right next to Yeter who tells her not to lie and that they have heard her speak Turkish. They ask her if she is ashamed of her Turkishness. As the camera moves to Yeter who is looking out the window, the man's words "you are both Turkish and Muslim" are heard. Upon asking her if she understands, Yeter finally answers in Turkish that she is not deaf. The camera brings the other man in focus who says not to be funny. As the camera moves back again to the first man telling her to repent because she is on the wrong path, the second man's voice is heard, repeating the same word: "repent." The shots keep going back and forth between the men who threaten her; the first one says that she should not let them see her again around the area, and the second one continues that this would be a shame for her.

During the reversal of shots between the two men and their threatening voices, Yeter in this scene seems powerless except in the shot that gives her the ability to mock the men by simply looking out the window and then saying she is not deaf. When the men get off the bus, the first man says the Islamic form of greeting again; as he gets off and there is still no move or answer from Yeter, when the second one also gets up to leave and says the greeting while looking intently at Yeter, she feels forced to reply back,

and says “aleykümesselam.” In the last close-up, while she shakes her head, she once again looks outside, with tears in her eyes. Yeter is Turkish and she speaks Turkish comfortably with Ali as well as later with Nejat. In fact, she has no problem with her Turkishness; however, her position as a prostitute causes a problem to the presumptions of the two Turkish men who define Yeter not only as Turkish but also Muslim.

These men take on the right to define Yeter’s identity for her with the presupposed norms of a Turkish identity equated with Islam. Their act in so far as they also perform a strict male, macho, fundamentalist Islamic identity role, validates its power by the very act of telling the Turkish Muslim woman who she is and how she should behave herself. Their characterization is significant particularly because they convey yet another type of “Ali”—as the fundamentalist oppressor of women. Although their inclusion in the film enacts the very power which the Islamic Turkish men hold and wish to exorcise, the scene by no means gives authority to this power. Instead, the scene ending with a close-up of Yeter and showing her emotions forms affection and sympathy with her—while at the same time having exposed the patriarchal structure’s impositions on her critically.

The scene portraying Sibel’s patriarchal family’s pressures on her and the confinements on her identity shows how she obeys the power structure by speechlessness and motionlessness. Yeter, in contrast, has to perform in adherence to the confinements of an Islamic Turkish identity, to the power structure the two men represent, by first speaking in Turkish and then using a word “selamunaleyküm” which symbolically validates the Turkish-Muslim identity imposed upon Yeter. The scene powerfully conveys how Yeter takes on this identity, certainly involuntarily, as a performative act,

thereby, illustrating how “the cultural conventions which essentially signify bodies,” for instance, the Turkish-Muslim greeting as a convention that symbolizes the Turkish-Muslim self, pre-exist the embodied selves, not vice versa.<sup>254</sup> On the one hand, the scenes of Sibel’s and Yeter’s performances enact and leave intact a representation of Turkishness affiliated with a patriarchal and Islamic power structure, and portray the characters’ in-between situations. On the other hand, both scenes enable the audience to sympathize with Yeter and Sibel, by revealing their performances as “positioning,” and as part of the identity processes of “becoming.”<sup>255</sup> Further, despite their performative acts of submission, their wide range of identity roles transgress fulfilling a predetermined, authentic, and homogeneous Turkish or Turkish-German identity.

At first, Yeter’s roles portray her identity as shaped as a “performance”—roles enforced by her gender and Turkishness. She is a tough prostitute; then, upon enforcement from the two Turkish males, she has to act as an Islamic-Turkish woman. In order to escape their threats, she enters a relation of convenience with Ali. However, after she begins to live with Ali and particularly in her interactions with Nejat, we also see her play her role as a mother, a natural side of her identity. Her performances in her interactions with Nejat reveal her identity in terms of a generationally re-configured relationship in which she trusts. Hence, Akin portrays her in a generational role, specifically a motherly role that is natural to her.

For instance, in a scene that shows Yeter and Nejat on the bus, we see them talking about Yeter’s life. They are seated in exactly the same position as in the scene

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<sup>254</sup> Judith Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution,” *Theater Journal*, 526.

with the two men. However, the framing differs in this scene; both Nejat and Yeter are included in the frame as they talk, giving a sense that despite the uncomfortable topic and their differing lives, they are equal. Nejat asks in German if Yeter has any children and upon the answer that she has a daughter, he asks whether she knows what Yeter does for a living. Yeter says that she told her daughter she worked at a shoe store. After a little while, Yeter says in Turkish that she did not want her daughter to be like herself; she wanted her daughter to have a good education and be someone educated, like Nejat, and for her daughter, she would do anything.

In another scene, when Nejat waters his father's tomatoes and Yeter asks him to pick one, Nejat says that they should take one to his father. How happy he would be, Nejat says, but after her first bite, Yeter begins to cry. She confides in Nejat that she cannot reach her daughter and she misses her so much. The scene ends with Yeter crying on the shoulders of Nejat. In another scene, she cooks börek and serves it to Ali; when he refuses to eat it, she gives it to Nejat on his way to work. At first, how Yeter serves the börek to Ali shows her as a traditional woman, but when he refuses to eat it, she swears it off and goes her way. She then turns to Nejat and, like a mother, gives him the börek. These various performances portray Yeter in diverse roles—from a tough prostitute to a forced Islamic-Turkish femaleness and fragility; from a suffering mother to an independent woman when she refuses Ali's statement that he owns her.

The multiple roles in which Akin portrays his characters leave open room for differences between his characters' identities to be seen. While acknowledging hybridity

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<sup>255</sup> I am using this in the same way as Stuart Hall and Naficy explain and which I have already explicated in my discussion of *Head-On*—identities fluctuating fluidly and always in the process of becoming instead of as fixed points of being.

as a useful concept corresponding to a cultural condition, challenging “the homogenization and essentialization of cultural identity” and as a challenge against “the cultural claims of the centers of power,”<sup>256</sup> Arif Dirlik cautions against losing context because of an abstract form of hybridity that risks blurring “significant distinctions between different differences.”<sup>257</sup> These differences range from class, ethnicity and race to gender. While showing hybridity as identity in and through performance, Akin’s films enable him to contextualize his characters with regard to their specific differences. I have previously explicated how, for instance, Akin’s characterization of Cahit and Sibel portrays the varying roles of their Turkish heritage in their hybrid identities —in Sibel’s identity, her ethnic background plays a larger role in defining her, while in Cahit it is to a much lesser degree. We have seen a similar portrayal of Yeter as well, whereby Akin conveys not only ethnic affiliation but also differences between genders as influential to her hybridity and her multiple identity roles.

