Losing the Plot: The (Mis)Translation of Güney Dal's *İş Sürgünleri*[1]

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Migrant literature in Germany, particularly that by writers of Turkish name,[2] has become a popular area of research in recent years. Most overviews of the field follow a teleological approach, tracing a development from the early texts of migrant misery in the work place, to the identity crises of authors writing 'in between' two cultures, to the more productive 'pluralism' offered by younger writers. This approach is exemplified in the title of Fischer and McGowan's chapter, "From 'Pappkoffer' to Pluralism," and Aglaia Blioumi's essay, "Vom Gastarbeiterdeutsch zur Poesie," amongst others.[3] Such accounts, while varying in their quality and slant, tend to divide the field neatly (and misleadingly) into 'generations.' This generational approach describes the perceived development of the field, but fails to acknowledge the development within the careers of individual writers. Such an approach is problematic in several ways, not least because it introduces the idea of progress towards an 'ideal' or more advanced form of literature, suggesting – either implicitly through the ordering of the material or openly through the titles and subtitles used – that the work of younger writers is more interesting than that of their predecessors.[4] Consequently, the authors of the 'pioneer' generation are at risk of being overlooked or summarily dismissed as purveyors of the crudest type of 'Literatur der Betroffenheit.'

Güney Dal is one of this first generation of migrant writers to establish themselves in Germany. Born in Çanakkale, near Gallipoli in Turkey in 1944, Dal moved to Berlin in 1972 (following the coup in Turkey the previous year) where he has lived ever since.[5] On his arrival in Germany, Dal worked as a porter in a factory and learnt German at the *Freie Universität*. He later worked as a radio journalist for the Berlin radio station *Sender Freies Berlin* and in the early 1980s was a regular contributor to the Turkish magazine *Anadil* ['Mother Tongue'] edited by Yüksel Pazarkaya. Since then he has three times been a recipient of grants for literary work from the Berlin Senate. Like many of the first generation of migrant writers, he continues to write in Turkish, and most of his works have been translated for the German market. The fact that he does not write in German did not prevent him from being a joint winner of the Chamisso Prize in 1997. The prize was set up in 1985 by the Robert-Bosch Stiftung in Munich to recognize non-native writers of German, although it has been awarded many times to writers, such as Dal and its inaugural winner, Aras Ören, who do not write in German.[6]

Dal prides himself on his engagement with literature and with literary theory. His writing project can broadly be summarized as an attempt to explore and inscribe the experiences of migrants in Germany, and to do so by also exploring the possibilities of the novel's form. While the thematic substance of Dal's novels has remained largely constant and familiar during the course of his career, he has approached this stock material through a variety of narrative forms. Even his early novels, those most easily reconciled with the notion of 'Literatur der Betroffenheit,' illustrate the willingness to experiment with form that has been developed more extensively in his later works. In 1988 he wrote a lengthy article for a Turkish magazine, explaining and extolling the virtues of postmodernism. His subsequent novels, particularly *Der enthaarte Affe* (T. *Kılları Yolunmuş Maymun*, 1988) and *Eine kurze Reise nach Gallipoli* (T. *Gelibolu'ya Kısa bir Yolculuk*, 1994), reflect this enthusiasm, and he has been named by Yıldız Ecevit, a leading critic of contemporary Turkish literature, as an avant-garde author worthy of mention alongside such modern 'greats' as Orhan Pamuk.[7]

Since the early 1980s, all of his novels have been translated by Carl Koß, in what Dal describes as a 'mutual dialogue' and Dal has a large amount of input into the finished versions. As such they can be regarded as 'authorized' in the fullest possible sense. This was not the case with his first novel, which is the subject of this article. The translator of this text, Brigitte Schreiber-Grabitz, took considerable liberties with elements of the novel's plot and construction, as well as the language, making changes that obscure some of the more interesting aspects of the original novel and make the German version less compelling.

