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The Gaps We Choose to Fill and How We Choose to Fill Them: Readers' Creation of Turkish German Identity in Texts by Zehra Çirak

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The Gaps We Choose to Fill and How We Choose to Fill Them:
Readers' Creation of Turkish German Identity

in Texts by Zehra Çirak

Whitney Roberts Ehle

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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Brigham Young University

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ABSTRACT

The Gaps We Choose to Fill and How We Choose to Fill Them:
Readers' Creation of Turkish German Identity
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This thesis explores why readers insist on interpreting Zehra Çirak's texts in light of her Turkish German background when she claims that her texts have little to do with her Turkish heritage and are more universally applicable. While readers can interpret her texts without considering the author's biography, thereby obtaining insights into their own personal identity, I suggest that it also makes sense for readers to interpret her texts with the author's biography in mind because of current events and the history of Turkish migrant labor in Germany.

To explore different possible interpretations of her texts, I have categorized Çirak's poetry, found in four of her volumes of poetry, *Vogel auf dem Rücken eines Elefanten* (1991), *Fremde Flügel auf eigener Schulter* (1994), *Leibesübungen* (2000), and *In Bewegung* (2008), into two broad groups. First, I look at the few poems in which Çirak overtly addresses alterity by discussing the alienation of Turks. In these texts, the speakers use Turkish words or images that link the texts to Çirak's biography. Then I turn to look at poems that can only metaphorically be interpreted as addressing Turkish German integration into mainstream German society and discuss how even though the figurative language Çirak employs make her texts applicable to other situations or interpretations, the texts lend themselves to being read in light of multiculturalism. In both of these categories of poetry, Çirak uses metaphor to address alterity without pandering to stereotypes or setting categorical limits on Turks, Germans, or other members of her readership.

Keywords: Zehra Çirak, Multiculturalism, Reader Response Theory

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Will ich also etwas, womit ich mich wiedererkenne, oder etwas, womit andere mich einordnen können?—Zehra Çirak, “Kulturidentität”

Chapter One: Introduction, Die Schublade

While working on my thesis, I thought many times to abandon the project, not because writing a thesis is difficult and takes a long time. Rather, the more I researched Zehra Çirak and her texts, the more I realized that my project would go against her wishes. Çirak, like many other Turkish German authors, does not wish to be read because of her Turkish heritage, but because of the literary merit of her works. In a 1996 German literature workshop at the University of Florida in Gainesville, one of the attendees asked Çirak how she felt about being read in the context of multicultural literature. Çirak responded:

Wir [Autoren, die nicht deutscher Herkunft sind] möchten nicht in eine Schublade hineingesteckt werden, denn damit werden wir auch beschränkt. Wir möchten natürlich auch mit anderen deutschen und deutschsprachigen Autoren verglichen und kritisiert werden, wenn es um deutsche Lyrik geht (Hasty and Merkes-Frei 76).

Despite Çirak’s clear desire to be read outside of a multicultural context and although I and other critics agree that Çirak’s works have merit without considering Çirak’s Turkish background, most articles written about her works discuss her Turkish descent, even many that purport that her works do not need to be read through this lens¹. The contradiction between critics’ statements and the execution of their literary analyses is evident, and most likely my thesis will be one of the most obvious examples of this contradiction.

When I began looking for a thesis topic, I started with the thought that I would like to research Turkish German literature. At that point, I had not heard of one Turkish German author,

¹ See pages 23 through 32 for a discussion of these and other articles.

let alone read his or her works. I assumed that Turkish Germans must have written some literature because they had such a large presence in German-speaking Europe, and thus, I opened the *Schublade* to find a Turkish German author that I would be interested in researching. After reading the works of several Turkish German authors, I determined that I appreciated Zehra Çirak's works the most because she writes poetry that does not fit the mold I expected to find when reading Turkish German literature. I, like many of the critics who discuss Çirak's works, appreciate how she sparingly addresses her Turkish heritage and uses vivid imagery and catchy word-plays. Yet, I, like other critics, still felt the desire to read her poems with one eye looking for some hint of her Turkish heritage, and I wondered why I wished to read her texts in this way.

As I continued researching Çirak's texts, I decided that interviewing her may help me decide whether or not it was appropriate for me to read her texts in light of multiculturalism. In December of 2010, I visited with Çirak in her apartment in Berlin, and in answer to my inquiry about whether or not she thinks about the reader as she writes her texts, she responded:

[Ich] denke natürlich daran, wie die Reaktion des Lesers ist, aber wenn das Buch veröffentlicht ist, wenn der Text fertig ist, es gedruckt und es geht raus, dann habe ich überhaupt keinen Einfluss mehr. . . . Und irgendwann bin ich hier nicht mehr und die Texte sind dann hoffentlich immer da, aber ich denke auch nicht daran, wenn ich jetzt ein Buch lese, dass ich mit dem Autor darüber reden will—
überhaupt nicht (Personal Interview).²

Here, Çirak reminded me of what Roland Barthes and other reader response critics have been saying for decades: the author is dead.³ In other words, Çirak admits that as soon as a text is finished, readers have control over how they will interpret it, not the author. Additionally,

² See page 74 for the full text of my interview with Zehra Çirak.

³ See pages 34-39 for a more detailed discussion of Reader Response theory.

Çirak's statement about not caring to talk with other authors about their texts suggests that the author of a text may not have a complete perspective of what the text is communicating to the reader.

In considering Çirak's statement about the death of the author, I suggest that readers are justified in interpreting her texts as multicultural literature for textual and extra-textual reasons. Despite the fact that Çirak, the actual author, does not intend to make multicultural statements in her texts, the implied author or narrator leads readers to associate these texts with multiculturalism by using Turkish words and images or addressing themes of alienation and Otherness. In addition to the textual devices that connect Çirak's texts with multiculturalism in readers' minds, extra-textual influences, such as history and current events, influence their readings of Çirak's texts. To show why readers might be justified in allowing their relationship with the text, history, and current events to influence their readings of Çirak's texts, I will analyze two groups of texts in light of multiculturalism: those texts that openly address her Turkish background and those that readers can only metaphorically interpret as addressing her Turkish background.

Turkish and German Relations: Historical Background

To understand why literary critics may choose to fill the gaps in Çirak's texts with information from her Turkish background, one should have at least a cursory understanding of Turkish and German relations. According to Robin M. Queen, many Turkish immigrants and immigrants of other nationalities came to Germany after World War II because Germany was experiencing a labor shortage. In 1961, the German and Turkish governments made a contract in which Turkish workers agreed to come to Germany to work for a period of one to three years.

As Turkey was experiencing economic and political hardships during this time, many Turkish workers decided to immigrate to Germany. Of the approximately five million foreign nationals living in Germany in 2001, 30.3% were Turkish immigrants. There are large populations of Turkish immigrants in big cities and smaller industrial towns (Queen 58). Having such a large minority population in Germany, however, started making majority Germans feel uncomfortable.

Although the history of racism and discrimination against minorities in German-speaking Europe begins long before the Turks came to Germany as *Gastarbeiter* in the 1960s, I focus here on the race question as it affected migrant workers after World War II. In *After the Nazi Racial State* (2009) Rita Chin explains that because of the principle of *jus sanguinis*, or the right of blood, which officially became part of German law in 1913, in order to be a legal German citizen, one had to be able to claim German ancestry. Without citizenship, one had limited or no access to social security, work permits, and residency. Thus, according to law, Turks and other guest workers were not considered citizens or even as candidates for citizenship (82-3). However, as conditions worsened in Turkey, many guest workers wanted to stay in Germany and become a part of German society. For thirty-nine years, Turkish guest workers and their children, many of whom were born in Germany, were legal outsiders, but in 2000, the German government began granting citizenship according to the principle of *jus soli*, or place of birth. According to the new law, children who were born in Germany to parents of non-German descent obtained automatic citizenship. The particulars of the law, though more generous to guest workers and their children than the principle of *jus sanguinis*, required that at least one of the child's parents live in Germany for at least eight years prior to the child's birth. Additionally, that same parent had to have either an unrestricted residence permit (*unbefristete Aufenthaltserlaubnis*) for at least three years or a residence entitlement (*Aufenthaltserlaubnis*). By the age of eighteen, a child who

received German citizenship in this manner had to formally choose German citizenship over any other citizenship or they would lose their German citizenship at the age of twenty-three (211). Through the strictness of their naturalization laws, majority Germans have continued to maintain a cultural distinction between themselves and Turkish Germans.

The religious and cultural differences between Turks and Germans of European descent prove to be some of the largest barriers preventing Turks from integrating into mainstream German society. For example, Susanne v. Paczensky, in the forward to *Die verkauften Bräute* (1978), a book by Andrea Baumgartner-Karabak and Gisela Landesberger that documents the experiences of uneducated Turkish women from Anatolia, suggests that the *Kopftuch* and the fact that Turkish women “gehen demütig zwei Schritte hinter ihren Männern her” makes Turkish women in Germany “ausgesondert” and “sonderbar” (7). For these and other reasons, Paczensky claims that Baumgartner-Karabak and Landesberger conducted their research to give readers “ein Gefühl der Empörung, dass Menschen so hilflos erzogen, verschoben und ausgebeutet werden und dass diese Hilflosigkeit besonders Frauen trifft” (9). While some Turkish men abuse their wives and daughters, not all Turkish women view the *Kopftuch* as demeaning and some wear it with pleasure. Thus, Westerners’ misinterpretations of Islamic traditions may allow stereotypes to prevail and prevent Turks from integrating into mainstream German society.

Even more recently, the SPD politician Thilo Sarrazin has spoken out against loose immigration laws. His book *Deutschland schafft sich ab. Wie wir unser Land aufs Spiel setzen* (2010) has been inflammatory in Germany, and according to *Der Spiegel*, the SPD nearly excluded him from their party for his views (136). Sarrazin points out that approximately three million people of Turkish descent currently live in Germany, and the birth rate among the Turks is double that of the general population (258). Thus, he fears that if Germany fails to regulate

immigration, his grandchildren will live in a Germany that has lost its own culture to Muslim traditions (308). Sarrazin suggests that if the Turks are to integrate, they must also assimilate (309), and in order to assimilate or receive benefits from the government they must work, send their children to school, and learn German themselves (327-8). Although his words are inflammatory, especially to a country that believes in using government funding to help the poor and fears sounding racist, much of what Sarrazin has written appeals to the German public. Many Germans wonder how their country can survive financially and culturally if they follow the path they are currently following, and Sarrazin's book plays to the fears of his German audience.

After Thilo Sarrazin sparked the debate about integration once again, the German Chancellor Angela Merkel added to the discord. On 17 October 2010 she told a group of youth from the CDU (*Christliche Demokratische Union*), "Of course the tendency had been to say, 'let's adopt the multicultural concept and live happily side by side, and be happy to be living with each other'. But this concept has failed, and failed utterly" (Smee 1). In making this comment, Merkel opened herself up for verbal attacks from those on the left of the political spectrum. Many people thought Merkel was pandering to the right wing of her party. Others thought she was simply speaking the truth (1). After all, Turks have not yet been fully integrated into mainstream German society. At least for the moment, Turks and Germans are not living "happily side by side." Yet, to hear the Chancellor herself speak so hopelessly, even callously, about the issue has brought the subject to the forefront of national and international news. Turkish Germans have been trying to find a place for themselves in German society for approximately fifty years, and such comments suggest that they will never be fully integrated into German society.

Turkish German Literature

The alienation that Turkish Germans experienced upon immigrating to Germany in the 1960s and continue to experience as a result of racist expressions from people like Thilo Sarrazin leads many Turkish Germans to seek artistic expression. As Turkish Germans have tried to find a place for themselves in the artistic life of Germany, they have had to surmount many challenges, especially the negative perceptions of German readers. Sabine Fischer and Moray McGowan, in an article entitled “From *Pappkoffer* to Pluralism: On the Development of Migrant Writing in the German Federal Republic” (1996), have identified several phases of the development of what has been termed *Gastarbeiterliteratur*, and their categorizations serve as a useful framework for understanding Zehra Çirak’s place in the history of Turkish German literature.

Many readers may associate Çirak’s and other Turkish German authors’ texts with the first generation of Turkish migrant workers. However, such an association limits them in being accepted as German authors. The first guest workers who came to Germany in the 1950s and 1960s from Italy, Turkey, and other countries were not prolific writers because many of the immigrants lacked education, had plans to return to their countries of origin, and experienced the “numbing” culture shock that came with leaving agrarian societies and entering an industrialized society (Fischer and McGowan 3). However, not all foreigners from Turkey and other countries were uneducated, and some were writing and being published. Yet, European Germans confused them with *Gastarbeiter*, despite the fact that they were educated and of a different socioeconomic class (Fischer and McGowan 3). Likewise, despite the fact that Çirak writes prolifically and speaks German as her primary language, German readers may remember the foreignness of the first influx of migrant Turks and place Çirak in a similar category. That is,

readers may expect Çirak's German to be subpar because they imagine all Turks are like the Turks who first migrated to Germany in the 1960s. By indiscriminately lumping all Turkish German authors into the same category as the first generation of migrant workers, the mainstream German audience may be missing out on the opportunity to read quality literature by Turkish Germans.

When the *Gastarbeiter* started writing, Turkish Germans who were writing texts on themes other than the *Gastarbeiter* experience had increased difficulty in disassociating themselves with the *Gastarbeiter* experience. During this time, *Gastarbeiter* wrote texts that primarily involved immediate *Gastarbeiter* experiences. They described their workplace or the hostels in which they slept. Additionally, they may have recounted experiences at the government office or their annual journey home. Many Germans of European descent refer to the literature that Germans of foreign descent began writing in the 1970s as *Betroffenheitsliteratur*, which means that the texts are largely autobiographical and focus on victimization (Fischer and McGowan 3-4). Fischer and McGowan list the themes of *Betroffenheitsliteratur* as including:

. . . the dreams of Germany as the promised land of material wealth; the reality of heavy, dirty, unhealthy work in poor conditions and the experience of prejudice, indifference and rejection; homesickness and dreams of return; life between two worlds and two languages (3).

These are the very themes many readers or critics expect to find when beginning their study of Turkish German literature, and these themes helped readers come to a better understanding of the struggles that Turks and other immigrants faced in German society. As Marilya Veteto-Conrad suggests, however, many European Germans experienced a “compassion fatigue” when reading

Betroffenheitsliteratur (“Unruhe” 60). In other words, mainstream German society was tired of reading literature in which *Gastarbeiter* complained about their lives in Germany. However valid the problems of these Turkish German authors may be, *Betroffenheitsliteratur* appears to have at least partially deepened the strain in the relationship between European Germans and Germans of Turkish heritage. However, many left-leaning Germans began to take an interest in the writings of foreigners during this time.

As a result of their increased interest in foreign literature, universities and other institutions created prizes to encourage foreigners to write. The Institute for German as a Foreign Language at Munich University started hosting writing competitions for foreigners. The best entries from these competitions were included in anthologies of literature written by foreigners. Another avenue for distinction among foreign writers was the annual Adalbert von Chamisso Prize, which was founded in 1985 (Fischer and McGowan 4). The prize was awarded to the foreign writers who submitted the best entries, as judged by Germans, not foreigners themselves. Zehra Çirak won the prize in 1989 (Veteto-Conrad, *Finding a Voice* 53). Çirak says of receiving the prize, “Ich habe ihn als Literaturpreis gesehen. Viele haben kritisiert, ja, warum bekommen den nur Leute mit nicht-deutscher Herkunft“ (Personal Interview). Despite the fact that people associated the prize with foreigners, Çirak looked at the prize as an opportunity to gain recognition for her literature, not for her foreign heritage. However, even though such prizes made Çirak’s texts and other literature written by foreigners more available to the mainstream German public, their writings were being lumped into one massive category and being published on the basis of how the texts conformed to the mainstream German public’s expectations for literature written by foreigners.

At the same time that Germans of European descent were fostering a market for migrant literature, immigrants themselves made strides in making their writings more available to mainstream German society. In 1980 they founded groups such as the PoLi-Kunst-Verein and a publishing organization called Südwind. The goal of these groups was to create solidarity between immigrant groups, so that immigrants of different nationalities would not feel the need to create hierarchies amongst themselves (Fischer and McGowan 4). Mainstream German society often viewed Turks as being lower and dirtier than the Italians, and thus, groups like Südwind tried to encourage the groups of immigrants who were viewed as better than the Turks not to add to the problems of the Turks and other groups of immigrants. Because German was their common language, most immigrants wrote in German, and they published anthologies such as *Sehnsucht im Koffer* (1981), rather than volumes of poetry or short stories by individual authors (5). Çirak, however, was never part of any such group because, as she stated during my interview with her, she does not want to be a part of any association (Personal Interview), and she was able to publish her own volumes of poetry.

From the late 1980s into the current day, Turkish German authors like Zehra Çirak have been identifying themselves with neither the Turks nor the Germans. Fischer and McGowan write that this generation of writers is “critical in new ways of the prejudice they encounter in Germany, but also of the self-pity, subservience, backwardness or greed of their parents’ generation” (Fischer and McGowan 6). Although these authors criticize their parents and the way mainstream German society ostracizes authors of foreign descent, these authors address new themes in their works that often have nothing to do with discrimination or their foreign heritage. According to Fischer and McGowan, in recent years, they have been more likely to be able to publish single-author volumes of poetry or short stories (6), and thus, I suggest that they have

gained more individual identity in the eyes of many of their readers. Although it appears that Turkish German authors have met more acceptance from German society than ever before, Fischer and McGowan point out that the German media has continued to stereotype the works of these authors because of the stereotypes associated with the writings of their parents (6). Zehra Çirak falls most distinctly into this group of second and third generation Turkish German authors who seek to be read because of the literary merit of their works and not because of their heritage.

Although these stereotypes have frustrated Çirak and other authors, the homogenous identity of *Gastarbeiter* and *Ausländer* that was created by German groups like the Institute for German as a Foreign Language at Munich University and immigrant groups like Südwind has also given second and third generation Turkish German authors an advantage in the literary market. Çirak herself recognizes that her Turkish German heritage gave her some advantages upon entering the literary scene. She says:

Wir Autoren, die nicht-deutscher Herkunft sind, haben natürlich einen Vorteil gegenüber anderen Leuten, die angefangen haben zu schreiben. Es gibt sicher in Karlsruhe auch andere Frauen in meinem Alter, die damals angefangen haben zu schreiben. Ich hatte das Glück, plötzlich interessant zu sein, auch wegen meiner Biographie: Die zweite Generation, die schreiben besser Deutsch als Türkisch, da wollen wir doch mal sehen, was die hier so machen. Ich fand dieses Interesse bei den ersten Veröffentlichungen. Ich habe mich natürlich von dieser Welle tragen lassen und gedacht, die werden schon merken, dass das, was ich hier mache, keine Ausländerliteratur ist (Hasty und Merkes-Frei 76).

Here, Çirak's suggestion that she received more attention than other up-and-coming authors reveals that the controversy surrounding a homogenous identity, like the kind of political

controversy surrounding the integration of Turkish Germans, makes the homogenous identity interesting and marketable. Thus, by drawing from this “Welle” early in her career, Çirak has associated herself with multicultural studies, and although readers recognize the individuality in her work, questions about her heritage continue to press on their minds.

Zehra Çirak: Biographical Background

While Zehra Çirak is technically a first generation Turkish German author, the fact that she immigrated with her family from Turkey to Karlsruhe, Germany at the age of three makes her, in effect, a second generation author. She and many other second generation Turkish German authors speak better German than Turkish and refer to Germany as home. Because her parents were *Gastarbeiter* who held fast to Islam and their Turkish traditions, Çirak’s knowledge of Turkey was influenced by her parents’ stories and holiday visits (Veteto-Conrad, “Zehra Çirak” 337). Çirak explains that her family, like most other *Gastarbeiter*, fully intended to return to Istanbul, and they hoped to be rich after a short year of work in Germany. However, decades later they were still living and working in Germany (Çirak, “De l’Orient-Express à l’Intercity” 128). Her parents’ expectations for their life in Germany were similar to the expectations of other migrant workers, but the children of these migrant workers, such as Çirak, have goals that differentiate them from their parents.