Akin’s hybrid characters are not abstractly hybrid and they are not all hybrid in the same way. By showing how gender and ethnic differences come into play for male and female subjects, the films pose Turkish-German identity and hybridity from more complex and contextual grounds than a mere combination of Turkish and German cultures. Therefore, Akin does not erase the play of differences stemming from gender in Turkish-German contexts along with effects of constraints on the female subject through the conventions of the ethnic “Turkish” family or ethnic heritage. For instance, Yeter’s complex identity is predicated on her differences as a *woman* of *Turkish* ethnicity. On the

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<sup>256</sup>Arif Dirlik, “Bringing History Back In.” Of Diasporas, Hybridities, Places and Histories, Beyond Dichotomies. Ed. Elisabeth Mudimbe-Boyi. (pp 93- 127), 103-104

<sup>257</sup>Ibid.,106.

other hand, as Sibel's transgressions and Yeter's diverse roles illustrate, Akin lets his female characters rise above the limitations of gender and ethnic impositions by portraying them in various differing identity roles and transgressive performances.

Therefore, while Akin portrays the difficulties and complications of differences, his portrayals invoke transgressions of differences—cultural, ethnic, national, as well as political affiliations. The next set of relations taking place in Germany between Ayten and Lotte, and Ayten and Susanne reveal the ways in which the film complicates questions of national and cultural identity. In addition, the following section will reveal how Akin poses a critical look at Turkish political questions not in isolation but rather from a European dimension, which supersedes a Turkish and German binary about the problems at stake.

Ayten-Lotte-Susanne:

Ayten is a terrorist group member and a political activist, fighting against the Turkish government's exclusion of minorities because of their ethnic and religious differences, deprivation of human rights, and globalization. After the arrest of her political group's members in Istanbul, in fear of persecution, Ayten escapes to Germany and hopes to find her mother. With her arrival in Germany—a foreign place to Ayten who neither speaks the language nor is legally allowed to reside—Ayten crosses several thresholds, generating experiences of “Scheidezone” and “Übergang,” and moments of inclusion and exclusion.<sup>258</sup> These threshold instances are important for portraying Ayten in constant movement and crossings, meanwhile conveying her shifting identity. First,

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<sup>258</sup>Waldenfels explicates that crossing a threshold, like the entry to a house, and entering a foreign territory are alike, generating moments of inclusion and exclusion in both cases."In "Schwellenerfahrung und Grenzziehung," 155.

Ayten has to change her name, a rather important event in the film that prevents Nejat from learning her real identity during Lotte and Nejat's encounter. With her arrival in Germany under a new name, Ayten literally attains a new identity, and becomes not only an illegal refugee, but soon after her fight with the group of Turkish people with whom she stays, she also becomes homeless.

In a scene that shows Ayten at the university where she seeks shelter, the spectator first sees her at a back row sleeping during one of Nejat's lectures. The shot then moves to Nejat who explices a poem, which appears to be by Goethe, and the scene ends with him reading the lines "who wants to see a rose bloom in the depths of winter...everything to its own time.... only a fool would want this untimely intoxication"; "secondly, I am opposed to revolutions, for they destroy as many good old things as they create good new ones." This scene is significant because of the specific lines Nejat reads and how they pertain to Ayten's story. While the lines read by Nejat, who wants to help Ayten by supporting her education, speak against revolutions, in her image of homelessness, the spectator can see one of the consequences of the useless revolution which Ayten supports. In other words, the analogy with the untimely blooming of a rose and revolutions is analogical to Ayten's own situation. Ironically, Ayten's new name in Germany is *Gül Korkmaz*: Rose Unafrid. With her first new name "rose" and her last name "unafrid," she represents a revolution; however, we see how she has not only left her education, but now as a refugee, she is also unable to create anything good.

Akin's picture of Ayten in this scene, as the scene with Susanne will also show, creates empathy for the homeless position which a young political refugee with good intentions endures, and at the same time disengages identification with her fight. The

audience senses that Akin does not agree with her fight, and instead uses Ayten's story to pose a criticism of the problems and of the Turkish government against which Ayten fights, while conveying the implications of these problems beyond Turkish borders. Particularly, the film's extension of Ayten's political fight into the lives of Lotte and Susanne situates the political issues at stake from the lens of international dynamics. While doing so, as my analyses below will illustrate, Akin portrays how Lotte and Susanne's identities transfigure beyond the boundaries of their German nationalities.

At first, Lotte explains her friendly gestures of buying food for Ayten, bringing her to her mother's home and giving her clothes in terms of her national identity. When Susanne confronts Lotte about Ayten's arrival to their house, Lotte explains her action as exactly German; she reasons that they have to help Ayten because she is illegal and was persecuted in her own country. While helping Ayten seems like a performative act that Lotte takes on to define her German identity, her mother's reply that Ayten should then apply for asylum illustrates their differing conceptions of Germanness. However, Lotte's reason is suspicious, and plausibly wants to please Susanne and have her approval by way of explaining her hospitality as German. The fact that Lotte falls in love with Ayten proves her attempts to help Ayten in terms of Lotte's emotional investment in Ayten. While she is in Istanbul trying to help Ayten in prison, she tells her mother over the phone that her life has a meaning for the first time. However, Lotte dies in her attempt to help Ayten retrieve the gun which the latter had hid on a building's rooftop.

Ayten wants the gun because the other women in prison pressure her about it; Ayten says Lotte is neutral and someone will come and take it from her. Yet after Lotte retrieves the gun, street kids steal her purse. After a long chase, when Lotte catches the

kids, one of them shoots and kills her on the spot. The scene almost repeats the original scene in which Ayten hides the gun. Lotte goes up the same stairs and asks the same woman to open the door. The woman even responds with a similar gesture, and next, we see Lotte up on the roof where Ayten was. This scene is significant for paralleling exactly the first scene and substituting the Turkish character with a German one. Lotte is unaware of what she is doing; however, Akin's substitution of a German woman in the same scenario explicitly twists her neutrality in an ironic way.

We know that Ayten is involved with a Kurdish group and can only guess that it could be the PKK because of the placards with the name of the group's leader, Öcalan, at the demonstration in Istanbul. Given the fact of a large transnational Kurdish network in Germany, and the protests and fights that took place in Germany during Öcalan's arrest in 1998, Germany and Germans have not been able to stay neutral to Turkish and Kurdish problems.<sup>259</sup> In fact, Akin's film reveals how these problems become entangled on a micro and individual level, and how they have unpredictable spillover effects both beyond Turkey and the confines of a group's particular fight. Although Lotte is neutral in the sense that she does not know what she is doing, her innocent involvement with the issue—by just retrieving the gun—leads to her murder, and paradoxically, not by terrorists but street kids whom she has to chase. The scenes of policemen chasing Ayten and their arrest of Ayten's group members, and Lotte's chase of street kids, who kill her without any purpose, powerfully expose the political and social problems in Turkey. The film's scenes in Turkey are very important for the messages they convey to the audience

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<sup>259</sup> For more detailed explication of the Kurdish-Turkish dynamics in Germany see "The transnational mobilization of Ethnic conflict. Kurdish Separatism in Germany," Alynnna J. Lyon. <http://www2.edu/~fredr/kurds.htm>. The article includes facts about violence between not only Turks and

about a Turkish nation which for two decades has been declaring its readiness and its right to enter the European Union. These political problems and the question of European Union membership become transparent in the next episode between Ayten and Susanne. However, while letting Ayten's voice articulate the Turkish political problems, at the same time, Akin portrays how her approach is ideologically manipulated.

