

HEAD MATTERS: KANAKA SPEAKS FROM THE EDGE OF SOCIETY: AN  
ANALYSIS AND TRANSLATION OF EXCERPTS FROM THE  
ORIGINAL BY FERIDUN ZAIMOGLU

BY

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On October 30, 1961 the Turkish and German governments signed an intergovernmental labor contract to solve Germany's labor shortage by recruiting Turkish *Gastarbeiter*. Between this date and 1990 the population of Turks living within Germany's borders reached 2 million. Up until recently, Turks had to fight for many rights including citizenship, religious education, and recognition. Even now, at times, they are still a marginalized minority. Women, especially, face difficulties balancing a strict family life within a larger, and more permissive, Western society.

Instead of a report about women of Turkish descent living in Germany, here are translated interviews with them. Many share the common theme of trying to find a place

for themselves in German society and all are amazing tales told in their own words.

Following is an analysis of the methodology used in the translations.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

“Wir holten Gastarbeiter und es kamen Menschen”  
(We sent for guest workers and people came instead)  
-Çağıl (Koppstoff 61)

The fate of Turks and their descendents living in Germany has not been widely publicized outside of the country. Especially across the Atlantic Ocean, very few of those people not heavily invested in German politics and affairs would even know that Turks make up Germany’s largest minority. Even fewer would know how they came to Germany, what problems they have dealt with, and what battles they are still fighting in order to be recognized as a minority group. Religious and cultural differences, the struggle to gain access to German citizenship, and racism are all major issues in the lives of Turks in Germany. Turkish women have it doubly hard in the attempt to balance the restrictive nature of their original culture and the liberalities of German culture. In the following testimonials the anger and hurt felt by many Turkish women is highly palpable, and manifests itself oftentimes under the guise of biting sarcasm. To understand the issues facing these women and all Turks living in Germany, it is necessary to examine the history of how they arrived there and under what circumstances they have remained there.

On October 30, 1961, the Turkish and German governments signed an intergovernmental labor recruitment contract (Kolinsky 79). There were many factors that led up to this decision to recruit foreign labor from abroad: the German economy had been expanding, many feared labor shortages in the agricultural and industrial sectors

because of the low post-war birth rates, and the German workforce was experiencing a swing towards white-collar employment leaving many vacancies within the unskilled blue-collar sectors. In order to alleviate the equivalent problems in East Germany, their government turned to integrating women into the workforce. The more traditional West Germany, instead of forcing women out of the kitchen and into unskilled employment, decided to look towards the *Gastarbeiter* or guest worker to solve their labor woes.

It was understood both within the German government at the time that developed the plan to recruit *Gastarbeiter*, the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), and the cooperating sectors of employment, that the *Gastarbeiter* program was temporary and upon expiration of any and all employment contracts the borrowed labor would once again go home. In *The Turks in Germany: From Sojourners to Citizens*, Barbara Freyer Stowasser writes: “German political parties, government agencies, labor unions, agricultural and industrial employers, and cadres of the media supported the recruitment policy on the assumption that it was a temporary measure undertaken for the benefit of the German economy” (54-55). Essentially, all of German society understood that there would be an influx of workers from various countries, Italy, Spain, Greece, Turkey, Morocco, Portugal, Tunisia, and Yugoslavia, who would remain separate from German society while working to benefit it and once there was no more work there would be no more guest workers. Indeed, the German term *Gastarbeiter* has no connotation of permanency. Kolinski writes: “The term *Gastarbeiter* itself implies ‘rotation’, a non-permanent stay” (80). The demographics of the workers that were recruited also lent themselves to avoiding any sort of permanent settlements. Almost all were men, younger than 40, working for a year, and residing in temporary housing—dormitories, barracks,

etc. (Kolinsky 80). Every facet of the program that brought them to Germany was geared towards them returning to their country of origin. Therefore, when many of the guest workers did not leave, they were seen simply as guests overstaying their welcome.

It was not obvious to many that any of the *Gastarbeiter* would end up staying until after November 1973, when Germany stopped importing temporary labor in the face of the oil embargo. At this point in time the government started using financial incentives to get guest workers to leave although some guest worker communities were already semi-permanent due to families' having already joined their husbands and fathers abroad. The recruitment halt in 1973 actually added to the size of the already growing communities. Those who were already in Germany at the start of the oil embargo began sending for their families under Germany's right-of-family-unification laws (Stowasser 55). Thus, the predominantly male guest workers who lived and worked on the fringes of society created larger communities with the arrival of wives and children who remained just as excluded by the rest of the German general public. By 1990, the population of Turks in Germany reached two million.

The *Gastarbeiter* originally lived in dormitory or barrack style housing when they first arrived in Germany. After many families came, the lack of multi-room housing forced many to go in search of other places to live. Lack of money and lack of German low-cost housing steered most into tenements and overcrowded apartments in the less desired—by most Germans at any rate—areas of cities. Stowasser writes: “They (guest workers) and their families often had to settle in rundown apartments, ancient working-class tenements in inner-city areas that quickly turned into ghettos” (58). Most, however, had no choice, as housing was one of the requirements in order to get a residency permit

to stay in Germany. They had to live wherever they could find a place. Kürsat-Ahlers writing in *The Turkish Minority in German Society*, claims that it is not even low-incomes that drove Turks to this type of housing. He writes: “Low income is not the sole cause of housing discrimination...On the contrary, recent evidence points to ethnic discrimination as the main cause for poor housing and the exclusion of Turks from housing integration in German society” (124). Whether it is the lack of money or racism by landlords that keeps Turks out of nicer neighborhoods, many found themselves cut off from German society due to housing.

Not only did housing keep many Turks from integrating and being a part of German life, but the inability, until recently, of even those born in the country, to attain German citizenship also kept them on the periphery of society. Up until 1999, German citizenship laws were based on descent and bloodlines or *ius sanguinis*, “law of blood” (Peck Ash Lemke 67). In contrast to countries like France, which formed a state before any notions of nation and people had developed, the German people had nationalistic longings based on ideas of culture and descent well before any state was set in place. Guntram H. Herb writes about the importance of cultural impact when deciding boundaries of a state: “German geographers in the 1920s suggested that the national boundary between Germany, Poland, and Czechoslovakia should be determined by mapping the imprint of German and Slavic culture on the landscape...”(21). The boundaries of modern day Germany were laid on cultural lines. It is in line with this concept that German citizenship was also based on culture and blood. Any change in this system, by granting citizenship based on something other than culture and blood, was seen as destroying German national identity. Under these laws even those of German



descent living outside of Germany were still eligible for German citizenship. Those Germans who were expelled or became refugees during World War II or could prove they were of German descent, were awarded automatic citizenship upon repatriation. Peck et al. write in *Natives, Strangers, and Foreigners*: “Article 116.1 of the Federal Republic of Germany’s basic Law granted the right of repatriation not only to any German who had been eligible for or admitted to citizenship within the 1937 borders of the German Reich, but also to refugees or expellees belonging to the ‘German people,’ and to their spouses and dependants as well” (72). Once the Iron Curtain began to crumble, thousands of *Aussiedler* or settlers from as far as eastern Russia began pouring into Germany and despite the fact that some of them could not speak any German at all, they were granted citizenship because they had German blood (Shlaes 20). This was in stark contrast to the millions of Turks and their children, many of whom had lived their whole lives in Germany and spoke better German than Turkish, who were denied citizenship or faced a long, hard battle to get it. In 1990, Turks still had to wait eight years to apply for a permanent residency permit and after ten years of permanent residency, depending on language proficiency and cultural assimilation, they were allowed to apply for citizenship. This was, however, no guarantee that they would get it. It wasn’t until after 1999 under the joint coalition of the Social Democrats and the Green Party, that German citizenship was granted to those children born on German soil to Turkish parents. However, recently they have slowly begun gaining recognition as a minority group in Germany.

Citizenship is one of many issues. Another bone of contention are the religious differences between Turks and Germans. Religious differences create a stark rift

between the two groups especially in two major areas: at work and at school. Unlike American schools, religion is taught within the public school systems. Students usually have two choices in religious education, Protestantism or Catholicism. For Turks and their children, who are predominantly Muslim, this obviously presents a problem. According to Karakasoglu, a few German states or Länder have addressed this issue, especially North-Rhine Westphalia, which first developed curriculum for Islamic education for the descendants of the Gastarbeiter (164). Karakasoglu points out the major difference between Christian religious education and Islamic: "In contrast to Christian religious education, however, lessons in Islam are voluntary and not part of the core curriculum" (164). At work questions of whether to give employees time off to observe Muslim holy days and granting daily breaks for prayers arise. It is up to each employer to decide if their employees are allowed to openly follow their religion.

Turks face everyday battles in order to create a sense of normalcy for themselves. However, they also have to contend with outright racism and sometimes violence against their families and community. In the early 1990s there was a string of attacks on foreigners and especially Turks. Neo-nazis and skinheads assaulted foreigners and their houses with rocks, firebombs, and bottles on numerous occasions in many different cities and towns (Peck Ash Lemke 83). According to Peck, Ash, and Lemke: "Immediately after unification, an outburst of xenophobic and racist violence sent shock waves through the country, exposing a hostility unprecedented in postwar Germany" (83). Although the violence has since died down attacks still continue around the country.

Originally, the German government was very slow to recognize the rights of Turks as a minority group living within Germany. Under the government today, things

are beginning to change and Turks are obtaining rights and freedoms that twenty years ago would have seemed more like a dream. Despite this new recognition Turks still face many difficulties. The fight for citizenship, housing, and the right to practice Islam are all battles that are still being waged.

Instead of writing about the plight this group faces in their adopted country or investigating the citizenship laws and how they relate to Turks living in Europe, I have decided to translate a few of the many voices telling their own stories in their own words about their hopes and oftentimes disillusionment with life in Germany. The book, *Koppstoff. Kanaka Sprak vom Rande der Gesellschaft* (Head Matter: Kanaka Speaks From the Fringes of Society) is a collection of testimonials from Turkish women living in Germany compiled by a fellow Turk: Feridun Zaimoglu. It is his second collection of testimonials by Turks, the first comprising solely the voices of men. It debuted in 1995 and is entitled: *Kanak Sprak. 24 Mißtöne vom Rande der Gesellschaft* (24 Voices of Dissent from the Fringes of Society). His other works include *Die Wahre Geschichte von Ertan Ongun*, *Liebesmale*, *Scharlachrot*, *German Amok*, and his most recent novel *Leinwand*. Much of his writing deals with questions of Turkish-German identity and how one lives as a Turk in Germany.

Through translating these women's voices I hope to be able to shine a light on the different lives of Turkish women living in Germany. In addition, I am also going to analyze the translation process that I used during my thesis and examine particularly how their testimonials reflect their feelings of alienation and frustration with accepting German culture and in turn being accepted by it.

## Chapter Two

### The Translation

Either Fight or Shut Your Mouth<sup>1</sup>

Mihriban, 30, Vegetable Vendor

*After a minor incident in the store, in which a German customer accused her of selling goods of a lesser quality, we engaged in a conversation.*

I was born in this city. I grew up here. I got married here. I work here and I raise my children here. Really. I should feel at home here. But I don't really. But I also never wanted to live in Turkey. I'm not whining about not having a homeland like so many others. I find that ridiculous. I don't like it when people whine about not having something. Either you get it yourself or come to terms with the fact that you don't have it and keep your mouth shut.

I can understand this kind of behavior. After all. I used to think the same way. I'm not saying this just to appear smart or as someone who came to her senses.

Oftentimes I ask myself why I don't feel completely at home here. I have seen the Turks in Turkey. They're doing fine. They know where they belong and thus are joined together in a sense of belonging. They are able to say "we belong here." And when they say that nobody looks at them stupidly and disagrees with them. And why would they? Somehow

or other they all look Turkish, if there is such a thing. If people say they have lived in Turkey for a long time, they speak Turkish, they have a Turkish passport and they claim they're Turkish then that's the way it is. At the very least nobody would ask specifically about it. In Germany it's similar with the Germans. If someone looks somewhat German, speaks very good German, behaves relatively German as well, and has a German passport, then there are no problems. It gets interesting when people are in fact born here and are raised here and speak German but don't look at all German and don't behave like Germans but nevertheless maintain that they are German, then they can keep holding up their passports. Nobody will quite believe them and everybody will look at them a little strangely regardless whether they think it's a good thing or not. It's like taking care of a house, making sure the refrigerator is full and always purchasing good food for it. But then when you go to get yourself something to eat and you're gaped at questioningly would you be able to feel at home there? That's how I feel here, but I'm not complaining.

Years ago I wished my parents had never come here. Then I would be in Turkey now and I would be with "my people." Of course they're not "my people" now, but they would be if I had always lived there. This possibility would have only been offered in Turkey and then only when you stay in that country, adopt their culture, speak their language and look similar to those people, only then do you have a homeland. But who these days has a homeland? It is an outdated word.

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<sup>1</sup> pp. 41-46. *Kopfstoff. Kanaka Sprach vom Rande der Gesellschaft.*

Everyone ends up shuffled from one place to another. Even the Germans emigrate. Nobody calls them “economic refugees.” They emigrate due to far more luxurious reasons than others, like, I don’t know, because the weather is bad here or because the people here are so unfriendly. When people emigrate because of such petty reasons then they are “noble migrants.” When people are struggling for their existence then they are “economic refugees” or hungry freeloaders.

I don’t need a homeland now. I have freed myself from needing one. What do people do that have a homeland? Are they doing better: I think that a person’s life only has the meaning that you give to it. I simply don’t care about it anymore. that’s enough! I’m not going to waste my energy bemoaning something I never could have had.

I was probably lucky. I have four more siblings. I am the youngest and the only one who was born here. I believe I was somewhat spoiled. My parents let me get away with more than my other siblings. I always had my own mind. Sometimes that was a good thing but sometimes it was bad as well.

