INTRODUCTION

New perspectives on Turkish-German Relations in Literary History

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DOI: 10.26650/B/AA09.2023.012.01

The Turkish-German relations are deep-rooted and based on a long history which can be traced back to the Crusades. The chronicle entitled Gesta Francorum (1100–1101) of an anonymous author\(^1\) connected with Bohemond I the prince of Antioch and Robert the Monk’s travelogue Historia Hierosolymitana (1107–1120) are the earliest historical literary sources in Europe which contain information about the Turks. The idea of the chronicles was based on creating an “enemy image” to motivate the Christians just before the start of the First Crusade\(^2\) and they were “very influential in the development of crusading ideas” (Morris, 1993, p. 56, 88; Kuran Burçoğlu, 1999, p. 189). In these two important literary texts, Turks were portrayed as “Enemy of God and Holy Christianity”, “misfortune of the Christians” and “dreadful barbarians”\(^3\).

\(^1\) The name of the author is not recorded in any of the surviving manuscripts. The general belief about the identity of the writer has been that he was a knight of Norman descent, who participated in the First Crusade as a soldier of Bohemond I of Antioch. Baudri of Bourgueil, one of the Benedictine monks who criticized the stylistic features and Latinity of the text claims that the writer concealed his identity in his text “because he was ashamed of his wretched style” (Morris, 1993, p. 56). Some historians relate the stylistic features of the text with the conception that it might be written by different authors. However, anonymous authorship was very common in Middle Ages. The author’s function for written sources as the creator of a text was different when compared with today’s literature understanding. So, this might be another reason why the author did not mention himself.

\(^2\) To contemporary Turkish-Muslim narrators, the Crusaders were a group of unbelievers who were trying to destroy the sacred world of Islam. (Lewis, 2014, p. 24).

\(^3\) The term “barbarian” does not mean the dehumanization of the Turks in that case, because of the possibility to convert them to Christianity. However, the conversion of the Turks was not the primary objective of the First Crusade, although the crusaders were interested in the Christianization of the Muslims of Syria and Palastine. Describing Turks as “dreadful barbarians” (LAT: iniquissimi barbari) was clearly a sign indicating that they belonged to the category of “other”, which included significant negative stereotypical features in its description (Pelech, 2020, p. 61).
Starting from the Crusades, the Western tradition of literary history associated the Turks usually with the concepts of “ugly”, “cruel”, “treacherous”, “deceitful”, “unreliable”, and “dangerous”. These terms were distinctive features, which could be easily adapted to the verbal and visual sources by the chroniclers, writers, or artists to create a binary opposition between the Turks and Europeans. Obviously, the sharp distinction between East and West has historical reasons. The shocking invasions of the Mongols and Asiatic Huns during the fifth and thirteenth century C.E. jeopardized and threatened the existence of European people by leaving them vulnerable against the violent attacks. These historical events left traumatic traces in the collective memories of many Europeans including German speaking folks. On this background it becomes very clear why the expressions in German vocabulary like “Türkengefahr” (EN: Turkish threat) and “türkische Grausamkeit” (EN: Turkish cruelty) carry negative connotations. For hundreds of years, they were used as synonyms for “threat” and “danger” in German language (Witzens, 2005, p. 225).

The image of the Turks as “barbarian enemies” in German speaking lands lasted into the 15th century. However, during the second half of the 1400s this negative stereotyping started to change considerably in literary sources especially in “Fastnachtspiele” (EN: the carnival plays). Hans Rosenplüt’s two plays Des Turken Vasnachtspil (1454) and Ein Lied von dem Türk (1454) are some of the earliest examples which include positive images about the Turks associated with the Ottoman Sultan. Both literary texts appeared after the conquest of Constantinople by the Emperor Mehmed II who caused an interest about the Turks in Europe. In these two plays the Turkish Sultan was portrayed as “the Great Turk”, whose subjects lived in peace and harmony (Ackermann, 2009, p. 189; Kuran Burçoğlu, 2010, p. 56; Walsch, 2011, p. 183; Zengin, 2016, p. 266). Despite the positive stereotyping in “Fastnachtspiele” that is underlined by particular verbal expressions such as “generous”, “mighty”, “tolerant”, “fair” and “confident” which refer to the young Ottoman Sultan, the negative image of the Turks was still more effective in German speaking cultures. The German poet and composer Hans Sachs described the actions of the Turks during their siege of Vienna as “Türkische tyranney” (EN:

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4 The “Fastnachtspiele” were theatrical dramas originated from the city of Nuremberg in Germany. They contained satirical critics about the sovereigns and state. The carnival plays were usually performed on the streets or town squares as a part of the Pre-Lenten festival.