Çirak struggled between her parents’ desire to raise her as though they were still living their rural life in Turkey and the reality of their city life in Karlsruhe. Because her parents continued to live according to their Islamic traditions, they prepared Çirak for an arranged marriage. Despite their Islamic traditions, Çirak’s parents allowed her to attend school with

German children. In order to preserve her modesty and Turkish identity, however, they told young Zehra to wear modest clothing and never wear make-up. In spite of her parents' admonitions, as a teenager Çirak would leave the house wearing the clothing prescribed by her parents, but as soon as possible, she would hike up her skirt and apply some lipstick and eyeliner (Veteto-Conrad, "Zehra Çirak" 337). Her actions indicate that Çirak wanted to fit in with her German peers more than she wanted to hold on to her Turkish heritage.

Thus, without entirely leaving her Turkish identity behind, she became more German than Turkish. Çirak explains that her ability to speak Turkish did not develop past adolescence, as she only spoke Turkish with her parents and chose to speak German with her friends and siblings. Her parents' inability to communicate well in German led her to write her first poems in German, rather than Turkish. This helped her maintain privacy (Çirak, "De l'Orient-Express à l'Intercity" 128-9). Later when Çirak was working as a cosmetician in Karlsruhe, one of her clients asked a friend to read a sample of Çirak's works. Dr. Beatrice Steiner, the friend of Çirak's client, found her work to be intriguing and helped her publish her first volume of poetry, *flugfänger* (Veteto-Conrad, "Zehra Çirak" 338).

Around the same time in her life, Çirak met Jürgen Walter, a sculptor, who would be an important influence on her career and personal life. *Flugfänger* and all of her subsequent volumes of poetry include pictures of Walter's sculptures, and these sculptures thematically complement her texts (Veteto-Conrad, "Zehra Çirak" 338). Walter's and Çirak's collaborative efforts suggest that they see the visual and the literary arts as complementary. Of Walter's influence on her works, she says:

Es ist nie ein Text aus dem Haus gegangen, bevor Jürgen Walter es gesehen hat.

Das ist ganz klar. Er ist auch mein Ansprechpartner. Und er gibt mir auch viele

[sic] Inspiration von seinen Bildern und von seinen Arbeiten—oder die Themen (Çirak, Personal Interview).

As their relationship deepened through their appreciation of the arts, Çirak and Walter fell in love. In 1982 Çirak left her parents' home to go to Berlin with Walter (Veteto-Conrad, "Zehra Çirak" 338-9). By leaving her parents' home to live with a German man, Çirak embraced her German identity.

However, because she and Jürgen did not officially marry until 2000 (Langner 50), she kept her maiden name, which is unmistakably Turkish. Thus, her name alone may be cause enough for readers to put her in the category of foreign writers. She says of readers' tendency to categorize her on the basis of her name, "Man darf das einfach nicht am Namen, am Klang des Namens bestimmen, ob man sich für die Herkunftsfragen interessiert oder nicht" (Çirak, Personal Interview). By keeping her Turkish name, however, Çirak indicates that she did not want to separate herself from her Turkish heritage enough to completely disconnect herself from her family and cultural background.

Rather than focusing on her cultural identity after moving to Berlin, however, Çirak focused on her art. In 1987 the Senate of Berlin awarded her with an artist's stipend to help her focus even more of her time on writing. In 1989 she won the Adalbert von Chamisso Förderpreis (Veteto-Conrad, "Zehra Çirak" 340), and in 1993 she was awarded the prestigious Friedrich Hölderlin-Preis, which was a first for an author of Turkish descent. Wolfgang R. Assmann, upon awarding Çirak with the Hölderlin-Preis, suggested that she should receive the award because she, like Hölderlin, lives between two cultures. Of Hölderlin Assman says, "Seine geistige Heimat war nicht Deutschland, sondern das antike Griechenland" (10-12). By comparing Çirak with Hölderlin in this way, he suggests that her spiritual homeland is not

Germany, but Turkey, which may have placed her Turkish heritage in the forefront of listeners' minds. However, despite the fact that the receipt of these awards may have associated her texts with her biography, not every writer of Turkish descent has received such prestigious awards. As such, they distinguish Çirak as an author of note.

Although many readers focus on her Turkish background and her Turkish name in order to categorize Çirak, she feels that her use of the German language is a more defining factor. She explains in an article entitled "De l'Orient-Express à l'Intercity: Ecrire entre deux mondes." (The Orient-Express to the Intercity: Writing between two worlds) (1999), which was translated from German into French by Hans-Jürgen Greif:⁴

Puisque je n'écris qu'en allemande, je ne veux plus, comme cela a été fait souvent et de façon erronée, être appelée une auteure turque, mais plutôt "auteure de langue allemande d'origine turque" (Because I only write in German, I no longer want, as has often erroneously been done, to be called a Turkish author, rather an 'author of Turkish origins who writes in German') (Çirak 128).

By including her Turkish origins in her definition of her identity, Çirak clarifies that she does not reject her Turkish background. However, she does not want readers to forget her German identity either. The fact that she writes all of her texts in German suggests that the German influence in her life has been greater than the Turkish influence.

Zehra Çirak: Her Works

Zehra Çirak has published five volumes of texts: *flugfänger* (1987), *Vogel auf dem Rücken eines Elefanten* (1991), *Fremde Flügel auf eigener Schulter* (1994), *Leibesübungen*

⁴ In my interview with Çirak, she explained that this text is likely a translation of a lecture she gave while traveling.

(2000), and *In Bewegung* (2008). These five volumes primarily contain free verse lyric poetry and a few texts that are more prose-like in style. In addition to her single-author volumes, Çirak has been published in numerous anthologies, including but not limited to: *Türken deutscher Sprache* (1984), *Freihändig auf dem Tandem* (1985), *Über Grenzen* (1987), *Anfang sein für einen neuen Tanz kann jeder Schritt: Junge Berliner Literatur der achtziger Jahre* (1988), and *Deutsche Dichterinnen vom 16. Jahrhundert bis heute* (2007). In 2008, she and her husband Jürgen Walter released *Die Kunst der Wissenschaft*, a DVD and CD that include Çirak's texts and pictures of Walter's sculptures. Finally, in 2011 *Der Geruch von Glück*, Çirak's first volume of prose, will be released by the Hans-Schiler Verlag (Çirak, Personal Interview). The covers of all of Çirak's single author volumes display photographs of sculptures created by Jürgen Walter. All but *In Bewegung* are currently out of print, and *flugfänger* is extremely difficult to find. As such, I have looked closely at the texts and cover art in her four most recent print volumes. The combination of Çirak's texts and Walter's sculptures creates a thematic sense of hopelessness, and I suggest that the hopelessness is a reflection of how many Turks feel Othered by mainstream German society.

Vogel auf dem Rücken eines Elefanten is Çirak's oldest available volume of lyric poetry and includes several of Çirak's most commonly discussed texts, such as "Istanbul" (89), "Doppelte Nationalitätsmoral" (91), and "Kulturidentität" (94). As these poems and others in the volume make clear statements about alterity⁵ and living between two worlds, I will discuss them and critics' readings of these texts in more detail at a later point in my thesis. The volume includes four sections, and the first section, "Streckphase," includes thirty-four texts that address subjects as varied as the use of the *Neuerechtschreibung* ("Duden ichden" 25"), troubled youth ("Streckphase" 21), and trade between Germany and Turkey ("Allianz" 16-17). "Seit wir uns ein

⁵ I define alterity as "Otherness" or "being different."

Herz gemacht,” the second section of the volume includes eleven poems and addresses themes of love and the unity of man and woman (“Freiwilliges Liebesgedicht” 58 and “Keine Verwirklichungsängste” 59). In the third section of the book, “So sei es sei so,” Çirak includes twenty-one texts, and one of the major themes is politics. In “Washtag” (65), the narrator compares washday to the way a government tries to cleanse itself of all guilt. “Notwehr” (73) and “Kleine Geschichte über Helden” (80) address the violence of extremists. The final section of texts in this volume is entitled “Bosporus fließt in mir” and includes only six texts. “Istanbul” (89) and “Doppelte Nationalitätsmoral” (91), among others, overtly address the difficulty of living between two cultural identities.

In *Vogel auf dem Rücken eines Elefanten*, the title and the cover art are doubly metaphoric. Because of the title, one might expect to see a picture of an elephant with birds on its shoulders to help it fly. Instead, readers are greeted with a picture of a man with no birds or wings on his shoulders.⁶ Although his stance indicates that he is ready for take-off, his body is not aerodynamic, and knowledge about aerodynamics leads readers to believe that he will fall as soon as he jumps. Even if readers’ imaginations were to allow them to see this man in flight, his trajectory would doubtless be lopsided and slow because his arms and feet lack symmetry. When considering the title, one can assume that the man pictured on the cover is the elephant, and his handless arms are the wings of the birds. Such an image suggests that just as an elephant could not fly with the help of birds’ wings, human beings who are in debilitating circumstances are also incapable of flight or success. Although such an interpretation could apply to many underprivileged groups, it also applies to Turks living in Germany who might feel that they are being held back by their environment and those around them.

⁶ See Appendix of Images to view the cover art.

Çirak's 1994 volume of poetry *Fremde Flügel auf eigener Schulter* also addresses human flight, among other themes. Two of her most frequently cited poems are included in this volume: "Kein Sand im Rad der Zeit" (44-5) and "Fremde Flügel auf eigener Schulter" (98). The volume also includes many other poems that address themes of flying, alienation, and hopelessness.

"Kreislaufstörung," the title of the first section of poems in this volume, includes twenty-five poems. "Fliegen im Ruhestand" (12) and "Trugbild mit Leichtigkeit" (15) evoke images of stunted flight and self-deception. Other themes discussed in this section of the volume are the difficulty of verbal expression ("Der Dichter und sein Schweiss" 18) and crossing the distance between the European and Asian continents ("Lied vom Onkelchen in Avrupa" 34-35). The second section of poems in this volume is entitled "Kein Sand im Rad der Zeit" and includes twenty-two poems. One of the most common themes found in this section is discrimination that leads to violence, as can be found in "Kein Sand im Rad der Zeit" (44-5) and "Der Besen" (49).

"Was mir auf der Zunge liegt," the third section of texts in this volume, includes sixteen poems. It includes poems that address Eurocentrism, such as "Euroegozentrismus" (82-3), and feeling as though one is observing society from a distance, such as "Besteck" (79). The fourth section of poems in the volume, "Zusammenhänge," includes eighteen texts, and many of them address the theme of love, such as "Zusammenhänge" (96) and "Fremde Flügel auf eigener Schulter" (98).

"Porträts," the final section of the volume, includes fifteen texts, and almost all of them are part of a series of portraits describing different women and men. They highlight the attributes the narrators view as feminine and masculine, but as the title of the volume suggests, the primary theme of the volume on the whole is stunted flight or development because of outer influences.

The cover of *Fremde Flügel auf eigener Schulter*, like *Vogel auf dem Rücken eines Elefanten*, shows a picture of one of Jürgen's sculptures trying to achieve flight.⁷ The man in this sculpture has a triangle in place of one of his feet, which decreases his aerodynamics. This man has one wing growing in place of his right arm, but it is an airplane wing that is too large for his body. His left arm, which is a human arm with a cumbersomely large hand, is not spread out ready for flight. Rather, the man has his hand covering his entire head in an expression of hopelessness. Unlike the man in the sculpture on the cover of *Vogel auf dem Rücken eines Elefanten*, this man is not in position for take-off. His body language indicates that he knows that he cannot fly, which corresponds to the hopelessness found in the texts of this volume.⁸

In *Leibesübungen*, Çirak's subsequent volume of poetry, Çirak turns from using the metaphor of flying to an over-arching theme of discovering self-identity. The first of the five sections of poems included in this volume is entitled "Selbstlaut" and contains ten texts, and the major themes in this section are growth and self-discovery, such as in the texts "Schon Unterwegs" (15) and "Alltagsgeschehen" (18-9). "Sucht-Meldung," the second section of poems in the volume, includes twelve poems, and many of them address the theme of confusion, such as "Sucht-Meldung" (29), "Lustspiel" (36), and "Silvester" (37). The third section of poems found in this volume is entitled "Leibesübungen" and includes twenty-eight poems. One of the themes addressed in this section of the volume is the difficulty of becoming united through marriage, as found in the texts "Oder Heiraten" (45) and "Sich Vertragen" (46). Another theme that she addresses in a series of six poems that are each titled "Leibesübung" is restricted movement due to societal expectations or personal inhibitions (68-73). "Wiedererkennungsdefekt," the fourth section of texts included in this volume of Çirak's poetry, contains fourteen poems, and they

⁷ See the Appendix of Images to view the cover art.

⁸ For a more in-depth discussion of the hopelessness found in specific texts, see Chapter Two.

address themes such as the strangeness of the self (“Ich Nicht” 80-1) and alterity (“Länderkunde” 96). In “Zeitsprünge,” the final section of texts in this volume, there are thirteen poems. These thirteen poems primarily address the effects of time on the present, such as in “Zeitsprünge” (103), “Menschlich” (105), and “Geschichte” (110). Although a smaller percentage of the poems in this volume directly address her Turkish German heritage than in either of the other two volumes of poetry I have already discussed, the metaphors that Çirak uses to discuss the search for self-identity may lend themselves to being interpreted in light of multiculturalism.

The cover of this volume is also quite different from her previous volumes of poetry. Walter’s sculpture is in color this time, and a man dressed in the color blue is sitting in what appears to be a pencil carved into some sort of canoe.⁹ The man’s hands appear to be tied behind his back, and the pencil is floating in an abyss of blue. In contrast to the title *Leibesübungen*, which suggests movement, the man’s immobility and inability to use the writing utensil may suggest an author’s struggle with the imperfections of language and her inability to use language to fully describe identity. Few, if any of the poems in this volume, have been discussed by critics or included in anthologies, because these texts cannot easily be read in light of multiculturalism, and perhaps because of their relatively recent publication date. However, at a later point, I will discuss how “Länderkunde” (96), one of the poems in this volume, metaphorically addresses the feelings of displacement experienced by a minority group that struggles to understand its collective identity. It is important to note, however, that if the author were not a Turkish German, I and other readers may not make such connections.

In Bewegung, Çirak’s most recent volume of poetry, does not include any poems that directly address Çirak’s Turkish German heritage, but it does include many poems that metaphorically address alterity or the attempt to flee one’s former identity. The first section of

⁹ See the Appendix of Images to view the cover art.

texts, entitled “In Bewegung,” includes ten poems, and these poems address finding one’s identity by leaving (“Fluchtkoffer” 20-1), returning (“Zurück nach Hause” 17), and seeing the world through others’ eyes (“Mit den Augen eines anderen” 19). “Innen,” the second section of texts in the volume, includes eleven texts, and many of them, such as “Die Ich-Taste” (25) and “Innen” (27), address the idea of self-discovery. The third section of poems found in this volume is entitled “Zur Liebe” and contains fourteen poems that primarily address love. “Das Mädchen und der Tod” (41), for example, addresses love between death and a young girl, and “Das Salz der Liebe” (43) uses the image of salt to express the pains of love. “Im Zorn,” the fourth section of poems found in this volume, includes sixteen texts, and most of these texts paint different pictures of violence. “Laokoon” (65), for example, refers to the passionate image of the *Laokoon* from Greek mythology, and “The war—er wars” (80-1) reflects the sorrow of a family that lost their son in a war. The fifth section of texts in the volume is entitled “Kulturobst” and contains nineteen texts. Many of the texts in this section address different forms of art or culture. “Bedeutungsvoll und worteschwer” (94), for example, refers to the difficulty of interpreting language, and “Dein Bild vom Sonnenbrand in Schönschrift” (95) focuses on the effects of using language to place oneself above others. In exploring the meaning of individuality and how to create identity, the narrators in these texts create gaps that can be filled with multicultural interpretations.

In addition, the cover of *In Bewegung* illustrates the ineffectuality of leaving one’s identity behind, which reflects how the culture people are born into influences them throughout life. Walter’s sculpture is entitled “Rückenschwimmen,” but shows a man lying prostrate on the ground.¹⁰ He appears to be trying to pull himself forward with one arm that has no hand, but because the man’s face is planted in the ground, he is unable to move. Additionally, a metal rod

¹⁰ See the Appendix of Images to view the cover art.

connected to the man's lower back connects him firmly to the ground. It is clear that this man will not be able to swim the backstroke because he has been sculpted upside down, and if he cannot move, he cannot find his new identity. Because the author of these texts lives between two identities, a Turkish and a German one, readers may be justified in interpreting the relationship between the cover art and the texts as indicating the struggle to understand one's cultural identity.

Çirak, an author who lives between two identities, is similar to the man in the sculpture who is trying to leave his former identity behind because even as she attempts to distance herself from her Turkish heritage, which represents her former identity, she becomes more closely associated with the stereotype. For example, Verlag Hans-Schiler, a publishing house that publishes books by authors of foreign descent, is Çirak's new publisher for this and her forthcoming volume of prose entitled *Der Geruch von Glück*. Çirak says of the decision to switch publishers:

Warum bin ich weg von Kiepenheuer und Witsch? Ich habe keinen anderen Verlag gefunden. Kiepenheuer und Witsch hat keine Lyrik mehr gemacht. Und dann war mein Manuskript drei, vier Jahre da, oder fünf Jahre und dann bin ich im Verleger Hans-Schiler begegnet. Wir kennen uns von früher und er hat früher hauptsächlich arabische Literatur ins Deutsche übersetzt—Lyrik auch. Und er macht jetzt seit einigen Jahren eben in Schiler Verlag und er ist was spezialisiert auf orientalische Literatur. Also, jetzt auch Prosa und Lyrik, aber er macht auch ganz normale Bellatristik—deutschsprachige Autoren auch. Er ist nicht Spezialist für Autoren mit Migrationshintergrund (Personal Interview).

Although the decision was made out of necessity, the fact that she left a large publishing company to associate with a smaller one that has a history of publishing foreign literature, does little to distance Çirak from her biography. Thus, despite Çirak's interest in writing on new themes, she has difficulty in preventing her works from being read in light of multiculturalism.

Review of Literature

The secondary literature that has been written about Zehra Çirak and her poetry to date focuses largely on her Turkish-German heritage. Some critics, such as Marilya Veteto-Conrad and Karein Goertz, apologize for this by recognizing Çirak's desire to be read outside of a multicultural context, but other critics write unabashedly about Çirak's biography. While I do not think that critics need to apologize for interpreting Çirak's texts as reflections of her dual-identity, especially when textual evidence suggests that the narrator is addressing multicultural issues, I do find articles that place more emphasis on Çirak's biography than her texts to be ill-founded and limiting to the texts. To systematically discuss the secondary literature about Çirak's texts, I will begin by addressing the article that most boldly equates her texts with Çirak's biography and continue through the article that tries hardest to open discussions of her texts to other topics.

Although the title of Beatrix Langner's 2001 article, "Im Wortraum der Dinge: Das Künstlerpaar Zehra Çirak und Jürgen Walter," sounds as though the article will focus on the collaboration between Çirak and her husband, Langner primarily focuses on Çirak's biography. Çirak's father was a musician and gave up his career to come to Germany for a year to become rich, thereby connecting Çirak and her family with the influx of first generation migrant workers. After describing *Leibesübungen* in terms of Otherness and immigration, she closes her article by

explaining that every time neo-Nazi violence grows, interest in foreign literature grows. In contrast, she describes Walter's sculptures in detail and does not categorize them according to his biography (50). Because this article is intended to be a window into the artists' lives, it focuses more on their biography than their work, but by sharing little about Jürgen Walter's biography, Langner reveals her interest in foreign literature, perhaps because of the growth of neo-Nazi violence.