I completed the secondary modern school and did an apprenticeship as retail saleswoman. Nothing special but people pay attention here whether you have an apprenticeship or not. The main thing is that you can prove something. If you want to participate then you have to know the rules of the game. otherwise you’ll be sulking in the corner.

I see it as ammunition. All knowledge can be useful. People don't say knowledge is power for no reason. I always watch the German and Turkish news or documentary reports. I want to know how things are looking in the world. I want to be able to join in the conversation when it comes to these topics. Sometimes my family jokes around with me. They call me "Mrs. Professor." But I believe they think it's good how I occupy myself with it. I don't want to get anything for it. I do it solely for myself and my kids.

This neighborhood is comprised of almost all Turks. The vegetable store belongs to my parents. My older siblings already had jobs when my father got too old to work. That is when my husband and I took over the store. The shop is doing well. Everybody needs vegetables. We don't sell anything else and it's all fresh. Because of that many Germans shop here as well. The old people feel like it's old times when there were no supermarkets. They come and stay longer than needed. They tell stories and as about recipes. They probably live alone and are bored. Allah kimseyi bu hale düşürmesin. God shall place no one in this situation. Sometimes I don't have much time so then I tell my kids to look after the customers. Older people are important in everyone's life. Just as they once looked after us so we must look after them and so it shall go with us later as well.

There are also young Germans who come here and linger in the store. At first I didn't understand why they watched us. At first, I thought

they came to regulate us, make sure we are doing everything right. I paid particular attention then that everything was clean and tidied up. But they weren't there to regulate. They wanted to see how we live, what we are like.

The Germans are definitely strange. They come and watch for hours, but when you speak to them then they quickly run away. I never understood until I asked myself why they would come here of all places and watch us, sometimes in pairs and sometimes alone as well: For them we are a change of scenery. It's like television for them. Now think about it, your television starts talking to you. Joking aside, I really believe we are a type of entertainment for these people. For us it's normal how we are. But for them it is so interesting how we make tea or from which glass we drink tea, how we speak to each other, how we behave. Everything is new. Perhaps like on vacation. Just a few meters away from their house there is another world. I don't think that they want to belong to it. For that it is perhaps too different.

There are also some who drink tea with us. They talk to the kids and ask them questions. They want to find out something new.

My children were born here and grew up here. They go to a German school, they speak better German than Turkish. But nevertheless these people are looking for differences. They want to pass it on for example by saying, "I spoke with a Turkish child and it was so different: I discovered this and that."



All of us are expected to have an adventure story. Like everyone in this society we also have our distinct functions and characteristics, but it's as a group. That we can tell interesting stories about our life is one of our characteristics. The last thing I was asked, was if we had fled here. There was somebody very keen on an escape story, like the ones in picture books. It's in now, where everybody talks about their escape from Turkey. "No." I said. "we neither fled from Turkey nor did we starve in Turkey. We immigrated plain and simple." That is the truth and everybody needs to accept this truth. There are many foreigners here who can tell stories that will completely change you. But there are at least just as many who live here completely normally. They have nothing out of the ordinary to report and their life looks like that of a German, only their name and maybe their face isn't German. But that doesn't necessarily mean that we are like the Germans.

You can call it what you want: We will never be a part of the German or Turkish society. At the most we can be a part of our own society. Nothing has been set up for us. We must fight for everything that we want to have: for residency, for the language, for education, for nationality, for recognition, for respect, for everything. And if we want a homeland, then we must even fight for that. It doesn't help to envy those people who were born with a silver spoon in their mouth. You don't have any more money because you envy the rich. Either fight or shut your mouth. There are no other choices.

It's The Same Way With Other Sins As Well<sup>2</sup>

Banu. 33, Barmaid

*Met on the train on the way to Kiel. She asked me for a cigarette. After a while we engaged in conversation. She revealed to me that I reminded her of one of her lovers. Cold shivers ran down my spine when I found out he had the same first name as me. I had to get off but she promised to tell me her story sometime. After that first encounter we started meeting regularly in the bar where she worked and didn't tell me just a love story.*

There are people who have luck in life. I have had no luck. Şansım olsaydı, anamdan erkek doğardım. (If I had been lucky, my mother would have given birth to me as a boy.) Kader işte, biz de buralara düştük. (It was intended that we ended up here.)

I am not dumber than those who have a family, a husband who is with them, or some such things. Maybe that wouldn't be the life for me. Everybody has their sorrows, all women. That is simply their fate, regardless if they're a housewife or a barmaid.

I was born here. After primary school I moved with my mother and my brother back to Turkey. My father wanted us to grow up there. As soon as he saved enough money he wanted to return to Turkey for good. We had a little house and a little shop there.

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<sup>2</sup> pp. 47-55. *Koppstoff. Kanaka Sprach vom Rande der Gesellschaft.*

I hated Turkey. I begged my mother to send me back to Germany. Everything was foreign, the language, the people, the buildings. That was a terrible time. The military dictatorship then. We couldn't leave the house. Here they allow everything. Everyone is allowed to do what they want to. But here nobody wants to go out at night. Except perhaps for us night owls.

A lot goes on in this place. There are only foreigners here. Mostly Turks, but also many Greeks and Morrocans. How many families have broken up here? How many have lost everything? And then I of all people ended up here. I'm telling you, fate.

Big business deals go down here as well. I know everything that's going on, but I can't tell.

The boss is a nice guy. He saved my life. I call him Bossi. But only when nobody's listening. He took me in. I had nothing. my husband was in jail. I owe him a lot. I left the secondary modern school. It was too late when I came back. I cried a lot, a ton. But crying doesn't get you anywhere. For that reason God gave women crying. Otherwise they have nothing.

My mother shed many tears as well. But what could she do? What can we do? Others have decided everything for us. We must accept that.

Luck hangs by a thin thread, thin as a minute or a thought. Had my father not gone into the Turkish café that one time, then I wouldn't be

here now. with all these drunk men. I would probably be in Turkey in my home, with a good husband and children. Who knows.

My father was a good father. He worked very hard. But the devil tempted him as well just like all of these men here. Most of them here have a wife and children at home. My father was alone. Not many can withstand the loneliness of Germany. Even the Turkish cafes are hellholes, even worse than bars. Many men come here, for instance, just to have fun. There are few women who can keep their men after they have had children. Men don't have to be faithful. That's not on their agenda.

My father had nothing to do with women. He despised men who went into bars. He's a family guy. He just wanted to collect the settlement and return to us. My mother immediately became suspicious when he didn't come. She said there is a woman involved.

My uncle never brought his family to Germany because he was living here with a German woman. He even had two children with her. He sends money to Turkey so that his wife and children can live but he hasn't seen them in fifteen years. Halime Yenge cried so much but she couldn't do anything from there. So she surrendered herself to her fate and is still waiting for her husband to return. But I'll tell you here in writing: He's never going back.

German women aren't like we are. They learn everything from an early age. They're shown everything at school. They know how to keep their men. They don't know virginity. The young Turkish men have a

good time with the German girls. They experience everything with them. For marriage they choose a Turkish virgin. But they're used to Germans. Their wife isn't enough. Ah, nowadays it's different even. When I see young Turkish girls, I'm not certain of anything anymore. It wasn't that way with me.

I was married blind. I was seventeen years old and I didn't have a clue about anything. I couldn't look at my husband. I cried a good deal on my wedding night. Then Orhan, my husband, went out. He came back towards dawn. I was so ashamed but I don't know whether I cried so much because I didn't know what I needed to do or because I would be sleeping with a man. But then I thought that until then all women had managed it. Of course I wasn't the first. I was still sitting on the bed. Then I shut my eyes. Yes, I always shut my eyes. Did they allow us then to open them? Şimdi maymunun gözleri açıldı, ama artık çok geç. (Now the monkey has opened its eyes, but it's too late.)

I got married too early.

After school, I sat around at home not working. I didn't finish the secondary modern school even though I wasn't a bad student in Turkey. I went to lycée, to secondary school. But here school is completely different. My German was too poor. I wanted to finish school in Turkey, but my father didn't want me to stay there alone as a girl. He said my grandparents were too old to look after me.

Actually it was my mother's wish to return to Germany. She didn't want to leave my father alone anymore. Not because of the women. But loneliness had created a gambler out of my father. The last night before he fled to Turkey with the savings and the settlement he gambled everything away. In one night he gambled away his entire life. In one night he gambled away our future, our luck. He's our father. Without him we wouldn't be here at all. That's what people say. I know it's a sin, but I ask myself if it wouldn't have been better otherwise.

This place is definitely strange. When I'm walking here my feet go backwards. When I'm here though, it's as if I'd never been anywhere else. And when I go home I regret I was ever there. It's the same way with other sins as well: the anxiety beforehand, the normalcy during, and the repentance afterwards.

I call this place a bar. Somehow I can't refer to it as a pub. That sounds so German. Here nothing is German except for the glasses and the beer. It's furnished in an American style. Bossi was in America once. He had the idea there to open up a bar. He thinks it's very clever. As if he had received the Nobel prize for it. Cheap junk everywhere. But what do these people want? It's enough for them. On weekends the place here gets packed. Germans come sometimes as well.

German men: That's a complicated subject. I'll speak frankly: They think they're the greatest, even if they don't think that about their dicks anymore. It's in the statistics, blacks have the biggest. They believe

in stuff like that, it is their Bible. But they think they're the best in bed. The only thing missing still is for them to charge money for it. Some even do that, from women I mean. It's no wonder that so many German women are with foreigners. I'm not saying that Turks are better lovers, even though nearly all Turkish men think and even assert that. Most of them see to it that they come. They are egotistical. They don't care what the woman feels.

They say women must always control themselves. A Turkish proverb says: "A woman has nine desires and can control them all. A man has one desire and can't control it." That is how we are brought up. And have we gotten a medal for it? No, at most a kick in the ass. I have always held myself back, put up with everything, always kept my mouth shut. I thought as a result I would be a better person. I woke up too late. Who concerns themselves now whether or not I hold myself back. But nevertheless I live with what I know now, regardless of whom it concerns. Earlier though, then I had a chance to accomplish something. Today I'm not so important to anybody that they would do something for me. That's the difference.

If I had a daughter I would tell her everything that I have learned in this wretched life. But I don't have a daughter. The worst part is not being able to pass on what I have learned. The older a person is the more they want to tell about their experiences. But it doesn't have to be to your own children. I'm telling my story so that others can learn something

from my tears and my pain. No more secrets. One might ask how I know all of this. I'm not a hooker or something. I mean they do their job as well and it's not worse than that of a barmaid. At least they don't make people drunk.

What I know about men, hookers could never find out. I am a barmaid. Men don't come to screw me. They want to amuse themselves. They want me to entertain them. They can do with me what they can't do with their wives or with hookers. Most of the time I listen and observe them. They talk about how great they are and about everything they've done in their lives. I always wonder why they tell me all of this, to a woman of all people, who is getting paid to listen to their cock and bull stories. Of course I don't say that out loud. I'm a type of actress. Some Germans think they're even charming. They're the worst. I am their doll upon which to practice. They try once this way, once that way, but during their breaks from practice they always let me know that I'm a Turkish barmaid. They never miss an opportunity to make it clear that women have it worse with the Turks than they do with the Germans. The worst part is that I can't disagree with them. You never like to hear the truth even if you know it's true.

It's true that Germans don't treat their women as bad as the Turks do. They even treat their children better. They don't hit them as much. Their children receive everything they need in life. But oftentimes the most important thing is missing: affection, and it's missing until the end



of their lives. Perhaps German men are good lovers, maybe they've learned tricks and techniques, maybe they can show women a good time in the sack. But you can't learn to caress, to stroke with feeling, not like you would a dog or a cat or a stuffed animal. Like you caress a human. A man has yet to tell me that he loves me. Not the right way so that I would believe him. But I know it's different when a Turk loves. The men do everything for their loved one. They even kill. That is a powerful love. Nothing and nobody can come between them. Maybe it doesn't last very long but at least you know you can love so passionately. But when you have never been truly loved or loved anyone truly then you haven't experienced the most beautiful part of being human. Then you are deaf, dumb, and blind.

I'd rather have foreigners here. Perhaps they don't have such beautiful expressions and don't want to play the gentleman, but at least with them I don't have the feeling of being a second-class barmaid, a hooker that doesn't fuck or something. There you are by yourself, everyone knows something about the others. You don't deceive yourself for long. You come together precisely because here everyone has a function and nobody is better or worse. The people come and go, and everybody has their part. Like in a family. Only there's no love and everybody is replaceable. If I weren't here another would take my place. It's that simple.

Actually it's sad. I would cry if I were to think about it. But I don't do that.

I have no contact with my family. They don't want to see me anymore. They think that just because I work here I'm not myself anymore. As if I had never suckled at my mother's breast, as if I had never been a child, as if I had never played with my brothers.

My youngest brother calls me sometimes and asks how I'm doing. He tells me about the family. He does it secretly. But he never gives me his telephone number. He always says he's calling from a phone booth. Buna da şükür. (Even for that I am thankful.) He could never call me at all.

For them I am someone who has strayed from the path. So does that mean that they're on the right one? Who knows. Only God knows and he'll decide later.

A sad story. no?

Yeah, what could you say about someone like me? Someone who has been struck by fate? Or tempted by the devil?

Who or what is at fault? Kader? Alın yazısı? Fate? Providence?

What would you call it? Terrible luck?

