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How has Turkish Literature been received in Germany? Works translated from Turkish into German up to 2011.

In the past, translations of Turkish literature were rare in Germany, sometimes barely two or three books per year. Interested readers were familiar almost only with the satirical writer Aziz Nesin (1915-1995), with the writer of novels Yaşar Kemal (born 1922) or the poet Nâzım Hikmet (1902-1963). A new, bilingual selection of Hikmet's poetry has been published in 2008 under the German title "Die Namen der Sehnsucht" ("The Names of Yearning"). The volume has been translated by the poet Gisela Kraft; publisher was Ammann Verlag in Zurich.

In addition, starting with the seventies of the past century, so-called "Gastarbeiterliteratur" began to appear. This literature, either written by or concerned with migrant workers, who were euphemistically called "guest workers" in Germany often suffered from bad translation. Many of these texts were full of self-pity, which did not make them more popular with German readers.

Turkish aspirations to become a full member of the European Union have led to a new focus on "Turkish" topics. Islam attracts much attention in the German media, and Turkey is increasingly regarded as an Islamic country. It is in this context that Turkish literature becomes more and more popular. Therefore, many German publishers started offering Turkish authors: Feridun Zaimoğlu (born 1964) and Emine Sevgi Özdamar (born 1946) are being published by Kiepenheuer & Witsch, Osman Engin (born 1960) by dtv, Yaşar Kemal (born 1922) by the Unionsverlag located in Zurich, Switzerland, and Yadé Kara (born 1965) and Esmahan Aykol (born 1970) by Diogenes.

In autumn 2008, the fourth book by Aykol appeared, a detective story named "Scheidung auf Türkisch" ("Turkish divorce / Şüpheli bir ölüm"). Her female serial hero "Kati Hirschel" is based in Istanbul. There are not too many writers of detective stories in Turkey. One of the most prominent writers in this field is Ahmet Ümit, who presented his novel "Patasana" in 2008. His publisher is "blumenbar". Also we should not forget the writer of crime stories Çelil Oker with his Detektive Remzi Ünal. The four titles published so far, appeared in the paperback series "metro" at Unionsverlag, Zurich.

Meanwhile, the well-established Turkish authors found their readers in Germany. Still, looking at Turkish literature as a whole, the selection of works that were translated is rather accidental and far from being representative. This is one of the backgrounds for the project of the Robert Bosch Foundation and the Unionsverlag called "Türkische Bibliothek" ("Turkish Library / Türkiye Kitaplığı"). This series of 20 volumes which has been edited by Erika Glassen and Jens Peter Laut is meant to make authors that have not been translated so far accessible to a German speaking public. The time frame of those texts is from the beginning of the 20th century up to the present.

In the past years, the "Turkish Library" published mainly modern classics like Halid Ziya Uşaklıgil's novel "Verbotene Lieben" ("Forbidden Loves / Aşk-ı Memnu"), which came out in German in 2007, as well as Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar's main work "Seelenfrieden" ("Peace of Mind / Huzur"), which is another key work of modern classic Turkish literature. It has been published in 2008 also by the Unionsverlag. One more novel by Tanpınar (1901-1962) has been brought out by Hanser-Verlag (1901-1962) in the same year, "Das Uhrenstellinstitut" ("The Clock Setting Institute / Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü"). Other authors among the modern classics published by the

"Turkish Library" in the years 2007 to 2009 were Sabahattin Ali, Memduh Şevket Esendal and the below mentioned Halide Edip Adivar.

In 2008, the series "Turkish Library" has been continued with Murat Uyurkulak's (born 1972) novel "Zorn" ("Rage / Tol"). He and his works represent the most recent generation of authors. Among the younger and modern authors published in the series in the years 2005 to 2010 are Ayşe Kulin (born 1941) with "Der schmale Pfad" ("Bir Gün"), Ahmet Ümit (born 1960) " with "Nacht und Nebel" ("Sis ve Gece") and Aslı Erdoğan (born 1967) with "Die Stadt mit der roten Pelerine" ("Kırmızı Pelerinli Kent"). In addition to monographic works there have been published four anthologies with short stories, poems and folktales in the same series within the last five years.

"Glückseligkeit" ("Bliss / Mutluluk") is the title of Zülfü Livaneli's last novel. The author was born in 1946. "Glückseligkeit" is the third novel of the author that has been translated into German. The topic in this novel is a "crime of honor", a subject that has been treated in many contemporary works.

