

**The Impossibility of Return:  
Güney Dal and the Exilic Condition**

Mert Bahadır Reisoğlu  
Koç University

---

*This article examines the role exile plays in the works of the first generation of Turkish German authors by focusing on Güney Dal. The first part of the article deals with Güney Dal's interviews with other Turkish German authors in 1983. Even though the authors interviewed by Dal do not consider themselves exiles, I show that exilic consciousness is marked not only by the impossibility of returning home, a condition that the authors interviewed deny sharing with exiles, but also by the fact that the exilic subject is already displaced within and is as such unable to be at home. In the second part, I interpret Dal's novel Eine Kurze Reise nach Gallipoli (1994), which he wrote after moving back to Turkey, as a work that showcases this insurmountable uprootedness and argue that Dal's modernist novel shows that the disintegration of exilic consciousness can establish a link with political and ethical issues beyond the reach of the isolated and paranoid subject.*

---

*Mert Bahadır Reisoğlu is an assistant professor in Comparative Literature at Koç University. He completed his Ph.D. at New York University with his dissertation on Turkish German literature and media technologies and published on Emine Sevgi Özdamar, Orhan Pamuk and Friedrich Kittler. His research interests are Turkish-German literature and cinema, contemporary German literature and theater, media theory, modernism and the avant-garde.*

---

In 1983 Güney Dal interviews other Turkish authors living in Germany for the literary journal *Gösteri*. The central theme of his inquiry is whether these authors consider themselves exiles. Dal suggests that this question is crucial, since there has never been a period in which so many Turkish authors lived abroad. The authors interviewed by Dal reject the claim that they are in exile, since they all believe that they can return to Turkey whenever they want. Written in the wake of the political upheavals and coups of '71 and '80, Dal's question is a powerful reminder for all the others of the fragile condition in which the authors and artists living abroad find themselves. It is also surprising that such an invitation comes from an author like Dal, who, both in his works and in his life, remains detached from mainstream politics, unlike authors like Fakir Baykurt, whom he also

interviews. Unlike Baykurt, for example, the reasons for his emigration are not explicitly political but rather personal, since he followed his wife when she found a job with Siemens in Berlin, although his preference would have been to live in France since he studied French literature. He worked for Sender Freies Berlin in 1978, and collaborated with Yüksel Pazarkaya in publishing the Turkish-German literature review *Anadil*. Currently he lives in Çanakkale. Dal's interrogation into the exilic condition reveals more about his own work, which is marked by an experience of exile, the definition of which is broader than what the other authors in the interviews understand: Exile for Dal is a condition that reveals the homelessness of the modern subject, as is also reflected in the schizophrenic narratives of Dal, which are remarkably different in tone and style from the works of the other Turkish authors writing in Germany during the same period. The homelessness that is central to Dal's work is an inevitable outcome of modernity and cannot be cured by a return to the homeland. When Dal asks about exile in the interviews, his goal is to investigate the links between the experience of the 'collective,' namely the guest workers in Germany, and the experience of the displaced author. His later novel *Gelibolu'ya Kısa Bir Yolculuk*, I argue in the second part of this article, can be seen as an attempt to broaden the definition of exile and to problematize the idea of returning to the home country altogether.

In his introduction to the interviews, Dal reveals his interest in the concept of exile by referring to a talk given by Ernst Bloch in New York in 1939. This is the talk entitled "Zerstörte Sprache – Zerstörte Kultur" that Bloch gave for the Schutzverband Deutscher Schriftsteller, in which he emphasizes the centrality of language to human understanding. For the German intellectual, Bloch points out in this speech, the experience of emigration cannot erase the influence of the German language on his or her understanding of the world: "Sicher ist jedoch, daß der Zufall, der uns in die oder jene Sprache hineingeboren werden ließ, später durch keinen anderen 'Zufall' korrigiert werden kann, auch nicht durch Emigration. Die Sprache wird dem Menschen sehr bald ein Stück seiner selbst, und eines, das - in der Mehrzahl der Fälle - am wenigsten abgetan werden kann" (280).<sup>1</sup> During the reign of the Nazi regime, German language either becomes the means of

deception or is severed from its former life and has to lead an alienated life in the experience of migration (292). This alienation of language in its loss of *Heimat* also has an effect on the state of German literature: “Was würdig ist, deutsche Literatur genannt zu werden, ist zur Zeit ohne Volk. Sie lebt nicht einmal mehr unangefochten rings um Deutschland oder gar in deutschem Sprachgebiet” (292).<sup>2</sup> The estrangement of German literature relies on the estrangement of its authors in exile as well as on the absence of its readership, a situation akin to the state of Turkish authors who have migrated to Germany. At the end of his speech, Bloch expresses his hope for the contact between German literature and a foreign land, a “young continent” with different ideological and cultural configurations, to which German authors in exile will ultimately have to respond (295). But he is quick to highlight that what they write as German intellectuals, even when their works are translated, will always remain German and will convey the influence of German language on their thinking (299).