### Those Who Are Smart Place Themselves On Our Side<sup>3</sup>

Çağıl, 27, Student

*When she heard about the new book project, she looked somewhat insulted. She said half of Germany had already been interviewed by me except for her: She would show me alright. At our next meeting she laid her own written testimonial on the table.*

As a child I thought the Germans would do everything right. I was ten years old when I came to Germany. Everything here was cleaner, more colorful, more diverse, more orderly. Opportunities for playing to no end, trees in abundance. I thought if I could just find the right friends, this place could become a paradise. The latter never happened. I thought that after learning the German language many problems would solve themselves. I went head over heels, crammed for all I was worth and the more I learned, the more I understood, and the path I had in front of me appeared that much longer. At that point in time I thought it was me, that there must be something wrong with me. I attempted to do everything like the others, but nevertheless something was different and it appeared to disturb people. Eventually I gave up seeking their closeness and their presence. They were too good for me. They had to be that way, the children, in my childish eyes, of a perfect society, who rightly had had natural and inevitable arrogance laid in their crib.

The years went by, and the more I matured the littler these people I once admired became. I lost my respect for them long ago.

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<sup>3</sup> pp. 56-61, *Koppstoff. Kanaka Sprak vom Rande der Gesellschaft.*

For a long time I was very resigned. I thought: "What can you do anyway when they are in charge? They are the majority, this is their country, they have the power. If you want power you must go to your own country." Now I think differently about it: There is no "my country, your country." We have lived here long enough that we don't have to account to anybody for our residence, our way of life, our successes or failures. We will pull ourselves up and when we are on the same level we will give them a blow that they aren't expecting. The rough fall of the arrogant will come long deserved.

I had so much time to observe the Germans. For a while I got very angry because of the unfriendliness, at times because of the coarseness. at times because of the lack of sensitivity, at times because of the lack of flexibility. But as an observer the anger fades, the perception increases. and the entire situation appears to be new. even though perhaps it is already familiar.

German life takes place in groups, pairs, threesomes. in fives. whatever. But it isn't contagious. As viscous as tar, I can't stand on it. I can't swim through it. I can only be happy when I find my little stone upon which I can put myself. And I ask myself why do people make themselves so difficult? They don't even let themselves be infected with nervousness. They avoid it like the plague. Their society makes you miss the crowd of monkeys, whose restlessness goes through your limbs and makes everything seem dead that stands still for only a moment. A

brainstorm erupts, and drenched with the rain of thoughts I stir. But here everything is attached to routine motionlessness.

There is so much space, and nevertheless they squeeze themselves next to each other in the corner. You want to ask, "Is anybody else coming?" Then here comes the good Kanak, puts himself in the middle, and while he's asking himself why everybody is lined up, he is, in the next moment, shoved off his place. After all, everyone belongs somewhere, and the Kanak at best belongs near the launching platform.

Thus things here are sorted out and put away, and the pieces that are too small, too big or too colorful are placed on the side. But the rejects form themselves together slowly into a mosaic that beautifully dwarfs the gray, one-inch by one-inch big pieces next to it. And when they still squeeze together so, they have absolutely no chance. Soon they are the ones, the gray stones that fall through.

Those who are smart place themselves on our side. Those who are smart can imagine something else because the narrow mindedness has an end now and doesn't suffice anymore as a life. False colors quickly flake off, and in this country many wannabes and weirdos are running around. That they don't ever deceive themselves. Now the real weirdos are coming, you see. And they aren't that way for a hobby or to be cool, rather because they can't be any other way. They didn't earn it, but at least it's real. Then there are still the Turkish Germans, the assimilated "fatmas," that would so gladly be something other than what they are.

That is, not at all different, when regarded from the German point of view. These people take it as a compliment when they aren't mistaken for a Kanak because they are ashamed of their origins and their differences. They let themselves be snubbed for a German handshake, a clap on the shoulder and a "you belong to us," from a German mouth. These people sell their Turkish souls for a cheap visit to the bar at Schumann's, they discard their colorful Turkish clothing for a black-and-white pose in a Zeit-magazine centerfold and they can't get rid of their swamp-corpse face because they don't let any Turkish makeup be put on the totally grim expression they have from trying to imitate Germans. These people are, for example, fashion designers or artists who regard colors as kitsch and whose spirit is just as chalk-white as the colors of their walls. To achieve a simpler beauty they outdo themselves in the exhibition of meaningless simple-mindedness. They look with cold, tired eyes, they are burned out because they have been a contradiction of themselves for an entire lifetime, they have devoted themselves to the negation of their being, and the imminent identity crisis, from whose exit they have barricaded to themselves, is chiseled into their forehead. But they don't see it. Because they have long given up on looking in the mirror out of sheer distress that they might still glimpse a Turkish face in it. Above all, only fear speaks out of these people, even when they rear up in a winner's pose. Fear of being teased and laughed at, fear of not being allowed to join in, fear of not being able to share, fear of lagging behind, fear of remaining

misunderstood, afraid of blows and of failure. They are the weakest of the group. They know how to help themselves only through conformity, they choose the easier way, they tear down all paths and bridges and then they still even complain that their family can't relate to them. Oh, that brings a great headline in a sensationalist magazine about Turks, which turns out to be so often the ejaculation of inbred German mental masturbation, in the best case of no use to anybody. They feel rebellious and unrelenting, in doing so they would rather shit on their own kilim than drop crumbs on the German's floor, in the hope of moving in with him. They will too: Into his bathroom, which they are allowed to lick clean every day. Even their stomach will rebel someday. They don't cause too much damage. They just stand around in the way. They may think of themselves as winners now. But soon this bad deal will do them harm.

Thus I prefer to build my own tent and not have to be buried under the rubble when the old house of Germany, which the German representatives for decades have refused to restore, collapses. In this house there is no computer in which a Turkish type has been installed. Greek, Czech, Cyrillic, I don't know what else. But all of our fellow citizens of Turkish descent, numbering over 2 million, have to endure how the German word processors and tongues defend themselves against Turkish names. Some parents know to help by giving their offspring neutral names like Jasmin, Deniz, Suzan or Monolya, Manuela "in German." A page of lesser-quality Turkish lessons in this or that

magazine achieves perhaps an amused smile, but astute people know that in the future whoever wants to fit in in Germany will manage neither without Turkish type nor without the Turks.

Yes, the Turks are coming. But no longer from the south like in the days before Vienna. Nor from the front, packed into trains. They don't fall from the sky nor do they grow like mushrooms. They have already been there for a long time, since the time you turned your back on them, wrinkled your nose and could hardly wait to send them back in order to get the streets Turk-free on Sundays again. The opponents of deportation came up with a saying, which no tear duct can withstand: "We sent for guest workers and people came instead." Now we're through with tears. The saying has been rewritten for a long time. What this country sent for, they will find out soon enough. Yes, the bastards are coming but not with döner kebabs, import-store kitsch, multi-cultural fluff of tearjerking literature from abroad and bad rap, festooned with gold in sultan-chic and babbling Anatolian songs, as the Germans would like it, if at all, but with quality, with learned Prussian discipline, an innate fire under our butts, accompanying cultural baggage, indispensable sentimentality and an acquired ability to resist, for what doesn't kill you supposedly makes you stronger, and it hasn't killed us. Is anybody frightened? But don't be. Whoever is on our side doesn't need to be afraid.



## All Earthly Things Will Pass Away<sup>4</sup>

Hatice, 22, Law Student

*She spoke to me in the cafeteria of the University at a reading for Abschaum. She criticized mainly the language the book was written in. Her biggest concern was the possible misrepresentation of Muslims in Germany. She responded affirmatively to my question as to whether she was ready to represent Muslims living in Germany with a testimony.*

I am seldom asked why I wear a headscarf because most people think they already know why. But they can't know why at all. Nobody can know what's going on in my head, it would be then as if I had told them.

I cover my head like devout Muslim women do. It is important for me because with it I declare my faith in Islam and adhere to its rules and laws.

My family is quite religious but I was never forced to do anything. I did everything of my own accord. During primary school, for example, I didn't have to wear a headscarf like some other girls. I took part in gym class and was allowed to play with boys. So I wasn't restricted in any way. My parents let me live my childhood to the fullest. But they brought me up in the Muslim faith and sent me to Koran school, where I was informed about our religion and learned to read the Koran. As a child I already knew that I would cover myself as soon as I finished primary

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<sup>4</sup> pp. 67-71. *Koppstoff. Kanaka Sprach vom Rande der Gesellschaft.*

school. That is one of the many rules that I have followed since that time, like praying five times every day for example. I had really looked forward to it but I prayed much earlier even with my mother and even fasted half-days during Ramadan. Afterwards I felt lightened and sensed how my soul became purer through it. It still affects me exactly the same way.

At that time, in the first years of primary school, it was very difficult for me. I was indeed born here but until I was six years old I only spoke Turkish. My parents spoke very poor German, and all of my friends in the neighborhood were Turkish. When I began school I had great difficulties. I didn't understand a word and was sent to kindergarten because I didn't participate in the lessons at all. There were a few Turkish boys and girls there who didn't speak any German either. Perhaps we were all there for the same reason. In any case we always played together. At first the kindergarten teachers attempted to include us in the games, but none of them could speak Turkish and eventually they gave up. When I began primary school again I could barely speak any more German than the year before. On account of my poor performance I was supposed to be sent to a special school. Allah'a Şükür there was a Turkish teacher at the school who looked after me. She gave me German lessons after school for free. She said it would be a shame if I went to a special school only due to a lack of knowledge of the language. I learned quite fast and I was even nominated for the Gymnasium. My father didn't want me to study further, but the Hodja of our community convinced him to send me to the

Gymnasium after all. He said I could always switch to the secondary modern school if need be, in case the Gymnasium was changing me too much. During the time at the Gymnasium my grades improved steadily. My parents saw they could trust me and approved of my studying law without ifs, ands, or buts. I am now in the third semester and Inscha'allah I will not disappoint my family.

I am very happy that I Alla'in izniyle have come this far at all. Sometimes it's definitely not easy to overcome so many obstacles but Allah gives me the necessary strength to keep on going, and one day when I can do beneficial work for the community then it will have been his will alone.

Unfortunately Muslims in particular are badly discriminated against in Germany. Of course nobody can keep us from practicing our religion. But the freedom to practice your religion in Germany isn't guaranteed. There are still a lot of difficulties in getting permission for Islamic slaughterhouses, whereas the same situation for Jews doesn't present any problems. What is more, many more Muslims than Jews live in Germany. You can see how much Muslims are restricted in the discussion about the Ezan, the call to prayer, which even in larger communities like Duisburg isn't allowed to sound over the loudspeakers. The Germans are afraid that we could take their religion away from them. But Islam is the most peaceful religion there is, and we gladly take

everyone in, but nobody is forced. That is against the basic principles of Islam.

Even at the University women who are covered are discriminated against. It comes up often in the grades. A friend of mine who studies economic science was shut out of a seminar because it was apparently full. We must live with such problems. Perhaps women without headscarves have it easier but I have never thought about not wearing a headscarf anymore because of it. I would rather give up my studies, for my religion is the most important thing in my life. All earthly things will pass away: money, power, beauty. What counts, is faith. That is the only thing that we will have to account for someday. When a person has gone the way of Islam and of the prophet Mohammed, when they have fulfilled their duties as a good Muslim then they have nothing to fear. But somebody who has strayed from the right path, has placed their desires and personal wishes above the will of Allah, or has been tempted by those who are unfaithful, they will pay for it later. Then their friends who kept them from their religious duties will not be standing by them. Someday everyone will go alone down this path.

I also have female friends who don't cover themselves. I respect their decision, for Islam is the most tolerant religion of them all because it was sent to the people last. But as a good friend, I also tell them about the advantages of covering yourself. That is my duty. A woman who doesn't cover herself has, for example, difficulties being accepted by men because

these men will see first of all a woman in front of them and feel attracted to her. Such feelings and thoughts can disrupt working together or even make it impossible. But when a woman is covered the men know immediately that she is devout and they have respect for her and her beliefs. She can conduct herself more self-confidently. Then it is better for everyone.

I don't have any German friends. I do know a few Germans through my studies but when we talk to each other it's usually about grades or classes. I have nothing against them, but the cultures are simply too different. We can't be how they are. A lot of things that make up their culture are forbidden in our religion. Unfortunately, there are a lot of Muslims living in Germany who want to be like the Germans. They forget thereby their own culture and religion. Inscha'allah they find their way back to the correct path.

I'm not saying that I haven't sinned. I have sinned like every other person as well. But my faith is unshakeable and if Allah wants I will remain on the path of Islam. for everything is his will, everything.

Everything about Me Is Second Rate<sup>5</sup>

Reşide, 34, German Teacher

*I met her at a school reading. While the other teachers stood around me with their different questions and objections, she stood off to the side and appeared to be extremely sad. Because she was the only teacher of Turkish ancestry, I wanted to hear her opinion. As everybody left she began to cry softly and said her experiences had made her a teacher while mine had made me a writer and that it is important to be able to change others.*

Her mouth is a mouth of words. A crack that knows no obstacle. Her mouth creates whole sentences in a language that has no opening and no way out. She stands at the chalkboard and drags me out of my dream and would like something from me. My hand runs over the wood of the desk: it sticks and won't come free. She wears a fine skirt whose pleats look like leaves when the wind blows through them. I wished I could rub my face off, I wished I could have a perfect mouth exactly like hers. Suddenly she is there, standing right next to me and grabs my arm. I stand up and follow her to the chalkboard. She says: Name, your name! I write out my full name to show her that I am a pedantic with the knowledge of those who can keep their names in their head. She laughs and the whole class begins to stir. A girl with pigtails attempts to pronounce the foreign words. In my language I say: That's not what I'm called! You have to

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<sup>5</sup> pp. 88-96, *Koppstoff. Kanaka Sprach vom Rande der Gesellschaft.*

call me by the right name. The teacher looks at me, and I don't comprehend anything this first hot day of school in Germany.