İş sürgünleri was written during Dal's first years as a worker in Germany.[8] It was published in Turkey in 1976 as one of three prize-winners from a competition organized by the Istanbul-based publishers Milliyet in that year. Before leaving Turkey, Dal had dabbled with various forms of writing and had had a few texts published. This, however, was his first novel. It is a novel that, despite its flaws and its troubled history, Dal remains proud of, describing it in the following terms: 'Bu roman, roman olarak benim ilk göz ağrım. Ama, romanlarımın en 'içten'lerinden biri. Yazılışından yayınlanışına, okuyucuya ulaşışına değin bin yığın talihsizlikler geçirdi.'[9] [This novel is my first attempt at a novel. But, of my novels, it is one of the most 'sincere.' From its composition, to its publication, to its reaching the reader, it suffered a great many misfortunes.]

It is these 'misfortunes,' suffered during the translation process, that this article seeks to highlight and, in some small way, to redress. By examining aspects of the novel that have been affected by the translation process, and by offering comparisons between the German translation and the Turkish original, I hope to demonstrate that Dal's first novel is a more interesting text than readers of the German version have

been led to believe. I shall begin by summarizing the plot and the early reception of the novel, before moving on to look in detail at the changes of structure and title made by the translator and at passages that, through their (mis)translation, have altered the impact of the text. It is not my intention here to delve into theories of translation, nor is the thrust of my argument based on any notion of an 'ideal' translation; it is, however, premised on the understanding that to rearrange and substantially alter the text goes beyond normal practices of translation.

Essentially, there are three plot strands that run through the novel. One of these, which is based on real events, concerns an unofficial strike at the Ford factory in Cologne, instigated by 'Gastarbeiter' in August 1973 to protest about working conditions. In the novel, one of their specific complaints is against what they regard as the unfair sacking of migrant workers – including one of the principal characters, Şevket (Schevket in the German translation) – for returning late from vacation. A second strand, also set in Cologne, concerns a Turkish sociology student, Ali, and his relationship with a German girl, Helga. Ali is one of the main 'thinkers' behind the strike. Not a worker himself, we see him producing leaflets and discussing politics and ideology. The third strand takes place in Berlin, where a Kurdish worker, Kadir Derya, who is a former colleague of Şevket's, works as a cleaner for a pharmaceutical company. Kadir is increasingly concerned by the fact that he appears to be growing breasts. It eventually transpires that this grotesque transformation is a result of a 'joke' being played on Kadir by his German boss, Herr Hartmann, to whom Kadir goes for medicine to relieve his suffering from stomach pains: Herr Hartmann is in fact feeding him hormone tablets. We learn this only on the closing pages when Kadir is rushed to hospital having taken a knife to his chest in an attempt to amputate his breasts.

The narration of the strike is largely dominated by what McGowan calls its 'political didacticism,' although the frequent switching of narrative perspective allows this to be tempered by a degree of ambiguity (300). As both McGowan and Adelson have recently argued, it is principally the Kadir storyline that makes the novel exceptional and prevents it from becoming just another left-wing tract. The tone of this strand of the narrative is markedly different from the rest of the novel. In contrast to the studied political and social realism with which the strike is portrayed, Dal depicts Kadir's traumatized response to his deformity in what Adelson describes as "psychological realism bordering on the surreal" (913).

Within these main strands, there are also several minor figures and sub-plots as well as substantial flashbacks to the pre-migration pasts of many of the Turkish characters. The inclusion of these pre-migration histories, even of relatively incidental figures (such as Ramadan, the very religious clerk at the translation office) is an

attempt, at times a clumsy one, to present a broad array of Turkish individuals, with particular stories and personal motivations, rather than a monotone, undifferentiated portrayal of 'Turks.' The novel is thus woven together from various narrative threads with frequent switches of narrative perspective. This is not in itself revolutionary, but it does indicate that the novel is more complex and has more literary ambitions than a standard example of confessional literature.