Although one might expect an article entitled "Genervt von Herkunftsfragen" (1996) by Martin Greve to make an attempt to discuss Çirak's texts outside of a multicultural context, this article equates her texts with her biography by letting readers know that Çirak is in the minority literature category. Greve interviewed three Turkish German authors, Aras Ören, Zafer Senocak, and Zehra Çirak, and thereby lumps them together into the category of Turkish German literature. When Greve begins discussing Çirak's works, he writes, "Zehra Çirak, die junge Dichterin, freut sich über Interesse. Ach sie hat sich immer gegen die türkische Schublade gewehrt, aber drinnen ist sie nun mal" (29). By placing Çirak in the *Schublade* against her wishes and refraining from discussing the particulars of her poetry, Greve gives his readers little reason to believe that Çirak might be right about her texts. At the close of the article, Greve once again writes that these three authors feel like the question of their Turkish heritage is no longer worth discussing, but he states, "Für den deutschen Leser fängt es gerade erst an. Sie haben uns irgendwie abgehängt" (31). By using the word "sie" to refer to the Turkish German authors and "uns" to refer to German readers, Greve creates a dichotomy between minority authors and "Germans," which includes himself, and thereby refuses to apologize for the fact that the mainstream German readership may be falling behind literary trends by not changing the way they read literature written by Turkish Germans.

Heidi Rösch's 1995 volume entitled *Interkulturell unterrichten mit Gedichten: Zur Didaktik der Migrationsforschung* also reinforces the kinds of readings that lead people to understand Çirak's and other minority authors' texts in a multicultural context. She uses the historical framework of migrant literature to suggest possible interpretations of their works that could be used in educational settings, which is an important way to bring the literature of minority authors to the attention of the general reading public. Rösch discusses five of Çirak's poems that most openly address her alterity: "deutsche sprache gute sprache," "Küçük Çekmece," "Allianz," "Kulturidentität," and "Sich Warm Laufen." In addition, Rösch chooses to discuss "Keine Verwirklichungsängste," among poems by other minority authors, when addressing how second generation migrant lyric poets write about love.¹¹ Rösch suggests that the way they address love indicates that they are migrant writers (12). While she recognizes that the second generation writes differently than the first generation, she suggests that "Keine Verwirklichungsängste" is an example of a love poem written from a migrant perspective because it depicts love as a "Migration zwischen Mann und Frau" (14). However, because the women and men of all ethnicities "migrate" from their own perspectives toward another perspective to form healthy relationships, her reading may seem a bit forced. Yet, her interpretation suggests that Rösch fills the gaps of the texts¹² with multicultural interpretations because she has read other texts by Çirak that more openly address such topics. By teaching others to interpret this and other poems in light of multiculturalism, Rösch invites others to fill the gaps in Çirak's texts in a similar way.

In "'deutsche Sprache, gute Sprache . . . ' Minorities in Germany and their German-Language Literature for Upper-Division German" (1997), Marilya Veteto-Conrad suggests

¹¹ See the Appendix of Texts for the full text.

¹² See pages 36 through 38 for a discussion of "gaps."

practical ways for including minority literature in the classroom. She mentions several of Çirak's texts, such as "Kulturidentität," "deutsche sprache gute sprache," and "Eigentum," and introduces possibilities for discussion. The discussion topics include understanding stereotypes, *Ausländerfeindlichkeit*, and *Ausländerfreundlichkeit* (64). In writing this article, Veteto-Conrad creates room for an interpretive community that learns how to analyze texts by minorities with the minority heritage in mind. Yet, because Veteto-Conrad's goal in writing this article is to increase students' awareness of minority literature and influence which works show up on the reading lists of university German departments, she clearly links Çirak's texts with multicultural studies. While Çirak may not appreciate such a link between her texts and multiculturalism, such an article makes her texts more available to a broader range of readers.

Kadriye Öztürk and Petra Fachinger, on the other hand, create cultural distinctions that influence readings of Çirak's texts by focusing on how her Turkish background heavily influences her use of language. In the article "Orte und Sprachen der Erinnerung in der deutsch-türkischen Migranteliteratur—am Beispiel von Zehra Çiraks Gedichten" (2004), Öztürk, who is also of Turkish decent, suggests that for a migrant culture, the language and place of memory reveal themselves in an author's texts (152). However, because Çirak left Turkey when she was three years old and had no formal education in the Turkish language, she herself claims to be less affected by the Turkish language and culture than Öztürk suggests. Although Öztürk's readings are valid and are based in the texts, he focuses on the small number of Çirak's texts that can be read in this way. By ignoring the majority of her poems, Öztürk may give a false representation of her writing style.

Similarly, in Petra Fachinger's book entitled *Rewriting Germany from the Margins: 'Other' German Literature of the 1980s and 1990s* (2001), she devotes an entire chapter to

discussing how Zehra Çirak and José F.A. Oliver use German to resist mainstream German society. Fachinger cites the poems by Çirak that include literary devices identified in *The Empire Writes Back* (2002), such as code-switching, which is switching back and forth between two or more languages (Ascroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 71),¹³ and claims that the structural flexibility of German allows her to “abrogate the ‘centrality’ of standard German and to inscribe difference” (46). Although the poems Fachinger cites, such as “Duden Ichden” and “Allianz,” use German in a distinct way, these poems are not thematically representative of the rest of Çirak’s poems.

On the other hand, Moray McGowan, in his articles “‘Bosporus fließt in mir’” *Europa-Bilder und Brückenmetaphern bei Aras Ören und Zehra Çirak* (1997), “‘The Bridge of the Golden Horn’: Istanbul, Europe and the ‘Fractured Gaze from the West’ in Turkish Writing in Germany” (2000) and “Turkish-German Views and Visions of ‘Europa’” (2000), focuses more on Çirak’s dual heritage than simply her Turkish background. However, he still links her texts with her biography. In “‘The Bridge of the Golden Horn,’” McGowan discusses how Turkish German writers, including Zehra Çirak, Aras Ören, and Emine Sevgi Özdamar, look back to Turkey with a partially Westernized and ironic perspective, while in “Turkish-German Views and Visions of ‘Europa’” and “Bosporus fließt in mir” he discusses how Çirak interprets Europe. In a discussion of Çirak’s text “Kulturidentität,” McGowan explains that Çirak rejects defining people according to ethnicity. He claims that the Turkish dreams she has of the Bosphorus do not suggest that she feels more Turkish than she does German. The Bosphorus, after all, is the Turkish symbol for migration and flux. Thus, in the poem “Istanbul,” by saying that the Bosphorus flows in her, she is not celebrating her Turkish heritage, rather the duality of her

¹³ See page 33 for a discussion of *The Empire Writes Back*.

identity (“The Bridge of the Golden Horn” 57-8). He may not discuss the “oriental” nature of Çirak’s texts, but he certainly places her texts within the context of multicultural literature.

Despite Marilya Veteto-Conrad’s desire to respect Çirak’s wish to be read outside of a multicultural context, she continues to analyze the few texts that address Çirak’s Turkish heritage, share her biography, and discuss the general history of Turkish German literature. In the article “Zehra Çirak: Foreign Wings on Familiar Shoulders,” which can be found in the 1996 collection of essays entitled *Homemaking : Women Writers and the Politics and Poetics of Home*, Veteto-Conrad directly links Çirak’s biography with her works by citing poems, such as “Geflüchtet,” and relating the event in her life that inspired the poem. In the case of “Geflüchtet,” Veteto-Conrad correlates the text with Çirak’s experience as she left her parents’ Islamic home to live with her German boyfriend (338-340). Other poems include “Notwehr,” “Sich Warm Laufen,” “Kulturidentität,” and “Doppelte Nationalitätsmoral.“ Like other critics previously discussed, Veteto-Conrad chooses to analyze the frequently anthologized poems, which she also does in her article entitled “*Doppelte Nationalitätsmoral: Social and Self-Perceptions and Authorial Intent of Two German-Language Turkish Women Writers*” (1996).

In the book *Finding a Voice: Identity and the Works of German-Language Turkish Writers in the Federal Republic of Germany to 1990*, Veteto-Conrad discusses the biographies, works, and goals of several Turkish German authors. When she discusses Çirak, Veteto-Conrad writes, “Just as she refuses to be relegated to one category, *verschubladiert*, as she puts it, so too does she decline even to see herself as displaced” (74). Here, Veteto-Conrad recognizes Çirak’s desire to not be categorized by critics, and she continues to discuss how Çirak differentiates herself from other Turkish German authors by avoiding *Betroffenheitsliteratur* and writing texts that allude to works by Goethe and Wolfgang Borchert (74-5). However, by

placing a discussion of Çirak's works in a book about Turkish writers in Germany, Veteto-Conrad has married Çirak's poetry with the *Gastarbeiter* experience. Veteto-Conrad's readings of these poems are accurate and textually-based. However, by choosing to focus on Çirak's biography and the history of Turkish German literature, Veteto-Conrad once again focuses on the multicultural aspects of Çirak's texts.

In an attempt to represent Çirak's body of texts more accurately, Veteto-Conrad discusses texts that are easily read outside of a multicultural context in her 1999 article, "Innere Unruhe? Zehra Çirak and Minority Literature Today." However, the only over-arching thesis that connects the texts that Veteto-Conrad chooses to discuss in this article is that these texts have a literary aesthetic, i.e., metaphors, imagery, word-plays, etc., and are not about alterity. "Innere Unruhe," "Keine besonderen Geschehnisse," "Es regnet Lob," and "Der Dichter und sein Schweiß," indeed, have little to do with Çirak's Otherness, but Veteto-Conrad could have picked from any number of other poems to make a similar point. In addition, by telling the reader that these texts have nothing to do with alterity, Veteto-Conrad leads readers to question whether or not she is correct, and rather than appreciating an alternate reading of the these texts, readers of the article may search for evidence that the texts do in fact deal with multicultural issues. By selecting poems for discussion primarily according to what they are not about, Veteto-Conrad manages to make her article about minority literature.

Similarly, in a compilation of poems by, articles about, and interviews with Zehra Çirak and Şinasi Dikmen that resulted from a 1996 Goethe-Institut workshop, which I will refer to as the *Werkheft*, the editors Will Hasty and Christa Merkes-Frei include several poems by Çirak that have nothing to do with her Turkish background. The *Werkheft* states each poem's theme in a few words and includes a set of learning activities for the classroom. Of the nine poems by

Çirak included in the *Werkheft*, the editors only apply “Brief an meine Schwestern in meinen Heimat,” “Istanbul,” and “Nationalitätsmoral” to Çirak’s multicultural background. Although the percentage of poems in the *Werkheft* that deal with Çirak’s biography is still high, it is far more accurate than other selections of her poems. Even the activities for poems such as “Geflüchtet” and “Nicken mit dem Kopf heißt nein,” which other previously discussed critics interpret in light of her desire to leave her parents’ Muslim home, focus on helping students apply these poems to their own lives. For example, one of the questions for discussion included by Elisabeth A. McCorcle about “Geflüchtet” is “Welche Situationen kennt ihr aus eurem Leben, die nicht rückgängig gemacht werden können? (z.B. erwachsen werden, Gesundheitsschäden durch Drogenabhängigkeit)” (26). By comparing Çirak’s poem to “erwachsen werden,” McCorcle shows how even those of Çirak’s poems which contain biographical references to her response about her multiculturalism can be read in a different light.

Later in the *Werkheft*, the editors address Çirak’s biography in “Zu den Autoren.” The editors explain in that Çirak is from Turkey and highlight how Jürgen Walter influenced her as an artist after she left her family. They write: “Obwohl es später zu einer Versöhnung mit den Eltern kam, bewegt sich Zehra persönlich und künstlerisch in einem kulturellen Bereich, der sich von dem ihrer Familie grundlegend unterscheidet” (56). Here, rather than only focusing on Çirak’s break with her Turkish background, the editors focus on how Çirak’s works themselves break with Turkish tradition. If that is the case, I suggest that her works cannot be as easily defined as “Turkish German” literature.

To this same topic, Will Hasty in his article, “Fremde Perspektiven in der deutschen Literatur: Zur neueren deutschen Literatur von Autoren nicht-deutscher Herkunft,” explains how the word “Deutsch’ (althochdeutsch *diutisk*)” literally means the “Sprache des Volkes” (59) and

concludes that the “gegenwärtige deutsche Literatur vielleicht eher im Sinne von *diutisk* als ein Medium der Kommunikation und der Selbstdefinition, das Gruppen mit verschiedenen Traditionen, Bräuchen und Interessen gemeinsam ist” (64). By removing nationalistic, geographical, and cultural associations from the meaning of the word “Deutsch,” Hasty shows how *Ausländerliteratur* is really part of the German tradition. In many ways this *Werkheft* moves away from stereotyping Çirak as a downtrodden Turk writing in German society. However, Hasty still brings up the question of whether or not Turkish German literature should or can be read as German literature, rather than simply reading their works as German literature.

Although Karein Goertz, in her 1997 article entitled “Borderless and Brazen: Ethnicity Redefined by Afro-German and Turkish German Poets,” explores texts by Zehra Çirak and May Ayim in terms of multiculturalism, she discusses how they use their texts to define themselves. Rather than saying that Çirak’s themes and style are reflective of her Turkish heritage, Goertz suggests that these authors’ “poems are vehicles for articulating and legitimating a hybrid identity that embraces seemingly contradictory identities without prioritizing one over the other” (69). By recognizing the German-ness of these authors and allowing them to create their own identity, Goertz makes room for their texts to be read in a different context, even though her analysis is still rooted in the authors’ biographies. Goertz writes concerning her choice to analyze Çirak’s works in terms of multiculturalism:

She specifically requests that her work not be placed (*verschubladiert*) within reductive and limiting categories. Thus, while I have chosen to discuss their [Zehra Çirak’s and May Ayim’s] poetry within the context of literature by and about bicultural Germans, I envision further studies of their poetry, for example, within the larger context of poetry as play (85).

By pointing out how these poems might be read in a different context and what direction other critics could go with Çirak's and Ayim's poems, Goertz goes one step further than other critics. The reader will notice that I am not taking Goertz's suggestion, not because studying how Çirak's works fit into the larger German tradition of playing with words would not be interesting, but because I am more interested in understanding how Çirak's texts reflect multicultural ideas and why readers might be justified in reading them in this way.

Theoretical Background

To answer the driving question of my thesis, i.e., how might readers be justified in interpreting Çirak's texts in light of multiculturalism despite her claim that her texts do not address alterity?, I address two major branches of literary theory: multicultural theories and reader response theories. Multicultural theories will help me interpret Çirak's texts as reflections of her alterity, as I will do in the concluding two chapters of my thesis, and reader response theories will help justify these readings as appropriate interpretations of Çirak's texts.

While researching theory that would relate to multicultural literature, I started with the ideas of Emmanuel Levinas, a philosopher who emphasizes the relationship with the Other.

Levinas suggests:

The best way of encountering the Other is not even to notice the color of his eyes!
When one observes the color of the eyes one is not in social relationship with the
Other. The relation with the face can surely be dominated by perception, but what
is specifically the face is what cannot be reduced to that (85-6).

In the case of Zehra Çirak, readers encounter Çirak through her texts, not her face, but Levinas' idea about approaching the Other without seeing the color of his or her eyes still applies. If

readers approach Çirak's texts without seeing the color of her eyes, or the aspects of her texts that suggest that she is Turkish German, they may be able to see her face better. That is to say, readers will understand Çirak and her texts better if they are, in a sense, blind to the Turkish allusions in her texts.

However, if readers should be "blind" to what they typically consider makes the Other, in this case Çirak, so different from themselves, i.e., skin color, eye color, and culture, why do readers continue to interpret her texts in light of multiculturalism? Levinas continues by suggesting that it is "response or responsibility which is this authentic relationship [with the Other]" (88). In other words, when people come in contact with someone who is different from them, such as with Çirak through her texts, they have an ethical responsibility to respond to her needs. Thus, in light of the prevalent racism many Germans feel toward the Turks, the goal of rectifying past wrongs may make some people feel as though they must notice cultural allusions in her texts, so that they can celebrate multiculturalism and fulfill their ethical responsibility toward Çirak. In addition, I argue that the majority of German's are not yet ready to ignore the cultural differences between themselves and the Turks, and as such, when they read one of Çirak's volumes of poetry, they are aware of the author's cultural heritage. With time, reading Çirak's texts for the sake of the alterity that is present in them may promote awareness in the general public and encourage "mainstream" society to more fully accept minorities.

In *The Empire Writes Back* (2002), a book by Bill Ashcroft, Garth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin that addresses post-colonial writing, the authors promote the cause of the Other by discussing how post-colonial writers use language to point out their Otherness and maintain their identity. Although Germany did not colonize Turkey, the ideas about the way post-colonial writers use language apply to Çirak's use of language. She appropriates and reconstitutes the

German language by “capturing and remoulding the language to new usages” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 37). In other words, Çirak, because of her Turkish heritage, uses the German language in ways that someone who is not familiar with the Turkish culture could never use the language. In addition to her use of code-switching, Çirak imbues her texts with Turkish imagery. She writes:

Das, was ich mit meinen Sprachbildern mache, das ist mit deutscher Sprache, auch von der Sprache sehr pragmatisch, praktisch ausgedrückt, einfache Worte, aber sehr bildhaft. Und dieses Bild kommt vom Türkischen her. In der türkischen Sprache spricht man sehr bildhaft, sehr umschweifend. Und das versuche ich, die Bilder, die in meinem Kopf entstehen, dazu brauche ich, wie man so schön sagt, diese orientalischen Kopfbilder in deutsche Worte umzusetzen und da entstehen diese Sprachbilder (Veteto-Conrad, “Doppelte Nationalitätsmoral” 16).

Here, readers can see that Çirak appropriates the German language to express her Turkish culture through “orientalische Kopfbilder,” which makes her use of the German language new and interesting. Additionally, by pointing out her use of Turkish imagery in the text, Çirak embraces her Turkish background, which invites readers to see how her Turkish heritage influences her texts. Thus, readers may feel an ethical responsibility to see what makes her Other.

Although my interpretations of Çirak’s poems include discussions of her Otherness, reader response theory also helps me answer the driving question of my thesis: Why do readers insist upon using Çirak’s biography to interpret her texts? In Roland Barthes’ essay entitled “The Death of the Author” (1977) he claims that focusing on the author of a text is not a valid way to interpret texts. As soon as an author writes a text, he or she is no longer a part of the text.

At one point he writes, “To give a text an author is to impose a limit on that text . . . to close the writing” (147). In other words, focusing on the author of a text limits interpretations of the text because critics then view the author as entirely explaining the meaning of a text. The relationship between reader and text allows for multiple interpretations of the text if the reader does not limit his or her interpretations by being concerned about authorial intent or the way in which the author’s personal life might be revealed in the text. Roland Barthes’ claim that readers limit a text by focusing on the author is reflected in Zehra Çirak’s desire to have her poetry read outside of a discussion of her Turkish heritage. She does not want readers to categorize or limit her texts by focusing only on her biography. However, accepting Çirak’s claim that her texts do not address her Turkish German background is problematic in light of Barthes’ claim, because in avoiding readings that interpret her texts as reflections of alterity we also “give [her] text[s] an author” by considering authorial intent.

However, much of literary criticism stands in contrast to Roland Barthes’ claim that the author is dead. For example, Peter Rabinowitz, in his article “Actual Reader and Authorial Reader” (1987) suggests that reading a text as an authorial reader, or as the type of reader the author imagined as he or she wrote the text (258), is foundational to literary criticism and has a valuable place (263). If readers were to consider Çirak’s desire to have her texts read without reference to her biography, they would be authorial readers. Along the same vein, Reed Way Dasenbrock suggests in his article “Do We Write the Text We Read?” (1991) that readers who adjust their interpretations to the texts rather than adjusting the text to their interpretations have the opportunity to learn from the Other (285-6). Thus, rather than simply seeing Çirak’s Otherness, readers might learn from her as an individual.