In the remarks with which he introduces the interviews, Dal focuses more on this experience of estrangement and exile than on the question of language’s central role in mediating between our experiences and our environment. He quotes the main problem that Bloch mentions at the beginning of his speech:

Wie können wir als deutsche Schriftsteller in einem anderssprachigen Land das Unsere tun, uns lebendig erhalten? Wie können wir wirtschaftlich unseren Ort finden, wie können wir politisch-kulturell unsere Aufgabe erfüllen? Man kann Sprache nicht zerstören, ohne in sich selber Kultur zu zerstören. Und umgekehrt, man kann eine Kultur nicht erhalten und fortentwickeln, ohne in der Sprache zu sprechen, worin diese Kultur gebildet ist und lebt. (277)<sup>3</sup>

This question resonates with Dal, who later in 1988 echoes Bloch in expressing his wish to be the chronicler of emigration and to record the pains of the “Vertreter des Exils in unserer Zeit, dessen Geschichte Tausende von Jahren zurückreicht. Seit über 25 Jahren leiden sie - bewusst oder unbewußt - unter der sozialen und kulturellen Entwurzelung” (“Chronik” 17).<sup>4</sup> His earlier investigation into the

uprooted condition of the exiled author implies that the chronicler is not situated outside the history he writes about. Dal seems to interpret the experience of migration not only as an individual problem, but as a problem that should concern the literary community in Germany and in Turkey. The questions he puts to his interviewees reveal this interpretation of exile, since they concern the differences between writing in Turkey and in a different country, the authors' understanding of modernity and the way it changed after emigration, whether they consider themselves in exile and if a new exilic or migrant literature is emerging in Germany.

If the condition of being an exile hinges on the impossibility of returning to the home country, then neither Dal nor the others would qualify as exiles. This impossibility is related closely to what Ahmad S'adi calls "an attendant project of return, which underscores its temporality. Exiles who lack a program, notion, or even actual dream of return are likely to succumb to the demands and contingencies of the everyday and become immigrants and eventually citizens of a new country" (217). The well-known 'in-betweenness' of the exile, then, also refers to a discrepancy between the actual state of affairs, in which the exile's real conditions prevent him or her from returning, and his or her state of mind, for which there is the future possibility of a homecoming. The authors questioned by Dal display this conflict in their self-assessment, but in their denial of being in exile they always refer to their actual conditions in the everyday life in Germany. Fakir Baykurt, for example, states that he can return anytime he wants. He claims that he can renew his passport whenever he wants to and that his relationship with his home country is not purely imaginary but concrete, since he still has a house, friends, relatives and children back in Turkey, while Fethi Savaşçı says that they are not the Young Turks (Dal, "Almanya'da Yaşayan Türk Yazarlar" 85; 89). Gültekin Emre makes a similar argument when he says that their relations with Turkey still continue, since they send money to their relatives, invest in Turkey and send their children there for education, while Orhan Murat Arıburnu makes a universalist claim to global citizenship to deny the claims of an exilic status (88, 91). Adnan Binyazar argues further that that label of 'exilic literature' is a marketing strategy used by authors who are unable to understand the reality of guest workers

(87). Among the authors interviewed, only Özdemir Başargan and Tezer Kırıl consider themselves in exile, but while Tezer Kırıl claims that she is in exile everywhere in the world through a reversal of the universalist claims of Arıburnu, Özdemir Başargan mentions the economic conditions that drove him into exile (91, 94). While some of the authors like Binyazar do not distinguish between workers and authors, claiming that neither group is in exile, others like Mehmet Yıldız consider the situation of the guest workers as exilic, while considering themselves free to return (93).