From the outset, many of the complexities of the novel were overlooked or obscured by the publishers, encouraging partial readings of the text. Attention was focused solely on the narrative of the strike and the text was read as being representative of a particular kind of social commentary, rather than being recognized for its literary ambition and inventiveness. The simplification of Dal's novel is reflected in the almost identical summaries placed by the publishers on the covers of both the Turkish and the German editions. Sten Nadolny, in his *Laudatio* to Dal delivered at the Chamisso prize ceremony, quotes from the German blurb:

> …seit Jahrzehnten gehen türkische Arbeiter in die verschiedensten Länder und hoffen, sich ein neues Leben aufbauen zu können. Was sie durchmachen, kann nur einer von ihnen tatsächlich schildern, der ihre Sprache und Mentalität versteht und selbst unter ihnen lebt… Orte der auf Tatsachen basierenden Handlung sind Köln und Berlin. Das Geschehen erreicht seinen Höhepunkt in der realistischen Schilderung eines Streiks und der Gründe für seinen Ausbruch. Indem *Güney Dal* mit seinen Landsleuten und mit uns hart und mit verhaltener Wut ins Gericht geht, leistet er einen wesentlichen Beitrag zum besseren gegenseitigen Verstehen. Er hinterfragt den Begriff *Integration ausländischer Arbeitnehmer*… Undsoweiter. (528)

Nadolny pours scorn on this summary and its emphasis on the authenticity and realism of the novel at the expense of more interesting parts of the plot. It is disheartening that precisely that aspect of the plot that makes the novel remarkable – namely the grotesque metamorphosis of Kadir – was overlooked in the marketing of the text.

The publishers' comments are illustrative of the way in which foreign authors have often been rigidly categorized according to their biography rather than their actual works and is indicative of the tendency for aspects of such texts that do not conform to rigid ideas of what 'belongs' in 'Gastarbeiterliteratur' to be ignored or denied. Nadolny goes on to criticize the reluctance of German critics and readers to acknowledge that 'migrant' writers might be capable of producing anything worthy of the name 'literature.' He states:

> [Der Klappentext] macht sehr schön deutlich, in welchem fast ausbruchsicheren Käfig unsere ausländischen Autoren-Mitbürger oder Mitbürger-Autoren (vielleicht sollte ich noch sagen: Gast-Autoren, um das Maß voll zu machen) in Deutschland von Beginn an gesteckt haben, und weiter steckten, selbst wenn sie sich längst von der sogenannten "Gastarbeiterliteratur" fort bewegt hatten – hin zur *Literatur* nämlich. (528)

Nadolny's play on the possible terms for describing these authors reflects the more general difficulty critics have had in fixing a suitable label to this body of literature: in an effort to find a name which demarcates a separate field away from the rest of '(German) Literature,' various permutations of ethnicity and nationality have been adopted (and then rejected).

Of course, it is not possible to read any part of the text in isolation from the rest of the novel: Dal's skill lies in the combination of the multiple strands and in the way the various sections of the plot overlap and inform each other. The contrast between the different narrative styles adds to, rather than detracts from, their overall success. Furthermore, one cannot completely ignore the 'Gastarbeiter' context. If 'Gastarbeiterliteratur' is understood as a parallel term to 'Arbeiterliteratur,' that is as a primarily historical definition of literature by and about workers, or in this case guest-workers, then clearly this novel at least partially fits into this genre: Dal was a 'Gastarbeiter' (of sorts) when he wrote it, although it should be recognized that he initially moved to Germany for primarily political rather than economic reasons.[10] Most of the characters in the novel are certainly 'Gastarbeiter.' However, to stop at that and hold the text up as a straightforward example of social and political realism, without any acknowledgement of its satirical moments and grotesque elements, or any recognition of the complexity of the shifting narrative perspective, which refuses to allow readers to settle into an attitude of unquestioning support of Ali's position, or even that of the strikers, is an unreasonable reduction. Such categorization can only be useful if it is employed with caution and if due attention is given to aspects of the text which stretch the boundaries of the term.