In a long take we see Ayten entering the kitchen where Susanne sits at a table preparing cherries for a cake. Upon her entry, Ayten greets Susanne with a 'Guten Morgen,' the only German phrase she uses, but without looking at Ayten, Susanne says that it is already noon, and that Ayten should not smoke on an empty stomach. Although Ayten has not even asked for permission to smoke in Susanne's kitchen, as she turns to prepare her coffee, she simply says, it is okay—implying it is okay that she smokes on an empty stomach. Next, as Ayten's back is turned to Susanne, and we can see both in the frame, Susanne asks Ayten about her political status, to which, without turning around, Ayten replies that she is a member of a political resistance group. In a frame that includes both, we see Susanne's face slightly turn away from the cherries, as she doubtfully asks what exactly Ayten fights for. As Ayten replies that she fights for freedom of speech, human rights, and education for everyone, she ends up turning more fully toward Susanne and explains that in Turkey only people with money can get education.<sup>260</sup>

For the first time, Susanne looks up from the cherries and, facing Ayten, says that maybe things will get better when Turkey joins the EU. Ayten moves toward the kitchen table where Susanne is sitting; she seats herself at the table while declaring her mistrust

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Kurds but also between different Kurdish organizations, as well as instances of Kurdish attacks on German police officers through the 1990's.

in the EU. She talks about how the EU is led by colonizing countries and lists Germany as one of them. As the shot reverses to Susanne who is still occupied with the cherries, we see from her expression that she does not agree with Ayten; as a smirk appears on her face, the shot reverses to Ayten saying that they fight against globalization.<sup>261</sup>

Ayten's use of the collective *we* while she is talking about her beliefs conveys how her political identity is predicated on her adherence to a group identity and its conventions. Her strong way of expressing herself illustrates how seriously she identifies with the group and their ideologies. In a sense, by defending her ideals, Ayten performs her identity. Her political orientation serves as a difference, like ethnic affiliation and ethnic conventions, by which identity can be defined and performed. For instance, when Lotte offers Ayten some of her clothes, Ayten's refusal of a sweater by saying that they do not wear American brands reveals not only her own preference but how this preference is closely linked to a particular identity—a partisan identity of anti-Americanism and anti-globalization. It is also important to note however that her betrayal of the group at the end illustrates her maturity and understanding of this group's fight's awful consequences.

Upon her angry remarks about her mistrust of the EU—the colonial powers, as she calls them—Susanne then says that maybe Ayten is just a person who likes to fight, and for an instant looks at Ayten as the reverse shot shows Ayten asking “Do you think I am crazy?” In another reverse shot, while Susanne momentarily looks at Ayten after this question, Ayten gets up fiercely and in a harsh tone continues to explain that one has to

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<sup>260</sup> The conversation between Susanne and Ayten takes place in English in a fitting manner to how Akin portrays the issues at stake through an international lens.

<sup>261</sup> Ayten implies the political group with which she is affiliated with her use of the “*we*.”

fight if a country kills its people because of looking or thinking different and wanting freedom. In another reverse shot, we see Susanne stopping; as she puts her hand on her cheek, for the first time she listens to Ayten for some duration. The shot moves back to Ayten who continues to explain that they protest to have work, energy and schools. When the reverse shot comes back to Susanne still facing Ayten, this time with an exclamatory hand gesture, she repeats her exact words as before, “Maybe, things will get better when you join the EU.” Susanne’s expressions in these shots show that she is not in agreement with Ayten despite her willingness to listen to her.

The dialogue at Susanne’s house ends with Ayten swearing at the European Union. She says “Fuck the EU” as she walks away from the table. We see Susanne looking at the cherries, and with her face down, momentarily looking sideways, she says to Ayten that she does not want her to talk like that in her house, and that Ayten can talk like that at her own house. Then, with her face looking up, Susanne asks, “OK?” While awaiting a response, we see her looking back sideways toward Ayten. Ironically, in the beginning of the interaction, Ayten had used the word “okay” to approve of her own actions with which Susanne seemed to disagree. But now, as the shot reverses to Ayten’s astonished face, she says ‘okay’ while taking a step back. As she walks out of the kitchen and is out of the frame, Susanne is in a focus shot showing relief with a sigh. Despite her brief entry into a ‘home’ life at Susanne’s house, after the dispute with Susanne, Ayten feels forced to leave—not because of her race or ethnicity but rather because of her own realization that she cannot stay there with her drastic opinions and manners. Hence,

Ayten crosses another threshold by leaving the house; after her departure, she becomes homeless and illegal.<sup>262</sup>

The interaction between Susanne and Ayten which ends with Susanne's words, and with which Ayten has to agree, significantly draws borders and boundaries relevant to the larger context of the two characters' argument. First, the interaction between Ayten and Susanne conveys an irony in that, while the hope of Turkey's entry to the EU comes from a German character looking at this as a possibility and a solution to the problems against which Ayten fights, the Turkish character is suspicious of this hopeful picture. The general public opinion on the issue of Turkey's possible admission to the EU in the last ten or more years follows an opposite trajectory, whereby the Turks want entry to the EU while they blame Germany and other nations for preventing Turkey's admission. Susanne's portrayal overturns this scenario by showing her hopeful vision about Turkey's entry to the EU. In this sense, the film presents her identity as more open than Ayten, who naively equates colonization and globalization—conflating colonization and the European Union as well as globalization and Americanism. Susanne's repeated answer, using the exact same words as before, "Maybe things will get better when you join the EU," is apt and explicitly conveys to Ayten that the EU requires the same things from the government of Turkey for which Ayten is fighting. Susanne's hopeful sentence derives its logic from the fact that under the pressures of joining the EU, Turkey must change its unjust living rights and standards. Thus, things will have changed when

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<sup>262</sup> While her entry and inclusion to the house is part of crossing a threshold, as Waldenfels explicates leave taking from a foreign territory as also crossing a threshold, Ayten's departure indicates her crossing this threshold once again: "Schwelle meint zunächst die Haus oder Tempelschwelle, die wir überqueren, wenn wir den fremden Raum betreten, oder verlassen, wenn wir Einlaß finden oder uns wieder entfernen." Significantly, this implies a metaphorical threshold – in the sense that her identity is once again reconfigured; she becomes homeless.