The authors' responses to the question of the changes in their writing after migration also center on their surroundings: Adnan Binyazar says that in his everyday life in Berlin he feels like he is still living in Turkey and thus finds it difficult to learn German, while Fakir Baykurt links this lack of change in daily life to the lack of an exilic literature, since, he claims, it is impossible to live as an exile when one feels as if one is in one's home country (87; 85). As such, for most of the authors, their transitory state seems to be a preparatory stage for a truly diaspora literature, one which will faithfully represent the experience of Turks in Germany. The Turkish author, then, finds himself in a peculiar position in which he prepares the ground for a diaspora literature in Germany while at the same time he emphasizes the independence of writing from external political and historical circumstances. Fakir Baykurt claims that the challenges of writing are the same everywhere and that his writing has not changed ever since he has arrived in Germany. Because he spends most of his time writing in his room, the change of location has no effect on him (84). Adnan Binyazar is also of the same opinion, since, he claims, writing is independent from location (86). Orhan Murat Arıburnu goes even further by saying that the problems people face are the same everywhere in the world and that the author has to be attentive to them wherever he or she goes (90). For him, being modern is incompatible with this separation between being at home and being abroad (90). The term Dal and the other authors he interviews use is 'çağdaşlık' which can also be translated as 'contemporaneity', but from the responses of the interviewees it can be inferred that the term refers to discussions of modernity and the Enlightenment in Turkey.

For some authors, referring to modernity means a criticism of capitalist societies too. Fakir Baykurt, for example, claims that being modern means to accept change, to be progressive and to embrace modern ideals, which can also be seen in socialist countries, while Adnan Binyazar claims that being modern in capitalist and colonialist countries is also a challenge (83). Being a modern author means responding to this challenge of modernity, reflecting on the changes it gives rise to in different countries and finding the best ways to depict them in writing. The challenges of writing are considered to be universal, and the issues that authors deal with remain the same regardless of whether they are in exile or not. As I will show below, this issue of modernity is crucial to understanding the distinctions between terms such as exile and diaspora. It is also important in considerations of modernism, for despite the fact that the majority of authors consider themselves realists, for Güney Dal the link between modernity and modernism has always been crucial.

While there is a plethora of terms to refer to dislocation and relocation, theorists of exile approach the concepts differently. In his seminal essay on exiles, Said distinguishes between exiles, refugees, expatriates and emigres: The word 'exile', "carries with it...a touch of solitude and spirituality" while expatriates like Hemingway choose to live in a different country and as such, while they also feel "solitude and estrangement of exile" they are exempt from its "rigid proscriptions" (229). Michael Böss, however, notes by referring to Tabori's work on exiles that this distinction between "voluntary and involuntary exile" is difficult to sustain, while "the status of the exile is dynamic as it may change – 'from exile to emigrant or emigrant to exile' – as a result of altered circumstances" (16). Instead, what remains in the category of the exile is first and foremost "an interest and affection for her/his homeland", a sense of having been uprooted, and at its core "the divided nature of the exilic mentality: the exile's nostalgia, constant hope for return and sense of having been dislocated and estranged and of living outside, not only at home but also in the adopted country" (93). Böss also refers to the "unexpected and meaningless shock which causes an open and painful mental wound" and a sense of disempowerment that memories of home only exacerbate over time (32).

This feeling of loss and the attachment to the country of origin are also important for Hamid Naficy, who emphasizes the ways in which exiles – among whom he lists authors like James Joyce, Marguerite Duras, Ezra Pound and Samuel Beckett -- “memorialize the homeland by fetishizing it in the form of cathected sounds, images and chronotopes that are circulated intertextually in exilic popular culture” (12). While sharing the same traumatic origins, diaspora, for Naficy, is “necessarily collective”, “horizontal and multisited,” and as such privileges “collective memory, often of an idealized homeland” (14). Once again, the exile’s condition is determined by an unsurpassable solitariness that can only be held under control with the hopes of a future return. The impossibility and possibility of return are here intertwined closely, one reinforcing the other and keeping the exile in a liminal state that can easily disintegrate. Exiled from its ancient meaning of “enforced removal from one’s native land in accordance with an edict or sentence” the term ‘exile’ wanders into the unknown and becomes an ontological condition of humanity in modernity (Böss 16). In Tibot Dessewffy’s words, with modernity we come to recognize that “in the ‘homelessness’ or *Geworfenheit* we all become strangers” (353).