As I recognize the sense behind Dasenbrock's, Rabinowitz's, and Barthes' claims, I feel that in reality both methods of reading texts provide benefits to the reader and the text, and I find it difficult to suggest that one or the other of these critical methods is more appropriate in every instance. I agree with Veteto-Conrad's view "that perhaps this is a pendulum swing, and the most helpful path is neither to exclude nor to make exclusive either ethnic origins or literary aesthetic" ("Innere Unruhe" 60). Looking at ethnic origins helps us by encouraging empathy and understanding between cultures, while discussing literary aesthetic, as Çirak wishes her readers to do, helps readers by encouraging a better understanding of the power of language to describe reality and evoke a fantasy. However, if critics are indeed experiencing a "pendulum swing," why is it that none of the critics whose articles I read interpreted Çirak's texts without a discussion of her biography?

Wolfgang Iser, the author of *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett* (1974), helps explain why readers might see multicultural allusions in Çirak's texts even when they are not intended by the author. In a discussion about how the limits of language prevent an author from telling a tale "in its entirety," Iser suggests that a text must contain "gaps." He writes:

These gaps have a different effect on the process of anticipation and retrospections, and thus on the 'gestalt' of the virtual dimension, for they may be filled in different ways. For this reason, one text is potentially capable of several different realizations, and no reading can ever exhaust the full potential, for each individual reader will fill in the gaps in his own way, thereby excluding the various other possibilities; as he reads, he will make his own decision as to how the gap is to be filled. In this very act the dynamics of reading are revealed. By

making his decision he implicitly acknowledges the inexhaustibility of the text; at the same time it is this very inexhaustibility that forces him to make his decision (280).

Because readers must make their “own decision as to how the gap is to be filled,” readers need to use their own knowledge and understanding of the world around them to fill the gaps. If, for example, a reader knows that the author of one of Çirak’s texts is Turkish and has seen Turks being discriminated against in Germany, that reader will likely fill gaps in the text with images of the kind of loneliness that is created by discrimination. Çirak may not intend for readers to fill the gap in this way. Nevertheless, they choose to do so.

However, because there are varied ways to fill the gaps in Çirak’s texts, it is interesting that many critics choose to fill the gaps only with multicultural readings. Stanley Fish suggests in his article “How to Recognize a Poem When You See One” (1980) that readers learn to read in a community (274). Thus, if readers learn to interpret poems from someone like Heidi Rösch, who places Çirak’s texts in a multicultural framework, they will also be likely to see allusions to Çirak’s cultural background themselves.¹⁴ Additionally, critics whose articles are published often study or work at a university, and they learn to read with a particular theory in mind. Thus, when they interpret poems by someone with the name Zehra Çirak, they apply the theoretical tool that to them seems most appropriate—multicultural theory.

I suggest that this tendency to use multicultural theory as a means of interpretation reveals the critic’s and the interpretive community’s identity and agenda. Norman N. Holland in his article entitled “Unity Identity Text Self” (1975) writes of the reader’s interpretation of a text:

¹⁴ See page 27 for a more detailed discussion of Heidi Rösch and her interpretations of Çirak’s texts.

The point in this crucial phase of response is that any individual shapes the materials the literary work offers him—including its author—to give him what he characteristically both wishes and fears, and that he also constructs his characteristic way of achieving what he wishes and defeating what he fears (817).

That is, readers interpret texts with an agenda, and although the word “agenda” carries a negative connotation, the agenda of the reader is not necessarily manipulative in a negative way.

According to Holland, as readers interpret texts, they wish to accomplish something and to defeat something. In this sense, when readers interpret Çirak’s texts in light of multiculturalism, they are revealing their fear of Western culture’s tendency to Other minority cultures. In order to champion the cause of Turks in Germany and defeat discrimination, readers fill the gaps in the text with allusions to discrimination and feelings of alterity. Championing such a cause brings many contemporary readers pleasure, and thus, such readings are in demand.

In the following two chapters of my thesis, I will interpret ten of Zehra Çirak’s texts in light of multiculturalism, not only because they are in demand or because I learned to read in an interpretive community that focuses on multicultural theories, but also because the gaps in the texts support multicultural readings. Five of the poems overtly address alterity and show that despite Çirak’s claim that her texts have nothing to do with her Turkish background, many of them do address alterity. The last five texts I discuss may not seem to address alterity on a first reading, but I will show how readers may fill the gaps of the texts to create multicultural interpretations of these texts.

Chapter Two: Texts that Openly Address Alterity

The texts I address in this chapter fit the theme that many readers expect when they choose to read poems by a German-speaking author of Turkish descent. I begin by discussing these poems to show that despite Çirak's claim that her texts do not address the topic of being Turkish in Germany, in reality, they do this. These texts address Turkey by employing such literary methods as code-switching, Turkish images, Turkish place names, Turkish cultural practices, and images of discrimination or alienation. Because of these themes, these texts are frequently discussed in critical essays and cited in anthologies that deal with minority literature, both of which indicate readers' and critics' interest in multicultural studies.

Before entering a deeper discussion of the content of Çirak's texts and how they address alterity, it is important to note that many of Çirak's texts are not poems in the traditional sense of the word. That is, Çirak does not rely on rhyme or meter. Rather, she uses poetic imagery and word plays in what some might consider more of a prose-like form. When I asked Çirak about her preference for calling her texts prose or poetry, she responded:

Bei mir ist ja auch so, schwingt auch so, dass bei den etwas längeren Gedichten könnte man auch Prosalyrik dazu sagen oder Lyrikprosa. Mir ist egal, wie das heißt. Wenn einer sagt, du das ist kein Gedicht, das ist Prosa, dann sage ich ok.

Mir Wurst (Personal Interview).

Here, Çirak intimates that it does not matter to her if people consider her texts poetry or prose, but she does indicate that she views her texts as lyric by coupling the term *Lyrik* with the term *Prosa* and merely changing the order of the two words. I suggest that although her texts may be loosely called lyric poetry, especially when compared to other modern and contemporary poetry, they may be better termed lyric prose because the texts create meaning through word choice,

rather than form. Thus, the particulars of my interpretations of the gaps in Çirak's texts will rest primarily on word choice, and I will only address form when it contributes to the conversation about Otherness.

I begin my discussion by looking at "Kulturidentität," one of Çirak's texts that most overtly addresses alterity. "Kulturidentität" begins with a question that stands on its own: "Ist das [Kulturidentität] etwas, womit ich mich wiedererkenne, oder ist das etwas, womit andere mich einordnen können?" (1-2). By putting this question at the beginning of the text and not including it in any of the following paragraphs, the speaker clarifies that answering this question is her goal. I suggest that because Çirak claims that she does not like to address the topic of cultural identity, this text, which addresses cultural identity, must have a different speaker than the author.

However, some critics, such as Marilya Veteto-Conrad in her article "Zehra Çirak: Foreign Wings on Familiar Shoulders" suggest that the voice in the text is Çirak's voice. Veteto-Conrad claims that Çirak wrote the text in answer to the frequently asked question: do you feel more German or Turkish? ("Zehra Çirak" 342). Readers can almost imagine the author thinking about how tired she is of answering questions about her heritage and deciding to write a quip response that would answer the question once and for all when reading the statement, "Ich bevorzuge weder meine türkische noch meine deutsche Kultur. Ich lebe und sehne mich nach einer Mischkultur" (3), which appears at the beginning of the first full paragraph of the text. By referring directly to Turkey and Germany in response to the question found at the beginning of the text, however, the speaker associates her words with Turkey and Germany, rather than the world's other cultures. Later in the paragraph, the speaker explains that she lives as a Turkish German "Zwangweise . . . weil ich weder in Alaska in einem Iglu noch in Anatolien tief in einer

Hütte lebe” (4-6). Here, readers may recognize the speaker’s inability to achieve a true *Mischkultur* because she feels forced to live between her Turkish and German cultures, rather than as an Alaskan or in some other culture. Because the text strongly associates the speaker with Turkey and Germany, readers may be tempted to associate the speaker with Çirak, as Veteto-Conrad has suggested. However, I suggest that the speaker, who may have autobiographical similarities to Çirak, is another voice, who against Çirak’s will, associates the text with Turkey and Germany, rather than the other cultures that the speaker claims she wants to join.

When I asked Çirak if she sees herself as the speaker or if she imagined someone else as the speaker in her texts, she responded that she wrote some texts from her own perspective and others from other perspectives. For example, sometimes she puts herself in the position of a tea kettle or another object and tries to write a poem from that perspective. However, in direct relation to “Kulturidentität” she says,

Also, ich habe mich ja nie als Ausländer gefühlt und deshalb habe ich es gar nicht geschrieben. Zum Beispiel, der „Kulturidentität“ Text. Das ist ja eigentlich ein Text, der könnte überall rein passen Es ist vielleicht ein Text über, ja, Sie spüren wie ein Weltbürger (Çirak, Personal Interview).

Here, Çirak explains that the impetus for writing the text was the fact that she never felt like an outsider, but in the text, the speaker expresses the distinct feeling that she is being limited by others’ perspectives of her cultural identity by asking, “Ist das etwas, womit andere mich einordnen können?” (1-2). Thus, contrary to Çirak’s statement that she never felt like an outsider, the speaker in this text is aware of others’ categorizations, and she feels the need to fight against them, which indicates to me that the speaker does in fact feel ostracized by others.

In response to being limited by others' perceptions of her as a Turkish German, the speaker stereotypes other cultures, just as she has been categorized by them. Whether the speaker uses the stereotypes to suggest that a little bit of every culture can be seen in her personality or to point out how offensive these stereotypes can be, she nonetheless stereotypes other cultures. For example, she claims that she "würde am liebsten japanisch aufwachen auf einem Bodenbett in Räumen mit transparenten Scheintüren" (12-3) and that she would like to "tierisch satt römisch baden" (15). While these images of sleeping like a Japanese person or bathing like a Roman may be appealing to people who are not part of these cultures, they reduce these cultures to stereotypes. In contrast to the "positive" stereotypes of the Romans and Japanese, among others, the speaker uses a negative stereotype when referring to Americans. As an American, when I read "Am liebsten würde ich . . . mein Geld nicht amerikanisch verdienen müssen" (22-3), I think about how many Americans do not earn their money in the "American way." However, whether the stereotypes are positive or negative, many members of the cultures listed by the speaker, do not engage in the actions the speaker attributes to the cultures, which reveals how limiting stereotypes can be. Thus, the narrator of the poem changes her initial question when she repeats it at the end of the text. The word *will* in the question "will ich also etwas, womit ich mich wiedererkenne, oder etwas womit andere mich einordnen können?" (28-9) places emphasis on whether or not the speaker wants to be stereotyped rather than the previous emphasis on varied uses of stereotypes. By pointing out the exclusive nature of stereotypes by stereotyping other cultures, the voice in the text creates a community of inclusiveness.

In contrast, the text "Doppelte Nationalitätsmoral" highlights how Germany is a community characterized by exclusiveness, and thus, readers may interpret the text as addressing

the problems that Turkish immigrants face while living in Germany.¹⁵ The narrator passes judgment on the uninviting Germans in the following lines of the text:

Die Socken
rot mit weißem Stern im Sichelmond
die Schuhe schwarz rot gold
für viele ist es
wie ein warmer Fuß
im kalten Schuhwerk (1-6).

As I interpret the text, the contrast between warm and cold found in the lines “für viele ist es / wie ein warmer Fuß / im kalten Schuhwerk” suggests that the Turkish foot that finds itself in the sock with the Turkish flag and the shoe with the German flag has all the necessities to stay warm. Life is more comfortable than before for most migrant workers who came to Germany because of economic need. However, the *Schuhwerk*, or footgear is *kalt*. The discrepancy between the warm foot and the cold footgear suggests that the national duality symbolized by wearing Turkish socks and German shoes leaves Turkish Germans feeling cold or unwelcome in Germany. In addition, Veteto-Conrad suggests that “the usually patriotic use of these symbols and colors highlights the menial existence of the people whose footwear bears the colors mentioned in the text” (“*Doppelte Nationalitätsmoral*” 10). While Veteto-Conrad and I may fill the gaps in the text in this way because of our knowledge of the current immigration struggles in Germany, the text overtly addresses Turkey and Germany through these images, and thus, our readings are justified.

Additionally, the image of the double-knotted shoelace and the additional visual and kinesthetic images throughout the text are the kind of images Çirak claims are characteristic of the Turkish language, and by using these images in the German language, the text appropriates

¹⁵ See the Appendix of Texts for the full text.

the German language to defend Turkish immigrants against the prejudice of the Germans.¹⁶ The text continues:

für andere
 ein Doppelknoten
 in einem nur schnürsenkellangen Leben
 aber das
 auf heißem Boden (7-11).

Here, the “Doppelknoten / in einem/ nur schnürsenkellangen Leben” may represent how hard Turkish migrant workers have to hold onto their jobs and thus, their physical comfort in order to stay in Germany. Since the shoe string, which I suggest represents life, is short, they do not have room for a double knot. In other words, they do not have the strength to hold onto something as tenuous as permission to stay in a country that wishes to send them back to Turkey. The *heißem Boden*, which is a kinesthetic image, at the close of the poem also suggests that the *Boden* on which these immigrants live, i.e. German soil, may not be their home for long. In other words, hot ground would make the feet of the Turk’s uncomfortable, and they might need to move their feet to an area of the world that is more willing to help them integrate. In this final image, the speaker in the poem passes a veiled judgment on mainstream German society for refusing to recognize the inherent difficulties of integrating into a new culture.

The next poem I will discuss, “Allianz,” is one of Çirak’s most biting poems, but rather than attacking mainstream German society, the text questions the humanity of capitalism by discussing Turkish and German international relations.¹⁷ For example, the text’s imagery characterizes the uneven trading that exists between Turkey and Germany, and it is violent and sexual. The text begins this comparison with the following stanzas:

¹⁶ See page 34.

¹⁷ See the Appendix of Texts for the full text.

Auf deutsch heißt die Hand Hand
 auf türkisch heißt sie el
 so ein Handel

der Handel hat begonnen

Hände tauschen aus und schütteln andere
 sie vermehren sich im Gerangel
 und schieben sich gegenseitig zu
 was sie aus anderen schöpfen

der Handel geht voran

die Lira geht durch Mark und Bein
 die Mark besteigt die Lira
 die Lira will gebären
 die Mark erzieht das Balg

By employing code-switching, the narrator of the text compares the German word *Handel* to the shaking of a German hand, or *Hand*, and a Turkish hand, or *el*. The words “sie vermehren sich im Gerangel” imply that the Turks and the Germans are participating in a skirmish that causes them to multiply or propagate. In other words, the narrator compares the productivity associated with participating in trade to the productivity associated with participating in sexual relations. The next stanza furthers this stark image by describing how the *Lira*, the Turkish currency, goes between “Mark und Bein.” Here, the term *Mark* may be a word-play where *Mark* is referring to *die Mark*, the German currency, and *das Mark*, the marrow of the leg bones. In other words, the *Lira* is becoming intimately connected with the German body and culture. The speaker in the text continues the sexual metaphor by saying that the *Mark besteigt* the *Lira*. Here, the word *besteigt* implies the way in which the stronger sexual partner climbs on top of the weaker partner, while also referring to the strength of the German currency when compared to the Turkish currency. When the *Lira* gives birth, the *Mark*, or the German culture, raises the child. In this sexual metaphor, the speaker of the poem discusses the dominance and power of Germany over

the weaker Turkey. The Turks lose their culture because they cannot earn as much money and have less to offer in the trade between Germany and Turkey. Here, the speaker appeals to the socialist sensibilities of her readership and may help them empathize with the weaker position of the Turks.

Although these metaphors may be unappealing to the reader, they are only clear in their accusatory tone if the reader is familiar with the history of Turkish and German relations after the Second World War. At the close of the poem, as Karein Goertz points out, the word *Handel* changes to *Händel* (31), which means quarrel. Additionally, *Handel* is described as rubbing its hands with the words, “reibt sich die Hände,” which suggests that one country is pleased with the results of the trade at the other country’s expense (Goertz 37). Goertz suggests that the *Handel* that the speaker refers to in the text is “the agreement between Germany and Turkey, which provided Germany with a cheap labor force during postwar reconstruction,” and the Turks respond to their mistreatment by sarcastically saying “eline sağlık,” which means “thank you, well done” (84). If readers know the history of postwar German reconstruction and basic Turkish, the image of postwar reconstruction that Goertz refers to is clear from reading the text. However, without the appropriate historical background, readers may create a more generic interpretation of the text and avoid interpreting the last line at all, which reminds us that the reader’s interpretive community influences the way he or she fills the gaps in a text.

In contrast to the violent imagery of the previous poem, Çirak’s “Istanbul” is characterized by peaceful imagery, and the narrator of the poem uses the serene image of the Bosphorus flowing through the middle of Istanbul to represent the duality of her personal identity.¹⁸ The text begins:

¹⁸ See the Appendix of Texts for the full text.

Von Istanbul bis Istanbul
 ist weit
 ist weit geworden
 mein Weg wohin nach Istanbul
 ist schmal ist breit wie Istanbul
 und Bosphorus fließt in mir
 in meinen Adern nur Blut
 salzig und ohne ein Blau wie das Meer (1-8).

The phrase “Von Istanbul bis Istanbul / ist weit / ist weit geworden” refers to how Istanbul, a major city in Turkey, is partly on the European continent and partly on the Asian continent. The relatively thin Bosphorus Strait flows between the two parts. However, the distance between the two parts of Istanbul may also symbolize the speaker’s dual cultural identity, as supported by the narrator’s claim that the Bosphorus *fließt* in her. She clarifies that in her veins she has *nur Blut*. Thus, the Bosphorus is not literally or metaphorically her blood. Rather, the Bosphorus is her cultural inheritance, and she feels distanced from Istanbul just as the two parts of Istanbul are distanced from each other. In other words, the narrator may feel distanced from Istanbul because she has embraced one part of her cultural heritage, either the Turkish or the European part, over the other.

I suggest that because readers know that the author is a Turk living in Germany, they are likely to assume that the speaker has embraced the European part of her identity. Although the speaker may be culturally distanced from Turkey, the Turkish part of the speaker longs to be reunited with her homeland. The poem closes:

in Istanbul ist
 Windstille
 in mir ist weit geworden
 Istanbul
 wie Sonnenblumenfelder
 sich der Sonne zuwenden
 drehe ich mich im Kreise
 und suche Istanbul (10-7).

Here, the *Windstille*, which stands alone to draw attention to the power of peace, may represent the calm that comes from reconciling two parts of one's identity. However, the words "in mir ist weit geworden / Istanbul" suggest that the distance between the two parts of Istanbul have increased, not literally, but inside of the speaker. In other words, the European part of her personality is growing apart from the Turkish part of her identity. Then, as Kadriye Öztürk points out, the speaker compares herself to a sunflower that turns to the sun, or in this case Istanbul (58). In other words, because the wind cannot blow her in the correct direction, the speaker must make more of an active effort to find Istanbul, the only place where she can reconcile her dual identity as a Turk and a European.

The final poem I will discuss that openly discusses alterity in relation to Turkish heritage has not, to my knowledge, been quoted or analyzed in any of the anthologies or critical essays that address Çirak's works. "Karenzzeit" is relevant because, like "Istanbul," it shows the dual identity of the speaker.¹⁹ In this case, however, holidays rather than geographical features serve as the symbols, and the speaker, who is looking back on a childhood question about holidays, presents a duality that is childlike and uncomplicated, unlike in any of the previous poems I have discussed. Perhaps this innocence is why the poem has not reached critical success like some of her more complicated multicultural texts. However, the text is significant because it is indicative of the reality of one Turkish German child's navigation of cultural identity, and cultural identity is most accurate in its singularity, rather than its stereotypes.