Turkey enters the EU. Indeed, Susanne's remark resonates with on-going contemporary political adjustments Turkey has been undergoing under the pressure of European nations for the sake of entering the EU.<sup>263</sup>

The narrative validates Susanne's logic about changes to Turkey's policies through the course of events that lead to Ayten's arrest and her deportation from Germany. Ayten has escaped from Turkey due to feeling threatened but not having actually experienced persecution. When her asylum is rejected, she is told that she needs not fear political arrest or torture upon her return to Turkey because of Turkey's expectation to join the EU. However, she is arrested and this exposes Turkey's begrudging willingness to overhaul its policies. On the other hand, the depictions of Ayten's prison life are far from the torture and horror stories presumed about Turkish prisons. She plays volleyball with other women, reads books, and can have visitors. The threat or torture in fact comes from the women in her group of affiliation. Akin's portrayal of improved prison conditions as well as humane treatment of the prisoners illustrate that a major point of international criticism and one of the most striking drawbacks in Turkey—the standard of its prisons—have been evolving for the better.

The handling of Ayten's case that becomes international after Lotte's death also reveals how Turkey takes on a different identity because of having to prove itself to the international community in expectations of EU admission. While trying to gather information about Lotte's death, a Turkish detective responsible for the case tells Ayten that they do not care about her organization, rather they have an international crisis. He

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<sup>263</sup> In recent years, Turkey has been reforming its governmental policies on the rights of minorities, such as granting Kurds the right of speaking Kurdish and opening media channels to Kurds. Nevertheless, the identity which Turkey has been performing largely through imposition of European nations still raises questions as to its genuine nature.

explains that German ambassadors are forcing them to provide answers. Turkish officials are worried about how they will explain matters to European investigators. The way in which Ayten's interrogation is worded reveals how her case turns to be life threatening for Turkey at the point of the German government's involvement. The officials' treatment of Ayten's case much more intensively expose how the pressure from a European country immediately changes the treatment of Ayten's case.

Hence, the film's portrayal of Ayten's story and a German family's involvement in it are significant for several reasons. First, it conveys the vexed identity conflict and crisis of Turkey between the remnants of a nationalist identity, which both cause the problems Ayten fights against as well as causes the continuation of terrorist activities, and a transnational identity which membership to the European Union requires. In this sense, there seems almost an analogical stand between Susanne's house as a threshold for Ayten and Turkey's wait at the threshold of the European Union. Similar to Ayten's unacceptable gestures of smoking and swearing in Susanne's home, Turkey's unacceptable human rights standards cannot be tolerated by Europe; Turkey must adhere to the European nations' expectations and take on a more open identity than the nationalist one it has been performing. Second, while revealing that Turkey's problems cannot be contained within the country, the film shows that both the world of Turkey and the European world of which it claims to be a part, must work in cooperative ways for change to occur, even if this change occurs slowly and not necessarily due to Turkey's genuine and free will. In this sense, while exposing Ayten's case and Turkey's performance of a different identity in accordance with European expectations, the film reveals the country's identity in transition.

Thus the dispute between Susanne and Ayten is also significant for portraying each character's identity through their differing approach to the same issues. Ayten defines her identity by her political orientation—however not in association with Turkish national identity, rather as against the Turkish government. She transgresses the limitations of national identity but she is a closed character in the sense of her attachment to a political ideology and group. In contrast, Susanne represents a European identity that entails her Germanness and openness to Turkey's entry to the EU. Yet she differs from Lotte's identity, which is willing to completely open all borders to an illegal refugee. On the other hand, we eventually learn that, by Lotte's insistence, Susanne has paid Ayten's lawyer fees in Germany during the case of her deportation. However, the spectator witnesses her transgression of a German or European identity after Lotte's death and Susanne's arrival in Turkey to meet Ayten. Before looking at this—also in connection to Ayten and Nejat's transformations at the end—first, I take a close look at a scene that shows crisscrosses during the characters' paths, in which the characters are connected visually while they themselves are not aware of their connections themselves. While connecting characters from diverse backgrounds, this scene exposes the similarities and parallels in their experiences, as well as conveying the transitions and thresholds in their journeys. Then I take a look at the crisscrosses during the border scenes in terms of the effects they create.

Taking place in Germany after Yeter's death,<sup>264</sup> in a crisscrossing of paths, the scene shows us two pairs of characters. Lotte has left home and Susanne to help Ayten

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<sup>264</sup> The spectator has already seen that Nejat is buying a German bookstore in Istanbul, so maybe, Nejat is back in Germany before his relocation. This probably is the only explanation to this scene as well as another one that brings Ayten and Nejat together in Germany—without their actual meeting.

find her mother; Nejat has left his father and begun a new life with Yeter still on his mind. In a long take, first we see Ayten and Lotte driving in the car, and as they move forward, simultaneously, we see Nejat and Yeter on a bus. In a sense, the scene represents Yeter, after her death, accompanying Nejat as a ghost on his bus ride. This image proves the significance of Yeter to Nejat's story and life. They sit across from each other, both looking out the window; close ups show their sad face expressions. While Nejat's gaze out the window slightly faces toward Yeter, her look is directed toward Ayten in the car. Next, in the foreground, we see Ayten and Lotte, sitting side by side, each looking worried. Indeed, in yet another instant, in the next shot, Lotte is stopped by the police and Ayten is arrested.

The scene immediately brings to mind the scene with Yeter and Nejat on the bus when Yeter confided in Nejat what she does and expressed her wish that she wanted her daughter to be someone like Nejat. However, in this frame, we see Ayten as homeless and illegal, looking for her mother. Her company and support, the German character Lotte—against the will of her mother—helps the illegal refugee Ayten. Meanwhile the Turkish-German character Nejat—having disowned his father—and indebted to Yeter has the intention to fulfill Yeter's wish—to support Ayten's education. This scene is particularly significant because of the symbolic connection it creates between Lotte and Nejat by showing their destabilized lives and broken familial ties through their relationships with Ayten and Yeter. In a sense, they have chosen to become like Ayten—sort of “revolutionaries” against their current situations in their lives. While Ayten is literally homeless, the other two chose homelessness by breaking away from their relations with their homes and parents. In fact, the scene brings together three characters,

a German, a Turkish-German, and a Turkish character, of the younger generation and around the same age, somewhere around Bremen in Germany, and as separated from their parental relations—in a mobile state of transition.<sup>265</sup>

With regards to the characters' transitions and their likenesses, it is important to look briefly at the crisscrosses during the border scenes for the similar effects they create to the above scene. Susanne's arrival in Istanbul takes place after a shot of Lotte's coffin boarding the plane for Germany. Immediately after, we see another shot with Susanne's suitcases coming out on the other side—in Istanbul. Susanne has arrived. The scene of exchange of places parallels the beginning of the film, when Yeter's coffin boarded the plane for Turkey while Ayten crossed the border to Germany. Although the coffins go in the direction of the characters' origins, the loved ones of the deceased go in the other direction, generating an uneasy and exciting effect—intensified by the instrumental upbeat music, suggesting action. Deniz Göktürk, explaining the need “for broadening our perspective beyond national boundaries for traffic in both directions” suggests “shifts and transitions between Turkisness and Germanness, mutual mimicry, performance, masquerade and humor” as possible tactics by which to achieve a divergent aesthetics from the earlier films of “cinema of duty” and a paradigm of victimization.<sup>266</sup> I have already illustrated how Akin's *The Edge of Heaven*, achieves shifts and transitions between Turkishness and Germanness with regard to Ali, Yeter, and Nejat's characters.