It is no accident that the primary representatives of this ontological exile are the modernist authors, as can be seen in the examples given by the theorists above. Writing on the surrealists in exile, Jacqueline Chénieux-Gendron claims that “any writer, as a poet, is exiled in language itself, in the language of communication; he creates a space in which he can write his own language. By definition, the situation of any artist is an interior exile” (164). In her article on the notion of estrangement in the works and biographies of Shkylovsky and Brodsky, both of whom experienced exile, Svetlana Boym makes the important distinction between two types of nostalgia that define the experience of exile. While the first one emphasizes ‘nostos’, depends on the imminent return to the homeland and is therefore “reconstructive and collective” as well as “utopian”, the second type of nostalgia is “ironic, fragmentary and singular” in its emphasis on estrangement and its acceptance of the “paradoxes of exile and displacement” (241). For Boym, the primary sources for the latter are modernist texts, which “problematize the three

roots of the word auto-bio-graphy – self, life and writing – by resisting a coherent narrative of identity, for they refuse to allow the life of a single individual to be subsumed in the destiny of a collective.” (242).

Opposed to the exile as an ontological category as represented by the modernist author and his aesthetics of estrangement is the collective. In the writings of the theorists mentioned above, in terms of displacement this opposite figure appears to be the refugee, or in Said’s terms, the dichotomy between Joyce and Nabokov and the “uncountable masses”. “Our age – with its modern warfare, imperialism, and the quasi-theological ambitions of totalitarian rulers –“ Said states, “is indeed the age of the refugee, the displaced person, mass immigration” (222). Throughout the essay, the invisible masses of undocumented people call for ethical responsibility and political action, to which the painful experience of the solitary exile can contribute. Said writes:

To reflect on exiled Muslims from India, or Haitians in America... you must leave the modest refuge provided by subjectivity and resort instead to the abstractions of mass politics. Negotiations, wars of national liberation, people bundled out of their homes and prodded, bussed or walked to enclaves in other regions: what do these experiences add up to? Are they not manifestly and almost by design irrecoverable? (224)

To understand ‘mass politics’ without the distortions of a melancholic and isolated self, one must leave the subjectivity in which one is already a refugee. This wording implies that the solitariness of the exilic subject is not an alternative to the fragile conditions of the masses of refugees, but is but one instance of the constant movement that characterizes the traumas of modernity, a temporarily stable – and relatively comfortable – positioning that allows the critic or the author to overcome the wounds of having been uprooted.

Interpreting the estrangement of the exile not with regard to an originary loss, “a condition of terminal loss” in Said’s words, that can be recovered but rather as an act of distancing oneself from one’s current state to recover from the traumas of modernity explains the main tension in Said’s article as stated right at the



beginning, namely the fact that “exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home” while at the same time it is the “potent, even enriching, motif of modern culture” (221). At the end of the essay, this dichotomy is resolved through the refusal of a stable home with Adorno’s dictum that “it is part of morality not to be at home in one’s home” (Adorno 39). Adorno’s condemnation of the home links its loss directly to the changes in modernity, in which “the bombings of European cities as well as the labour and concentration camps merely proceed as executors with what the immanent development of technology had long decided was to be the fate of houses” (39). The true home under these conditions of modernity, for Said, appears to be writing itself:

Much of the exile’s life is taken up with compensating for disorienting loss by creating a new world to rule. It is not surprising that so many exiles seem to be novelists, chess players, political activists, and intellectuals . . . The exile’s new world, logically enough, is unnatural and its unreality resembles fiction. (230)

Returning home becomes an impossibility in both senses: It is impossible to return home because the homeland will never be the same and the subject will never feel welcome, since the nostalgic reconstruction has always already been a fiction. And it is impossible to be at home, for the subject is already displaced within, constantly exiled within himself such that it is impossible for him to find any stability. “The constructed orderliness and universality of exilic narratives of ‘home’” that Böss refers to always appear to be in the process of disintegrating, while the “fetishization and nostalgic longing for the homeland’s natural landscape” that Naficy attributes to exilic representations of the home country is always threatened from within by the “claustrophobia and temporality” of the “paranoid structures of exile” that he ascribes to representations of the foreign lands in which the artist is exiled (Böss 31; Naficy 5). The instability and constant disintegration of ‘home’, as we will see in the case of Güney Dal’s works, can be disastrous for the lonely

subject, who, in Claudio Guillen's words, is not only banished from his home country, but also "from the present – or, even worse, from the future" (275).<sup>5</sup>