When the "Peace Prize of the German Booktrade" was awarded to Yaşar Kemal in 1997 and to Orhan Pamuk in 2005, Turkish literature received a strong impetus. And when Orhan Pamuk (born 1952) received the "Nobel Prize in Literature" one year later, this raised the attention even of those who had never before shown any interest in Turkish literature. In 2008, Nobel Prize winner Pamuk presented his new novel "Das Museum der Unschuld" ("Museum of Innocence / Masumiyet Müzesi"). In the years 2008 to 2011 most of the author's earlier novels have been translated for the German readers.

Yaşar Kemal, born in 1922, has presented in 2008 a new title in German called "Die Hähne des Morgengrauens" ("Roosters of Dawn / Tanyeri Horozları"). This book is about the massive resettlement of millions of Greeks and Turks as a result of the Treaty of Lausanne, concluded in 1923, which had immense repercussions on the individuals involved. A large number of earlier novels of the author have been published by Unionsverlag.

The success story of Turkish literature in Germany goes even further: Turkey was elected to become the "Guest of Honor" of the Frankfurt Book Fair 2008, thereby putting once more the focus on Turkish literature. Many works that were translated into German deal with Ottoman and more recent Turkish history. And books that deal with Islam in a wider sense also find interested readers. Nedim Gürsel surprised us in 2008 with Anatolian legends: "Sieben Derwische" ("Seven Dervishes / Yedi Dervişler") is the name of his traveller's account, in which he points out the influence of Islamic mystics that is still present in Turkey today.

Female authors are just as common as male ones in the Turkish literary scene, and they do not confine themselves to typical "female topics". Here are some examples of female authors translated into German: Halide Edip Adivar (1884-1964) is already a modern classic. In 2008, her novel of inner development "Die Tochter des Schattenspielers" ("The Clown and His Daughter / Sinekli Bakkal"), first published in 1935, appeared in German, published by Manesse in Zurich. Adalet Ağaoğlu's novel "Sich Niederlegen und Sterben" ("To Lie down and Die / Ölmeye yatmak") came also out in German as one volume of the series "Turkish Library". And in 2008, Claassen published Oya Baydar's new novel "Verlorene Worte" ("Lost Words / Kayıp söz").

No sketch of modern Turkish Literature is complete without mentioning the "Istanbul novels". Apart from Orhan Pamuk's books, Mario Levi's novel "Istanbul war ein Märchen" ("Istanbul was a Fairy Tale / İstanbul bir masaldı"), first published in 1999, has been brought out in German by Suhrkamp in 2008.

By now the large number of modern classics and samples of recent literature which has been brought on the market by leading German publishers give the German reader for the first time a vague idea of the vast scope of modern Turkish literature. Collections of short stories and poems, plus piles of travel books, journalism, audio books, literature for children and youths, and also a wide selection of non-fiction complete the picture. Developments of the last years have corrected the picture of Turkish literature. The search for oriental fairy-tales was – to some extent – replaced by more realistic views. As was to be expected, Turkish authors write on all those subjects that are in the centre of other literatures of this world.

So far, special impulses were needed to motivate German publishers to bring out larger numbers of German translations of Turkish literature. The award of the "Peace Prize of the German Book Trade" to Orhan Pamuk, the award of the "Nobel Prize in Literature" to the same author, and the role of Turkey as guest of honor of the Frankfurt Book Fair in 2008 are such impulses. The award of the Nobel Prize to Orhan Pamuk is a good example for the great impact that such an extraordinary event can have: Because of Pamuk's great popularity, every new novel or collection of essays by Orhan Pamuk is being translated and published more or less automatically. Even some early novels by this author that came out in Turkey long ago were subsequently published in German.

Unfortunately, there is no continuous willingness of German publishing houses to print Turkish literature. Again and again, special events are needed to raise the interest of German publishers in Turkish literature. It is necessary to find ways and means to bring some steadiness and continuity into this interest.

Ways and Means to Bring Some Steadiness and Continuity into the Interest of German Publishers in Turkish Literature.

These considerations led to the idea of establishing a program of a type that we have seen in other similar situations. I am referring to the "Tercüme Bürosu", which existed in the 1940s, and which had the purpose of translating classics of world literature into Turkish. I am also referring to the program „Schritte - Adımlar" of the S. Fischer Foundation, which initiates, coordinates, controls, and finances the translation of 50 works of German literature into Turkish. Admittedly, these two examples are initiatives for translations into Turkish, similar procedures could, however, also be applied for translations in the opposite direction. And one such example is already in existence: The „Türkische Bibliothek" („Turkish Library") of the Unionsverlag, which was sponsored by the Robert Bosch Foundation. But after 20 volumes with translations this program came to an end in 2010/11.