In this text, the speaker, who is now an adult, describes her life as a Muslim child living in a primarily Christian country in a way that makes the duality seem like a learning experience, rather than a complication. She begins by describing how Muslims and Christians schedule their holidays. The first stanza reads:

¹⁹ See the Appendix of Texts for the full text.

zwischen den Feiertagen
 zweier Religionen
 die einen wandern im Kalender
 die anderen sitzen darin fest (1-4).

Rather than complaining that the Christians did not understand her customs, which one might expect from *Betroffenheitsliteratur*, she explains Muslim traditions in relationship to Christian traditions, so that readers can understand her text, even if they did not realize before encountering the text that Muslim holidays fall on different days each year. Next, the speaker points to how as a child, she did not understand Christian customs. The second stanza reads: “einmal fragte ich / ob Karfreitag immer / an einem Freitag” (5-7). By asking this question, the child reveals how, despite the clarity of the name *Karfreitag*, she assumed that Christians celebrate their holidays according to the Islamic calendar. The assumption of similarity between one’s own culture and another is normally viewed as ethnocentric, but this child, after learning about some of the differences between Christianity and Islam, continues by expressing her joy in being able to experience the differences side by side.

Because the speaker in the text discusses how she has the opportunity to celebrate the holidays of two religions, readers come to see how despite the differences between Muslim and Christian holidays, in many ways they are complementary. For example, the second to last stanza reads:

Doch das Schönste am Karfreitag ist
 daß es die Bachsche
 Matthäuspassion noch gibt
 und beim Opferfest
 will ich sie wieder hören (9-13).

Here, the narrator claims that the most wonderful thing about *Karfreitag*, which is the Friday before Easter and the day when devout Christians remember the Crucifixion of Christ

(“Germany” 468), is that she can listen to Bach’s *Matthäuspassion*, which commemorates the Crucifixion. Although the narrator’s family is Muslim, as evidenced by her earlier confusion as to when Christian holidays occur, she appreciates the festivities of the Christian holidays. In addition, she can listen to Bach’s *Matthäuspassion* again when the Muslims celebrate *Opferfest*, which is the day Muslims remember Ibrahim’s faith in God and his willingness to sacrifice his son. However, because Muslims use the lunar calendar, their holidays occur eleven days earlier every year (“Turkey” 1322). This means that the narrator will not be able to celebrate the Christian or Muslim holidays in exactly the same way each year, but the narrator’s willingness to mix Christian traditions with the celebration of a Muslim day of remembrance highlights the complementary nature of commemorating Christ’s crucifixion and Abraham’s sacrifice of a lamb in place of his son around the same time of year. Additionally, because the narrator celebrates both holidays, rather than just one, the reader becomes aware of the symbolic similarities between the two religions and the cultures that live these religions.

The narrator closes the poem with a short two line stanza that furthers the feeling of enjoying both cultures and explains the title of the poem. Because the word *Karenzzeit* is visually related to the word *Karfreitag* and the term *Karenz* comes from the Latin word *carentia*, meaning *das Nichthaben* or *das Entbehren* (“Karenz”), readers may connect the term *Karenzzeit* with the Christian Lent, which ends the day after *Karfreitag*, and with the Muslim Ramadan. People observe Ramadan and Lent by doing without or fasting. In addition, *Karenzzeit*, is a term that means *waiting period* (“Karenzzeit”), and when the narrator says, “Von Ramadan bis Weihnachten / ein süßer Warteraum” (14-15), the reader understands that the time between Ramadan and Christmas is a time of sweet anticipation for the narrator. Ramadan is the Muslim month of fasting that teaches devout Muslims to remember the less fortunate (“Turkey” 1323),

and Christmas, in contrast, is a feast day that celebrates the birth of Christ (“Germany” 471). The two holidays are different in purpose, i.e., one is a celebration while the other is more somber. However, the speaker in the poem enjoys celebrating the holidays of both religions, and thus, rather than being a text that focuses on dualities and alienation, “Karenzzeit” is a text that reconciles Turkish immigrants with mainstream German society.

In the poems I discussed in this chapter, the narrators openly discuss living between the German culture and the Turkish culture. Although they overtly address their Turkish cultural heritage and sometimes accuse mainstream German society for its coldness toward Turkish immigrants, as in the text “Allianz,” the poems cited and discussed above create a rounded image of what it means to be Turkish and German. In other words, these texts present the cultural duality of Turkish Germans as problematic without omitting the positive aspects of being able to experience and embrace two vastly different cultures—or countless cultures, as suggested by the speaker in “Kulturidentität.” Readers who are familiar with the history of Turkish guest workers may want to read all of these poems in light of what it means to be a Turk living in modern day Germany, and they are certainly not mistaken in making this decision. However, the varied nature of the representations of foreignness in these poems prevents readers from stereotyping Turks as a social group of victims who need liberally-minded champions to come to their aid, and helps readers see Turks as individuals with individual personalities. Thus, in their individuality, readers are able to relate to Turkish Germans’ feelings of frustration, alienation, and joy.

Chapter Three: Texts that Metaphorically Address Alterity

In the poems discussed up to this point, the speakers in Çirak's poems openly discuss the complications and benefits of being a German of Turkish heritage. The poems in this chapter, however, include no specific references to Germans or Turks, and readers can only interpret them as commenting on multiculturalism in Germany when considering textual elements, the author's heritage, current events in Germany, and the history of Turkish and German relations. Because these poems rely on metaphors, not all of them must be interpreted in light of multiculturalism in Germany. In fact, in Çirak's opinion some of the readings of the following texts may be irresponsible because readers and critics may have allowed their knowledge of Çirak's heritage to influence the way they fill the textual gaps and, thus, interpret the texts. However, because of the malleability of metaphors, readers from interpretive communities that focus on alterity will see references to the alienation and displacement of Turks living in Germany.

For example, in the text "Der Besen," the speaker describes a broom, which readers may interpret as a metaphor for Turkish Germans.²⁰ To introduce the broom at the beginning of the poem, the speaker says, "Ein heimatloser Besen / hatte keine Tür mehr da / vor der er eigens kehren könnte" (1-3). Because she describes the broom as *heimatlos*, a reader who approaches Çirak's text as one informed by Çirak's alterity may connect the homelessness of the broom with the feeling of not having a homeland, a feeling that many Turkish Germans experience. To suggest that the broom has no door in front of which it can sweep is to say that the Turkish Germans are unable to do the work for which they are most suited. If a broom cannot sweep, it cannot fulfill its purpose, and if a person has limited opportunities for education or career advancement, he or she cannot fulfill his or her purpose. Moving to a country where

²⁰ See the Appendix of Texts for the full text.

Gastarbeiter are deemed less capable than local workers presents Turkish immigrant workers with fewer *Türen* or opportunities than they might like.

In response to the limitations set upon them by many Germans, some Turkish Germans have sought to overcome these limitations through hard work while others have dealt with these limitations in more negative ways. Thus, the text continues to support my claim that the broom represents Turkish Germans when the speaker says, “sein Stiel ist stählern und geladen” (6). The word *stählern* suggests that the Turkish migrant workers have a strength and fortitude that makes them capable of withstanding the struggles of feeling homeless and discriminated against. For example, a Turkish man with whom I spoke during my recent trip to Nuremberg displayed the strength of the Turks in Germany by pointing to several different shops in downtown Nuremberg that were owned by Turkish Germans. Among these shops were not only Turkish restaurants, but also a jeweler, a clothing store, and a supermarket. Here, one can see that despite discrimination, Turks have created a strong presence for themselves in Germany. On the other hand, the second adjective Çirak uses to describe the steel is *geladen*, and this word has a more negative connotation. Because many Turkish Germans feel like they do not belong in Germany or in Turkey, they feel laden with cares and concerns about their future. The use of the word *geladen* may also suggest that the Turks living in Germany are like loaded guns, ready to go off at any moment because of their discomfort. The metaphorical steel from which the Turkish Germans are formed may be strong, but what is the weight limit? How many cares or problems can they carry before the steel warps or the gun fires?

In the next line, the speaker continues to represent the Turks as passive and aggressive by playing with words and using double meanings. Thus, the poem vividly enacts Petra Fachinger’s suggestion that Çirak’s texts include “semantic, and consequently cultural, ambiguity” (47). The

text continues, “doch seine Borsten sträuben sich” (7). Here, the verb *sich sträuben* can mean *to bristle* or *to resist* (“Sträuben”). According to the first definition, even the *Borsten*, the weakest part of a broom, remain straight and bristled. The image of the weakest part of a broom remaining straight under the heavy weight of the steel handle suggests that Turkish German immigrant workers are stronger than expected and no amount of discrimination will cause them to bend. At the same time, because the verb carries a connotation of resistance, readers can also interpret the *Borsten* as not only remaining straight under pressure, but as actively resisting discrimination by embracing the kind of violence inherent in the previously discussed image of a loaded gun. By choosing *sich sträuben*, a verb that has more than one meaning, the narrator opens up the possibility for readers to see Turkish Germans as both passive and aggressive in their response to those majority Germans who may mistreat them.

Although readers can interpret the metaphor of the *heimatloser Besen* as representing Turkish Germans and their plight, metaphors leave room for other interpretations. Veteto-Conrad, for example, suggests that the *Besen* represents the German Right, rather than a Turkish immigrant in Germany, but before presenting her argument, I wish to clarify that Veteto-Conrad’s interpretation and my interpretation of “Der Besen” are not the only two valid interpretations. For example, other readers may interpret the text as being broadly multicultural or as addressing any number of immigrant groups. However, looking specifically at Veteto-Conrad’s alternate interpretation, I once again cite the first three lines of the text, which read, “Ein heimatloser Besen / hatte keine Tür mehr da / vor der er eigens kehren könnte.” Veteto-Conrad’s claim that the *Besen* is the German Right rests on her translation of the word *eigens* to *to itself* (“Zehra Çirak” 357). Although this is not the dictionary definition of the word *eigens*, this word is visually connected with the word *eigen*, an adjective which means *own* (“Eigen”).

Veteto-Conrad's translation suggests that the broom is self-seeking because it refuses "to allow others to share its space" (357-8). According to Veteto-Conrad's translation of the word *eigens*, which I believe can be seen as valid because of Çirak's tendency to play with words, the broom does not deserve as much sympathy because it aggressively sought to keep its own door and, therefore, lost it.

However, I respectfully depart from Veteto-Conrad's interpretation of the poem when she suggests that because the word *eigens* suggests selfishness the broom represents the German Right rather than Turkish Germans. The word *eigens*, because of its close relationship with the word *eigen*, may suggest that the broom has negative qualities, but because the word *eigens* actually means "specially" ("Eigens"), it continues to support the first interpretation I provided. This definition suggests that the broom has no door in front of which it can specially sweep, and sweeping specially implies sweeping with specific or particular purpose. If a broom has no door in front of which it can sweep with purpose, the broom's purpose remains unfulfilled, and this is the plight of Turkish Germans living in Germany, not the German Right.

"Eigentum," another poem that in my view metaphorically addresses the Turkish German plight, discusses ethnocentrism without mentioning Turkey or Germany.²¹ Because the author is a German of Turkish heritage and in light of recent comments made by the German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Thilo Sarrazin,²² readers may be tempted to assume that the speaker's voice is a German voice. Although the text was published in 1991, long before Sarrazin published his book, readers rewrite the text according to their own interpretative communities, and the present-day interpretative community includes Sarrazin's *Deutschland schafft sich ab*. Thus, when reading "Eigentum," readers may hear Thilo Sarrazin's voice

²¹ See the Appendix of Texts for the full text.

²² See pages 5 and 6 for an explanation of Thilo Sarrazin's and Angela Merkel's comments.

claiming Germany for ethnic Germans in the repeated use of the word *mein*. The first stanza and the first line of the second stanza of the poem read as follows:

Meine Heimat mein Land
 meine Landsleute meine Sprache
 meine Geschichte mein Krieg mein Sieg
 meine Sehnsucht mein(e) Frau (Mann) mein Kind
 mein Haus mein Hab und Gut meine Zukunft
 meine Meinung mein Recht meine Person
 mein Nachbar mein Feind in meiner Zeit

mein Gott steh mir bei daß mir alles bleibt (1-8)

The placement of the word *mein* followed by a possession at the beginning of each line emphasizes the selfishness and ethnocentrism of the speaker. Although some of the first possessions listed, such as *Heimat* and *Sprache*, may seem like acceptable claims on one's cultural heritage, the list becomes increasingly sinister when the narrator claims *mein Krieg mein Sieg*, which may particularly stick out to readers because they rhyme. Thus, with each repetition of *mein*, readers may begin to question the morality the narrator's possessiveness. Furthermore, as Veteto-Conrad suggests, when *Feind* follows the word *Nachbar*, the narrator's possessiveness becomes even darker ("Zehra Çirak" 352). Finally, when the speaker claims God in the second and last stanza with the words "mein Gott steh mir bei" (8), readers may ask themselves why a loving God would choose to bless one group of people while destroying another. The narrator allows this ethnocentric voice to speak in the text, not because she agrees with the selfish claims, but to raise questions about the ethics of such thinking. After all, viewing God in a possessive way led to the crusades, the Holocaust, the Jim Crow laws of the South, and the discrimination of Turks in Germany.

On the other hand, the last stanza of the text, which expresses a fear of losing everything to the Other, may make the speaker's possessiveness more understandable, perhaps until the very

last four words. Breaking from the pattern of beginning each line with *mein*, which grabs the reader's attention, the speaker says:

mein Gott steh mir bei daß mir alles bleibt
 da kommt einfach ein anderer mit seinem mein
 und nichts bleibt mir mehr
 nichts von mir—ach du meine Güte (8-11).

In this stanza, the speaker suggests with the words “nichts bleibt mir mehr / nichts von mir” that his or her identity is tied to the many items listed in the first stanza, i.e. *Geschichte* (3), *Sehnsucht* (4), etc. Without his or her *Landsleute* or *Sprache* (2), the speaker feels that he or she has no identity, and thus, the speaker calls on God to prevent “ein anderer mit seinem mein” from taking away his or her possessions. However, despite the fact that most readers likely understand the speaker's expression of the necessity of self-preservation over the preservation of the Other, the last four words “ach du meine Güte,” which suggest that the speaker's *Hab und Gut* is more important than her other possessions (5), remind readers of the speaker's selfish expressions in the previous stanza. That is, one's personal identity should not be tied to a war, one's enemies, or material possessions because these expressions of individuality destroy the humanity in the Other and the Self.

By leaving out specific country names, the speaker in the poem highlights that ethnocentrism is a global problem, not merely a Turkish or a German failing. The speaker in the text avoids details that might paint any specific person, country or gender in a negative light. For example, because of the parentheses in the line “meine Sehnsucht mein(e) Frau (Mann) mein Kind” (4), the text avoids revealing the gender or identity of the speaker, and thereby suggests that such jingoistic sentiments can be found among people of all genders and nationalities. The fact that all nations suffer from ethnocentrism, however, does not mean that it would be inaccurate to read the text as addressing the German Right's approach to *Ausländer*. Such an

unbiased approach gives readers the opportunity to question their own motives and the effects of ethnocentrism on peoples of all countries, including Germany.

In “Länderkunde,” the identity and biases of the narrator of the text are more unclear than in any of the previous texts I have discussed, and thus, the text relies on word plays and the arrangement of the text on the page to draw readers’ attention to alterity.²³ The majority of the text consists of one word, *Einwanderer*, which is repeated several times in various forms to reveal all of its meanings through all of the possible word groupings. The text reads:

Ein gehend Stück barfuß
einlaufend fürbaß

Ein Wanderer
Ein Wand ere r
ein Wander er
Einwand erer
Einwander er
Einwanderer

Ein-
w
anderer (1-11).

Because the text closes with the word *anderer* standing alone, readers can see that the *Wanderer*, who is introduced in the first line of the second stanza, feels alienated and Othered. In addition, he is *barfuß*, which suggests that he is poor, like the Turkish, Slavic, and African immigrants who came to Germany because of economic need. The umlaut on the *u* in the word *barfuß*, although technically a misspelling, visually connects the idea of being barefoot with a wanderer who is walking *einlaufend fürbaß*, or inward and onward. Moving inward suggests that the wanderer is an immigrant crossing the border of a country and moving onward suggests that the immigrant is trying to make a life for himself in that new country. Additionally, the line “Ein Wand ere r,” because of the space after *Wand*, focuses on the existence of a wall that shuts out

²³ See the Appendix of Texts for the full text.

the wanderer, just as many migrant workers who immigrate to Germany only enter the country with great difficulty. Finally, in the last line of the middle stanza when the speaker combines all of the letters and leaves out the spaces, readers see the word *Einwanderer*, which, in light of Çirak's own childhood migration to Germany may link the poem to *Migrantenliteratur*.

The idea of the Other may also connect Çirak's text, "Mit den Augen eines anderen," to her Turkish heritage.²⁴ Expressing a desire to experience the world the way her neighbor experiences the world, the speaker says:

So zu sehen wie der Nachbar
wenn er an seinem Fenster steht
zu hören was er lauschen kann
sozusagen wie er zu sein
mit dem gleichen Hund spazieren gehen
mit der gleichen Frau zu schlafen
seine Angst vor mir zu haben
und keine Angst vor ihm (1-8).

Although the speaker's wish to experience life from the neighbor's perspective initially seems reminiscent of the common sentiment of wanting to "spend a day in somebody else's shoes," the tone of the text changes when the narrator expresses a desire to sleep "mit der gleichen Frau." Wanting to know what it is like to hear what a neighbor can hear, see what a neighbor can see, or even walk a neighbor's dog can be seen as harmless or even altruistic, but wanting to sleep with a neighbor's wife is selfish and would destroy the relationship between the neighbor and his wife. The sinister tone continues with the use of the word *Angst* because the *Angst* that exists between the two people in the poem suggests that the speaker in the text may be interested in understanding his neighbor's perspective for more reasons than to appease his curiosity. The speaker is also interested in self-preservation. In other words, the fear that exists between the speaker and his neighbor may be like the fear that exists between many Turks and Germans.

²⁴ See the Appendix of Texts for the full text.

Turks fear Germans because Germans have legal and financial power over Turks, and Germans fear Turks because the Turkish population is growing at a rapid pace. The Turkish speaker, who does not understand his neighbor's perspective, wants to be rid of his fear of the neighbor and wants to understand what makes Turks so fearsome to mainstream Germans. He begins to achieve his goal by attempting to see the world through the Other's perspective.

At the same time, readers could insist that because the narrator makes no specific reference to race or culture, the text discusses the inherent differences that exist between all individuals, regardless of race or cultural heritage. For example, because I am not my neighbor, I cannot fully understand what my neighbor thinks and feels. As such, we may come into conflict or be afraid to speak with each other. If, however, I had the opportunity to spend some time thinking as my neighbor thinks and experiencing life as my neighbor experiences it, I would come to understand my neighbor. While it is not incorrect to read this text as addressing issues between any number of groups that do not understand each other, such as the issues between homosexuals and homophobic people, I suggest that readers may more readily apply the text's discussion of alterity to the Turkish German question in Germany because they know that the author is Turkish German.

One of Çirak's most malleable texts is "Fremde Flügel auf eigener Schulter" because readers can interpret the text as having to do with the integration of Turks into mainstream German society, as a love poem, or in additional ways that I have not yet considered or that do not directly relate to my project.²⁵ Looking first at the interpretation dealing with integration, I cite the first stanza of the text:

Du bist Rechtshänder ich bin Linkshändin
wie selbstverständlich träumen wir vom Fliegen
du hast einen Flügel auf deiner linken Schulter

²⁵ See the Appendix of Texts for the full text.

und ich natürlich einen auf meiner rechten
 so beim gemeinsamen Schwingen wünschen wir
 Schulter an Schulter verwachsen
 abzuheben (1-7).