But I would also argue that this spiraling disintegration of exilic consciousness as exemplified in Dal's novels establishes a link with the mass politics and the massive catastrophes happening beyond the reach of the isolated subject. When Said posits exile as "an alternative to the mass institutions that dominate modern life" (thereby juxtaposing the masses and the institutional structures that regulate them in one word), or when Mufti interprets Said's solution as a critical effort to "assume the posture of minority," the dissolution of this self-exiled subjectivity within the narrative should be taken into account in modernist narratives (Said 233; Mufti 105). This, I would suggest, also implies a reinterpretation of the distinction between exiled and migrant writers, the difference between which, according to Carine Mardorossian, can be construed as the dichotomy between the "detachment" and "privileged status" of exiled writers as "in-betweens, mediators between two cultures" and the migrant narratives' contestation of this privileged position in their emphasis on "movement, rootlessness and the mixing of cultures, races and languages" (16). We can see the continuity between the two in Salman Rushdie's seminal article on the subject, in which he writes that as displaced authors they have been "forced...to accept the provisional nature of all truths, all certainties" in a modernist fashion but that the 'fragmentariness' that they experience even goes further than the ontological loss of home and certainty in modernism, since "the writer who is out-of-country and even out-of-language may experience this loss in an intensified form" (12-13).<sup>6</sup>

Being a chronicler of exile while also questioning one's positionality as exilic, then, reveals Güney Dal's awareness of the permeable – and to refer to the word *exile*'s etymology, jumpable and crossable – boundaries between mass politics and isolated and perhaps paranoid subjectivity. It may seem surprising that Dal, as an author who started his career in a realist mode with his earlier works such as *İş Sürgünleri* but later chose a more modernist mode of writing with more paranoid and schizoid undertones as in *Der Enthaarte Affe*, still saw himself as a

historian of the mass movements in the second half of the twentieth century. However, this self-appointed task showcases that his project aims to bring exilic loneliness together with the 'abstractions of mass politics' in a way that displaces the self from its 'modest refuge' of subjectivity and remembrance. This is why in Dal's work there is no home that can be construed as the melancholic's nostalgic object of desire. In this regard, I would propose that a late novel of his, *Gelibolu'ya Kısa Bir Yolculuk (Eine Kurze Reise nach Gallipoli*, published by Piper Verlag in 1994) is a good example of Dal's radical understanding of exilic writing, which eliminates distinctions between homeland and foreign countries without confining his writing to the ruminations of a lonely subject. First of all, the novel is structured just like *Der enthaarte Affe*, with two sections written by different people who are doppelgangers of each other. This schizophrenic form enables Dal to disseminate the sense of a stable self. But while in *Der enthaarte Affe* there was still the promise of a return to the homeland as a unitary self that has found itself finally through writing, *Gelibolu'ya Kısa Bir Yolculuk*, which entirely takes place in Turkey as a story of homecoming, shows the impossibility of coming home and finding oneself, even via writing. The locations in which the novel was written by Dal are indicated at the very end as 'Berlin-Istanbul-Berlin', once again proving that constant mobility is impossible to overcome.

The novel is the story of Burak Doğu (whose last name means the 'East') who decides to visit his childhood town, Gelibolu, in order to overcome his depression after receiving a letter from a childhood friend who tells him about his ex-girlfriend, Nermin. The first half of the novel gives us a glimpse of Burak's disturbed and suicidal psyche while he observes both himself and the changes in the town. Right at the beginning of the novel, we learn that Burak has suffered from alienation from childhood onward, had problematic relations with his parents and wanted to escape from Gelibolu with his ex-girlfriend Nermin who rejected these plans. This estrangement has only increased when he became a banker instead of an artist in order to earn enough money to buy art supplies. The alienation, as such, appears to be an originary condition rather than the result of displacement. Burak seems rather hindered in his movements due to his domineering mother,

because of whom he refuses a job opportunity in New York. As the person who is stuck and unable to move, Burak is the inner exile par excellence, for regardless of his location, be it Istanbul or Gelibolu, his loneliness is marked by alienation and detachment from his surroundings. The reason for his trip back to his hometown is not to recover the past that is lost (the wording of which, 'geçmiş zamanın peşinde', would also remind the reader of Proust) but to heal his "tired body and damaged nerves" (42).<sup>7</sup> The exhaustion of old age prevents him from construing his trip as a romantic escapade and his "wildness" prevents him from communicating with others (103). His difference from other people in town is also formulated in terms of the dichotomy between big cities and the provinces, since the narrator describes him as a "city neurotic" (116). While this is clearly visible in his dialogues with the people from his childhood throughout the novel or his conversation with the man sitting next to him in the bus, whose diatribe on contemporary politics he attempts to stop by asking him about suicide, this estrangement is depicted most effectively in the descriptions of the cities:

It was as if the city was stuck in the Middle Ages when people suffered from water shortage. There were rumors that there could be an epidemic of cholera or typhus, and it made people more afraid, suspicious and careful. They were already angry and had sullen faces. They smelled bad. They had let all the hair in their bodies grow as much as possible. These foul smells were so powerful that they could permeate anything and disrupt communication. (25)

The defining feature of Istanbul is the noise that is coming from everywhere, particularly from radios. At a time of inner migration, in which big cities in Turkey have changed drastically, Dal is describing the masses from an apathetic point of view that emphasizes the separation between the solitary and exiled subject and the uniform masses in constant movement.

The same dynamic can also be observed in Gelibolu, where the newcomer residents of Santral Street are described as "rude" since "the beautiful times had past when everyone knew everyone else, shared their troubles and joys" (77).

While this could easily turn into a nostalgic remembrance of the idealized past, in Dal's hands this initial observation is transformed into political parody: Tired of getting accused and insulted for being deaf, the new residents of the street, who have a tendency to speak very loudly, decide to see a doctor and prove that their ears are healthy. After the 'scientific measurements' done by a German technician who spends his time drinking beer in the city, it is revealed that the patients have indeed deficient hearing capacity, which their doctor Zeki tries to interpret by developing a grand theory about the deficiency of hearing in Turkish people – a trait that explains their unwillingness to 'lend their ears' to the changes in the world. At the end, the doctor discovers that the defect was caused by an electricity terminal. The residents withdraw their complaints against the party in power at the last minute, and the doctor is never seen again, possibly taken into prison as an anarchist. The yearning for a nostalgic past turns first into a parody of the solitary Turkish intellectual separated from the masses, and then to a total critique of society through satire.

The history that is uncovered in the first part novel is twofold: On the one hand, there is the brief mention of a history of escape. Whenever Burak goes to Gelibolu, he experiences the 'intertwinement of the past and the present" (45). But Gelibolu in the past, the narrator tells us, was inhabited by many minorities as well, while in the present, even the few members of those minorities whom Burak knew from his childhood have escaped to places like Buenos Aires and New York. As such, diasporic experiences of the collective are present in the narrative through their absence. As a former resident who has been unable to escape, the inner exile faces the impossibility of recovering the past. As such, Burak's own struggle to remember his past and to come to terms with it also ends in failure. This is the movement and the displacement that he experiences in the first half of the book: He realizes that while becoming a famous painter would be the final destination of his "sea voyage", he has run off course, such that now, he confesses, "perhaps the best 'direction' would be to have no direction" (27; 31). This constant mobility and lack of balance that are depicted in nautical metaphors contrast with the old angler Rasim, whose immobility is described with similar terms: "His eyes did not

see the docks. Perhaps there was no need to. As someone who had anchored and remained stuck in the best period of his life, he had no desire to sail further” (63). The sadness of the angler is also closely related to political problems, as the narrator informs us that the pollution of the Marmara Sea destroyed all the fish (64). The alternative to the constant movement and imbalance of the ‘city neurotic’, namely the life of a common man who has managed to settle, seems equally hopeless. Moreover, being settled also means involvement with local political issues such as pollution. Just when he realizes that he has failed in his mission to find himself through remembrance, he has an encounter with his doppelganger after he starts reading the papers the doppelganger was trying to mail before having a car accident.