One major difficulty of such a venture is the canonization, i.e. the selection of representative works of a national literature, which is always a difficult and controversial task. Nevertheless, Turkey should have an interest in the reception of Turkish literature in Germany, covering adequately all tendencies and main topics of this literature, and rendering a representative selection. The following should be kept in mind: Samples taken from individual authors are often a more or less accidental choice; this should not be the case, the selection of texts should be institutionalized and follow a steady time planning.

These amounts to the following proposal: The Turkish government initiates a commission for the purpose of compiling a representative list of titles to be translated. The translation of these titles is especially supported. A „scout" will be appointed for each of the widely used major languages, who should keep official contact with publishers and editors, bring texts rec-

ommended for translation to their attention, pick out suitable publishing houses and translators, and ensure quality control of the translations. A „scout“ with an official function is likely to have easier access to publishers than an individual translator, who can succeed only if he already has an existing relationship and good contact to the publisher in question.

The program must be individually adapted to each target language. Existing translations should be reviewed and taken into account. Subsequently, it would be determined which works are missing in the language in question. The procedure can be compared to making a mosaic, step by step, the picture is slowly completed. Compared to the present TEDA program, support should be comprehensive and attractive enough to reduce the financial risk of the publisher to a bare minimum. In this way, the willingness to publish a work will be greatly enhanced. Furthermore, supporting measures are to be initiated to publicize the translated works, for example intensive contact with the press, organization of events with suitable partners (Goethe Institutes, literature houses etc.).

Publishers still can continue to apply for support for titles that they have selected themselves. The successful TEDA program should be continued.

Some Considerations for the Selection of Works to Be Translated into German

The publication of modern Turkish classics is incomplete because German readers are more interested in contemporary literature, i.e. the setting should be in our time. The reader does not want to familiarize himself with a different era in addition to trying to understand a different culture. That is why Livaneli's "Mutluluk" had better chances than, for example, works by Orhan Kemal.

When people are interested in the literature of a foreign country, their interest is often not strictly literary. They are more interested in all aspects of life in that country. If, for example, reports about "crimes of honor" make headlines in the press several times, some editors will be tempted to have a bias for titles covering this subject

One common basic demand of publishers is that the title has to be new. That is why, for example, a novel by Suat Derviş that she wrote in German in the year 1932 could not be published in German so far.

As a rule, German publishers prefer mostly novels. Short stories have little chance to be published, translated poetry almost none. A few poems and short stories, however, make it into literary magazines and periodicals. Some Works and Authors Translated into German and Published in the Years 2009 - 2011, or about to be Published Soon:

Baydar, Oya. Judasbaumtor. Erguvan kapısı. 2011.

Pamuk, Orhan. Cevdet und seine Söhne. Çevdet Bey ve oğulları. 2011.

Yaşar Kemal. Der Granatapfelbaum. Hüyükteki nar ağacı. 2011

Nedim Gürsel. Die Töchter Allahs. Allahın kızları. 2011.

Mağden, Perihan. Wovor wir fliehen. Biz kimden kaçıyorduk, Anne? 2010.

Livaneli, Zülfü. Roman meines Lebens. Ein Europäer vom Bosphorus. Sevdalım Hayat. 2011.

Mungan, Murathan. Städte aus Frauen. Kadından kentler. 2010.

Levi, Mario. Wo wart ihr als die Finsternis hereinbrach? Karanlık çökerken neredeydiniz? 2011.

Sait Faik. One volume with a collection of stories is planned for 2011.

Hundert Jahre Türkei. Zeitzeugen erzählen. [One hundred years of Turkish history. Time-witnesses about their history.] Ed by Hülya Adak and Erika Glassen. 2011.

This list can be completed only around the start of the Frankfurt Book Fair in autumn of 2011

A small selection of proposals for authors or works that should be translated into German in the future:

Orhan Kemal (1914 - 1970): Novels, selected stories

Orhan Duru (1933 - 2009): Collected works, selected stories

Fazıl Hüsnü Dağlarca (1914 - 2008): Selection of poems

Aziz Nesin (1915 - 1995): Selected stories

Sait Faik (1906 - 1954): Collected works