Wolfgang Riemann, in his 1983 book, *Das Deutschlandbild in der modernen türkischen Literatur*, draws attention to the fact that the text that was published in Germany was substantially different to the original version (111). What Riemann does not mention, however, is that the first changes occurred before it was even published in Turkey. Originally, Dal had wanted to call his novel *Memeleri büyüyen işçi*, literally, 'The worker whose breasts are growing.' This is the title under which it was submitted

to the competition and Dal still feels this would have been the most appropriate title for the novel. However, once it had been decided that the text was to be published, Dal was approached by a representative from the publishers and asked to change the title. Apparently, the reason for this request was that the publishers felt that their readers would not purchase a book whose title contained the word 'breasts.'[11] Dal, as a novice author, did not feel able to insist on retaining the provocative title, so he duly came up with a new one, more acceptable to such readers, namely *İş sürgünleri* ['Labour exiles'].[12] It can be seen that whereas the focus was originally on Kadir, this amputation of the titular breasts (an echo of the attempted amputation that takes place in the text, perhaps) switches the emphasis away from any individual and widens the scope to encompass all the novel's characters.

Dal's account of the translation of his text into German (related in the letter quoted above) betrays a lasting sense of irritation and a certain amount of bitterness at the way this process was conducted. According to him, the translator and the German publishers, (a small, left-wing, Berlin-based firm, *Edition der 2*) after translating the novel, rearranged parts of the book, without consulting Dal, and renamed it: *Wenn Ali die Glocken läuten hört*. The new title does have some basis in Dal's text: it is derived from a line of poetry by the conservative poet Mehmet Âkif Ersoy,[13] quoted by Ali: "Olur mu nâkus inlesin beyninde Osmânın?" (*IS*, 39) ["(How) can it be that church bells penetrate the brain of an Ottoman?"], translated in the German text as: "Wie ist es möglich, daß Kirchengeläut in die Ohren eines Osmanen dringt?" (*Ali* 7). This line is taken from a poem written during the Greek occupation of Thrace and western Anatolia during the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire following the end of World War One.[14] The poem bemoans the occupation of Bursa, the former capital of the Ottoman Empire, by European soldiers. Ali quotes it in reference to the situation of Muslims living in Europe, who have to listen daily to the sound of church bells: "Das, was des Dichters Herz am meisten betrübte, waren die Glockentöne, die jede Stunde in die Ohren der Osmanen drangen. […] Jetzt gab das Glockengeläut kein Echo in den Ohren des Osmanen, aber Millionen Menschen waren aus des Dichters Land aufgebrochen und hörten dem Kirchengeläut hier zu" (*Ali* 7).

The bells ring on several occasions during the novel, providing a backdrop against which the reader can measure the passing of time. It is on the occasion of their first ringing that they are most heavily thematized. There are, however, significant discrepancies between the ways in which they are treated in each text, as the following quotations from the Turkish text and its German translation illustrate. In the original, Dal wrote: "Daha yüzbinlerce işçi bu çan seslerini saat başı dinleyebilisin diye ülkede sıraya konulmuştu. Mark verilip çan sesleri dinletilebilsin diye. Emperyalist bir kültürün tohumları işçilerimizin kafalarına dikilebilsin diye" (*IS* 40). This can be

translated as: "Saying, 'let hundreds of thousands more workers be able to listen to the sound of these bells on the hour,' [bells] were placed everywhere in the country. Saying, 'let them be given Marks and listen to the sound of bells.' Saying, 'let the seeds of an imperialist culture be planted in the brains of our workers'."[15] However, in the German published version, this has become: 'Weitere hunderttausende von Arbeitern warten darauf, dieses Glockenläuten zu jeder angebrochenen Stunde hören zu können, sie warten auf ihre Arbeitsvermittlung. Unsere Arbeiter erhalten D-Mark dafür, daß sie die Glocken läuten hören, daß eine fremde Kultur in ihre Köpfe gepflanzt wird' (*Ali* 7).

The most notable difference is the suggestion in the Turkish novel that the bells are perceived as part of a conscious policy conducted by the Germans in order to undermine the Muslim workers, rather than just a coincidental side-effect of the presence of churches in Germany. This is conveyed through the repeated tolling of the gerund 'diye' ('saying') combined with the third person imperative form, a grammatical construction used to express purpose or intention.[16] In the German translation, all such sense of intent has been lost. Indeed, the German text introduces an element of willingness on behalf of the Turkish workers to come and listen to the bells, removing yet further any indication of German culpability. It is further worth noting that whereas in the Turkish text the speaker is specifically concerned about an 'imperialist' culture being planted in the minds of the foreign workers, in the German novel this is referred to merely as a 'foreign' culture, thus losing the implication of colonial intention on the part of the German host culture and, by implication, western European culture more broadly.