Here, the speaker describes two people with opposite talents that are interconnected, and I argue that this image suggests that the integration of Turks into German society is underway. The narrator is left-handed and the other person is right-handed. The right-handed person is a man, as evidenced by the *-er* noun ending, and the narrator is a woman, as evidenced by the *-in* noun ending on *Linkshändin*. The differences in this image imply that their strengths are opposite, yet potentially complementary. Although the text does not directly suggest that the *Linkshändin* is Çirak or that the *Rechthänder* is Jürgen Walter, I suggest that if readers know about the author and her husband's lives, they could interpret the woman and man as representing Çirak and Walter. Walter is a sculptor, and Çirak is a writer. The skills are complementary in their artistic nature, but they produce different results that appeal to different senses. Likewise, Walter is German and Çirak is of Turkish heritage. In their ethnicities, others might see them as mismatched, but having both ethnicities represented in one couple could be an advantage in that it would broaden the perspectives and viewpoints of both people. However, because the couple in the text clasps dominant hands instead of using them to act and because their wings are growing out of their non-dominant sides, they prevent themselves from making further progress toward flight, or integrating Turks into German society.

The speaker's placement of words in the first stanza furthers her concept of an incomplete integration of Turks into mainstream German society. *Verwachsen*, which is used as an adverb at the end of the sixth line, suggests that the creature with two wings wants to lift-off deformedly. However, by ending the line with *verwachsen* and momentarily delaying the reader's eye from reading the verb infinitive on the next line, she briefly uses the word as a verb,

which would suggest that the two different people have grown together (“Verwachsen”).

Because the speaker uses *verwachsen* as a verb and an adverb, readers see the creature as two people that have grown together crookedly and may not be able to fly successfully.

The flight to which the text refers, I argue, is as an integration that is so complete that not even rough winds or difficult political struggles could tear the two people apart. In the first stanza, the speaker suggests that both of the creatures want to fly when she uses the word *träumen*, and here, the speaker clarifies that the right-handed man, who in my interpretation represents mainstream German society is not the enemy of the left-handed woman, who I claim represents the Turkish Germans. They both have the same goal; otherwise European Germans would not have allowed Turkish Germans to make slow inroads toward integration. For example, some mainstream Germans began advertising to appeal to guest workers because they wanted to earn more money from an untapped market, and others started marketing the artistic endeavors of guest workers to mainstream German society because they wanted to broaden the canon and help guest workers integrate (Chin, *The Guest Worker Question* 22-23). Having an influence on the German market system suggests that Turkish Germans have achieved a degree of integration.

However, in the second stanza of the poem, the speaker refers to the fear Turkish Germans and Germans have about what would happen if they flew, or became a fully integrated society. The stanza reads:

Auf festem Boden
 hier sind wir schon lange uns einig
 aber wehe in den Lüften dort könnten wir
 uns zerreißen
 also halten wir verlässlich die Hände
 meine linke in deiner rechten
 und kratzen uns allabendlich
 gegenseitig die juckenden Schulterblätter (8-15).

By placing “auf festem Bodem” on a line by itself, the speaker creates an image of security. The Turks and the Germans have been living with each other on the same ground and in the same cities for decades, and they have reached a certain level of security in maintaining the status quo. However, the words *wehe* and *zerreißen* express fears about the consequences of flight, or complete integration, and these fears come from Turks and Germans. Thus, the words *kratzen . . . gegenseitig* connote an agreement between the Turkish Germans and majority Germans to prevent flight, perhaps by playing to each others’ fears or negative stereotypes. Many European Germans fear the unknown or foreign, and they often see “deviant migrant youth” as a threat to their traditions. However, many Turkish Germans want to maintain their unique identity, and as such, they play to the negative stereotypes of majority Germans and use their Turkish language, accent, and traditions in order to establish their identity in a society that is hostile to their differences (Eksner 22). Flight, or complete integration, is thus impeded by the fears of both people in Çirak’s poem. Because the narrator speaks with honesty and represents Turkish Germans and majority Germans as responsible for preventing complete integration, she opens up the possibility for Germans and Turkish Germans to understand each other better.

However, after analyzing “Fremde Flügel auf eigener Schulter” in terms of multiculturalism, I suggest that readers may also choose to interpret the “Rechtshänder” and the “Linkshändin” as a romantic couple. Çirak herself interprets the text in the following way: “Zum Beispiel, gibt es dieses Liebesgedicht ‚Fremde Flügel auf eigener Schulter.‘ Es ist ein Liebesgedicht, ja? . . . Und nur weil das Wort ‚fremde,‘ ja? Aber es liegt auf den fremden Flügel, dass man zu zweit deshalb fliegen kann“ (Personal Interview). Here, she suggests that the poem is a love poem, and that the mere presence of the word *fremd* should not encourage people to interpret the poem as having anything to do with multiculturalism. The Goethe-Institut

Werkheft writers agree, as can be seen by the fact that they categorize the poem under the theme “Liebe” (Hasty and Merkes-Frei 11). After all, in a relationship, people need their own metaphorical wings and the metaphorical wings of their partner if they hope to be able to fly, or reach their full potential. However, a multicultural reading of the text based on readers’ knowledge of Çirak’s heritage and intercultural relationship with Jürgen Walter may justify readers in seeing the text as a love poem and as a text that addresses integration struggles.

Because readers can interpret all of these poems and many more of Çirak’s poems as addressing Turkish and German relations while applying them to other situations, they may be more appealing than the poems written by many of the first generation Turkish German authors who openly discuss the effects of migration in most of their works. Çirak, although she may not appreciate it when readers interpret her texts in light of her cultural background, has created texts that lend themselves to being read as multicultural literature. Granted, readers, me included, may not have drawn parallels to the Turkish German condition if they had known nothing of the author, but because literature is open to interpretation, we can view such readings, among others, as valid.

Conclusion: Reading Responsibly

By first interpreting poems that readers can clearly link to multiculturalism and then turning to interpret poems that readers must metaphorically link to Çirak’s biography, I have shown how Çirak’s texts lend themselves to multicultural readings even when readers must work to see the connection. However, at times, readers would have to work to interpret the texts in any other way. Her Turkish name and all of the associations readers have with the history of Turks in Germany invite readers to interpret her texts as products of her dual ethnicity.

After surveying her published texts, I have discovered that Çirak's later works contain fewer overt references to her Turkish heritage, thus, I discussed none of the texts from *Leibesübungen* or *In Bewegung* in the first chapter, but despite the fact that some of these later texts never openly mention Turkey, they are still a product of a Turkish German's perspective. Some of the texts evoke feelings of alienation, but even in writing on other subjects, she reveals how the perspective of some Turkish Germans has changed. Instead of seeing herself and her fellow Turks as victims, Çirak sees herself as a rightful member of German society, and this perspective helps readers more fully understand the perspective of the Other.

Thus, despite my initial attempts to respect Zehra Çirak's wishes by not interpreting her texts with reference to her biography and her status as a Turkish German, my entire thesis stands in opposition to her desire. If the author is metaphorically dead, her texts must speak louder than her own desires, and every text I have cited, in my view, refers to living between two cultures. Additionally, readers can responsibly and accurately interpret many of her other texts as a reflection of the Turkish German perspective. Thus, when Çirak rhetorically tells critics, "Es gibt ganz wenige Texte, die sich irgendwie mit dem Thema [my Turkish heritage] beschäftigen. . . . Ich schreibe über das gar nicht. Welche Stellen meinen sie denn in meinen Texten?" (Personal Interview), I point to the ten poems I have discussed and many others. These are texts that evoke feelings of confusion, alienation, and failed hopes, and some of them openly mention Turkey. Therefore, Çirak's texts themselves stand in opposition to what Çirak says about her choice of theme. No, readers should not manipulate texts to find multicultural themes, but if such themes are present, they are justified in interpreting the texts in ways that instruct them concerning the perspective of the Other.

Appendix of Texts

Keine Verwirklichungsängste

Ihre Hand fährt der Rundung
 seines Hinterkopfes entlang
 er dabei seine Hände nicht lassen kann
 von ihrem aufgerundeten Sowieso
 beider Finger sich verknoten
 im Kurzhaar
 dabei sein Daumen sich
 an Rippen verzählt
 ihre Zehnfingerabtastatur tut gut
 ein beidhändiger Beitrag dazu
 ist nicht unangenehm nein gar nicht
 ihnen ist
 als hätten sie nicht anderes im Sinn
 aber auch
 da kommt ein aber auch
 und macht ein aber ach
 ach es könnte so weitergehn (*Vogel 59*)

Kulturidentität

Ist das etwas, womit ich mich wiedererkenne, oder ist das etwas, womit andere mich einordnen können?

Ich bevorzuge weder meine türkische noch meine deutsche Kultur. Ich lebe und sehne mich nach einer Mischkultur. Zwangsweise lebe ich so, weil ich weder in Alaska in einem Iglu noch in Anatolien tief in einer Hütte lebe. Es gibt Kulturgegenstände, die ich trotz meiner—(Zitat: Strauß) »Zugehörigkeit zum europäischen Hygienekreis«--verweigere. Z.B. Fernsehen. (Als Kind und Teenager blieb mir nicht viel anderes übrig als fernzusehen. Die TV-Serie »Dallas« lernte ich einige Zeit, bevor sie in Deutschland gesendet wurde, in der Türkei kennen. Berauschen lasse ich mich aber lieber von anderen Kulturen, z.B. durch Musik von Bach und Mahler, durch Filme von Tarkowski oder Buñuel oder Akira Kurosawa.

Ich erkenne mich wieder.

Also würde ich am liebsten japanisch aufwachen auf einem Bodenbett in Räumen mit transparenten Scheintüren. Dann würde ich gerne englisch frühstücken, danach mit fremder Gleichgültigkeit chinesisch arbeiten, fleißig und eifrig. Am liebsten möchte französisch essen und tierisch satt römisch baden, gerne will ich bayrisch wandern und afrikanisch tanzen. Am liebsten würde ich russische Geduld besitzen und mein Geld nicht amerikanisch verdienen

müssen. Ach, wie möchte, ich gerne einen Schweizer Paß, ohne in den Verdacht zu geraten, Inhaber eines Nummernkontos zu sein. Am liebsten möchte ich indisch einschlafen als Vogel auf dem Rücken eines Elefanten und türkisch träumen vom Bosphorus.

Will ich also etwas, womit ich mich wiedererkenne, oder etwas, womit andere mich einordnen können? (*Vogel 94*)

Doppelte Nationalitätsmoral

Die Socken
 rot mit weißem Stern im Sichelmond
 die Schuhe schwarz rot gold
 für viele ist es
 wie ein warmer Fuß
 im kalten Schuhwerk
 für andere
 ein Doppelknoten
 in einem nur schnürsenkellangen Leben
 aber das
 auf heißem Boden (*Vogel 91*)

Allianz

Auf deutsch heißt die Hand Hand
 auf türkisch heißt sie el
 so ein Handel

der Handel hat begonnen

Hände tauschen aus und schütteln andere
 sie vermehren sich im Gerangel
 und schieben sich gegenseitig zu
 was sie aus anderen schöpfen

der Handel geht voran

die Lira geht durch Mark und Bein
 die Mark besteigt die Lira
 die Lira will gebären
 die Mark erzieht das Balg

der Handel blüht

Sommernautausch und Erholung am Meer
 dort bekommen wir Sonne viel
 und Wärme viel
 und noch mehr noch mehr fürs gute Geld

der Handel trägt

ein Handel verträgt und kommt ab
 bezieht und bilanziert
 braucht eine Hand
 einigt sich mit dem kleinen Finger

firmt und richtet über den Daumen weg
 gesellschaftet mit dem Ring der Allianz
 gesetzbucht mit geordnetem Unterschied
 mannt die Frau
 und emanzipiert sich
 platzt aus sich heraus
 und registriert in sich hinein

es gibt Händel

er reist mit dem Zeigefinger
 schiffet sich ein, schult sich spannt sich aus und verüblicht sich
 er kämpft mit seinesgleichen
 süchtig die Hand des anderen im Mund
 vertritt und treibt er Geister aus

der Handel reibt sich die Hände

eline saĝlık (*Vogel* 16-7)

Istanbul

Von Istanbul bis Istanbul
 ist weit
 ist weit geworden
 mein Weg wohin nach Istanbul
 ist schmal ist breit wie Istanbul
 und Bosphorus fließt in mir
 in meinen Adern nur Blut
 salzig und ohne ein Blau wie das Meer
 die Windmühlen drehen sich nicht mehr
 in Istanbul ist

Windstille
 in mir ist weit geworden
 Istanbul
 wie Sonnenblumenfelder
 sich der Sonne zuwenden
 drehe ich mich im Kreise
 und suche Istanbul (*Vogel 89*)

Karenzzeit

zwischen den Feiertagen
 zweier Religionen
 die einen wandern im Kalender
 die anderen sitzen darin fest

einmal fragte ich
 ob Karfreitag immer
 an einem Freitag

schon gut schon gut

Doch das Schönste am Karfreitag ist
 daß es die Bachsche
 Matthäuspassion noch gibt
 und beim Opferfest
 will ich sie wieder hören

Von Ramadan bis Weihnachten
 ein süßer Warteraum (*Fremde Flügel 46*)

Der Besen

Ein heimatloser Besen
 hatte keine Tür mehr da
 vor der er eigens kehren könnte
 jetzt fegt er waagrecht
 in verhexten Lüften
 sein Stiel ist stählern und geladen
 doch seine Borsten sträuben sich
 ihm fehlt schon jeder Grund
 und daher jeder Boden (*Fremde Flügel 49*)

Eigentum

Meine Heimat mein Land
 meine Landsleute meine Sprache
 meine Geschichte mein Krieg mein Sieg
 meine Sehnsucht mein(e) Frau (Mann) mein Kind
 mein Haus mein Hab und Gut meine Zukunft
 meine Meinung mein Recht meine Person
 mein Nachbar mein Feind in meiner Zeit

mein Gott steh mir bei daß mir alles bleibt
 da kommt einfach ein anderer mit seinem mein
 und nichts bleibt mir mehr
 nichts von mir—ach du meine Güte (*Vogel* 86)

Länderkunde

Ein gehend Stück barfüß
 einlaufend fürbaß

Ein Wanderer
 Ein Wand ere r
 ein Wander er
 Einwand erer
 Einwander er
 Einwanderer

Ein-
 w
 anderer (*Leibesübungen* 96)

Mit den Augen eines anderen

So zu sehen wie der Nachbar
 wenn er an seinem Fenster steht
 zu hören was er lauschen kann
 sozusagen wie er zu sein
 mit dem gleichen Hund spazieren gehen
 mit der gleichen Frau zu schlafen
 seine Angst vor mir zu haben
 und keine Angst vor ihm

dem jeden Tag aus dem Weg zu gehen
und die Türen leise schließen
an solchen Tagen wie er zu sein
mit den Augen eines anderen (*In Bewegung* 19)

Fremde Flügel auf eigener Schulter

Du bist Rechtshänder ich bin Linkshändin
wie selbstverständlich träumen wir vom Fliegen
du hast einen Flügel auf deiner linken Schulter
und ich natürlich einen auf meiner rechten
so beim gemeinsamen Schwingen wünschen wir
Schulter an Schulter verwachsen
abzuheben

Auf festem Boden
hier sind wir schon lange uns einig
aber wehe in den Lüften dort könnten wir
uns zerreißen
also halten wir verlässlich die Hände
meine linke in deiner rechten
und kratzen uns allabendlich
gegenseitig die juckenden Schulterblätter (*Fremde Flügel* 98)

Appendix of Images

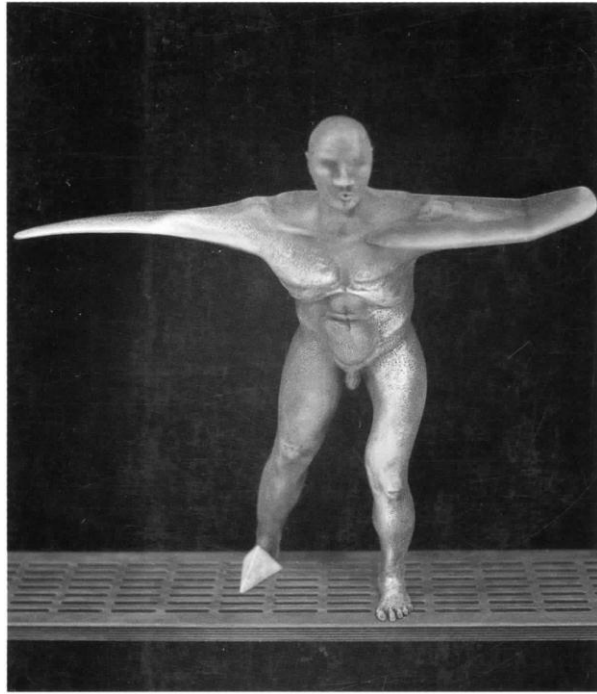


Image 1: The cover of *Vogel auf dem Rücken eines Elefanten*

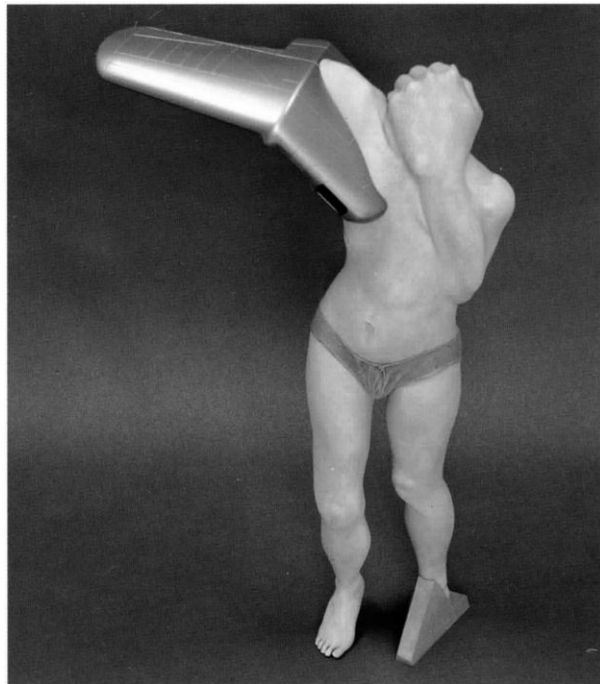


Image 2: The cover of *Fremde Flügel auf eigener Schulter*

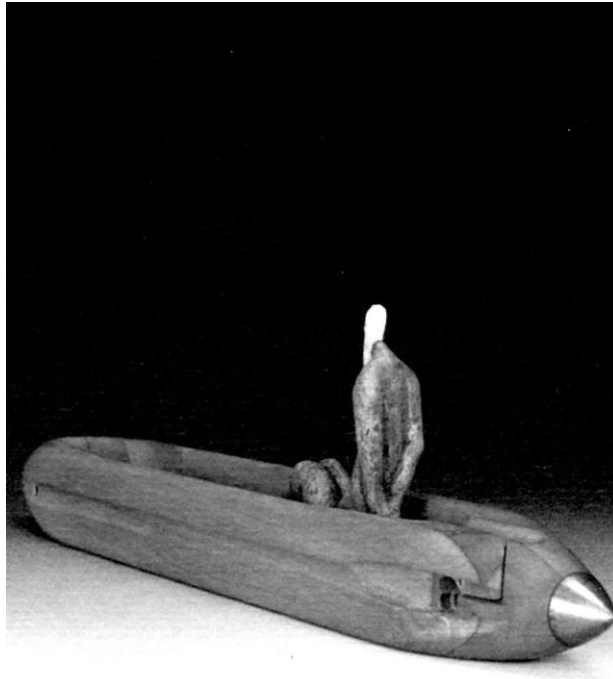


Image 3: The cover of *Leibesübungen*

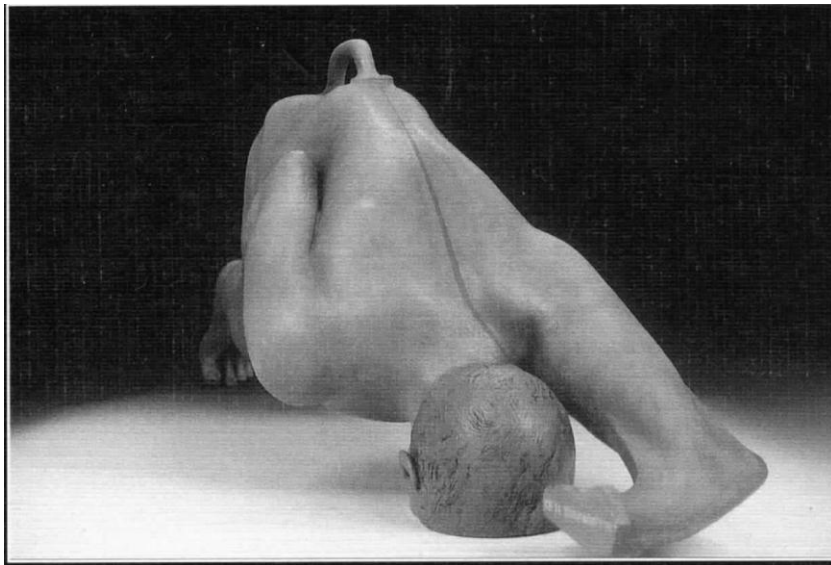


Image 4: The cover of *In Bewegung*

Personal Interview with Zehra Çirak—21 December 2010

Ehle: Also, für meine These interessiere ich mich dafür, warum so viele Menschen Ihre Texte lesen und—

Çirak: Viele Menschen, meinen Sie?