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<sup>265</sup> Moreover, this is the only scene in the film that brings Ayten and Yeter together. Yeter's sad face looking out the window faces the direction of her daughter's sad face. The scene momentarily and metaphorically connects the mother and daughter—despite their real separation and sadness.

<sup>266</sup> “Turkish Delight, German Fright: Unsettling Oppositions in Transnational Cinema”, In *Mapping the Margins*, ed. Karen Ross & Derman, pp. 177-192. p.188.

However, *The Edge of Heaven* represents at large a visual and narrative spectacle of shifts and transitions. Not only its opening flashback scene in Turkey cutting into Bremen, but a constant ‘shift’ between the two countries underscores the film visually, which the border scenes and coffins exemplify. While the border scenes visually signify the ‘traffic in both directions,’ the nature of *action* they generate unsettles a Turkish and German binary narratively as well. The first border scene and exchange of places, between Yeter’s coffin and Ayten, implicated action in terms of Ayten’s threshold experience of arrival to Germany, as well as generating the transition in Lotte’s life. At the same time, Yeter’s death brought about Nejat’s entry into a new life in Istanbul, leading to transitions between his German and Turkish identity. During this shift of places and consequential shift of relations, the film exposes the characters’ personal transitions and thresholds through their interconnections with one another. Next, I examine Susanne’s stay in Istanbul, which represents not only a transformation for her, but also for the other two characters, Nejat and Ayten. Specifically, relations between Susanne and Ayten, and finally between Susanne and Nejat, characterizes them as transcending fixed identities defined by national, political, and cultural attachments while portraying their parallels and similarities.

After her arrival in Istanbul, Susanne spends a terribly sad night at a hotel. We see her mourning Lotte in a scene shot completely in the closed form style, with very dark lighting, and a claustrophobic, depressing mood. After her meeting with Nejat the next morning, she spends the next night in Istanbul at her daughter’s room in Nejat’s apartment. In this scene, the room is very light; Susanne reads her daughter’s diaries. In contrast to her night before, the scene here creates introspective and retrospective moods

of the open form, infused by intense white light. Susanne reads that Lotte understands why her mom disapproves of her; she is too much like her mom. The diary reads that Susanne had travelled through Turkey to India in a spirit of freedom and looking for herself thirty years ago. Susanne's vision of Lotte's appearance in the room in bright light, as we see Susanne laying back, with a smile and surprise, looking at Lotte's smiling face, reveals a moment of resolution to Susanne's sadness. The shot showing her the next morning portrays a transformed image of her. Walking down the same street as Lotte has done during her stay at Nejat's apartment, we see Susanne striding by some men playing tavla at a café in a similar walk of ease to Lotte's; she greets them with a friendly hello as she strides by; her picture evokes a sense of lightness for the first time in the film. Her night in Lotte's room and this scene portrays a new Susanne, which her actions of reconciliation with Ayten also prove.

When Susanne visits Ayten in prison, to Ayten's many apologies, Susanne affectionately replies with her offer of help to get Ayten out of prison. This is a surprising and drastic change from the beginning and conveys how Susanne transgresses her reservations about helping an illegal political activist. One could expect that because of her daughter's death while trying to help Ayten, she would not want to be involved with her at all. Nevertheless, not only in this scene but also in the film's final scene as well, after Ayten leaves prison by repenting her actions and comes to visit Susanne at the German bookstore, Susanne offers to help her again and invites her to stay with her at Nejat's place. After Susanne pronounces the Turkish district's name wrong and Ayten corrects her, Susanne embraces her warmly.

In his recent three-page commentary on the film, Thomas Elsaesser brings attention to the relevance of Akin's use of a Fassbinder actress, Hanna Schygulla, as a key factor in Akin's built up of a "moral fabric" or as his title points out, an "ethical calculus."<sup>267</sup> He observes that "Schygulla as the matriarch presides over more than the film's liberal conscience." Elsessaer posits that her figure, "as the guardian of this pledge" extends "the generational burden of the German-German-'Hollywood' dialogue (Sirk was German born)" to a "German-Turkish-'European'" dialogue.<sup>268</sup> While I agree with Elsaesser that Akin's choice of Schygulla continues a trend of melodramatic film production, Elsaesser's remark ambivalently assesses the European value in Akin's film by way of Fassbinder and particularly his character Schygulla—the oldest and most famous female character of the new German cinema and an archetype of Fassbinder films. While in Elsaesser's vision, the "German-Turkish" of German-Turkish-'European'" dialogue maps out equivalently to the German Fassbinder and Turkish Akin, I suggest that we also consider the implications of the European dialogue the film constructs on a narrative level—specifically through a web of interconnected German, Turkish, and Turkish-German characters Akin deploys in his film.

Particularly through Schygulla's roles in this film, primarily as a protective and cautious German mother and simultaneously as a representative of an open European identity, in engagements with both Turkish and Turkish-German characters, Akin indeed forms a triangular dialogue of Germany, Turkey and Europe. Further, however, I am

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<sup>267</sup> Thomas Elsaesser, "Ethical Calculus", *Film Comment*, May/June 2008, 44, 3, pp. 34-37.p.34.

<sup>268</sup> He explains that Akin inscribes himself into the "genealogy of Sirk-Fassbinder melodrama." While Elsaesser's reflection insightfully traces the generational influences in the line of three important American, German, and German-Turkish directors, his explication that Sirk was German-born, highlights his Germanness to the Hollywood dialogue implicated by Fassbinder's films, while to the European dialogue enabled by Akin's film, Fassbinder's Germanness, and Akin's Turkiness figure in.

interested in how Schygulla's performances of Susanne in the last part function even more than a European dialogue, extending into a global dialogue, conveying universal compassion as a virtue that substitutes the values of an ethnic or continental identity.

In Istanbul, we see Susanne transgress her former reservations and transform into a role of complete openness, forgiveness, compassion, and peace-making. Akin's particular use of Schygulla's figure, with whom the audience can associate nothing but Fassbinder and Germany, for a role of a character who transgresses beyond her logic of "European" identity, and transcendence of her earlier inhibitions, on the one hand seems ironic, yet I venture to say that it works. And it works because of the universal theme through which Akin portrays her transcending her former self and bond with the character of Ayten—namely, death.