Although Ali resents the ringing of the church bells primarily on the grounds of the racial and class-based exploitation they are perceived to denote, clearly the religious context cannot be ignored. It is notable that the ringing of these bells at least partially succeeds in bridging an otherwise intractable opposition: that between left-wing Turks and their zealously religious compatriots. Elsewhere in the text, Ramadan, who can broadly be read as representing the Islamists' position, refuses to recognize socialists (generally described en masse as Communists) as Turks, regarding them as being morally equivalent to the godless Germans, and is outraged by their lawless strike. The antagonism cuts both ways, as the later scuffle in the factory grounds demonstrates, since the workers and socialists associate the Islamists with their oppressors. On this occasion, however, Ali states his respect for the religious conservative poet Âkif, and offers him the devotion due to an ancestor: "Her ne kadar Kemalistleri beyenmeyip, Mısır'a gidip yerleştiysen de, dedeciğimin ellerinden öper gibi, ellerinden öperim, Âkif dede" (*IS* 41; omitted in German version). ["However much the Kemalists disapproved [of you] and even though you went to Egypt and

settled there, I kiss your hands like I kiss the hands of my dear ancestors, Âkif sir."].[17] Ali himself recognizes the seeming incongruity between their positions, but is willing to move beyond this to embrace their common heritage. A similar tendency can be identified in a later – and very different – text, "Nimm den Sonntag" in Feridun Zaimoglu's first book *Kanak Sprak*.[18] Here the speaker is a self-defined 'müllkümmel' (*KS* 124), and the register employed is entirely different; nonetheless, the point being made, albeit more crudely, bears comparison:

> Wenn ich den ollen bimbam hör, was da dir'n privaten himmel stark bewölkt, s'geläut wie so'n fetter becher, aus dem der verdammte sirup tropft und dir's hirn dumm verklebt, werd ich'n haßbimbo […] so'n richtiger muselmann werd ich, obwohl mir die bärtigen auf die eier gehn. (*KS* 123)

It would seem that the effect of being constantly exposed to the ringing of church bells is the consolidation of an otherwise neglected or reluctant Islamic identity amongst people who would normally dissociate themselves from all that entails.

Despite the new title's resonance with this aspect of the plot, however, it creates a complete change of emphasis both from the author's original choice of title, and from the Turkish published version. Not only is Kadir absent, but gone, too, is the generality. Instead, the attention of the reader has been fully diverted on to Ali.[19] Accordingly, the novel now opens, not, as in the original, with Şevket and his family returning late from vacation to find his redundancy notice, nor even with Ali as we first encounter him in the Turkish text – listening to old Turkish folk songs, reading newspapers, musing on politics and practising revolutionary speeches in his flat – but with the arrival in Ali's flat of Helga. Thus, instead of seeing Ali first in his own context and Helga arriving subsequently as a relatively peripheral character, Helga's entrance is here the catalyst, providing the impulse for the introduction of Ali. The fact that we encounter them both simultaneously, on an essentially equal footing, changes the balance of Dal's text by reducing our understanding of Ali on his own terms and by elevating his relationship with Helga to an importance which it does not have in the Turkish, and which indeed is not sustained in the German version – Helga, in fact, appears only once more in both versions of the novel. Furthermore, whereas in the Turkish text, this chapter runs for approximately twenty-five pages, only ten of which include Helga, in the German it is reduced by almost half to about thirteen, of which only two are given as a flashback to the time before Helga arrived. Presumably this is an attempt made by the translator to 'rectify' the scarcity of German characters in the text and thus to provide the German readership with an access point – a more

familiar figure with whom they can identify, since all other German characters are either very minor, totally repellent, or both.