The first half of the novel ends with this desperate encounter and loss of all hope, while the second, shorter part is comprised of the contents of these handwritten papers, namely the incoherent ramblings of a man who claims to travel from one nightmare to the other without being able to wake up. The records of these dreams signify a total loss of self and self-control, and the dreams center on getting lost in different parts of the world, which the narrator defines as a process of slow fragmentation of oneself and one’s body. Because of his constant travels, he writes, he will “slowly get crippled and destroyed piece by piece” (160). While Burak feels stuck in Gelibolu and in his life, the doppelganger loses his family life in deserts. The image of the desert, together with the man’s suspicions that he might be a prophet (another theme from *Der enthaarte Affe*) relays the experience of exile in biblical terms (193). The prophets, however, are now extinct, and this makes the narrator feel even more out-of-place. The narrator aims to warn the people as a prophet would and feels responsible for the catastrophes they encounter, but this ethical responsibility is made more difficult by the impossibility of communication, a state that defines the status of the narrator in modernist literature. The narrator’s dreams are also significantly more international than the first part of the novel: The narrator travels through many lands in different continents, has a conversation with a foreign journalist, and shows a keen awareness of the political issues all over the world. The man also travels through

time and “wakes up to the Ottoman Empire”, but this awakening is yet another nightmare. Just as in the first part of the novel, the multicultural nature of the Ottoman Empire is emphasized when the narrator refers to the intermingling of noises and shouts in Greek, Armenian and Hebrew (177). The Babylonian multiplicity of languages here merely contributes to the theme of inability to communicate that is one of Dal’s constant preoccupations. This multicultural experience is portrayed not in terms of harmony, but cacophony, in which the constant movement and confusion of the narrator take part. Constant dislocation and movement here are no longer only spatial but temporal, and history is a nightmare from which he wants to awake: “I awoke from one dream into another and I had no idea how I could wake up to my real life. And I had never travelled back in time in my dreams. And I could sense that this would end up in a catastrophe from my anxiety and from the constant pressure on my thighs by the need to take a piss” (180).

At the end, he mentions several contemporary political disasters such as AIDS and Chernobyl before meeting his doppelgänger, Burak. Political catastrophes have a direct impact on the body of the narrator, who shows symptoms of sickness right after seeing the news of Chernobyl on the TV (205): “I can see now that my destiny and life are nothing other than the sum of the catastrophes of human history. That means I will jump from one catastrophe to another every second and I will continue living while becoming a wreck because of these catastrophes” (191).

The book itself is an example of doubling of Güney Dal’s earlier novel, but while *Der enthaarte Affe* takes place in Germany, *Gelibolu’ya Yolculuk* takes place in Turkey. The identity split that happens in both novels as such is not only a result of being a guest worker in Germany, but a universal principle that underlies the modernist aesthetics of Dal. It is also through this split and schizophrenic disintegration that the narrator can establish a connection with what pertains to the ‘collective’ as it can be seen in the direct influence of global politics on the psyche of the narrator as well as the construction of the novel. The narrator expresses his

sense of duty towards the public, since as a prophetic figure he represents the conscience of the people, and as such he sees his predicament as a necessity, while he is not sure whether his message will be received by the people (205). Themes of isolation, solitariness and the confrontation between the melancholic individual and the mass give rise in Dal's novel not to a recuperation of this self or a newly gained certainty in the safety of this temporary refuge, but are used as a vehicle to disrupt this isolation in order to open the narrative onto disparate episodes of world history, in which the individual can no longer retain its comfortable immobility. The crises of the exilic subjectivity leads to an opening onto more massive and collective crises that can only be recorded in this schizophrenic bipartite structure.

Dal's *Gelibolu'ya Kısa Bir Yolculuk* completes the project that was started in his earlier novel *Der enthaarte Affe*. While the latter still revealed hopes of an imminent recuperation of subjectivity and the overcoming of the splitting, the former relinquishes this hope and exemplifies Boym's modernist nostalgia. As a repetition of the earlier novel with a difference, it can be seen as Dal's response to the question he asked in his interviews: The exilic condition of the author is insurmountable and undeniable, but it is this very alienation that will enable the author in exile to forge a link between the collective and the alienated author, as well as between the fractured experiences of the modern individual and political problems across the world. The exilic condition that underlies modernist narratives gives voice to this political and ethical responsibility whose assumption is impossible but also necessary.

---

<sup>1</sup> "It is however certain that the accident which lets us be born into this or that language cannot be corrected later with another 'accident' such as emigration. Language will be a part of one's self which cannot be dismissed easily in majority of the cases."

<sup>2</sup> "What merits to be called German literature lacks a nation at present. Even around Germany or in German-speaking areas German literature is not alive."