5 Rosenplüt’s carnival plays describe a fictional visit of Mehmet II in Nuremberg. In the storyline the young Ottoman Sultan suggests utopian solutions for the social injustice and other problems in the city. It is remarkable that the introduction of Des Turken Vasnachtspil mentions him as “Der große Türk ist kumen her / Der Kriechenlant gewunnen hat / Der ist he mit seinem weisen rat” (EN: The Great Turk has arrived here / He who conquered Greece / He is here with his wise councilors) (von Keller, 1853, p. 288 as cited in Walsch, 2011, p. 181).
Turkish tyranny) in his book *Die Welt des Hans Sachs* (1520) with remarkable illustrations. The visual representations of the Turks as horrible, cruel creatures drew attention of German public opinion to an stereotypical enemy image (Ackermann, 2009, p. 199). The reason is that the Turks had provoked a great horror during the expansion period of the Ottomans in Europe. Up to the beginning of the 20th century, the Ottoman Empire was a central factor of European power politics. For three centuries this Empire had been a great political and military power as well as a great threat to many European Kingdoms including German territories.

The negative image of the Turks was emphasized by Martin Luther’s treatises entitled *Heerpredigt wider den Türken* (1529), *Vom Kriege wider den Türken* (1529), and *Vermahnung zum Gebet wider den Türken* (1541). In his speeches Luther associated the Ottoman expansion in Europe with Christian eschatology and he interpreted the Turk as a representative of the worldly nature of the Antichrist (Ackermann, 2009, p. 200). In this regard, the Turks were described as the “the tool of the devil”, and “the scourge of the God” by Luther. Nevertheless, “Der Türk ist der Lutherischen Glück” (EN: The Turk is the Lutherans luck) was a common idiom in Protestant Germany because the Turks had the power to weaken the forces of the Catholic sovereigns in Europe (Witzens, 2005, p. 222).

The stereotyping of the Turks as “threatening other” persisted in Baroque plays of German literature in which Christian women are portrayed as being compelled to decide between

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6 In numerous visual and textual sources Sachs offers the same negative image about the Turks connected with the Ottoman expansion in Europe over, and over again. Most of his poems are printed as illustrations, engravings, or woodcuts. *Ein Klag zu Gott, über die grausamliche manigfaltigen wüterey, deß Blutdirstigen Türcken umb gnedige hilff* (1532) is an illustration to a poem by Sachs which includes the representation of Suleyman I and the invasion of Hungary (see: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1849-1031-255 [10.07.2023]). Sachs wrote the text in November 1532, the year in which the Ottoman army, three years after the siege of Vienna, made a new advance through Hungary into Austria. He begins his text by declaring that the Turk is destroying God’s Christian heritage by oppressing God’s Christian people, removing them from Him and elevating himself to rule over heaven and earth (Ackermann & Nöcker, 2009, pp. 439–440).

7 By the late Middle Ages European Kingdoms had lost interest in Crusades while the Ottoman Empire launched a holy war for the Islamic faith to expand its territory and to reach the city of the Red Apple (TR: Kızıl Elma) which was the final objective of the Turkish-Muslim conquest. The Ottoman sense of imperial mission associated the city of the Red Apple with different European capitals such as Constantinople, Budapest, Vienna, and Rome that represented the final victory of Islam (Lewis, 2001, pp. 42–43).


10 In contrast to that Christian women were associated with characteristics such as lustful, desirous, passionate, and impulsive in Ottoman narratives and travelogues. They were perceived as weak creatures to be possessed and dominated by Ottoman-Muslim men (Nader, 1989, pp. 323–355 as cited in Eksigil, 2014, p. 80).
becoming mistresses of the Ottoman rulers or to be executed. *Catharina von Georgien* (1657), the play written by Andreas Grypius, and Daniel Casper von Lohenstein’s two tragedies the so called “Türkische Trauerspiele” (EN: Turkish tragedies); *Ibrahim Bassa* (1653) and *Ibrahim Sultan* (1673) are examples of literary texts dealing with chaste Christian women and lustful Turkish rulers in Ottoman society. In these dramas, the Turkish male figures devote themselves to worldly rewards whereas the Christian female characters believe that they will be rewarded for their piety and chastity in afterlife. In this sense, the Turkish tragedies in the Baroque period can be defined as tools of anti-Turkish propaganda in German literature (Kontje, 2019, p. 199).

Unlike the representations from medieval and Baroque periods, in which negative images were dominant, the stereotype of “brutal and lustful Turks” transformed into a colorful portrayal with favorable qualities in the 18th century. From this perspective, Turks started to appear with positive features in German literature, music, and art. The Austrian composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart’s famous opera *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (1782) is an example in which the Turks are connoted with positive characteristics. This presentation was an effect of the “Turquerie” movement when Europe became interested in Turkish culture, music, art, literature, fashion, and architecture. Following the Enlightenment into the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire’s influence over European culture persisted. This was reflected in various textual and visual sources. Turkish fairytales including Oriental motifs were translated into German and they were very popular among the people who showed a keen interest in Oriental culture (Kuran Burçoğlu, 1999, p. 195).