The chapter concerning Şevket is similarly edited, reduced from twenty-four pages to just six. Coupled with its change of position in the text this editing reduces our understanding of Şevket and means that he becomes, as Adelson states, a "mere conduit to explain the wildcat strike" (913). The second section of the original chapter – describing Şevket's visit to the translation office to discover the contents of his redundancy notice – is further edited and reinserted as a flashback scene during an account of the final stages of the strike (*Ali*, 109-17). Not only does this rewritten version omit details and even an entire subplot contained in the Turkish, but it clearly does not fit here – it interrupts the narrative and reads very much as an afterthought. By losing such details and extra plot elements, the text, particularly in terms of its characterization, loses something of its complexity and becomes more crude.

Recently, Moray McGowan in particular has shown the way towards a more nuanced reading of the novel. As well as his recent article on masculinities in Turkish-German fiction, which discusses *Ali* alongside other texts, he and Sabine Fischer devoted a significant amount of space to a discussion of Dal's first two novels in their overview of migrant literature in Germany in the influential volume edited by Horrocks and Kolinsky. The analysis of *Wenn Ali die Glocken läuten hört* offered here praises the novel for the complexity with which it treats themes and settings typical of 'Gastarbeiterliteratur.' The figure of Kadir is singled out as a demonstration of Dal's 'literary self-awareness [and] playfulness,' while his transformation and his ultimate mutilation of his breasts are interpreted as "a grotesque metaphor for German treatment of Gastarbeiter, especially Turks, as subhuman beings, and for the helpless and self-destructive response of a man unprepared for the bewildering complexities of urban technological society" (Fischer/McGowan 8).

This latter point seems to overlap with Dal's own intention for the Kadir storyline, although it is interesting that Dal himself does not mention the German / 'Gastarbeiter' dimension: he seems to regard the story as a more general reflection on the lot of a worker in the modern world. To quote again from his letter: "O zaman Kadir'in 'memeleri'nin büyümesinin, tarım işçiliğinden birden bire sanayi işçiliğine atlıyan insanın "metamorfozu" nu vurgulmakta uygun bir "bild" olduğuna siz de katılacaksınız sanırım…" ["At that time (i.e. when you have read the Turkish text) I am sure that you too will agree that the growth of Kadir's 'breasts' is an appropriate 'bild' for emphasizing the 'metamorphosis' of a person suddenly thrown from being an agricultural labourer to being an industrial labourer…"]. It is particularly worth noting the emphasis Dal himself places on the word 'metamorphosis,' drawing attention to it by his use of quotation marks. This seems to be a nod towards Kafka's famous text

Die Verwandlung, a connection made both by Edgar Hilsenrath and Leslie Adelson.[20] It is particularly useful to consider Kadir in comparison with Gregor Samsa in terms of the emasculation of both men following their respective metamorphoses. McGowan states in his chapter on masculinity that Kadir's body becomes "politicised, sexualised, and gazed upon in a way rarely practised on male bodies in contemporary German writing" (301). The same is, to an extent, true of Samsa. Of course, the bodies of both men are only subjected to this scrutiny once they have become altered; more specifically, once they have become feminized.[21]

Kadir finds his bodily transformation as bewildering and disorienting as the change in his working conditions, and becomes increasingly alienated both from his own body and from his immediate surroundings. On his arrival in the unfamiliar working environment in Germany, Kadir is transformed from an autonomous speaking subject to the passive object of the demands and commands of others. The growth of Kadir's breasts approximately coincides with his loss of language, and hence with his loss of power. As a Kurd, Kadir is rendered speechless twice over. Through his reminiscences of his time in the army we learn that he had been taught that Kurdish is nothing but a corrupt dialect of Turkish, reflecting the official policy of the Turkish Republic at the time. On arrival in Germany, Kadir assumed that German was in the same way just a variation of Turkish, and waited for his German interlocutors to learn to speak properly. Eventually he comes to realize that this is not going to happen and so takes refuge in sign language and pidgin German (*IS* 107-8; *Ali* 87). As he retreats further from the external world and cocoons himself in his bedroom he becomes less aware of the distinctions between languages. There is a telling passage in which he is unable to ascertain whether Ali and Şevket are addressing him in German or Turkish (*IS* 105-7; *Ali* 85-7). There are also several occasions on which his inability to communicate effectively with his youngest, German-speaking son Selim is made apparent (e.g. *IS* 103; *Ali* 81-2).