Ehle: Oder die Artikel, die ich gelesen habe. Sie gehen um, wie Sie Türkin sind und in diesem Text kann man sehen, ah sie ist Türkin und so was. Und ich habe auch gelesen, dass Sie das nicht gern haben. Und das verstehe ich.

Çirak: Ja, ich verstehe vor allem nicht. Es gibt ganz wenige Texte, die sich irgendwie mit dem Thema beschäftigen. Ja, was soll ich schreiben? Also, ich habe mich ja nie als Ausländer gefühlt und deshalb habe ich es gar nicht geschrieben. Zum Beispiel, der „Kulturidentität“ Text. Das ist ja eigentlich ein Text, der könnte überall rein passen. Das hat jetzt nicht mit Migration. Es ist vielleicht ein Text über, ja, Sie spüren wie ein Weltbürger, ja? Und ich verstehe halt bei den meisten Artikeln, die so was schreiben—ich schreibe über das gar nicht. Welche Stellen meinen sie denn in meinen Texten? Verstehen Sie? Welche Stellen sind das? Ich weiß es nicht. Zum Beispiel, gibt es dieses Liebesgedicht „Fremde Flügel auf eigener Schulter.“ Es ist ein Liebesgedicht, ja? Auch mit Thema Fliegen natürlich, weil es ist ein gemeinsames Thema schon mal gewesen. Und nur weil das Wort „fremde,“ ja? Aber es liegt auf den fremden Flügel, dass man zu zweit deshalb fliegen kann. Und selbst da bei solchen Sachen, ich habe kapiert, dass bei Fremdsein. Ich find das unglaublich, unwichtig. Es ist auch nicht richtig. Es gibt noch viele Leute, die über Autoren, wenn sie schreiben, dann möchten sie immer, ja, was ist das? Ist das

politische Literatur? Ist das romantisch? Ist das Pop? Oder was weiß ich, was für Sachen es gibt? Und ich glaube einfach, dass allein der Name—allein der fremdklingende und nicht deutsch Name es ausmacht, ja? Denn, wenn jetzt mein Buch erscheinen würde, zum Beispiel, mit einem Pseudonym, einem anderen Namen—was weiß ich, Karoline Walter. Dann würde man die Texte genau so lesen, wie sie gelesen werden, aber überhaupt nicht . . . man merkt es nicht, ja? Es ist auch nicht so gewesen, dass ich irgendwie absichtlich dieses Thema nicht behandle. Ich habe das Thema in Deutschland zu sein, oder irgendwie nicht Deutsche zu sein nie bearbeitet, weil es für mich uninteressant war, ja? Es war auch nie ein Problem für mich. Es gibt ja auch Autoren, zum Beispiel, Emine Sevgi Özdamar, kennen Sie, ja? Für sie war es es ja wirklich ein Thema auch in ihren Büchern, ihrer Schauspielerei, und Schreibung in der Türkei und dann ist sie nach Deutschland gekommen aber auch als Erwachsene hat sie die Schauspielschule gemacht und der Weg hierher und das Leben hier und dann wieder zurück und dann wieder her. Das ist in ihrer Literatur immer ein großes Thema und sie schreibt auch gut darüber. Es gibt auch Autoren, die schlecht darüber schreiben. Gut, aber für mich war das nie ein Thema. Ich bin einfach allein durch den Namen darein gerutscht, ja? Und ich denke mal, wenn jemand meine Texte liest, er wird dann lange suchen müssen bis er irgendwas findet. Es gibt ganz wenige Texte, zum Beispiel, in dem Neuen, in *In Bewegung*, da steht ein Wort, ein Satz, „manchal bin ich meine eigene Dramatürkin,“ ja? Ich spiele gerne mit Worten. Ich hätte auch ein englisches Wort nehmen können, aber ich habe diesmal das Türkische genommen, aber ich denke mal Leute, die suchen, die finden ja unbedingt irgendetwas, ja? Aber bei mir müssen sie sehr, sehr strecken, weil es ist nicht einfach. Aber dann einfach etwas so behaupten—das finde ich nicht schön, aber ich kann mich nicht mit den Leuten streiten, ja? Das ist mir denn auch egal . . . Warum bin ich weg von Kiepenheuer und Witsch? Ich habe keinen anderen

Verlag gefunden. Kiepenheuer und Witsch hat keine Lyrik mehr gemacht. Und dann war mein Manuskript drei, vier Jahre da, oder fünf Jahre und dann bin ich im Verleger Hans-Schiler begegnet. Wir kennen uns von früher und er hat früher hauptsächlich arabische Literatur ins Deutsche übersetzt—Lyrik auch. Und er macht jetzt seit einigen Jahren eben in Schiler Verlag und er ist was spezialisiert auf orientalische Literatur. Also, jetzt auch Prosa und Lyrik, aber er macht auch ganz normale Bellatristik—deutschsprachige Autoren auch. Er ist nicht Spezialist für Autoren mit Migrationshintergrund. Das gar nicht und ich war froh überhaupt ein Verleger zu haben und er war hier in Berlin und er war froh, dass ich zu ihm komme. Weil ich war ja schon bei Kiepenheuer und Witsch, hatte schon dafür einen Namen und habe gedacht, mir ist es egal. Ich nehme auch den kleinen Verlag. Ich möchte, dass jetzt diese Texte erscheinen—die Lyrik. Und das ist vor zwei Jahren eben erschienen und jetzt macht er den Prosaband und er will auch als nächste *Leibesübungen* nochmal auflegen. Und ich hoffe, dass er die Gedichte von den Wissenschaft . . . sogar zwei Sprachen. Das kann denn Deutsch und Englisch und dann vielleicht die anderen Texte. Es ist genug Material da um den nächsten Gedichtband zu machen. Und bei mir ist ja auch so, schwingt auch so, dass bei den etwas längeren Gedichten könnte man auch Prosalyrik dazu sagen oder Lyrikprosa. Mir ist egal, wie das heißt. Wenn einer sagt, du das ist kein Gedicht, das ist Prosa, dann sage ich ok. Mir Wurst. Aber jetzt habe ich auch speziell mich in den letzten Jahren mich auf Prosa beziehen bestutzt, weil man hat mir oft gesagt, dass ich doch bitte auch mal Prosa schreiben soll—länger. Denn in allen Büchern ist immer verteilt ein bisschen Prosa—drei, vier, oder fünf. Dann habe ich gedacht, ok jetzt werde ich mich darauf konzentrieren, habe neue Texte geschrieben, kurze, lange. Ich habe Prosaminiaturen. Sie sind nur eine Seite und dann habe ich auch zehn Seiten. Die Längste ist dreißig Seiten lange Geschichte. Es wurde mir von Außen nah gelegt. Mach das! Du kannst das. Und ich habe

immer gedacht, ah, nein, möchte nicht. Ich bin Dichterin, ja? Und sie haben gesagt, nein, schreib das! Und ich habe gesagt, ok, gut. Und jetzt werde ich, jetzt warte ich denn erstmal auf die Reaktion. Mal sehen.

Ehle: Ich habe gelesen, dass Sie das Wort „Text“ lieber haben als „Gedicht“ oder „Prosa.“ Stimmt das oder ist das Ihnen egal?

Çirak: Auch egal. Es ist ja ein Text. Es ist ein Text und natürlich kann ich meine Prosa—kann ich nicht zehn Seiten Prosa schreiben, wie meine Lyrik. In der Prosa taucht es auf, ja? Also, so wie ich meine Lyrik schreibe, kommt auch in der Prosa vor, aber nicht von Anfang bis Ende. Denn ich versuche auch zu erzählen. Das ist Experiment. Schaffe ich das, ja? Bin ich auch Erzähler? Bei den Gedichten war das denn auch so, dass manche Gedichte sind super kleine Geschichten eigentlich. Und deshalb sage ich immer, mir ist das eigentlich egal, ob das jetzt Text, Lyrik. Gut, natürlich muss ich denn mich irgendwann entscheiden. Natürlich kann ich mein Prosabuch jetzt nicht Lyrik sagen. Das geht nicht. Aber bei gewissen Texten, die so an der Grenze sind zwischen Lyrik und Prosa. Ja, da ist es mir dann egal, was man dazu sagt.

Manchmal wundere ich mich ja auch. Dann lese ich Lyrik. Und so ein Text. Es ist vielleicht so geschrieben und das heißt denn Gedicht und dann denke ich mir, ja, gut. Es ist also—die Form interessiert mich eigentlich nicht. Der Text, der Inhalt, und der Klang, also der Rhythmus. Das ist wichtig für mich.

Ehle: Und wenn Sie schreiben sind Sie der Erzähler oder die Erzählerin oder stellen Sie sich vor, dass jemand anders spricht?

Çirak: Ja, beide. Das ist ganz unterschiedlich. Ich habe oft in meinen Gedichten, oft die Situation eines Kindes oder auch die Situation eines Altens oder die Situation eines Sterbendens. Also, ich versuche mich immer. Ich versuche mich sogar vorzustellen, dass ich eine Teekanne bin. Auch über Dinge zu schreiben, als ob ich das selbst wäre. Ich könnte, zum Beispiel, auch über den Stollen hier schreiben. Dass ich das bin und jetzt, wie fühle ich mich? Fühle ich mich gut? Ich werde gleich gegessen. Freue ich mich? Ja, ich fantasiiere gerne über die Gegenstände und dann bin ich das natürlich. Ich versetze mich in die Situation hinein. Ich schreibe hauptsächlich über Menschen, über zwischenmenschliche Beziehungen, und dann versuche ich halt auch wirklich in die Rollen hinein zu denken. Und natürlich denke ich auch dabei an den Leser. Natürlich. Aber zuerst denke ich erstmal nur an den Text. Und er muss gut sein. Manchmal gefällt mir was—ist aber nicht gut. Dafür habe ich meinen Lektor. Mein erster Lektor im Haus ist erstmal Jürgen—bis auf den Prosaband. Bei dem Prosaband da kennt er viele gar nicht. Er hat gesagt, er will das Buch fertig lesen, weil für Lyrik war er immer mein Lektor. Er hat gesagt, eh, gut. Oder Tip gegeben, das ist nicht gut, passt nicht, oder so. Und es ist nie ein Text aus dem Haus gegangen, bevor Jürgen Walter es gesehen hat. Das ist ganz klar. Er ist auch mein Ansprechpartner. Und er gibt mir auch viele Inspiration von seinen Bildern und von seinen Arbeiten—oder die Themen, ja? Und bei dem Prosaband war das eben nicht so. Das muss ich mal auch gucken. Er ist auch wieder mein Kritiker. Mal sehen, was er sagt. Ich denke dabei natürlich beim Schreiben erst an den Text und, dass es stimmen muss. Und dann soll er, wenn er mir gefällt—wünscht sich jeder Autor, dass er auch jemand anderem, dem Leser, gefällt, ja? Aber man kann nicht so schreiben, dass es jedem gefällt. Also, das habe ich schon lange begriffen. Es gibt, zum Beispiel, Autoren. Ich bekomme Bücher geschenkt. Oh, das ist ganz

toll! Lies das! Dicker Roman. Ich lese gern die dicken Romane. Vielleicht schreib ich mal, wenn ich hundert bin, einen. Und dann lese ich das und denke, nee, das gefällt überhaupt nicht. Was haben sie? Welche Quelle? Zum Beispiel, ich habe ein Buch gelesen. Ich kenne ihn auch persönlich. *Der Weltensammler*. Ilija Trojanow. Er hat Preise bekommen . . . Wir begegnen uns manchmal und ich habe gedacht, ich lese das jetzt mal. Ich habe es nicht mal zur Hälfte geschafft. Und andere finden es wunderbar. Er ist gereist durch die Welt wegen diesem Buch und ich dachte, ich kann überhaupt nicht damit anfangen. Und so geht es auch mit Lesern, die mit meinen Texten gehen. Dass die einen sagen, so wie Sie, die sind schön und die anderen sagen, so was mag ich nicht. Also, damit muss man immer rechnen. Das ist also bei der Musik so, bei der Malerei so, selbst bei der Mode. Nicht nur bei der Kunst, bei jeder Arbeit eigentlich. Und ich schreibe nicht nur um zu gefallen, ja? Aber an den Leser denke ich schon. Zum Beispiel, wenn ich eine Passage schreibe, die witzig ist oder sehr delikat. Da freue ich mich schon auf die Lesungen, wie dann das Publikum reagiert, ja? Ich habe so ein paar sehr witzige . . . Texte—und habe ich mit meinen Lektoren gesprochen—da freue mich, wenn ich das lese, wenn die Leute das hören. Und ich bin dabei und kann die Reaktion sehen, ja? Und natürlich denke ich dann, wenn der Text fertig ist, auch an den Leser. Weil ich auch über die Lyrik immer sehr nahe mit dem Leser war. Das heißt ich habe sehr viele Lesungen gemacht mit Lyrik und anderen Texten und ich lese gerne. Es gibt Autoren, die schreiben tolle Texte, aber lesen nicht gerne und lesen auch nicht gut. Sie müssen das ja nicht machen, aber für mich war das immer auch eine Art kleine Performance—auch durch die Zusammenarbeit mit Jürgen Walter. Wenn wir aufgetreten sind, waren wir auch oft auf der Bühne zusammen und dann muss man halt auch präsentieren—die Stimme und eben auch die ganze Aktion. Ja, so weit denke ich natürlich daran, wie die Reaktion des Lesers ist, aber wenn das Buch veröffentlicht ist, wenn der

Text fertig ist, es gedrückt und es geht raus, dann habe ich überhaupt keinen Einfluss mehr. Ich meine, natürlich bei Lesungen, oder an Schulen, oder Universitäten, wenn ich da bin und dort lese, dann kann ich Fragen beantworten, oder wenn ich die Workshops mache, das ist wunderbar, aber erstmal muss der Text im Buch funktionieren. Ich kann ja nicht jeden, ja? Und irgendwann bin ich hier nicht mehr und die Texte sind dann hoffentlich immer da, aber ich denke auch nicht daran, wenn ich jetzt ein Buch lese, dass ich mit dem Autor darüber reden will—überhaupt nicht. Zum Beispiel, Saramago ist mein Lieblingsautor—ein portugiesischer Autor, der hatte auch vor zehn Jahren Nobelpreis bekommen und ist dieses Jahr leider gestorben.

Ehle: Lesen sie die Texte auf Deutsch oder auf Portugiesisch?

Çirak: Nein, nein auf Deutsch, nicht Portugiesisch—kann ich gar nicht lesen. Ich lese nicht mal türkisch Bücher, weil mein Türkisch so ist, dass ich manche Worte nicht verstehe und dann muss ich zu oft im Buch nachschauen. Weil es gibt—die türkische Sprache hat sich auch weiter entwickelt. Ich spreche dieses alte Türkisch, weil ich es von meinen Eltern kennen gelernt habe—mit vielen arabischen Worten. Und neu Türkisch hat sich in den letzten fünfzig Jahren entwickelt. Es sind neue türkische Worte dazu gekommen. Die kenne ich nicht. Dann muss ich ja nachschauen. Und wenn ich einen Roman lese, lese ich gerne schnell und Türkisch lesen geht mir immer so langsam—oh, schon wieder ein Wort. Was heißt das? Und ja? Deshalb ich lese nur auf Deutsch. Und Jose Saramago, wie gesagt, ist mein Lieblingsautor zur Zeit. Und wenn ich ihn lese, dann gefällt mir das Buch ehe als Mensch interessiert mich Saramago gar nicht, weil er hat darüber sehr viele unterschiedliche Themen in verschiedenen Zeiten, manches spielt in der heutigen Zeit, manches spielt in Mittelalter, manches noch früher—eine Geschichte über Jesus

hat er geschrieben—quasi eine Lebensgeschichte über Jesus. Und wenn ich dann die Biografie lese, ok weiß ich er ist Portugeser und so und so viel Jahre alt und lebt da und dort—mehr brauche ich eigentlich nicht wissen. Und das ist halt irgendwie so der negative Teil, dass wenn man jetzt für die Biografie, für meine Biografie sehr interessiert, will man vielleicht immer Rückschlüsse auf die Texte beziehen. Das verstehe ich auch nicht. Deutsch ist meine Sprache. Denke ich, ja träume ich auch auf Deutsch. Und ich habe nie daran gedacht Türkisch zu schreiben. Ich habe mal versucht meine eigenen Texte ins Türkische zu übersetzen—nicht so gut. Auch nicht so toll. Und will ich auch gar nicht.

Ehle: Türkisch ist ganz anders als Deutsch. So mit Präfixen und Suffixen.

Çirak: Kennen Sie sich aus mit der türkischen Grammatik?

Ehle: Ein wenig. Nicht viel.

Çirak: Na ja, ich habe Türkisch auch nicht in der Schule gelernt. Also, ich könnte Ihnen über die türkische Grammatik überhaupt nichts sagen. Ich habe das Türkische nur so von den Eltern übernommen, aber türkische Grammatik könnte ich Ihnen jetzt auch nicht erklären, ja? Überhaupt nicht. Ich spreche es halt automatisch richtig, aber nicht so gut wie Deutsch. Also, ich kann sagen, deutsche Sprache hundertprozentig, türkische Sprache sechzig. Also, es fehlt sehr viel.

Ehle: Wenn man aufhört oft auf eine Sprache zu sprechen oder nicht in dem Land ist, geht es nicht so gut mit der Sprache.

Çirak: Also, ich denke mal es hat auch was mit meiner Lebensentwicklung zu tun. Wenn ich, zum Beispiel, nicht Jürgen kennen gelernt hätte, weiß ich gar nicht, ob ich dann Schriftstellerin geworden wäre. Ich habe zwar angefangen zu dichten, habe schon mehrere Gedichte geschrieben, als wir uns kennen lernten, aber vielleicht hätte ich nicht so den Antrieb gekriegt. Er hat gesagt, mach mal weiter. Mach das mal professionell. Stellen Sie vor ich hätte einen türkischen Mann kennen gelernt, hätte mich verliebt, und ich hätte vielleicht ein bisschen Deutsch weiter geschrieben. Dann hätte sich aber mein Türkisch auch verbessert, weil ich Türkisch mit ihm spreche, auch Deutsch, aber irgendwie anders halt umfällt—mehr türkischsprachig. Dann hätte ich vielleicht auch weiter geschrieben oder vielleicht auch nicht. Also, es macht schon auch viel aus mit dem man zusammen kommt, wohin man sich entwickelt und mein Weg war eben dieser. Gott sei dank.