Lotte's death unites Susanne and Ayten beyond their cultural and ideological differences. Akin uses the most human and universal theme, death, as a tie by which he brings his most separated characters—not only because of their national and cultural backgrounds but because of their ideological opinions—together and portrays them both transgressing their earlier identities' affiliations. The audience sees Lotte as a mother who has lost her daughter instead of a German mother or a speaker in the name of European Union, and Ayten, as a free young woman who has not only lost her lover but also her mother—instead of a Turkish political activist. A scene of her at the ferry, watching the waves—similar to Nejat's wait at the sea in the end—portrays her transition to a new beginning.

My last analysis, of the relation between Susanne and Nejat, illustrates how Akin moves not only beyond a Turkish and German binary of ethnicities and cultures, but also

how, while bonding his characters through shared experiences of loss and death, he reveals them in their most human form—in their human likeness. Susanne and Nejat meet for lunch on the next day after Susanne’s night in Lotte’s room. As they are about to start eating, to his question as to what they should drink, she offers a toast to “death.” Susanne says that Nejat should not take offense if she gets drunk but Nejat says that he might join her as they toast and smile. The spectator knows the missed connection about both characters’ losses: Lotte and Yeter receive this toast, binding the German mother and the second generation motherless Turkish-German man. However, Nejat does not only mourn the death of Yeter, the mother figure to him, but also his father’s loss—which the next scene in the film brings up to the surface and leads to another significant incident of forgiveness as well as transformation.

The spectator hears the Turkish daily prayer Ezan during three shots of a mosque from different angles, while the next shot shows Turkish men walking down some steep stairs. Next, we see Susanne watching these men from high above in Nejat’s living room, with wide windows opened fully. As Nejat slowly walks into the frame and stands next to Susanne, she asks where the men are going. When he says that it is the three day feast of sacrifice, Susanne asks what is sacrificed. We are situated at the same height as Susanne and Nejat, looking with their vision from high above at numerous men walking the steps down. With the two characters side by side, looking down at the men, we hear Nejat tell her the story, detailing how Ibrahim was ready to sacrifice his son Ismail to God for proving his faith to God. After Nejat explains how upon seeing Ibrahim’s faith and God’s satisfaction, God instead sent a sheep to sacrifice in place of Ismail, Nejat and Susanne

look at each other and looking in Nejat's eyes, she says "Bei uns gibt diese Geschichte auch." (We have this story too)

This scene beginning with Ezan and highlighting the Islamic grounds in Turkey, as well as thematizing Turkey's religious difference displayed in Susanne's observation and question is particularly important for two reasons: first, while revealing yet another crisscross—the shared religious story of Abraham's sacrifice—the scene in fact rises above religious and cultural differences between the Islamic and the Christian world. In this sense, the scene is yet another example of how Akin poses a Turkish, German, European dialogue that goes beyond binaries. Against the difference of Islam, through which public discourse excludes Turkey from Europeanness, Akin focuses on a connecting story—between three religious groups; Muslims, Jews, and Christians. While the story could hence be seen as illustrative of a connection with the spectator across religions and cultures, as well as playing into the Turkish, German and European triangle of dialogues, Akin's continuation of the scene after Susanne's remark takes the story from the macro to the micro level, revealing its importance to Nejat's individual world, instead of a Turkish or German world with which he identifies.

To Susanne's remark that they have this story too, Nejat continues with his personal story about how he had asked his father if he would sacrifice Nejat. In a close up, with shaking voice, Nejat expresses how he feared the story because his mother died when he was young. In the reverse close-up Susanne waits a minute; with her eyes and smile full of compassion, she asks, what his father replied. To Nejat's answer that his father would even make God his enemy to protect him, in the next close up of Susanne, her eyes filling with tears, she asks, if Nejat's father still lives. Hence, the second reason

why the scene is so important to the overall film lies with how Akin individualizes Abraham's story and makes it meaningful on a much more personal level to both Nejat and Susanne, but even Ali. Susanne who just lost her daughter can relate to Ali's response, declaring a parent's wish to protect his child. The answer builds a similarity between the parents of the film, despite gender and ethnic differences between them. They all love their children and want to protect them.

As in Akin's *Head-On* where he deploys open windows and a balcony in revealing Sibel's and Cahit's relative perspectives to Istanbul and their personal transformations, here in front of another wide window, almost like a balcony, suffusing the spectator with a feeling of highness and openness simultaneously, we see the generation of a moment of personal revelation to Nejat—a transformative moment. Susanne's question whether his father still lives generates a change in Nejat who witnessed the deaths of a mother, Yeter, and a daughter, Lotte. While Nejat can hardly reply, and the shot moves to the men walking down the street again, he asks if Susanne can take over the bookstore for several days. Though he doesn't say so, he leaves to find his father. Akin's use of the spatial openness of the window and his characters' raised standing above the men who are going to the mosque reveal less the differences between the men and Susanne and Nejat, and more the openness to both of the characters' through the shared story. Susanne's character here once again symbolizes a person who listens with open ears and eyes, and with her question, she becomes the generator of forgiveness and peace.

Akin's stories of cultural contact and mobility in *The Edge of Heaven* surpasses *Head-On* by way of creating characters not only of Turkish-German background but by

way of including Turkish and German characters and by interweaving all of their stories. In doing so, he usefully unsettles the geo-political Turkish versus German outlook and is able to expose these problems beyond the parameters of Turkish political landscape and geography. However, he also presents tales of love and death crisscrossing through generations and familial sets, all along showing the spectator how alike the characters are in their losses and sorrows. It is melodramatic and exaggerated and so is *Head-On*. Yet, it is my hope that my analyses of both films shall have revealed how Akin's projects with these films are of utmost significance to the Turkish-German culture and our understanding of its contemporary contours, as well as the trajectory of Turkish-German film.

With regards to my above observations, it is important to clarify that, although Akin's films are certainly not social documentaries, his characterizations and stories convey us more open and enriched venues about the contemporary whereabouts of Turkish and German cultural realms.<sup>269</sup> Also, both films build more hope for individual growth and transformation. This brings me to the second value in these films, namely, the transformation Akin enables from the “cinema of duty” films representing the Turkish people, its community and experiences in Germany to these transnational films—regardless of their uses of melodrama, spectacle, and exaggeration—that nevertheless indicate a new direction. Akin does not only break away from the paradigm of victimization and portrayals of Turkish-Germaness through a lens of dominant culture

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<sup>269</sup> Akin is in a privileged position to portray these insightful stories because although the films do not depict social reality, they spring from a distinct mind—as I already explicated in terms of “double-consciousness”—and a spirit who knows the two realms and their relations quite well. For instance, to the question “How real is *Head-On*?”, Akin has replied that the film is created out of reality, namely, *Head-On* is the result of Akin’s own yearlong observations about his own socialization. Akin, *Gegen Die Wand. Das Buch zum Film mit Dokumenten, Materialien, Interviews*. Kiepenheuer & Witsch: Köln, 2004. p.234.

versus minor culture, but also enables an alternative paradigm of movements and transitions with his films that trace a two-directional route, going between Germany and Turkey. On this route, while in *Head-On*—along with portrayals of alternative homecomings to Turkey—Akin represents the transformation stories of two young second generation Turkish-Germans, in *The Edge of Heaven*, he presents us with transitional and transforming identities of Turkish, German, and Turkish-German characters interconnected in a Turkish and European world that is also gradually shifting and evolving.