Kadir is terrified that the process of emasculation signalled by the growth of female breasts on his male torso will also result in the loss of his hair and, ultimately, of his penis, the symbolic site of masculinity and power. As a means of halting this traumatic process, Kadir has regrown his moustache (which had previously been shaved off as a means of disguise, necessitated by some kind of regional feud) and contemplates growing a full beard in order to reassert his masculine identity. Facial hair has important cultural significance in Islam, according to which the presence (and the length and style) of a man's beard can be interpreted as a sign of their belief.[22] This, too, finds reflection in Dal's novel in several passing details that are, for some reason, often omitted in the translation. For example, the very first word of the Turkish text is 'bıyıkları' ('his [Şevket's] moustache') and many of the characters are

introduced or defined by the presence and style of their moustaches. In Dal's second novel *Europastraße 5*, (1981; T. *E5*, 1979) male road accident victims are identified as Turkish by virtue of their moustaches and, of course, hair is given particular emphasis in the title of Dal's third novel, *Der enthaarte Affe* (1988).

The ideological significance of facial hair in constructions of identity in Dal's texts and elsewhere is something that will need further examination. Here, however, I wish to concentrate on this passage as a final example of the (mis)translation of the text, not least because it is quoted (in a translation into English of the faulty German rendition) by McGowan in his insightful chapter examining representations of Turkish-German masculinity. The discrepancies can best be illustrated by comparing the passage concerned (i) with the published translation (iii); both are given below, along with my translation of the Turkish text (ii) and the relevant passage from McGowan's chapter (iv):

> i) [M]eme başlarının büyüyüp kabardığını, memelerinin dolgunlaşıp etlendiğini fark ettiğinden bu yana yâni bıyıklarını koyvermişti. Ve giderek tüm kıllarına daha da bir ilgi gösteriyor, sakal bırakmayı bile düşünüyordu. Böylece, *Tanrının bir lâneti gibi* kendi erkek gövdesinde büyüyen bu *et parçalarına* karşın erkekliğini kanıtlamak istiyordu. (*IS* 64; italics added)
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> ii) That is to say that since noticing the growth and swelling of his nipples and the filling out and fleshing up of his breasts he had left his moustache to grow. And gradually he was paying all of his hair more attention, and was even thinking of growing a beard. In this way, he wanted to prove his masculinity to these *pieces of flesh* that were growing on his male body *like a punishment from God*.
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> iii) Als er dann bemerkte, wie seine Brustwarzen sich vergrößerten und anschwollen, hatte er sich schnell wieder einen [Schnurrbart] stehen lassen. Im weiteren Verlauf hatte er seinem gesamten Haarwuchs mehr Beachtung geschenkt und sogar daran gedacht, sich einen Vollbart wachsen zu lassen. Es war so, *als wollte er Gott lästern* und den an seinem Körper wachsenden *Fleischwülsten* seine Männlichkeit beweisen. (*Ali* 37; italics added)
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> iv) Kadir's moustache is no longer sufficient; only a full beard might counterbalance the threat to his gender identity: "It was as though

> he wanted to blaspheme and prove his masculinity to the bulges of flesh growing on his body." (McGowan 301)

The significant sentence is the final one. In Turkish, adjectival modifiers always precede their noun, therefore the phrase in italics "Tanrının bir lâneti gibi" ("like a punishment or curse of God") has to refer forward to the 'et parçaları' ('pieces of flesh') and cannot be interpreted as a follow on from the preceding sentence about growing a beard.[23] Once the sentence has been understood in this way, it can be seen that presenting the growth of a beard as a blasphemous act results from a misreading of the Turkish text. In fact, if anything, it should be read as an affirmative action to placate an angry deity: throughout the text Kadir remains unaware of the real reason for his bodily transformation and assumes he is being punished by God for some misdemeanour. Moreover, in Islam, beards are, if not a prescribed requirement, then certainly strongly recommended, and therefore to describe the act of growing a beard as blasphemous in this way is highly misleading.