The children have light fuzz on their upper arms. A blond whisk pokes out from the underarms of the girl with the pigtails. They smell freshly washed. Her ears are clean. With all the noise they make on the playground during break they look like distraught cherubs that have fallen from heaven into the basin of holy water. They play catch, tug on shirttails, or shoot with plastic pistols at the Indians in the treetops. The girls eat their bread with Nutella while sitting. My mother didn't pack any food for me. The children are energized whether they are throwing their bread crusts to the sparrows or butchering legions of redskins. I am thinking: They talk from the back of their throats because they don't drink enough water. I am thinking: Straws are for adults and yet the kids are slurping their cold chocolate milk through straws.

I stand alone in the shadows and breathe in the freshly mowed grass and I feel the dizziness that seizes you when you want to end things once and for all. I smell my strange, thin body. The shoes pinch and the blouse with the shark collar even makes the teacher laugh. I would like best to smell her flowered skirt.

I walk slightly stooped and it looks as if a hunchback were trudging through the streets. Everything about me is second-rate. In my field of view I make out crazy phantoms: A goblin clad in red whose curse is to bathe in every puddle. A screaming animal that eats its own

teeth. A dragonfly that flies its loop-the-loops in the blessed heat. I keep these images to myself. I wouldn't be able to impress the teacher with them and that is the most important thing.

I have to go to bed at eight o'clock. I lie there motionless and curse the silence. The panting of my father comes from my parents' bedroom. Propped on both hands he penetrates this softness that lies between the thighs. He knows the purpose of his hard organ. The devil rides my mother until she brings up foam from her sex. Her hair spreads out on the pillow like a handful of worms. My father throws himself down next to her and catches his breath. I know about these images of crazy ecstasy because I used to watch them once in a while through the keyhole. Only what they've left behind, belongs to their world.

I throw myself into the new alphabet. The kids speak to me as if the noise from their pharynx roared down and did a one-eighty right before the throat in order to bump into the teeth in their mouths. Their language is a thing of gristle and bones grating against each other. I find it hard to believe that they seem to play or speak without the slightest effort. When playing it's about power and victory. The kids take things as seriously as if they had to defend their very last castle. Their game is tricky and without the least bit of mercy.

The girl with the pigtails is called Magda, a strange name that sounds like cotton candy. A couple of show-offs make fun out of building



a circle around her and in chorus start shouting: jacket-Magda is a cow. Magda's head sinks and she doesn't move at all.

I learn a bit of German. The bad part about this way of communicating is that when you talk you have to keep your head completely still and your hands quiet. I'm surprised by their laugh, which doesn't sound quite right. On the other hand they can look at you very darkly. The evil eye that my grandmother always warned me about seems to live in the eye sockets of the Germans. When a child eyes me with a dark expression, I hurl it back at him twice and three times as dark. It works because then he turns away and acts as if he were looking for something. They scratch and pound on their toy and eventually it flies apart or breaks through the middle in two. Only then are these children happy and they have tears in their eyes from joy.

The ants stockpile everything that can be carried away. Their feverish zeal has an element of the theatrical. According to my mother I should learn from their example. She tells me this horrible story about a cricket that sits on a branch all summer long and plays the violin on its body. It wastes its life with this free musical performance and neglects to stockpile food reserves for the winter's harsh time. One day it falls clumped up on the ice and dead from its likewise frozen branch. My mother admonishes me to do my utmost. I stomp on every ant pile that I come across.

Our ancestors are important in our house. Even when I'm silent all the legends my mother loves to tell me are running through my head. She calls me into the kitchen. She has her hands in the dishwater and says: Earlier, in other countries, the women of our family would put twigs of purple loosestrife in their hair. She says: The steppes store a powerful heat, and people go crazy from the embers. She says: There the horse thieves were hanged and the blasphemers and the shameless who derive pleasure from other men's wives. They hanged, dangling from the trees and their tongues bulging out of their mouths quickly turned gray and brown. She looks me in the eyes and I quickly look away. She says: Those who look away have something to hide. She sends me back again to my homework. My ancestors were people who knew how to live. Their enemies were in alliance with Satan. Health strengthened the backs of my ancestors. They swore revenge and they didn't forget this revenge, that means, they demanded gratification. Their wrath was easily taken too far but my mother taught me that only just wrath and cleansing with the blood of the enemy can forge the bonds of a clan.

On the playground I look at the strange children and ask myself if they are my enemies. They ask me if I'm still wearing diapers and go away laughing. I would like to kill them all. I imagine how their cold dead bodies would lie on the yellow tiles of the playground and how I would walk all over their corpses. When God has them in his grip, he shall jab holes in their lungs.

All the same I found being strong difficult. I often got lost in my own neighborhood and I would sit on my backpack in order to get rid of the blank whiteness in front of my eyes. In this whiteness there is no room where you can set things down. When I close my eyes I see a mass of vermin descending on everything white. I throw up a flood of mosquitoes that, shimmering with dampness, fly away. I swelter in this white heat and the smell of burning hair fills my nose. The man from the small Edeka store steps outside. He is wearing red suspenders and has a vertical wrinkle between his eyebrows. His stupid ass smells bad. Mother says the man talks with his ass and I should flee from the gases. I go away even though he gave me a full bottle of mineral water once.

The table is set. My mother inspects my fingernails to see if they've been chewed. The eggplant mash sticks to your gums and the seeds that didn't get crushed get stuck between your teeth. My father dips white bread in olive oil so that his beard shines unhealthily. He thanks the Lord for having given us such rich gifts. I'm supposed to join in his praying. I hate this final amen and I hate all of the eggplants in this world. The daily saying of the blessing at mealtimes are useless. Nevertheless, I say to my mother: Eline sağlık. Health to your hands. Elin dert görmesin. May your hands not get involved with worries. And to my father: Kesene bereket. May your wallet be full.

The madwoman that they left behind is talked about a lot in the family. She is called "the distraught" or "the woman with the unhealthy

eyes.” I remember how she ripped her clothes down to the skin and stormed out in her tatters and enjoyed her walk of freedom like a crazy turkey. Her face was wet, and it was one of her habits to draw a third eye on her forehead with a felt tip pen. The ink smeared and it looked more like a wound. She was tied to the table leg with a chain. When she had an attack, her eyes would teem with blisters. She exuded the smell of infection and rotteness. The family regretted the loss of her dignity. I know that “the distraught” loved to hum a certain song: Clouds come together and soon there will be a storm. While she hummed she would act as if she were busy crocheting.

Where I come from the kids would snap their fingers to get the teacher to call on them. Here you simply raise your hand. There is an abundance of chalk. The teacher washes the chalkboard with a wet rag. Our headmaster at the time always had a wooden ruler with him, and his right hand could break someone’s neck. Here I still haven’t had one thrashing.

My mouth becomes different. My tongue can jump over my lips without hurting itself. I am better acquainted with the area above my neck from which my breath makes an attempt to string the words together. Otherwise I swallow down what comes to my mind. The German curses don’t have the proper power. Here you don’t say: You curly-tailed son of a bitch, who drinks her own menstrual blood and gets drunk off of it and shoves a rat up your ass! The curses here are one syllabic and orderly like

a tidy house. The German children pelt each other with dirt clods and pieces of bread smeared with Nutella. The boys grab at each other's crotches and yell: Sissy! The girls are in frilly dresses. They are careful not to get them dirty.

I saw it. I stood off to the side hidden behind a thick tree trunk, but it wasn't my wish to remain hidden. I heard quiet murmuring close by. Leaves rustle. I see what I see: a strange game. Two boys from my class, and both are naked from the waist down. One lays himself down on his stomach grinning and turns his head so that he doesn't miss anything. The other rubs his lower body on the naked backside of the other. They giggle like little girls and then they become silent. Eventually they switch positions. It's the same rubbing game that my father does only he always makes a serious face.

Once when my grandfather was drunk he screamed: Whoever licks a whore's cunt must wash his mouth out with soap. At that my mother left the room dragging me with her and boxed me on the ears a couple of times. She said: You must shut your eyes and your ears when you encounter immoral things. Now I don't close my eyes. I see what I see.

My father's back: His shirt stretches when he gets down to touch his forehead to the floor. Through praying he chases away fear's crows that freeze his heart. The black birds perch on the shoulders of the unfaithful. Nobody can get rid of them, for they have a good hold. Their

claws wrap around your collarbone. They are God's bookkeepers, noticing all crimes and sending their messengers, small and quick like sparrows, up to the heavenly judge. When life is over, they will say: It is written down in the book. I am scum and made of brackish water and if the highest of judges hadn't blown his holy breath into this cesspool, I would have evaporated long ago. That is what my father says, he who goes through God's ninety-nine beautiful names on the rosary.

God is present in our house and all that is sublime needs a roof.

What Is Normal In This Country?<sup>6</sup>

Devrim, 24, Art History Student

*I met her at an event that I had been invited to by an academic organization. During the discussion part she agreed enthusiastically with my harsh criticism of the Turkish passion for club life. Our discussions took place exclusively at restaurants and cafes.*

The purpose, always the purpose: Does something have a purpose or does it have no purpose? Is the purpose of use. does it have a core. or is it hollow, or is the purpose some kind of tingling excitement so that someone is able to say “I suddenly got goose bumps” when they are referring to purpose?

I am reading from an album of prose. from an acquaintance’s album of garbage: “Standing on the mountain peak. under my feet the ice cap is melting away. I feel a sense of peace, my heart is no longer so restrained...” That is completely a stupid female complaint and in the next moment, I’ve swallowed down the first culture shock, I think: Is she really what is written on that paper or is there purpose in it? What is then wrong with this country? And the answer: moving glasses and commuting, writing memoirs and knocking back pills. being vegan and being a house husband is what is wrong. Buying an astrology book in big print is what is wrong. Being so confused that you think love is a means for obtaining warmth. Finding children pushing baby carriages great is

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<sup>6</sup> pp. 102-105. *Koppstoff. Kanaka Sprach vom Rande der Gesellschaft.*

what is wrong with this country. A latex costume from the summer's sado-masochist collection, an Indian ballyhoo rescue, a skim-milk cure. Everything goes down the one-way street. Everybody is flapping open their little German mouth and I see a puke white set of dentures. Women batterers are begging in tears for the last rites. What is normal in this country? A school friend has been running around for a few weeks with this grin as if somebody had cut her straight across the face. She, of course, has joined. what else, an incense cult and is registering for one expensive seminar after the other. She talks about Sris and Babas, about Sartori and the mystical land of the white elephant. Aha. Is it any of my business? No. But she doesn't let up. She has become a blabbering information booth. She has got the look of a killer on a mission. And I am her born victim. Clearly: The stupid Muslim woman ought to be converted, ought to be put in her place because she thinks that she can make a fool out of herself as well. I don't make a secret of my uneasiness with her contentment with insignificant things. German middle-class children are throwing their bombed brain over board and they glow so sickly and confidently as if they had just shoved a couple of Jews in the oven. A terrible comparison I know. What is then normal in this country?

Germans call their own country a sinking ship and leave Alemanian in droves. They go exploring where luck is in store for them. Leaving alone what in their eyes isn't worth a dime. The rest believe in a Germany that consists of three puzzle pieces: Brown sofa cushion with trimming.



solarium and alpenglow. In the ghetto the Kanak kid shouts for a better future. Well? Does that bother anyone? At the local McDonalds a Turk is our “employee of the month.” That is absolutely insane! My god, we have arrived and are really involved! We are mutually patting each other on the back. That is what I call the integration of sensations. A health-food freak describes muesli cocktails to me: “First you have to sprout the corn oats. Please pay attention, keep your mind and body on it.” On what, thank you? But he keeps going: “Acacia honey, poppy seeds and raisins, currants and shredded coconut...” blah, blah, blah. So yeah, purpose, does it have a core or is it hollow? And they talk and talk and talk. About Tibetan levitation for instance. About Claudia Schiffer. About Native American sweat lodges. Going to Florence. Being in Tuscany. They have cheap feelings of high adrenaline and take legal action. They strike their neighbor dead because his parakeet warbles at night. They blather in jargon about the economy, the Germans, and they suddenly make long faces when they pontificate on history. The history lesson ends in a concentration camp dilemma. You hear from them, we certainly can't pay for it forever. What's Deutschland? What's moral? That is the opposite of Babylon: There God reaches down, cleans the garbage from the ground, and puts an end to the confusion. He always reaches down, always then of all times, when the German is in the mood to have some more space. And the Turk has a ghetto body and he howls and he shouts. Nothing and nobody hears him. Nobody lets him out, my

God, if he were to come out of the ghetto, the Mongols would be loose. And then the shoe assassins: A twenty year old confesses to having put thumbtacks, fishing hooks or razor blades in shoes ten times. Couch potatoes in front of the television. Stuffing themselves with fat and they think incessantly that too many are mixing with too many. It's not acceptable that a black casts an eye on "our women." That the Turk becomes impertinent: The one with the knife fights. Whether second floor or first floor the people's heads become infested with lice because the bloodbath fails to materialize, because the VCR is in their ass, because Mommy's stew may not taste just right today, because there are no more free tickets because the others are losers and really are pigs, because the weather is not cooperating, because too many bums are loafing around in front of the department store, because Mrs. Meyer's new hair dye ought to be forbidden, because Mrs. Jürgensen trudges around in street-cur blonde, because it's so seemly, because someone bought expensive run-free stockings and then they have buyer's remorse, because techno is only disco music with other devices. Blah, blah, blah.

There Must Be More In It For Us Than This<sup>7</sup>

Nilgün, 17, Schoolgirl

*The niece of an acquaintance. I met her at her brother's trial. She sat on a bench alone and looked at everybody curiously and forcefully, like a wild cat that throws itself at the first indication of danger. When she saw her brother she smiled, went to him, and said that she wouldn't let him go to jail. He smiled back and seemed to believe her.*

At home I am called Nilgün. But outside nobody calls me that. There I am Nilla. I am generally somebody else at home. It has to be that way. Otherwise I wouldn't survive.