## Conclusion

I began this dissertation asserting Leslie Adelson's point that Turkish-German literature is not a tired, old bridge between two fixed worlds and following her proposal to treat Turkish-German literature as a threshold space. As Adelson explains, the image of a threshold lets emerge the appearance of something *new*. Accordingly, I posed a set of questions about what we can see that is new and different in texts which portray Turkish, Turkish-German and German characters travelling between the two countries and negotiating interactions in both Turkish and German cultures.<sup>270</sup> Consequently, what the analyses have shown actually enables us to see how these texts serve as thresholds, in the sense of creating unique crossing over effects and thereby generating productive and positive effects regarding identities and cultures.

In the preceding chapters, I examined different examples of thresholds in terms of crossing boundaries as well as in terms of the unsettling effects on what constitutes various borders. Significantly, I explicated the threshold in terms of a space that allows reaching new realms—implying attainments of new identities, becoming a new person, becoming more than what one was before. Accordingly, the most indicative effect shared

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<sup>270</sup> Adelson explains the “new” that emerges in the threshold through an example by Tawada’s interpretation about Paul Celan’s poetry: “For the Japanese-born Tawada, the between of Celan’s German-language poetry does not mark a border (*Grenze*) between two distinct worlds but a threshold (*Schwelle*), a site where consciousness of something new flashes into view,” “Against Between: A Manifesto,” 24.

by all the texts is the manner in which they allow their characters to transform into new selves and to become ‘more’ than what they were at the beginning of their narratives.

Underlying such transformations of the individual characters and the transcendence of the “in-between” mode, however, is the manner in which the texts allow for a destabilization and an undermining of the “between two worlds” paradigm. This is particularly important for the unsettling effects the narratives create around the presumably separate and stable worlds of Turkey and Germany. In a certain sense, this body of literature and film, depicting traversals in Turkish and German cultural and geographical scapes, is uniquely able to map the dynamics of two complex and changing Turkish and German worlds with inter-connections—a configuration that is closer to lived reality than the fictional two worlds paradigm. In order to view the ways which each chapter’s texts enable unbounded ‘crossing over’ effects regarding identities as well as the Turkish and German worlds, I would like to at this point return to these effects more individually.

The first chapter’s novels *Selim oder die Gabe der Rede* and *Der weinende Granatapfel* introduced us to the German protagonists Alexander and Ferdinand, who both think within the boundaries of the two worlds paradigm during their travels in Turkey. On the one hand, the novels portray the manner in which the protagonists think with cultural binaries and essentialisms. On the other hand, both texts, which utilize unique narrative structures create threshold effects in the sense that they deconstruct the cultural fable of two worlds. Important to this effect is the way in which the texts reveal Turkish cultural and spatial landscapes as a mix of East and West, a co-mingling of both modern and traditional and so-called Asian and European elements, which Ferdinand and

Alexander view through a “two worlds” lens. By revealing the protagonists’ “two worlds” thinking as constructed and by generating the illusory effect surrounding their cultural fixations, the novels enable a deconstruction of the fable of two fixed worlds—East and West, Orient and Occident—as mapped respectively onto Turkey and Germany.

Further, in *Selim oder die Gabe der Rede*, the addition of diary entries to Alexander’s autobiographical and in *Der weinende Granatapfel*, the fantastic doubling of Ferdinand with the Sufi poet function like thresholds for the readers as well as the protagonists. Throughout the narratives of both novels, the reader ‘crosses over’ from witnessing Alexander and Ferdinand treat Turkey in fixated terms—with the lens of the two worlds paradigm—to recognizing the paradigm and its use in the narratives as illusory. At the same time, through their travels and experiences in Turkey, both Alexander and Ferdinand cross over their own bounded thinking; they pass beyond a two worlds paradigm, thereby attaining new, alternate self- understandings.

The second chapter analyzed how the novels *Selam Berlin* and *Die Brücke vom Goldenen Horn*’s young protagonists, going back and forth between Turkish and German city scapes and cultural realms, cross over to open ‘transcultural’ identities by departing from socio-cultural and national identifications. In addition, as this chapter explicated, the novels’ depictions of Turkey and Germany undermine and subvert the “between two worlds” paradigm by representing Turkey and Germany as comprised of multiple layers. Furthermore, the portrayals of specific locations, such as Kreuzberg and a travel agency in *Selam Berlin* and the Bosphorus and the Golden Horn in *Die Brücke*, subvert stabilities of Turkish and German worlds by depicting significant transitions in Turkish and German cities’ pasts and presents.

For instance, Yade Kara portrayed the transition in Kreuzberg after the Wende, revealing the diverse plurality of its inhabitants and thereby satirized “authentic” claims of Turkishness about the area as well as about the Turkish people. Özdamar uses the bridge metaphor in new ways to destabilize essential notions of what constitutes Europe and Asia. By utilizing the Bridge of the Golden Horn, she conveys the intermingling nature of Asian and European elements within the two sides of Istanbul—traditionally presumed to be equally divided as Eastern/Asian and Western/ European. Particularly, her use of the Bosphorus strait and her narrator’s literal crossing across this body of water by ferry creates a threshold by revealing these polar entities as flowing into each other rather than as isolated, thereby also portraying the ideas of tradition and modernity associated with each side as co-mingled.

Furthermore, this chapter’s texts revealed particular points of connection and intersection between Turkish and German worlds in the past and present. For instance, in *Selam Berlin*, the protagonist Hasan’s parents conjure up an intersecting point with the history of the Wall, ironized by Hasan’s father’s double life between East and West Germany. In *Die Brücke*, the connection between Turkey and Germany through Berlin’s and Istanbul’s respective student movements—a link further extended through wider global contexts—enable to cross beyond binary worlds. These examples indicate some of the ways in which Turkish and German worlds in their evolutions have been intricately connected rather than separated.