Ehle: Also, ich frage mich auch, wer Ihre Leserschaft ist. Wissen Sie, wer Ihre Leserschaft ist?

Çirak: Eigentlich nicht. Ich gehe mal davon aus, dass meine Leserschaft auf jedenfall Menschen sind, die sich erstmal auch für Lyrik interessieren. Jetzt reden wir mal nur von der Lyrik, weil Prosa, ja, jetzt erstmal bei mir—ich habe zwar schon mal Prosa geschrieben, aber ich bin mal bekannt als Lyrikerin, sagen wir mal so. Wenn ich jetzt auch noch als Prosaautorin gut ankomme, schön, aber jetzt erstmal als Lyrikerin. Und dann natürlich Germanisten, die sich besonders gerade auch für deutschsprachige Literatur nicht deutscher—ja wie sagt man—es gibt auch zum Beispiel—wie heißt er denn nochmal? George Konrad, so ganz viele Autoren auch in

der Vergangenheit, die keine deutsche Herkunft haben, aber trotzdem als deutsche Autoren bekannt geworden sind—selbst Chamisso. Deshalb ist der Preis nach ihm benannt worden. Also, der von Chamisso war bekannt geworden als deutscher Dichter und Schriftsteller und das war ja auch so eine Sache mit dem Preis. Ich habe ihn als Literaturpreis gesehen. Viele haben kritisiert, ja, warum bekommen den nur Leute mit nicht-deutscher Herkunft und so. Und gab es lange Zeit auch immer: Soll man den Preis abschaffen oder nicht? Also, ich fand etwa ein Literaturpreis und jeden Literaturpreis, den man bekommt. Gut, wenn es heißt wir machen einen Literaturpreis für Idioten möchte ich ihn nicht haben, aber so habe ich das gesehen, ja? Das ist ganz klar und am Anfang gab es natürlich sehr viel Kritik, weil jetzt haben sehr viele Autoren—die PoliKunst Szene, mit der hatte ich nie was zu tun. Ich bin nicht in solchen Organisationen—ich bin nicht mal in deutschen Schriftsteller Verein, nicht mal das, weil ich gar keine Verein möchte. In VF könnte ich auch mal ein, aber nicht mal das brauche ich. PoliKunst, das wurde auch ja damals die ersten Ausländer, die in Deutschland gelebt haben und dann doch länger geblieben sind, als sie sich dachten und dann eben auch über ihre Lebenssituation geschrieben haben. Ob das dann politisch war oder gesellschaftskritisch aber immer das Gewicht des Ausländerseins. Da sind, zum Beispiel, Franco Biondi und Gino Chiellino, und Aras Ören damals auch, obwohl er doch Türkisch geschrieben hat, aber doch über das Leben hier in Deutschland. Also, es gibt einige, das nannten wir die erste Generation, die auch über dieses Thema geschrieben haben und nicht alles war literarisch gut. Die Themen waren interessant aber soziologisch und damals hat man halt oft kritisiert, dass halt auch schlechte Literatur wurde. Warum? Nur weil sie eben von Ausländern geschrieben ist. Da hatte das so ein bisschen—stinkt ein bisschen so. Es gab aber auch gute Autoren dabei. Verstehen Sie mich ganz. Es gab sehr gute Autoren dabei, aber so ist dann das Wort entstanden: „Ausländerliteratur.“ Und Ausländerliteratur hatte immer etwas mit

Arbeiterliteratur auch etwas damit zu tun. So ist es ja eigentlich auch entstanden. Zum Beispiel, diese ganze Zeit, als man Frauenliteratur gesucht hat und hochgehoben hat. Ich glaube das war viele Frauen nicht recht. Entweder man ist Literat und Literat. Man ist nicht jetzt Frauliterat oder Männerliteratur oder Frauenkrimi—stellen Sie sich mal vor. Also, das Genre Krimi ist ja schon, ja? Es gibt ja auch Liebesromane, die mit Kriminalität auch zu tun haben. Ja, gut, dann irgendwie muss man ja halt wieder eine Schublade aufmachen und sagt man ok das ist jetzt ein Krimi, aber stellen Sie sich mal vor, es gibt nochmal zwei Schubladen—Männerkrimi und Frauenkrimi, ja? Oder Frauensciencefiction, Frauenliebesromane? Das alles es so—es hat immer so einen kleinen Beigeruch. Das finde ich nicht schön. Also, es reichte aus, wenn man wirklich schon diese Kategorien von Sciencefiction, Krimi, oder Liebesroman—das muss reichen, ja? Wegen Ihrer Frage mit PoliKunst. Für ein Beispiel, wir waren mal bei einer kleinen Gruppe darin. Es war berliner Autoren, aber da waren alles—Lyriker, Prosa schon ein bisschen, Deutsche, Ausländer, ganz gemischt, ja? Also, es waren jetzt genau so viel Deutsche dabei wie nicht Deutsche und das hieß dann ja einige waren Jahre lang darin. Das war sehr schön. Wir haben Sachen organisiert, Lesungen gemacht--gemeinsam. Jürgen war auch darin. Jürgen war der Sprecher manchmal sogar. Weil er eben kein Autor war, konnte er besser Kritik machen. Und Neugesellschaft für Literatur hieß das. NGL. Neugesellschaft für Literatur und da war alles vertreten—auch Märchen Erzähler, auch Kinderbuch Schreiber. Also, es ging um die Literatur halt.

Ehle: Aber jetzt sind Sie nicht dabei?

Çirak: Nein, das hat sich auch aufgelöst. Wir waren sehr lange dabei. Ich glaube seit sieben, acht Jahren gibt's denn nicht mehr. Und es war eine schöne Zeit, aber dann hat das sich irgendwie gereicht, glaube ich nur. Aber wir haben sehr schöne Sachen gemacht.

Ehle: Ich habe viele Artikel gelesen und einer von ihnen war „Genervt von Herkunftsfragen“ von Martin Greve. Und ich fragte mich, was Sie gedacht haben, als Sie diesen Artikel gelesen haben. Hat er Ihnen gefallen? Oder erinnern Sie sich daran?

Çirak: Es war mal in *Zitty*. Na, ja es war ein paarmal was, aber an den erinnere mich jetzt nicht. Aber das ich gesagt. Das habe ich gesagt, „Genervt von Herkunftsfragen.“ Ja, ja, das war bestimmt ich.

Ehle: Es war interessant, als ich diesen Artikel gelesen habe, weil er gesagt hat, dass—

Çirak: Ich denke, das wird mich immer verfolgen, aber nicht nur mich. Es gibt viele Autoren, die ich kenne. Wir sind froh, wenn über unsere Texte geschrieben wird, ohne jetzt immer auf unsere Biografie, ja? Ich meine, meine Biografie ist auch nicht interessant. Ich habe weder studiert. Ich konnte nicht, weil ich nicht so gut war in der Schule, ja? Was kann ich aufzählen? Gut, einen Beruf habe ich gelernt—Kosmetikerin. Ich arbeite heute noch zwei Tage. Das ist für mich wichtig—Krankenversicherung, Rentenversicherung, dass es dadurch schon mal gedeckt ist.

Ehle: Arbeiten Sie hier in der Nähe?

Çirak: Ja, ja. Zu Fuß zehn Minuten. Ich komme nach Hause und mein Mann macht Mittagessen. Dann gehe ich wieder hin. Und ich kann doch gut mit meinen Lesungen reisen. Ich kann sagen, jetzt arbeite ich nicht Donnerstag und Freitag, sondern da und da. Und das ist sehr gut. . . .

Ja, wir sind froh, wenn über unsere Texte gesprochen wird und nicht immer gesucht wird irgendwie was in Hintergrund. Es ist berechtigt, wenn der Text davon handelt, ja? Dann ist es ganz klar. Dann muss ich auch damit leben, dass man hinter fragt, ja schreibst du das jetzt-. Wenn ich jetzt einen Text geschrieben hätte oder schreiben würde, eine Geschichte, die in Istanbul stattfindet oder auch in Berlin ist. Das machen auch viele, ja? Das ist auch gut so. Dann kann man ruhig auch hinterfragen, ja, denken Sie, Sie könnten in der Türkei vielleicht leben auch so wie in Deutschland? Ok, dann würde ich auch darüber erzählen, aber es beschäftigt mich gar nicht, ja? Wir werden, zum Beispiel, jetzt nach vielen Jahren—ich war vielen Jahren nicht in der Türkei. In Ankara war ich zwar letztes Jahr bei einer Lesung, aber Istanbul Freunde und jetzt, weil die Stadt halt toll ist, ja? Genau, diese Genervtheit der Herkunftsfrage. Es gibt aber auch einige Autoren, die nicht meiner Meinung sind. Die möchten gefragt werden, weil ihre Empfindung, ihre Art zu schreiben, ihre Themen sich damit beschäftigen auch, ja? Man muss das halt von Text zu Text sehen und nicht am Namen bestimmen. Man darf das einfach nicht am Namen, am Klang des Namens bestimmen, ob man sich für die Herkunftsfragen interessiert oder nicht, ja? Aber ich denke mal, Deutschland hat sich auch weiter entwickelt, ja? Es gibt ja so viele seit der Wende auch, aus Osteuropa, viele Leute, die in Deutschland leben . . . Und viele schreiben halt auch, ja? Und irgendwann wird dann man aufhören über diese Herkunftsfragen. Dann wird man einfach nur registrieren. Der Name klingt fremd, aber das ist ein deutscher Text, ok. Gucke ich mal. Wo ist er geboren? Ach,

sogar in Deutschland geboren. Ja, auch so. Und wenn da nichts dabei steht. Ja, also damit müssen wir einfach leben bis es das mal ändert.

Ehle: Ich glaube auch, leider vielleicht—viele Menschen so wie ich, die an der Uni studieren und die Literatur studieren—wir lernen, wie man die Literatur kategorisiert. Und dann wir studieren Frauenliteratur oder multikulturelle Literatur oder usw. Und es war mir interessant, als ich Ihre Gedichte gelesen habe, weil zuerst sagte ich, ah, sie ist Türkin. Suche ich nach etwas, was sie geschrieben hat, was zeigt, dass sie Türkin ist. Und wie Sie gesagt haben, es war wirklich schwierig etwas zu finden. Und ich dachte, oh, das ist auch schön. Eigentlich noch schöner und deshalb habe ich mich angefangen dafür zu interessieren, warum Menschen Texte so lesen möchten.

Çirak: Ich meine, welche deutschen Autoren kennen Sie zum Beispiel? Wenn Sie, zum Beispiel, Brechts Gedichte lesen—gut, Brecht ist jetzt weltbekannt, aber einfach wenn man das weglässt, dass er weltbekannt ist und dann einfach nur den Text liest—interessiert Sie seine Biografie auch so sehr? Eigentlich egal, ja? Genau, es ist mir egal, wie Goethe gelebt hat oder es gibt sogar oft bei Künstlern, dass sie tolle Kunst machen, aber menschlich ganz schlimm sind, ja? Ich will es auch gar nicht wissen, ja? Also, ich lese das oder gucke mir das Bild an. Und ich denke mal das geht aber auch—ich weiß nicht bei Musikern ist das vielleicht auch so. Wenn ein Musiker meiner Situation— sagen wir mal so, er macht Musik und hin und wieder sind irgendwelche Türen, sagen wir mal, die auf einen anderen Kulturbereich kommen—aus dem Asiatischen, oder Orientalischen, oder Russisch, oder was auch immer, aber eben nicht Deutsch. Ich glaube er hätte das gleiche Problem, dass er auch immer gefragt wird, ja, hat das mit der Herkunft zu tun?

Das ist in Ihrer Musik manchmal. . . . Und ich glaube das wird nie aufhören—immer dieses Suchen danach. Das ist ganz klar, aber ich bin halt manchmal etwas traurig und auch manchmal böse, wenn es nicht stimmt. Also, in meinen Texten ist das nicht so, ja? Denn, zum Beispiel Emine Sevgi Özdamar kann nicht so wie ich reden. In ihren Texten ist das Thema. Und es ist auch nicht so, dass ich nicht absichtlich nicht darüber schreibe. Ich meine, es wäre doch schlimm, wenn ich jetzt mir selbst verbieten würde ein Wortspiel wie „Dramatürkin“ wieder zu machen, nur weil ich Angst habe, dass sie jetzt die Schublade öffnen und sagen, ah, jetzt ist sie wieder eine Türkin. Also, das ist auch nicht schön, wenn man dann so immer aufpassen muss. Soll ich das Wort „fremde“ benutzen? „Heimat“ benutzen? Wird es bei mir anders interpretiert? Und wird es bei einer Frau Beate blah, blah, blah, wenn sie „Heimat“ schreibt, dann wieder ganz anders interpretiert? Ich habe auch keine Lust mehr darüber nachzudenken, weil dieser Prozess, das dauerte jetzt über zwanzig, fünfundzwanzig Jahre, dass ich immer diese Diskussion habe. Und merkwürdigerweise ist das—so auch zeitweise mal ist es—verschwindet das, dass man immer die Biografie, aber dann je nach dem welche politische Entwicklung auch das Land nimmt—also, in Deutschland war jetzt gerade sehr wichtig Migration und Sarrazins Geschichten. Dann werden auch manchmal die Künstler so solchen politischen Fragen gefragt. Das finde ich auch idiotisch. Sonst fragt man uns gar nichts. Nur wenn dann jetzt wieder Probleme, dann sollen wir jetzt plötzlich etwas dazu sagen. Also, das finde ich auch nicht gut, na? Also, wenn ich etwas zu sagen hätte politisch, dann möchte ich dann gefragt werden, aber nicht nur deshalb weil jetzt mein Name in die Schublade von Sarrazins Kritik fällt, ja? Und ich finde es auch nicht richtig, wenn man sich einen neuen Namen zulegen musste, also, um Dingen zu entgehen. Das ist denn idiotisch.

Ehle: Es ist schön, dass Sie Ihren Namen behalten. Ich meine vielleicht, wenn Sie vor dreißig Jahren geheiratet hätten und den Namen von Ihrem Mann genommen hätten—immer noch haben Sie „Zehra.“

Çirak: Ja, es hätte auch gut passieren können, dass wir, genau, nach dieser islamischen Hochzeit gleich heiraten. Damals hätte ich dann bestimmt Zehra Walter genommen, weil ich war ja als Autorin nicht bekannt, aber dadurch, dass ich halt als Lyrikerin unter Zehra Çirak bekannt bin und Doppelnamen mag ich nicht so sehr, habe ich gedacht, das mache ich nicht—natürlich nicht, ja? Also, blödsinn. Wieso soll ich jetzt plötzlich—nur weil ich auf dem Papier geheiratet habe—unter Zehra Walter veröffentlichen? Mochte ich auch nicht, aber es hätte sein können, dass ich, wenn ich mit zwanzig geheiratet hätte, dann hätte ich auch seinen Namen angenommen, aber wie Sie sagen, der Vorname bleibt ja noch.

.....

Ehle: Ich habe bemerkt, dass Sie in Ihren ersten drei Gedichtsammlungen oft über fliegen geschrieben haben, aber in den vierten schreiben Sie weniger darüber oder fast gar nicht.

Çirak: Das hat aber auch angefangen mit dem ersten Buch „flugfänger.“ Hat es damals schon angefangen? Ja, da gab es ein Objekt. Nee, den Titel habe ich gegeben und das Objekt wurde dann dazu gebaut, genau. Es gab auch mal Ausnahmen am Anfang, aber „Fremde Flügel auf eigener Schulter,“ „Vogel auf dem Rücken eines Elefanten,“ das war schon absichtlich so. Das Motif fliegen ist für mich wunderbar. Also, ich fliege gerne und Jürgen hatte ja auch ganz viele Objekte gemacht zum Thema—der Traum vom Fliegen und der Alptraum vom Fliegen. Zum

Beispiel, jetzt bei den Vogelserien—hat auch wieder etwas mit Fliegen zu tun, aber es ist nicht jetzt mein Hauptthema. Das hat sich so ergeben und wir fanden das dann auch schön und dann bei *In Bewegung* waren halt andere Texte, andere Schwerpunkte gesetzt.

Ehle: Und jetzt Wissenschaft.

Çirak: Jetzt Wissenschaft. Und ja, bei der Vogelserie geht es auch sehr viel um Natur, Naturschutz, und Naturmissbrauch, ja? Ja, und bei der Prosasache, das werden wir sehen. Ich hoffe—können Sie es denn bestellen? Ja, dann würde ich natürlich auch gerne, wenn Sie das Buch gelesen haben, das Neue, wenn es herauskommt, was Sie dazu sagen. Würde mich dann schon interessieren auch. Ich glaube, ich würde dann von Ihnen andere Fragen bekommen.

Ganz andere.

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Ehle: Ich habe einen Artikel gelesen—auf Französisch—„Ecrire entre deux Mondes“ und es ist von Ihnen geschrieben, aber ich nehme es an, dass Sie es nicht auf Französisch geschrieben haben.

Çirak: Nein, nein.

.....

Es sind ja Texte von mir, wenn ich in Frankreich bin, wenn ich in—sonst wo bin ich—ich reise ja sehr viel durch die Welt. In Japan war ich—dann werden die Texte natürlich in die Sprache übersetzt.

.....

Ehle: Wahrscheinlich schon. Lesen Sie die Artikel, die Kritiker schreiben oder ist es Ihnen egal solche Artikel zu lesen?

Çirak: Nein, egal ist es nie. Keinem Autor egal. Ich glaube jeder Autor, der sagt, mir ist das egal—das ist gelogen. Natürlich liest man am liebsten Lob, ja? Und gute Kritik und wenn schlechte Kritik ist, liest man es einmal und tut es weg. Und wenn es Gute ist, hat man es dann auf seinem Schreibtisch liegen und zeigt sie auch gern. Aber schlechte Kritiken möchte man ja nicht hören. Das ist ganz klar, aber es interessiert mich natürlich, ja.

Ehle: Und haben Sie die Artikel gelesen, die Veteto-Conrad geschrieben hat?

Çirak: Einige. Nicht alle, einige.

Ehle: Sie sind auf Englisch.

Çirak: Ich vertraue ihr auch. Sie kennt ja auch meine Situation und hat sicher auch weiter entwickelt, ja? Kann sein, dass sie am Anfang, in den ersten Jahren vielleicht, dass sie Sachen geschrieben hat, die sie heute anders schreiben würde. Aber dazu kennen wir uns jetzt viel zu gut. Sie kennt ja meine Lebensgeschichte, meine Literatur, meine Entwicklung in der Literatur kennt sie und so denke ich mal sie hat sich auch mal weiter entwickelt, ja? Kann vielleicht sein, dass sie vor fünfundzwanzig Jahren vielleicht auch etwas geschrieben hat, wo ich dann gesagt hätte, na, ja, so richtig ist das vielleicht aber auch nicht. Aber es ist nicht schlimm. Ich denke

mal. Ich muss nicht alles jetzt von ihr immer wissen. Sie hat auch einiges jetzt übersetzt ins Deutsche. Irgendwas Langes hat sie mal über uns beide auch geschrieben—über Jürgen und mich. Das hat sie uns auch ins Deutsche übersetzt und geschickt, weil uns das halt interessiert hat—die Zusammenarbeit. Das interessiert uns dann natürlich schon. Und Marilya ist ja auch ein Mensch—ich glaube bevor sie etwas behauptet, würde sie uns denn fragen. Und die Möglichkeit haben ja nicht alle. Also, wenn Sie was schreiben und wirklich nicht sicher sind, dann können Sie uns gerne erstmal fragen.

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