I have lived in this dump for seventeen years already. Here there are more arcades and Turkish tearooms, their official name, than bakeries. The only movie theater in the vicinity went out of business when everyone started buying all of the videos for themselves. I was still a little kid then. Now there is a video rental, what else though? I still remember how I went to the theater with my older brother Pumuckl. I remember it as if it were yesterday. I was happier as a child. Or else I didn't quite get everything.

My brother is now in the clink. He was up to something at the arcade. I don't know what exactly. My parents didn't tell me anything. I shouldn't think badly of my brother. I don't do that anyway. He is and remains my Abi, my older brother. That's not how it is with the Germans.

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<sup>7</sup> pp. 125-130, *Koppstoff. Kanaka Sprak vom Rande der Gesellschaft.*

If it doesn't suit them they don't know their siblings anymore. There isn't any cohesion. I believe that is their biggest mistake. They have no unity in the family. I notice it with my German friends. One of them, Susanne, has a younger brother. Okay, he's not the quickest. But he's really a totally decent guy. When some people make fun of him, she joins right in with malicious remarks. I asked her once why she does that, that's her own brother, and so on. She said to me then: "What. you think I want to disgrace myself in front of everyone with him? It's bad enough I have one like that in my family. I'm already punished enough." I was completely stunned. Of course, they aren't all like that. Maike gets along really well with her sister. But the Germans simply aren't the same with their siblings I think.

I stand by my brother. Even if he's been up to something. The gossips around here know more about what's going on anyway than anyone else. I've already heard everything. He was fired from where he worked because of job cuts, that is clear. He was a metalworker. He was unemployed for a long time. Then he got a job in an arcade. My parents weren't admittedly very happy about it, but it was better than nothing. After a while he started bringing more and more money home. He said it was something to do with bonuses, what do I know. Then strange people started calling our house. I think they were drug dealers. He was doing something there. Then he robbed the store and took off to Stuttgart to my

Uncle's. But the police caught him there. The store was closed for a while. When they didn't find anything it was opened again.

He's actually an exception. Most of the guys here have done time or are guilty of something. Most of them don't have anything to do, no job, no money. My mother says they should be sent back to Turkey. Then they would see what it's like to wander around. My brother wasn't that way. He didn't make a mess of things in the beginning. But most of the guys here don't know any different. And the women: their whole life consists of cooking, raising children and gossiping. Even those who run around with a veil. They think they're better. Then they shoot their mouths off the most. And they still believe that they are going to paradise. And I shall be the wood of hell to which God sets fire because I wear jeans. One time I told a veiled neighbor my opinion. She told on me straight away. My mother immediately sided with her. After all, she is our neighbor and older than me. I needed to be respectful. That makes me want to puke. Everything is fake, everything is insincere. But not me. I don't want to belong to it. I will not join in. I want out. I don't want to become like all the others. I have my own world there outside. At home I act the good little daughter, I go to school, do my homework and chit-chat nicely with everyone at weddings. There I am in their shitty insincere world. But when I'm with my friends, my life looks different. There I am Nilla. We do whatever we feel like doing far away from home. We don't want to foul it up. We want to have fun, listen to music, make music.

dance, enjoy our youth. They say you only live once and most people live as if they have so much life ahead of them they have to warm themselves up first. Why else are they so paralyzed? We have so much power. It mustn't be wasted. There has to be more to this than waiting forever to get older, marry, have children and grandchildren and then worrying about them. There must be more to this than umpteen grannies in the pedestrian zone walking their dogs, the hideous dozing faces in the streetcar, the boring nights of television in which one Turkish soap opera after another is on or some German crap after the other in which I, or people that look like me, never appear, more than the yearly vacation to Turkey, my so-called homeland, about which I know less than every single tourist who has done a tour there. Something has to happen, a bang and everybody wakes up and sees that they mustn't live for nothing, that they have to change something if not in the life of another person, then in their own life. I see that it can't go on like this. The people can't be happy like this. Get up, go to work, come home at night, eat, watch television, and sleep. I don't want to live like my parents or most of the Germans here. I don't see a big difference between the average German family and the average Turkish one. The manner perhaps, is somewhat different due to traditions. Yeah, we eat other things and we speak a different language. Our cultures differ from each other. But I compare myself with my German friends and I see that their parents want roughly the same for them as mine want for me. The fathers are in the teahouses or in the bars. What's the difference?

The mothers sit for the most part at home and accept visits from neighbors or friends. And they all think they are so different. What is more, they lead the same dreary existence and they don't even notice it because they're hung up on the superficial things. Something has to happen in my lifetime. I will make sure that it happens. Everybody is responsible for it themselves. I have taken the first steps towards it. But I also don't think much of simply going away. Semra did that. She just took off. Her parents found her though and sent her to her aunt in Turkey so that she would get a proper talking to there. But nothing helped her anymore. She ran away from there too. When her aunt found her again she sent her directly back. She didn't want to deal with her anymore at her age and with her illness. She stayed here for a while. Her parents forbade her to talk to us. As if we were to blame that she had had enough of her alcoholic father, her painkiller addicted mother and her hysterical grandmother. They thought marriage was the answer. They married her to her cousin. An asshole of a man. They simply wanted to get rid of her, marry her as a virgin. The man should look after her of course. He beat her everyday. She waited for her eighteenth birthday and then she left for good. The gossips believe she's somewhere walking the streets. They all think that when a woman takes off and lives however she likes. They don't see that she had a chance to be happy.

I don't want to end up that way too. I want to find a place between hard and soft. I want to notice myself, and others shall notice me as well.

I want to move something. How, I don't know yet. I only know that it doesn't work here.

I'm pushing myself away. Good-bye. Slowly but surely, I'm pushing myself away.



## Chapter Three

### The Analysis

#### Introduction

Translation is obviously a difficult art: I use that word, for if translation is not an art it can hardly be called translation. Yet it is a secondary art, and at best can strive for but never reach a final perfection.

-Edwin and Willa Muir (93)

To translate is defined in the English as “express the sense of (words or text) in another language” or “be converted or convert something into (another form or medium)” (Pearsall 1523). Following this definition, one seeks not necessarily to translate literally, but to find words that “express the sense” of other words or simply to “convert something” from one form to another. What is important to note in this definition is the modern sense one gets from it. Not only does translation entail what one would consider the traditional definition of linguistic translation (i.e. taking words from one language and making them understandable in another) but here it also involves converting something from a form or medium into yet another form or medium. This means that one could possibly translate a photograph by recasting it into an oil painting (change in medium). According to this definition, everyday students in classrooms around the world translate original Shakespearian texts, texts from Goethe, Schiller or in China the Laozi by interpreting and mentally translating older forms of their respective languages including completely foreign words into modern ideas or ideas that transcend the boundaries of time. They try to create another image in their heads that matches the cultural images of

the original. This form of translating consists more of translating culture through language as it changes over hundreds of years, rather than simply translating the “language itself.” Indeed, culture entwines itself around language, constantly pulling on it, molding it, and often changing it entirely as to render it completely foreign to those people of older generations who often find themselves cut off from the language and slang of youngsters. Likewise, culture and language change so much throughout time that older texts seem to remain frozen in another time and place, coming across as alien to the next generation’s youth.

Although translation is discussed above as simply a factor of overcoming boundaries of time, this is merely one of the few ways of viewing the act of translation and is included in order to make this point. With contemporary and modern issues there are still cultural gaps. When viewing the form of translation that people most commonly refer to (i.e. translating something from French to English, German to Chinese, etc.), issues of time are usually nonexistent.

After determining to an extent what translation and translating is, it is also important to determine what translation is not. Translating is not taking a word and finding its exact equivalent in another language. The real key here is to look back at the definition on the first page and focus on the word “sense.” One has to focus on the “sense” of the word because oftentimes there is either no exact equivalent or sometimes there is not even a word in one’s native tongue (vice versa in one’s second language) that means the same thing. The best that one can do is to convey—sometimes through more than one word—the “sense” of what is meant. A good example of this is from a German class that I am taking right at the moment, in which we are studying German

experimental poetry. A word came up in one of the poems: *Sesshaftigkeit*. This word has no exact equivalent in English. There is no one single word that I could come up with that would match it. Rather, one would have to rely on a phrase, which although it is not an exact match, conveys this “sense” that we are looking for, and that is: “a settled way of life” (Scholze-Stubenrecht 679). This, however, probably does not even pick up on the finer nuances that *Sesshaftigkeit* would express nor does it carry with it the root of the word that would point the way back to the ancestry of the word, where it came from and how it changed and came to occupy the place in German vocabulary that it holds today. This does not mean, however, that people have not tried to find exact equivalents for words, in fact during the technology boom of the 1950s onward a computer translator was thought to be just around the corner. Later on, I will explore these differences in translation theory more extensively.

How does one take a text written in one language, translate it into another language, and have it retain the original spirit, with which it was written? There are essentially two very different paths one could take, along with a third that is basically a zealous over-exaggeration of one of the first two. According to George Steiner: “The theory of translation, certainly since the seventeenth century, almost invariably divides the topic into three classes. The first comprises strict literalism...The second is the great central area of ‘trans-lation’...The third class is that of imitation, recreation, variation, interpretative parallel” (253). The first comes from the scientific and linguistic approach to translation. It devotes itself completely and wholeheartedly to the strict and narrow path of literalism. This will be known as the literalist approach. The third is on the complete opposite end of the spectrum. This is where the translator essentially takes over

the creative reins from the author and starts acting on his/her own whims by adding things in, taking things out, and in short, assumes creative liberty. This one will be known as the imitator. Finally, there is the second one which lies somewhere in the middle of both the first and the third. It concerns itself not with literalism or imitating but rather focuses on paraphrasing and capturing the “essence” or the “sense” of the original text and translating that into the target text. For obvious reasons I chose the path right down the middle. This does not mean that I completely ignored the other two choices, especially the literalist approach. There definitely are some sentences that translate fairly literally from the original language into the target language. It does, however, remain impossible to utilize this approach all the time.

In analyzing my translation I will look at all three of the paths that I could have chosen. I will explain the first and the third paths first and then follow with the second and most desirable method. Underneath the heading of the second method I will also explore other areas that pertain to it and are extremely important in understanding the translation process in general, such as reconciling differences in the structure and syntax of the two languages, English and German, and analyzing cultural differences and how they affect language. I will also consider questions that consume translation theorists and deal with notions of foreignness: whether a translated text should retain foreign elements and look noticeably like a translated text or whether the translator should view it as a text just like any other text in the target language and therefore exclude any remaining traces of foreign oddities or words.

## The Literalist Approach

At different times throughout history, literalism has been tossed around as a viable approach to translation theory. According to Lefevere in *Translation: Its Genealogy in the West*, after 1800, those people writing on the subject of translation and translation theory began to acknowledge that there were indeed different approaches to translating texts, depending on the audience for which one was translating. However, before 1800, there was not a range of options to choose from, and it was usually not dependant on the translator's own whims and fancies as to what should be translated and how to translate it. Between 500 and 1800, a bilingual or even "multilingual culture" flourished in Europe (Translation 16). Of this population living in Europe at that time, most were illiterate, and therefore written translations like the literature that is spread around the world today, would not fill an area of great demand. The oldest form of translation is what Alessandra Riccardi refers to as "liaison interpreting" or L1. He defines it: "Liaison interpreting (L1) is the oldest and most natural form and is always performed in two language directions by the same person—face-to-face communication is the hallmark of L1" (75). Those in authority, most often nobility and the priesthood in the case of the biblical translations, were the ones dictating what was translated in print, what this finished translation looked like, and how it was translated (Translation 16). Lefevere defines the first of three basic categories in the history of translation: "authority (the authority of the person or institution commissioning or, later, publishing the translation... (Translation 15). Authority had a defining force in dictating what texts were commissioned to be translated and also, perhaps subsequently, published. Most of those in authority did not desire to see that the public had access to important scientific or

other sorts of documents, which may have proved to be a liberating force. Lefevere writes: “in such a culture, translations were not primarily read for information or the mediation of the foreign text. They were produced and read as exercises, first pedagogical exercises, and, later on, as exercises in cultural appropriation—in the conscious and controlled usurpation of authority” (16). Thus, the main focus behind translations prior to 1800 was not to produce texts that were “faithful” to the original vis-à-vis some literary model. Rather the intent was to translate texts, which therein held great connections to power or to the act of gaining power. Lefevere goes on to describe the role of language in translation pre-1800: “Language was considered a vehicle for the exchange of thought. Or, in other words, the same thoughts could be conveniently ‘dressed’ in different languages. The old Latin word for translating: *translatere* can be taken to mean simply: ‘an exchange of signifieds’...without overmuch regard for the connotations, cultural and otherwise, carried by the actual signifiers” (Translation 17). One used language to convey information, thoughts, and notions to another person. Language and the act of expressing thoughts were considered universal. In order to translate these into another language one simply had to take the same thoughts and put them in or “dress them up in” another language. This act of translation’s main intent was not necessarily to be a literal rendering of the original text, rather it ignored cultural implications of the source text. The fact that language could also be a vehicle for culture was still a foreign notion.

The literalist approach—or the idea that every text and the words that comprise it have exact equivalents while disregarding the fact that culture and context have any bearing on the original text—still lives on today under the guise of computer translations.