<sup>3</sup>“How can we do our part and keep ourselves alive as German authors in a country that speaks a foreign language? How can we find our economical place and how can we fulfill our political and cultural duty? One cannot destroy language without destroying culture itself. And conversely one cannot keep and cultivate a culture without speaking the language in which that culture is formed and in which it lives.”

<sup>4</sup> “representatives of exile in our times, whose history reaches back thousands of years. For the last 25 years they have been suffering – consciously or unconsciously – from social and cultural uprootedness.”

<sup>5</sup> The author is even banished from his own writing. In Denis Hollier’s Derridean interpretation of the term, writing itself is already “proof of the foreigner” (93). See Hollier.

<sup>6</sup> On a different note, I would also suggest that the distinction between postcolonialism and “continental comparativism” that Emily Apter analyzes relies on a similar set of attributes, but Apter notes that despite their differences, both critical schools emphasize “fractured subjectivity” and the “desire to belong to ‘narration’ as a substitute for ‘nation’” which shows the close links between subjective narratives (and theories) of disintegration and concerns with masses and mass institutions (89).

<sup>7</sup> The translations from the novel in this article are mine.

### Works Cited

- Apter, Emily. “Comparative Exile: Competing Margins in the History of Comparative Literature.” *Comparative Literature in the Age of Multiculturalism*. Ed. By Charles Bernheimer. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996. 86-96.
- Bloch, Ernst. “Zerstörte Sprache – Zerstörte Kultur.” *Politische Messungen Gesamtausgabe Band 11*. Berlin: Suhrkamp, 1985.
- Boym, Svetlana. “Estrangement as a Lifestyle: Shklyovsky and Brodsky.” *Exile and Creativity: Signposts, Travelers, Outsiders, Backward Glances*. Ed. Susan Rubin Suleiman. Durham: Duke University Press, 1998. 241-262.
- Böss, Michael. “Theorising Exile” *Re-Mapping Exile Realities and Metaphors in Irish Literature and History*. Ed. by Michael Böss, Irene Gilsenan Nordin and Britta Olinder. Aarhus University Press, 2006. 15-47.
- Dal, Güney. “Almanya’da Yaşayan Yazarlar.” *Gösteri: Sanat-Edebiyat*, 37 (1983), 82-97.
- Dal, Güney. “Chronik der Auswanderung.” *Eine nicht nur deutsche Literatur*. Ed. by Irmgard Ackermann and Harald Weinrich. Munich: 1986. 16-17.
- Dal, Güney. *Der enthaarte Affe*. Berlin: Piper Verlag, 1994.
- Dal, Güney. *Gelibolu’ya Kısa Bir Yolculuk*. Istanbul: Simavi Yayınları, 1994.

- 
- Dessewff, Tibor. "Strangerhood Without Boundaries: An Essay in the Sociology of Knowledge." *Exile and Creativity: Signposts, Travelers, Outsiders, Backward Glances*. Ed. Susan Rubin Suleiman. Durham: Duke University Press, 1998. 353-370.
- Guillen, Claudio. "On the Literature of Exile and Counter-Exile". *Books Abroad*, 50.2, 1976, 271-280.
- Hollier, Denis. "Letter from Paris (Foreign Mail)." *Exile and Creativity: Signposts, Travelers, Outsiders, Backward Glances*. Ed. Susan Rubin Suleiman. Durham: Duke University Press, 1998. 89-106.
- Mardorossian, Carine. "From Literature of Exile to Migrant Literature." *Modern Language Studies*, 32.2 (Autumn, 2002), 15-33.
- Mufti, Aamir. "Auerbach in Istanbul: Edward Said, Secular Criticism and the Question of Minority Culture." *Critical Inquiry*, 25.1 (Autumn, 1998), 95-125.
- Naficy, Hamid. *An Accented Cinema*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.
- Rushdie, Salman. *Imaginary Homelands*. London: Penguin Books, 1992.
- Said, Edward. *Reflections on Exile: And Other Literary and Cultural Essays*. Granta Books, 2012.
- Sadi, Ahmad H. "Representations of Exile and Return in Palestinian Literature," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 46 (2015), 216-243.
- Woodhull, Winifred. "Exile," *Yale French Studies*, 82, Post/Colonial Conditions: Exiles, Migrations, and Nomadisms, Volume 1 (1993), 7-24.