The last chapter explicated how Fatih Akin’s identity portrayals unsettle what constitutes an authentic Turkish-German identity. The various portrayals of characters in the films *Head-On* and *The Edge of Heaven* show how Turkish-German identity implies

more than a constant bridged condition between two cultural sides. Akin's portrayals of Turkish-German characters create a threshold effect by destabilizing the fixity of the very hyphen and by subverting the concept of a pre-determined 'Turkish-German' identity. In this sense, similarly to Özdamar's depiction of the two sides of Bosphorus as fluidly connected, Akin's portrayal of diverse Turkish-German identities suggest that the two sides, Turkishness and Germanness, co-exist openly, transiting from one side to the other, to varying, unpredictable extents.

While showing Turkish-German characters' identities in experiences of fluid transitions and thresholds, Akin's various portrayals cross beyond the idea of lives "in-between" two cultures. Instead, reminiscent of Şenocak's remarks, these portrayals indicate that living with two cultures and worlds cannot be seen along a straight line, narrowly defined as being either Turkish or German. Characters' lives and negotiations between Turkish and German worlds reveal new forms of becoming, allowing one to recognize how these identities fluidly transition from being Turkish to more German or vice versa—as was the case for Cahit. Significantly, while both films enable one to see the openness inherent in Turkish-German identity, they also provide alternate routes of journeys with implications of personal thresholds for second-generation Turkish-German characters like Sibel and Cahit, as well as for a German character, Susanne. In *The Edge of Heaven*, Akin's interweaving of a seeming Turkish political issue into the narrative serves to indicate how Turkey as a country in transition stands in relation to Europe instead of a direct opposition to Germany. Furthermore, *The Edge of Heaven* provides an unbounded crossing over effect through the interconnection of diverse characters in a humanist sense, conveying the transcendence of ethnic, national, and cultural boundaries.

Fatih Akin's documentary film *Crossing The Bridge* begins with a view of the iconic Bosphorus Bridge—the bridge that connects Asia and Europe. Akin's film interrogates the concept of “between two worlds” and the topos of a bridge between fixed worlds from the very onset of the film, when one of the film's interviewees simply and beautifully articulates that “Bridging the East and West is a naïve concept.” He expresses his opinion that the myth about East is East and West is West has led to the idea of ‘clash of civilizations’ but, as he puts it, the notion that the East starts in Istanbul and goes to China and the West starts in Greece and goes to LA is ridiculous. Indeed, while the criticism expressed by these words in front of the Bosphorus questions the geographical stability attached to the notions of what constitutes East and West, Akin's film at large asks one to reconsider the notions of what is presumed to be Eastern and Western, European and Asian. Akin's primary material in this film is music and the film narrates the evolution of Turkish music through observations and interviews done with Turkish musicians by the German musician Alexander Hacke. Akin shows how the music of a country conceived often as Eastern or Asian has at its roots been European and has been undergoing a process of modernization and of mixing European styles until this day.

While Akin maps the complexity and transitional nature of the Turkish music onto the transitions that the “Asian/European” city Istanbul has experienced, he questions the stability of the divide between set binaries—East/West, Asia/Europe, Turkey/Germany. Akin's picture instead indicates how these worlds interact, connect, and intermingle. Therefore, the film performs a destabilization of the “between two worlds” paradigm by undermining the bridge metaphor as well as the exclusive stability of the worlds on the two sides of the bridge. This film's title “*Crossing the Bridge*” is excellent

for uncovering the fact that although the bridge is literally there, it is crossed; in other words, the bridge is only a construction, and as the title implies, by crossing from one side to the other, what one finds is many similarities between the two sides.

What Akin significantly allows us to conceive is that the bridge is only a utility and what stands on the two sides are not only changing but are also not necessarily separated by a cultural divide. Furthermore, in addition to this crossing beyond the fixities of Europe and Asia, by bringing Alexander Hacke to Istanbul in this picture, Akin enables another form of crossing, a reversal and a new metaphor in Turkish-German film—as was also the case with his other films examined in chapter three. This move functions to cross the bounded nature of Turkish –German film within the boundaries of Germany. I believe Akin could have made the film without Hacke but his choice in portraying the hybrid nature of Turkish music and with it a country and people’s identity through the narration of a German musician makes the film’s motif of crossing even more accentuated and poignant.

At this point then, I would like to consider Akin’s act of crossing by making *Crossing the Bridge* as well as his other films that I discussed in this dissertation in the context of a reflection by Leslie Adelson about how critics do not imagine the migrants to cross the bridge of perpetuity and land somewhere *new*.<sup>271</sup> While Adelson criticizes the conception of Turkish-Germans as suspended on the bridge and incapable of landing anywhere new, she explicitly means Germany and the German context as the new place

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<sup>271</sup> Adelson, “Against Between: A Manifesto,” “Migrants are at best imagined as suspended on this bridge in perpetuity; critics do not seem to have enough imagination to picture them actually crossing the bridge and landing anywhere new.” 22.

where the migrants have already landed.<sup>272</sup> Akin, with his films, not only literally and visually enables the crossing of the bridge but more than merely a landing by Turkish immigrants in Germany, depicts landings and crossings in the other direction—to Turkey. I am not suggesting that these are landings in the sense of closed “arrivals”—points of finality. Rather, as I discussed above, they portray more open episodes of comings and goings, transcending ethnic and national boundaries. Therefore, in the manner that Akin’s recent films depart from stories in Germany and only about Germany, and enable new routes for Turkish-German and German characters in Turkey, we can conceive this as a metaphorical arrival at openness—an arrival at open identities, open roads, open relations. In this sense, by crossing the bridge of perpetuity in the other direction, from Germany to Turkey, and creating new arrival stories in Turkey, Akin is indeed crossing a threshold—enabling what we understand as Turkish-German cultural productivity to attain a newer identity.

Akin’s films, as the international fame they have acquired also suggests, are a strong indication of a new stage in the Turkish-German realm that enables us to realize that old fixities about individual identities and oppositional Turkish and German worlds are being left behind. Rather, as conveyed in *Crossing the Bridge* and in *The Edge of Heaven* as well as in *Selam Berlin* and in *Die Brücke*, more hopeful and open visions unsettle the “between two worlds” paradigm by revealing East and West, and Turkey and Germany as unfixed worlds—in transitional states as well as in points of connectedness. We can ask then, whether this has not always been the case, for instance, especially after

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<sup>272</sup> Adelson situates this landing particularly with regard to the entry of Turkish-German narratives into German spaces. For instance, in the “Manifesto,” her reading of Şenocak and Zaimoğlu’s texts as interventions into the German context, particularly into “the spaces of historical narrative” (Manifesto, 32), and later her readings in the *Turkish Turn* about other Turkish-German narratives ‘interventions into the German historical contexts serve as the examples of threshold.

the Turkish guest-worker recruitment to Germany. And although certainly this has been the actual social reality, the time of transcending the two worlds paradigm, which has obscured these connections by fixating changing complex worlds to notions of stability has arrived; the varying literature and filmic production in this dissertation can be seen as the forerunners that put this hopeful imagination to creative work.

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