During the 1950s and the boom age of technology, scientists and linguists alike declared that eventually humanity would be blessed by a computer program that would make it possible to get rid of all human translators and rely solely on a processing chip for all inter-lingual communication. This would be the one of the apexes of science helping people. But just how accurate are literal or computer translations? George Steiner likens the literalist approach to the inexperienced years of translation theory: “The theory of translation...almost invariably divides the topic into three classes. The first comprises strict literalism, the word-by-word matching of the interlingual dictionary, of the foreign-language primer, of the interlineal crib” (253). That is, literalism is the most immature and amateur way of approaching translation theory. It suggests that all one really needs in order to translate material for him/herself is a bilingual dictionary (or nowadays a computer hooked up to the internet). In order to find out exactly how accurate these methods are and if there are any situations in which they are appropriately applicable, I will take one of the lines from *Koppstoff* and compare it to a literal rendition via a computer translation. Then I will compare it to my final translation. From Feridun Zaimoglu’s *Koppstoff: Kanaka Sprach vom Rande der Gesellschaft*:

“Meine Familie ist zeimlich religiös...” (67)

A computer based translation (<http://babelfish.altavista.com/babelfish/tr>):

My family is rather religious...

Finally my translation:

“My family is quite religious...”(33)

As we see, all three are fairly close in meaning to each other and also to the original. But when you move away from the realm of simple, fairly culturally void statements to long

paragraphs imbued and saturated with cultural details and references real problems arise.

From *Koppstoff*:

„Meine Familie ist ziemlich religiös, aber ich wurde niemals zu etwas gezwungen. Ich habe alles freiwillig gemacht. Ich mußte während der Grundschule zum Beispiel kein Kopftuch tragen wie einige andere Mädchen, habe am Sportunterricht teilgenommen, habe mit Jungen spielen dürfen. Ich wurde also keineswegs eingeschränkt“ (67).

A computer based translation (<http://babelfish.altavista.com/babelfish/tr>):

My family is rather religious, but I was never forced to something. I made everything voluntary. I did not have to wear, in sport instruction participated, with boys play may a head cloth during the primary school for example like some other girls. I was not thus by any means limited.

Finally, my translation:

“My family is quite religious but I was never forced to do anything. I did everything of my own accord. During primary school, for example, I didn't have to wear a headscarf like some other girls. I took part in gym class and was allowed to play with boys. So I wasn't restricted in any way” (33)

Thus, one can see that it is possible in some situations—like in the first example—to translate something quite literally and still capture pretty much the same sense of the original. Once one goes beyond simple sentences and is forced to solely utilize a dictionary or computer in order to translate, the translation deteriorates rapidly. In *Translating Literature*, Lefevere writes: “It is not hard to see that any approach to translation dominated by equivalence is likely to focus on the word as the unit of translation, since words can be pronounced equivalent to other words more easily than sentences can be pronounced equivalent to other sentences, paragraphs to other paragraphs, or texts to other texts” (7). It is much easier to equal one word with another, but much more difficult to create a paragraph that is equivalent to another paragraph if not impossible.



In fact, this impossibility of equivalence is exactly why a literalist approach to translation has not measured up to other theories. It simply disregards the notion that any text, excluding perhaps very technical documents, occurs within and retains elements of the situation or culture surrounding it. Lefevere writes: “But *translatio* (to those in authority the epitome of the ideal “faithful translation”) is impossible. An exchange of signifieds in a kind of intellectual and emotional vacuum, ignoring the cultural, ideological and poetological overtones of the actual signifiers, is doomed to failure. except in texts in which the ‘flavour’ of the signifiers is not all that important: scholarly texts, or non-literary texts in general” (Translation 18). Thus any text that removes itself from its cultural background will lose whatever meaning that that background lent to it. Words no longer have any cultural weight, and translations based upon these cultureless texts cannot and should not be accepted as valid reproductions. Even with short sentences that seem to lack cultural weight like the first example, it is impossible to translate perfectly.

But is it not possible to translate one word perfectly? One could try to obtain a near perfect translation if one were, for example, to take the word *bed* in English. If one were to attempt to translate this word into German you would look it up in your German-English dictionary and find the word *Bett*. The prototypical bed implied in the English word *bed* consists of an object that has four legs, which connect to a rectangular frame made either of wood or metal. Upon the frame lies a mattress, which could be made out of a number of different materials and on top of that one would find various blankets, pillows, etc. The main function of both the prototypical bed and the prototypical *Bett* is to serve as a sleeping place. Thus, the prototypical bed implied in the German word *Bett*

would probably look quite similar to the English bed. Therefore, the German word *Bett* is synonymous if not a near-exact equivalent of the English word *bed*. But in contrast, the prototypical German view on words that are imbued with culturally bound thoughts and ideas are quite different from the view of an English speaker. As a result, the thoughts and ideas that are bound to an English translation of the same word are also different. Take, for example, the German word *Heimat*—from the sentence „Heute brauch ich keine Heimat“ (*Koppstoff* 43). *Heimat* is defined as “home, home town/village ...homeland” (Scholze-Stubenrecht 386). In English we would think of *Heimat* as referring merely to one’s land of origin or one’s native land. If somebody were visiting the United States and they were originally from Sweden, then an English speaker would consider that to be his/her homeland. However, the German word *Heimat* carries with it a much deeper meaning than the English translation. It goes beyond the physical and into the realm of the spiritual and national. Ever since the notion that states should be based on nations, there has been an increasing emphasis made on *Heimat* and identity in German culture. Mary Fulbrook writes about *Heimat* and its changing face within the new unified Germany:

In ways difficult to define, but immensely important, identity is often rooted in a sense of place. The German preoccupation with *Heimat*—an essentially untranslatable word referring to one’s homeland with which one identifies strongly—is traditionally very strong. Dialect, accent, custom, modes of behavior, landscape, and boundaries are all important. (211-12).

In a land of immigrants, we seem to have lost, if there ever were one, this permanent, deep, and defining connection to a homeland. In parts of Germany it is especially strong.

Where families have lived for hundreds of years on the same plot of land or even within a few miles of where they were born, this connection to the land runs deeper than our word homeland connotes. Fulbrook writes: “Although it is very difficult to define precisely, a sense of identity—personal, social, and national—is very closely tied in with the landscape in which one lives and moves” (214). Homeland is not an exact equivalent of the word *Heimat*. The cultural connections to this word are untranslatable and therefore very few words could ever be considered as perfect and literal translations of the original text.

The last point that will be addressed regarding the literalist approach is closely tied in to imperfect translations discussed above. Another reason that it is impossible to translate a word literally is that a word is not simply the sum of all its letters. Words in every language have a history behind them, changing throughout the years from one definition and usage to another completely different one. But, much as people are the result of everything that has happened to them, these past definitions and histories all lend a unique connotation or flavor to a word. Words that are or were related in one language share similar roots with other words. An example of this in German would be the word *Geschichte*: “Zu unseren Eigenschaften gehört eben auch, daß wir interessante Geschichten über unser Leben erzählen können” (Zaimoglu 45). The translation reads: “That we can tell interesting stories about our life is one of our characteristics” (17). Here, *Geschichte* means, “story” or “tale” but it can also mean “history.” Story and history, in German, are the same word and therefore permanently tied together. In English it is possible to use story in lieu of history (i.e. when asking somebody about their life history “what’s your story?”) or even history in the place of story, but they are

not the same word. Another interesting point about the word *Geschichte* is that it also has very deep roots with the German noun *Schicht*—layer, stratum, coat—and the related verb *schichten*—to stack. Unlike the English translation the German word for history has connections to all of these words. In German, history is not “made,” like it is in English, rather it is stacked, layered, heaped, and piled. Chapters in history are looked at as individual layers of events, which are all put together to form a whole. All of these connections and connotations of *Geschichte* are lost through the process of translation, and there is no feasible way to convey that in a translated word.

The literalist approach has deep roots in the history of translation. Translators once thought that their job was merely to take thoughts in one language and make them accessible in another language without attending to the loss of cultural signifiers. Unfortunately, literalism in translation theory lives on today through the numerous computer translators so favored by the college student hurriedly trying to make some sense out of Goethe’s *Das Leiden des Jungen Werthers* for tomorrow’s class. There are numerous problems with this approach to translation: the first being that when a computer, or even sometimes a person, is given a sentence that has any cultural implications at all and is longer than a few words, it or the student hunched over his/her basic dictionary will spit out some tangled, incoherent mess that is, by no means, the slightest echo of the original text. Also, the literal translation assumes that the same connotation implied by the translated word was meant by the original, untranslated word or vice versa, that the connotation of the original is implied by the translated. By simply examining the differences between *Heimat* and homeland it is plain that the deep meaning and implications of the German word are not carried through the translation into

the English word. Finally, it is impossible in any translation, regardless if it is literal or not, to maintain the etymological background of a word. The fact that *Geschichte* has many connections with layers, strata, and the making of such, does not come through in its translation into English of the word history. Obviously, the literalist approach is neither the most accurate to the original text nor does it produce the most graceful of translations.

### Usurping the Authority of Translation

There is the possibility in translation of sticking too close to the linguistic side of the original language or taking too literal of a stance to the art of translation. On the other hand, there is always the possibility of veering off the other side of the course. That is, one can give equal weight to both the linguistic and the cultural side of the original text, yet not capture the essence or sense of the original. This happens most often when the translator considers the target language to have more authority or be more important than the original. Thus, the original sense of the text is altered, distorted, and changed so that it fits into the cultural norms of the target language. George Steiner defines this area of translation in broad terms: “The third class is that of imitation, recreation, variation, interpretative parallel. It covers a large, diffuse area, extending from transpositions of the original into a more accessible idiom all the way to the freest, perhaps only allusive or parodistic echoes” (253). This definition includes the many and infinite amount of injustices that a translator can commit against the text he/she is translating from the simple omission of a word or phrase or the addition of new text to the full blown theft of a text in order to create a variation upon its skeleton in yet another language while still calling itself a “translation.” Steiner writes: “At the opposite extreme [of strict

literalism] we find *imitation* ‘where the translator (if now he has not lost that name) assumes the liberty not only to vary from the words and sense, but to forsake them, both as he sees occasion’”(254). Here Steiner uses the example of Cowley’s translation of Pindar and Horace. Due to the enormous distance that Cowley perceived between English and Greek culture, he more or less gave up and had “‘taken, left out, and added what [he] please[s]’” (254). Thus, in order to make the task easier for oneself, the translator simply sidesteps the challenge presented by cultural differences, by falling onto the path of imitation in that he/she takes the original text and simply uses it as a device to imitate the target language and culture. Dinners on the floor in Persia become meals shared on the Victorian table. Cultural differences are easily fixed just by painting the translation in the tones of the target culture, leaving out any references whatsoever to a different way of living.

Although imitation is not as widespread now, it was a regular fixture of translation before translation theory was something to be studied—before 1800. It was especially prevalent in countries that deemed themselves as more important, more cultured, and more sophisticated than others. The translator would look at the culture he/she was translating from and if he/she decided that it was inferior then it was perfectly acceptable to take as many liberties with the text as one saw fit. Lefevere, in response to a letter written by Fitzgerald to his friend Cowell bragging about the changes he had made in Persian texts, writes:

“*Traductio* is a matter of the relative weight two cultures carry in the mind of the translator: obviously, Fitzgerald would never have taken the same liberties with a Greek or Roman author, also because there were too many experts around. But

since Victorian England considers itself central, and since he happens to be translating from a culture that is by no means central to it, he takes what liberties he pleases" (19).

Here the supposed "dominant" culture takes precedence over any of the original cultural references that the author deems as inferior or even barbaric and unfit for the target audience. Unfortunately, texts translated in such a manner leave out events and differences that might have opened up new worlds to the readership, ones that managed to remain free from the prudent shackles that hobbled Victorian England.

When is it possible to take out foreign elements from the text? It really depends on the readership one is translating for and the capacity to which they can understand words and phrases left in the original. In the typical high school literature class in the United States, great emphasis is placed on the literary traditions of the old world or old Europe, as it is known today. Therefore, if the translation is meant for an educated readership, then it is reasonable to leave foreign elements in, with the understanding that the reader will either be well versed enough to puzzle it out or is capable of finding someone or some resource to help them. In *Translating Literature*, Lefevere addresses an English poem that retains the Italian words "col bambino": "It would probably not make much sense to leave the Italian phrase in a translation into Chinese or Arabic, both languages whose readers would, for the most part, not be as immediately arrested by the incongruity as would readers in Europe and the Americas" (30). Therefore, it is at the discretion of the translators which foreign phrases to leave in and which ones to leave out based on the understanding of their target readership.

Although imitation is not as widespread as it used to be, it is still necessary to familiarize oneself with it in order to avoid making the same mistakes that others have. It is important to give both the target culture and the original culture the same weight and not favor one over the other to the point that you harm the original. That does not mean, however, that one should leave all the foreign elements in the text in order to avoid being ethnocentric. The translator must decide which foreign elements must be left in and which are acceptable to translate into a near equivalent in the target language.

### Foreign Elements In My Translation

The text that I translated is especially complex in regards to these questions of which foreign elements to leave in and which to omit. Almost all of the text is in German, but the women writing about their experiences, or at least many of them, routinely added words and phrases here and there in Turkish. One of the options that I ostensibly had was to translate all of the text including the Turkish into English. This would have been necessary if the translated text was for a different readership. I assume that my readership knows more about Islamic religiosity than they do about Turkish culture. Thus, it would make sense that the I would have translated all of the Turkish cultural references. Yet, the women providing these testimonials all speak German. Based on this, the Turkish words and phrases that they used must have some contextual significance. Either they are unable to think of a German phrase that is more fitting or else by using the Turkish they are adding an additional emphasis. A mixture of both Turkish and German has become the prevalent language amongst the second and third generations of Turks living in Germany. In *Turkish Everyday Culture in Germany*, Tan and Waldhoff write: “The second generation speaks a mixed language in which either



Turkish or German is the dominant component. Language formation reflects the wide variety of ways in which the Turkish and German life-styles touch or overlap and constitute the social environment and milieu for that generation” (145). In discussing these foreign elements in the text, I divided them into three categories: Turkish phrases that are religious in nature and Turkish words or phrases that are cultural in nature. The third category is not related to the first two and that is: German proper names. First, I will address who my readership is and then I will discuss all of these categories and give the appropriate examples.