The positive image of the Turks in German speaking countries reached a peak with the entry of the Ottomans into the First World War on the side of Germany and Austria-Hungary as an ally. The diplomatic and political interests of the German Reich and the Ottoman Empire established a close friendship that was represented as a “Waffenbrüderschaft” (EN: brotherhood in arms) in different visual and textual contexts. A glorified stereotyping of the

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11 In *Ibrahim Bassa*, the Ottoman Empire Soliman (Suleiman I) is described as “a virtuous prince”, however Lohenstein decided to transform him into a monstrous sex-crazed monarch in his next drama *Ibrahim Sultan*.


13 In literature and art, the Orient was associated with lush landscapes, mystery, eroticism, and colorful costumes. Oriental motifs were in great demand in literary transfer because of their exoticism that was first considered foreign but quickly integrated into the common literary memory in Germany and Europe (Duprat, 2018).

14 The establishment of the close diplomatic ties between the Ottoman and German Empires can be traced back to the reign of Abdülhamid II (1876–1909). During his reign the relationship between the two empires was so intense that European public opinion and diplomacy were convinced that Germany played an active role in the selection of Abdülhamid II’s successor (Sefer, 2023, pp. 59–60).
Turks in the Third Reich was present in various essays, books, illustrations, and newspaper articles\textsuperscript{15} (Ihrig, 2014, p. 173). During the Second World War, Turkey became a safe place for the Jewish-German refugees who escaped from Nazi Germany. Their influence can be seen in different written sources including scientific texts which were produced in Turkey between 1950s and 60s.

The post-war labor agreement between Germany and Turkey in 1961 had started a migration flow from Turkey to Germany. The migration movement from East to West “changed individual and familial lives and transformed the social and cultural landscapes of both nations in unforeseen ways” (Hake & Mennel, 2014, p. 1). The unexpected consequences of the labor migration have caused cultural clashes, social conflicts, debates about multiculturalism, integration, ethnic and national identity which have created a new image of Turks in visual and verbal sources. The new image of Turks was the embodiment of the so called “Gastarbeiter” (EN: guestworker) and the immigrant. Connected with the rise of ethnic stereotyping and xenophobic rhetoric, Turks were once again projected as a threat to the German identity, German language, and German nation. Nonetheless, the high visibility of Turks in nearly all cities of Germany has challenged many Germans’ image of the “self” as cosmopolitans. To be cosmopolitan implies multicultural fluency, acceptance, even celebration of differences and existence of others. These transnational and multicultural experiences which were mostly associated with the Turks had a positive impact on their image in German literature\textsuperscript{16}, movies\textsuperscript{17}, and language\textsuperscript{18}.

We can say that the Turkish-German relations have gone through a very dynamic process of evolution which was created and then transformed through various types of literary and visual sources that extend from chronicles, travelogues, diaries, fairytales, paintings, cartoons, dramas, ballads, operas, novels, short stories, posters, postcards, scientific texts, newspaper articles, movies, and television programs. Moving forward from this historical starting point this book proposes to focus on new perspectives on German-Turkish relations

\textsuperscript{15} The National Socialists were strongly influenced by the Turkish War of Independence which reflected their vision to create a liberated Germany. Therefore, some newspapers included the application of “Turkish lessons” in Germany (Ihrig, 2014, p. 223).

\textsuperscript{16} Feridun Zaimoğlu’s novel Kanak Sprak (1995) is an example of the influence of young Turkish immigrants on German language.

\textsuperscript{17} The television movie Metin (1979) written and directed by Thomas Draeger is an example of filmic sources which focus on the cross-cultural relations between the Turkish immigrants and Germans in Germany.

\textsuperscript{18} The impact of multilingual Turkish youths on German language is called “Kiezdeutsch”, a new dialect that includes different grammatical and lexical innovations such as word order variations or shortening of nominal phrases. The term “Kiez” refers to the Kreuzberg district in Berlin which is known for its large percentage of Turkish immigrants.
from the fifteenth through the twenty-first century. Divided into seven chapters, it moves between literary, historical, cultural, linguistic, and semiotic representations of German and Turkish images. The first two chapters display a historical view on images of Turks in literary texts between the 14th and 19th centuries. The third chapter deals with semiotic and linguistic representations of the German, Austro-Hungarian, and Ottoman Empire in postcards during the World War I. The fourth chapter discusses the writer stance in scientific texts which are produced under the influence of immigrant German academics in Turkey. The fifth chapter highlights the images of Turkish immigrants in German documentaries which were filmed in the last days of the GDR. The sixth chapter provides a fresh view on conceptions of childhood and their manifestation in Turkish, German, and Austrian children’s literary texts. Finally, the seventh chapter offers theoretical reflections on xenology and xenophilia regarding the German-Turkish relationship. Consequently, all chapters include a new perspective on Turkish-German relations, and I hope that this book will be a useful source for future studies showing how multidimensional the Turkish-German relations have been throughout the centuries.

References