The readership that I am intending my translation to serve is mainly those English-speaking students who are interested in diversity in Germany or German culture. Therefore, I am assuming that many of them have a basic knowledge of German cultural references and proper names. I do not necessarily intend my translation to be read by those who are well versed and fluent with Turkish culture. However, I do expect my readership to be more knowledgeable about Islamic religious references. Despite the fact that I do not expect my readership to be very knowledgeable about Turkish culture I left most of the corresponding untranslated words in. I felt that the author purposefully intended to use Turkish instead of German and subsequently translating words that they did not intend for the majority to understand would defeat the purpose.

The category of Turkish words or phrases that are purely cultural in nature only applied to a few instances in the book. The first comes up during a rant by Çağıl, a student, in response to Turks who try to act German:

„Sie fühlen sich rebellisch und ungebeugt. Dabei scheißen sie sich lieber selbst auf ihren *Kilim*, bevor sie dem Deutschen auf den Boden krümeln, mit der Hoffnung, daß sie bei ihm einziehen werden“ (Koppstoff 60, emphasis added).

At first I did not realize that *Kilim* was a known word in English, and therefore had translated the section as such:

“They feel rebellious and unrelenting. In doing so they would rather shit on their own house rug than drop crumbs on the German’s floor, in the hope of moving in with him” (31).

Later, after I had discovered the word in my English dictionary I immediately changed it back to its original due to the implications of the sentence: a *kilim* is not just some ordinary house rug that one would have lying around like it was implied in the first translation. That is, “house rug” fails to substitute for the definition of *kilim*, which reads: “a flat-woven carpet or rug made in Turkey, Kurdistan, and neighboring areas...from Pers. *gelīm*” (Pearsall 778). “House rug” could be one of many types of rugs, originating in textile shops from a multitude of places. However, a *kilim* has very deep historical roots in the lands from which these women’s families are descended.

*Kilims* are very traditional rugs that have a great cultural emphasis. In *Kilim: A Complete Guide*, the authors describe the Anatolian *kilims*:

“Until recently, Anatolian kilims continued to be woven by women and girls as dowry pieces and commemorative textiles for certain rites of passage such as birth, death and circumcision, all of which are important in the Islamic faith...Kilims were used as covers for the floor, as doorway and window curtains.

prayer rugs and, occasionally, eating cloths. They were also made into every size of bag for storage and transportation” (109).

*Kilims* are still very much a large part of tribal life in parts of Turkey. They hold great traditional value for many Turks (especially Turks living in Germany who identify that much more with old traditions since they are away) and represent their cultural heritage. The symbolism of defecating on one’s *kilim* rather than dropping crumbs on the German’s floor gains new meaning when examining the cultural importance of *kilims*. It is one of the most callous ways of turning one’s back on one’s identity, roots, and inheritance. If I had not altered my original translation, I would have been doing the text a huge disservice.

The second example I am going to address deals with alienation from the host culture. Devrim, also a student, writes: „Deutsche nennen ihr eigenes Land das sinkende Schiff und verlassen *Alemania* in Scharen“ (Koppstoff 103, emphasis added). My translation: “Germans call their own country a sinking ship and leave *Alemania* in droves” (48). *Alemania* (*Almanya*) is the Turkish word for Germany. There are a few reasons why I did not change it to “Germany.” The first reason was because then the translation would remain faithful to the original text and English readers would probably be able to understand the word since the Spanish word for Germany is the same (*Alemania*). Also, by leaving it in its original form it imparts to the reader a sense of alienation, of not belonging. If the text simply read “Germany,” then the reader would have no reason to stop and think. But when it reads “*Alemania*” one gets a feeling of being disconnected and that the *Alemania* of Devrim’s world is much different from the

Germany everyone else knows. It represents a personal view of the country that is different than the global view.

Finally, many of the women uttered a number of anecdotes in Turkish, which were likewise translated within the original text. Banu, a barmaid, speaks: “Şansım olsaydı, anamdan erkek doğardım. (Hätte ich Glück gehabt, hätte meine Mutter mich als Jungen auf die Welt gebracht.) Kader işte, biz de buralara düştük. (Es ist wohl so vorgesehen, daß es uns hierher verschlug)“ (Koppstoff 47). My translation reads: Şansım olsaydı, anamdan erkek doğardım. (If I had been lucky, my mother would have given birth to me as a boy.) Kader işte, biz de buralara düştük. (It was intended that we ended up here)” (18). Leaving both of the Turkish phrases intact gives the reader a sense that these women still are living in between two worlds. Their German is good enough to talk about their lives in detail, yet they still describe some of their predicaments with Turkish phrases and anecdotes. This gives one the feeling that these problems are directly related to this divide between the cultures. On the one hand, certain aspects of their life are very German. On the other hand, it is most suitable to describe some of the events in their lives in their native language. This duality of identity is especially obvious when comparing the testimonials from women who have not yet fully assimilated and others who were born in Germany and feel themselves more German than Turkish, for example, like Nilgün who never uses any Turkish and feels less connected to Turkey than she does to Germany.

In addition to cultural anecdotes there were also many religious references in the original text. Hatice, a very devout Muslim, speaks: “Allah`a Şükür, gab es eine türkische Lehrerin in der Schule, die sich um mich gekümmert hat” (Koppstoff 68). My

translation reads: “Allah`a Şükür<sup>8</sup> there was a Turkish teacher at the school who looked after me” (34). Later she says: “Ich bin jetzt im dritten Semester, und Inscha`allah werde ich meine Familie nicht enttäuschen. Ich freue mich sehr, daß ich es Allah`in izniyle überhaupt so weit gebracht habe” (69). My translation reads: “I am now in the third semester and Inscha`allah<sup>9</sup> I will not disappoint my family. I am very happy that I Allah`in izniyle have come this far at all” (35). I kept all the religious references intact because it lends a certain element to the original as well as the translated text. One of the biggest bones of contention between Germans and Turkish immigrants is the religious differences. Therefore, if all of the Allahs had been changed to Gods then it would have masked one of the biggest issues between the two groups.

Finally there are all of the German proper names that were left intact in the translation. Çağıl speaks about the Turks who want to become German: “Diese Leute verkaufen ihre türkische Seele für einen billigen Kneipenbesuch beim Schumann`s, legen ihre türkischbunte Kleidung ab für eine Schwarzwießpose auf einem Zeit-Magazin-Doppelblatt...” (Koppstoff 59). My translation reads: “These people sell their Turkish souls for a cheap visit to the bar at Schumann`s, they discard their colorful Turkish clothing for a black-and-white pose in a Zeit-magazine centerfold...” (30). Here both the name Schumann and the reference to Zeit-magazine, a German weekly newspaper, are meant to represent typical German institutions. Schumann is a very typical German name and therefore these people to whom Çağıl is referring who want to “sell their Turkish souls” in order to become a typical German. *Die Zeit* is a highly read weekly and anything published in it—here the poses of wannabe Germans—is very

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<sup>8</sup> Turkish for “Allah be thanked”

<sup>9</sup> Arabic for “If Allah wills”

mainstream. *Die Zeit*, as a result, becomes synonymous with the common Germans. Consequently, the simple association with *Die Zeit* indicates that these people dearly want to be a part of German mainstream society. Thus, both references were left intact because the readership that I am translating for should understand the implications.

Foreign words in a translated text are not left in simply to give it an exotic flavor. Rather, most serve very important contextual purposes. Whether it is the word *kilim* that invokes the historical roots of all Turks living in Germany or using the word “Alemania” instead of “Germany” to highlight their alienation from society, all of these words are used to make pointed criticisms about themselves, German culture or many other things. The religious references to Allah further emphasize the religious differences between Turks, who are mostly Muslim, and Germans, who are usually either Protestants or Catholics. Finally, just like the Turkish cultural references, the German proper names are used to invoke German mainstream society. All of these foreign elements have a function within the original text and also within the translated text. Therefore in order to translate the text faithfully they must remain intact in both the original and in my translation.

#### Capturing the Essence of the Original Text

The final option in translation theory lies somewhere in between strict literalism and complete imitation. It concerns itself with being faithful to and capturing the sense of the original text. Steiner defines it as such: “The second (theory of translation) is the great central area of ‘trans-lation’ by means of faithful but autonomous restatement. The translator closely reproduces the original but composes a text which is natural to his own tongue, which can stand on its own” (253). This definition focuses on capturing the sense of the original translation, yet not forgetting that the translated text must be an

independent entity within the target language. It assumes that the ultimate target readership will be lay people and not some polyglot or academic comparing the translation with the original. However, the definition from Steiner, while having taken the proper steps away from literalism in translation, comes across as enormously vague and fails to develop any particulars or details which might help the student attempting to try his/her hand at translation. To expand on the definition from Steiner and further refine it, a new model from the German theory of translation—

*Übersetzungswissenschaft*—has recently come to light. In *A Critique of Translation Theory in Germany*, Snell-Hornsby writes:

“What is dominant in the series of new approaches recently presented in Germany...is the orientation towards *cultural* rather than linguistic transfer; secondly, they view translation not as a process of transcoding but as an *act of communication*; thirdly, they are all oriented towards the *function* of the *target text* (prospective translation) rather than prescriptions of the source text (retrospective translation); fourthly, they view the text as an *integral part of the world* and not as an isolated specimen of language” (81-82).

Instead of simply seeing language as a vehicle for dressing up different thoughts without any attention paid to cultural implication, like in the early days of translating, this new theory focuses on those cultural signifiers, which are fundamentally important to the original text. It finally acknowledges that language does not occur in some cultureless vacuum. Focusing instead on language as a tool for communication, it requires the translator to acknowledge cultural differences within texts and address them in the course of translating. This definition does not assume that the text will play the exact same role

in the originating language as it will in the target language; it focuses more on its place within the target language than that of the original. Finally, it recognizes that all texts are intrinsically bound to each other, to all languages, and to the world. Even more current theories still acknowledge that the focus of the translation is on the final product. In *Thinking Through Translation*, Jeffrey Green writes: “Ideally, the translator should write the way his client would have written were he using the target language in the same situation” (13). Ultimately, however, translation theory has descended into the realms of uncertainty. Green writes: “Since translation is a philosophical impossibility, it is an apt illustration of the inevitable gap between idea and experience, even the experience of ideas” (180). Even though a perfect translation is impossible, it still represents the abyss between the actual event itself and the written description.

There are many small steps between the first stages of translating, which may consist of hand-scribbled notes, to the final translated product. First it is necessary to address the structural and syntactical differences any translator will encounter when translating from German to English. This includes word order of sentences and the role of compound words in German. From there I will move into the cultural realm, by examining and comparing colloquial phrases and proverbial expressions in both languages to show how I translated them as “acts of communication.” Then I will discuss word choice in two different veins: the first will contrast the differences between prospective translations and retrospective translations, while the second will concern itself mostly with matters of style in word choice—formal vs. informal. Finally, I will sum up with a few notes on the cultural aspects of translating this text.



When starting to translate a German text into English the very first thing that one must do is to rearrange the word order. There is no way to avoid this first step due to the nature of the German language, which waits until the very last second, by finally relinquishing all of the verbs, to let you know where it is going. Edwin and Willa Muir, the great translators of much of Kafka's work into English, write: "As a beginning, one must change the order of the words, and to do that with a great prose work is to commit an irremediable yet unavoidable injury against it" (93). One example is from Reşide's testimonial: "Ich erinnere mich, daß sie ihre Kleider am Leib zerriß und in Fetzen hinausstürmte und ihren Freigang wie ein meschuggener Truthahn genoß. Sie war im Gesicht naß, und es war eine ihrer Marotten, mit einem Filzstift ein drittes Auge auf ihre Stirn zu zeichnen" (Koppstoff 93). In order to convey to an English speaker exactly how this sentence is set up it is necessary to simply translate it hyper-literally but in the order presented here. It would read: "I remember myself (reflexive verb), how she her clothing on the body (here, to the skin) ripped and in tatters out stormed and her freewalk like a crazy turkey enjoyed. She was in the face wet, and it was one of her habits, with a feltpen a third eye (direct object) on her forehead to draw." Immediately it is obvious why it is necessary to switch the word order around. Otherwise, you would have a sentence that is barely recognizable as English. My translation reads: "I remember how she ripped her clothes down to the skin and stormed out in her tatters and enjoyed her walk of freedom like a crazy<sup>10</sup> turkey. Her face was wet, and it was one of her habits to draw a third eye on her forehead with a felt tip pen" (44). Even the simplest of

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<sup>10</sup> Despite the fact that the English word "meshugga" comes from the German word "meschuggene," I chose not to use it because it is a distinctly Yiddish term that has not crossed over into mainstream American English.

sentences require the translator to play linguistic musical chairs in order to achieve a sentence that remains faithful to the original yet is natural to the target language—not necessarily just understandable.

Another important structural aspect of German is the formation of words. Due to the nature of the German language, it is possible simply to create new words by combining two or more already familiar ones. “Spielemöglichkeiten” (Zaimoglu 56) which literally means playopportunities (one word), translates into English as “opportunities for playing” (27). “Gehirnmasturbationsejakulat.” (Zaimoglu 60) translates literally as mentalmasturbationejaculation, but would be paraphrased as “the ejaculation of mental masturbation” (31). Although an unusual combination of words in German as well, I chose not to reenact the same word structure in the English translation because I felt that much of the content was already foreign enough. The power of English to form new words is not nearly as inventive and creative as that of the German language and to leave the English translation as “mental masturbation ejaculation” would be to force the reader to consume almost impossible phrasing to the point that it detracts from already foreign content. The phrase, “the ejaculation of mental masturbation” already strikes myself, as a native speaker of English, as enough of an odd statement. Thus, it is necessary to take the words apart and review the individual pieces in German before translating them into English, and although not a perfect translation, it captures the sense of the compounded word.

Another difference between any two languages is colloquial phrases. Colloquial phrases in German differ markedly from those in English in both style and structure. When Nilgün writes, “Mein Bruder...hat sowas gedreht in der Spielothek.” or literally,

“my brother...was turning something in the arcade,” she doesn’t mean that he was physically turning something (Zaimoglu 125). Rather, the English phrase, “be up to something,” captures the sense of what she really intends. Instead of “shutting your trap,” like you do in English, Mihriban refers to, “die Klappe halten” (Zaimoglu 41). Literally, it means, “hold the flap,” but can be used as anything similar to “shut your mouth,” or “shut up.” These are just two examples of the thousands of tiny differences between English and German colloquial phrases. The literal translations show the stylistic differences between the two languages. Colloquial phrases in English differ from their literal meanings as well. “Shutting your trap” conjures up somewhat pirate-like images of the traps on ships. Similar to proverbial phrase, which will be discussed in the next paragraph, translating colloquial phrases from one language to another involves matching the “sense” of the phrase rather than the actual words. Although neither language expresses the exact same phrases in the exact same way, both convey the same “sense” whether it be literally “turning something” or “being up to something.”

A part of viewing translating as an act of communication requires the translator to find similar expressions and proverbs in the target language as implied in the original. If the proverb, “A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush,” comes up in the original then it is necessary to try and find a fairly equivalent proverb in the target language. In German it would be, “Ein Spatz in der Hand ist besser als eine Taube auf dem Dach.” It literally translates as, “A sparrow in the hand is better than a pigeon on the roof.” Both have a similar meaning, in that what you have in reality is better than what you might have hypothetically. Towards the end of the testimonial by Mihriban, she states: “Es bringt nichts, die Leute zu beneiden, die das alles in die Wiege gelegt bekommen haben.

Man hat ja nicht mehr Geld, weil man die Reichen beneidet” (Koppstoff 46). “die Leute...,die alles in die Wiege gelegt bekommen haben” means, “the people, who had everything laid in their cradle.” The basic definition is that these people were born with privilege; they have not had to fight for everything. A similar expression in English is, “to be born with a silver spoon in your mouth.” It implies the same meaning: one is born into luxury. Therefore, the appropriate translation for the entire phrase reads: “It doesn’t help to envy those people who were born with a silver spoon in their mouth. You don’t have any more money because you envy the rich” (Hilles 17). This is an act of communication because it focuses on the implied definition of the saying and not on what is literally meant. The English expression of “being born with a silver spoon in your mouth” communicates relatively the same thing as the German expression of “having everything laid in your cradle.”

When translating a text in light of a definition that focuses more on the cultural than the linguistic, the translator must focus on capturing the sense. Oftentimes, the literal translation of a word does not fit into the larger contextual scheme when translated. Simple cultural differences lead speakers of a language to favor a word that literally may not fit in in the same sentence when translated. The translator must make allowances for these types of situations and not allow him/herself to linger or obsess over dictionary definitions that rule out words that, in the end, may prove to be more fitting than any literal translation. In Devrim’s testimonial, she uses the German word “Nutzeffekt” repeatedly. The definition of “Nutzeffekt” is “useful effect,” or in the technical rendering, “effectiveness” (Scholze-Stubenrecht 565). When inserting either of these definitions into the larger contextual framework translated into English, neither of them

fit very well: “Does something have a (useful effect) or does it have no (useful effect)? Is the (useful effect) of use, does it have a core, or is it hollow...” (47). It is the task of the translator to find a word in the target language that sounds natural to the ears of the target audience. In light of the theory of translation that I ultimately ended up using, I chose to focus on the word and how it will “function” within the text—prospective translation—and not necessarily how the original text stipulates the use of the word—retrospective translation. The term “useful effect” sounds extremely foreign and would not usually be utilized by a native speaker under these circumstances. After fishing around and looking at all the contexts within which the word “Nutzeffekt” is used, I came to the conclusion that the proper translation would be “purpose.” The purpose of something is very similar to its useful effect in that both are the reason behind which one would utilize something. A person uses a lawnmower to mow the lawn because its useful effect is that it cuts the grass. Likewise, the purpose of a lawnmower is to cut grass. Purpose captures the sense of “Nutzeffekt” and is frequently used in the English language. Therefore, Devrim’s testimonial in English reads: “Is the purpose of use, does it have a core, or is it hollow, or is the purpose some kind of tingling excitement so that someone is able to say ‘I suddenly got goose bumps’ when they are referring to purpose?” (47).

Word choice is not just important in contrasting prospective translations with retrospective translations but is also a huge determiner of style. In order for a translation to be faithful to the original, one must make sure not only to match the sense what is being said, but also to match the style in which it is being said. For example, in English a college party does not equal a soiree. With each term, one expects something completely

different. A college party is normally very informal, the atmosphere is laid back, dress is casual, and the alcohol is usually fairly inexpensive due to the paucity of money in college circles. A soiree on the other hand brings to mind images of ballroom dresses and martini glasses, something altogether different from the college party. The lesson is this: If a word in the original has the same connotations as a college party, the word you want to use in the translation is not soiree. An example from my translation. Nilgün talks about her home: “Ich lebe schon seit 17 Jahren in diesem Kaff” (Zaimoglu 125). My translation reads: “I have lived in this dump for seventeen years already” (51). The German word “Kaff” has a fairly negative connotation to it, as seen in the translation “dump.” There are, however, other ways to express the word “dump,” as in a boring, provincial place. A few synonymous words are “to live out in the sticks” and “nowheresville.” “Nowheresville” does not have a very strong negative connotation. It lends itself almost to the apathetic rather than to the negative. On the other hand, the problem with most of the English synonyms other than “dump” is that they all usually imply a staggering sense of distance and they hint at elements of the cowboy or “backwoods” lifestyle. The English sense of a small country town is in stark contrast with the German sense, in that space and distance play a much larger role. One can “live in the sticks” or out in the “backwoods,” but neither refers specifically to a small town although the implication that it is boring is still there. Finally, “dump” fits because it is at once negative without being completely apathetic, yet it does not penetrate into the realm of large distances like “living out in the sticks” does. Finally it is an informal word and fits in with the rest of Nilgün’s testimonial.

One of the most difficult aspects of translating this text was the fact that it was a reflection of German culture through the eyes of women acclimated to Turkish ways. The translator is not simply working through one cultural barrier but two since it involves a minority culture—the Turks—entrenched in a larger, majority culture—the Germans. Many of the testimonials dealt with how they felt Germans viewed them and how they should be viewed. Çağıl writes about what Turks are not:

Was sie sich da ins Land holten, werden sie früh genug herausbekommen. Ja, die Bastarde kommen, aber nicht mit Döner, Exportladenkitsch, Multikultigetrampel tränenreicher »In der Fremde«-Literatur und schlechtem Rap, goldbehangen im Sultanschick und anatolische lieder lallend, wie's der Deutsche gern hätt, wenn überhaupt... (Zaimoglu 61).

My translation reads:

“What this country sent for, they will find out soon enough. Yes, the bastards are coming but not with döner kebabs, imported kitsch, multi-cultural fluff of tearjerking literature from abroad and bad rap, festooned with gold in sultan-chic and babbling Anatolian songs, as the Germans would like it, if at all...” (32).

This passage deals with the cultural images and stereotypes that Turks have to deal with everyday. The first line is in response to a common saying that emphasizes Germany's lack of forethought when they first started recruiting guest workers: “Wir holten Gastarbeiter und es kamen Menschen.“ or “We sent for guest workers and people came instead” (Zaimoglu 61). Then Çağıl lists all of the things that Turks are famous for in Germany: ethnic cuisine, heart-breaking literature about experiences in Germany, cheap

imported bric-a-brac, and stereotypes of Muslims and the people from Anatolia.

“Exportladenkitsch” literally means exportstorekitsch, but here the meaning is cultural in nature and refers to imported goods—here, kitsch, knick-knacks, etc.—from Turkey.

“Multikulti” means multicultural mix while “getrampel” literally means stamping but here it takes on the sense of being unimportant and would translate into the English as “multi-cultural fluff.” The only slight change that I made, other than to simply translate the passage, was to add in the word kebab after döner. Döner kebabs are a special type of kebabs that are typical to Turkish cuisine, yet I do not expect the readership for whom I translated to be highly versed with Turkish culture. Therefore, I added in the word kebab to further clarify what a döner is without changing the sense or meaning of the text. I further refined it in order to keep the text as an “act of communication,” rather than confuse the reader with a foreign word that may or may not be familiar.

In conclusion, we have seen that literalism focuses too heavily on the linguistic elements of the text while ignoring the cultural. On the opposite end, imitation is much more faithful culturally, but has been used by many in order to abuse their privileges as an intermediary between two languages. Finally, there is the path between the two, that of “trans-lation.” This path, in light of the recent additions to translation theory in Germany, *Übersetzungswissenschaft*, focuses on the cultural rather than the linguistic, looks at translations as an act of communication, and favors the function of the target text rather than the directions of the original. Translating German into English is an attempt to reconcile the “sense” and direction of the original text with the different structure and word order of the English language. It is necessary to move into the realm of the cultural and use translation as an act of communication. Proverbial expressions in German



become similar proverbs in English. The focus is not on the literal definition but rather implied meaning. Words like “Nutzeffekt” are changed in order to fit in as a function of the target text instead of focusing back on the original text. The focus when translating was not on the linguistic but rather on the cultural. This text was doubly difficult since these women experience their lives not solely in one culture but in between two different cultures.

### Conclusion

Human beings have used the tool of translation ever since they started interacting with people of different cultures and languages. Up until the rise of literacy among the general populations, most of the translating was done orally (Riccardi 75). However, at that time in Europe most of the educated population spoke two or more languages and would not have required an intermediary to translate for them anyway. The powers of authority, the nobility and the priesthood, were the ones who decided what to translate, who would translate it, and exactly how it would be translated. The emphasis was not on culture but rather on taking thoughts in one language and re-creating them in another language or “dressing them up in another language.” It was assumed possible to express thoughts perfectly in any other language regardless of the original connotations. They did not strive for equivalence through literalism necessarily, as I later defined it, rather they simply ignored the implications that culture could have on a text.

Literalism, in the sense that it is possible to find equivalents for words, exists still to this day in computer translations. While it is possible to find near equivalents for individual words, it is much more difficult finding large passages that are equivalents of

each other. Even near-equivalents are not perfect translations. Similar words in different languages have varying connotations and cultural implications. The prototypical image for any word in one language will most likely be vastly different from the prototypical image of the same translated word in another. Also, there is no translation that is capable of translating the history of the word as well. Definitions of words are not stagnant. They are constantly changing and taking on new connotations.

On the opposite side of literalism is imitation. A translator imitates when he/she does not remain faithful to the original text. This can include adding things in, taking things out, or simply altering things so that the translation is not an accurate restatement of the original. Most of the time, translators that deemed their own cultures superior (i.e. Victorian England) would take liberties with texts from cultures or languages that were deemed inferior or the original too tasteless for the target audience. Oftentimes this meant exchanging foreign elements in the text for the more familiar elements of the target culture. Whether to leave foreign elements in the translation or take them out is solely dependant on the discretion of the translator. If he/she feels that the target audience would understand the foreign elements then it is best to simply leave them in. However, if it impairs the target readership's understanding of the translated text, the translator should find other cultural equivalents for them.

Due to the nature of the text that I translated, I chose to leave all of the foreign elements in. The women from my translation live in between two worlds: The German and the Turkish. This becomes apparent when they pepper their testimonials with Turkish words and phrases. Words left in Turkish take on an added cultural emphasis for the text whether religious or cultural. On the same note, they also used German proper

names to symbolize mainstream German culture. Both Turkish words and phrases and German proper names are used to symbolize the duality and cultural overlapping that is their reality. The text itself becomes a symbol of living between two worlds.

Finally, there is the last category in translation theory. It focuses neither on strict literalism nor on imitation. Rather, it concerns itself with a faithful rendition of the original text whose audience is neither an academic nor a polyglot but a lay audience. The German theory of translation—*Übersetzungswissenschaft*—further refines the definition by orienting it towards the cultural, viewing translation as an act of communication, and focusing on the orientation towards the function of the target text and not the directions of the original. This is the theory that I followed most closely and in turn analyzed my translation in light of it.

When a translator begins translating any German text it is necessary to go over the entire text and focus on the style, feeling, and intent of the text. Unfortunately, since German and English word structure and grammar are so different from each other, it is necessary for the translator to change sentences. Thus, the translator must try and produce a satisfactory translation to convey the intentional, perhaps very careful word order in the original language. After that I turned towards the cultural realm of my translation. Since this definition of translation theory views translation as an act of communication, colloquial phrases and proverbial expressions are left in but equivalent expressions and phrases are then found in English. Colloquial phrases are rewritten and translated for the target audience. I looked for the implied meaning of proverbial expressions and then attempted to match an English expression to it with a similar implied meaning. This is also the same method used for individual words. It is not the

literal definition that I looked for; rather it is the implied definition and function within the translated sentence. Word choice is also extremely important in translating. In order to have a prospective translation one must focus on the function of the target text and ask whether or not it is the proper word for the situation. Word choice also heavily affects the style of the translation. In order to remain faithful in capturing the sense of a text, the translator must also capture the style of the text. This requires the translator to not only be very familiar with the connotations of the original text but also with the connotations of the words he/she uses in the target text. Finally, one of the reasons that translating this text was so difficult is that it is not the product of one culture. These women are in a very hard yet special position within German society. They are a minority group living within a much larger majority. They are constantly moving across invisible cultural lines, dealing with expectations from both Turkish and Germany society, and fending off the blows of societal racism. The original text mixed elements of both Turkey and Germany placing itself not within either group but above and beyond both. My goal in translating this text was to accurately represent these women and their lives.

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