It should be stressed that McGowan does not develop the issue of blasphemy in his chapter. However, the fact that this (mis)translation is repeated in interpretations of the novel by Germanists who have no access to the Turkish original, whether or not it forms a central part of their argument, illustrates the danger that such mistakes can inscribe themselves as the accepted text, obscuring and indeed inverting the actual content and intention of the original. This is not to suggest that only Germanists who can read Turkish should be allowed to comment on the text, merely to highlight the potential pitfalls in accepting unauthorized translations, which may well have been amputated or even emasculated, as the definitive text.

Clearly it would be an overstatement to conclude that the deficiencies of the German translation have entirely obscured the merits of Dal's original text. The novel retains many of its striking features, notably its use of multiple narrative perspectives and the grotesquely surreal Kadir storyline, to name but two. However, as I hope to have demonstrated, the unauthorized changes made by the translator have significantly weakened the impact of the novel, particularly in terms of its construction and characterization, and have also had an effect on a more subtle level through the many omissions and misreadings. These changes have been compounded by the blinkered appraisals used to market the text, which focus on the elements of the novel that allow it to be categorized simply as 'Gastarbeiterliteratur.' I believe this is an over-simplification and an unfair reduction of Dal's work.

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Notes

[1] Earlier versions of this article were presented to the Departmental Research Seminar in Swansea and to the CUTG Annual Conference held at the NUI Maynooth in September 2003. I would like to acknowledge the support of the AHRB who fund my research and the UWS English, Languages and Media Studies Planning Group who partially funded my attendance at the conference in Maynooth. I would further like to acknowledge the helpful comments and queries of those people who listened to or read earlier drafts of this piece, particularly (in Swansea) Dr Tom Cheesman, Dr Brigid Haines, Dr Katharina Hall, and Jonathan Padley. From further afield, I am grateful for the comments of Professor Leslie Adelson, who also kindly provided me with a pre-publication copy of her article about Dal's text. Finally I would like to thank Güney Dal for his generosity and patience in answering my queries and allowing me to quote from our correspondence.

[2] I have borrowed the formulation 'writers of Turkish name' from Tom Cheesman and Deniz Göktürk's article, "German Titles, Turkish Names: The Cosmopolitan Will." The term has merit in that it does not exclude writers on grounds of country of birth, country of residence or language of composition. Cheesman returns to this terminology in his forthcoming article "Juggling Burdens of Representation." I am grateful to Dr. Cheesman for allowing me access to his as yet unpublished article.

[3] Although I am using their title as representative of an approach I dispute, Fischer and McGowan's chapter in fact offers a valuable reading of Dal's novel.

[4] See Tom Cheesman's "Juggling Burdens of Representation," which articulates the dangers of this perspective through a critique of a representative example of its type and proposes a "tentative non-chronological, non-teleological categorisation," in which writers and their works are sorted according to their "implied mode of response to the cultural-political problem of representation." (n.p.)

[5] Since this article was first written, Dal has in fact returned to Turkey; he now divides his time between Istanbul and Assos (Behramkale), a small town on the Aegean coast.

[6] The 2003 catalogue of prize winners, *Viele Kulturen – Eine Sprache*, quotes the closing statement of Harald Weinrich's 1983 essay "Um eine deutsche Literatur von außen bittend" by way of outlining the philosophy behind the prize: "Deutschland ist ein Land, aus Sprache und Geschichte gemacht, und alle Personen, die von der deutschen Sprache einen solchen Gebrauch machen, daß sie diese Geschichte weiterschreiben, sind unsere natürlichen Landsleute" (*Viele Kulturen* 4). Given the emphasis placed on the criteria of using the German language, it is especially ironic that some winners of the award, like Dal and Ören, write not in German but Turkish.

[7] Ecevit, 92. Beyond this article and newspaper reviews of some of his novels, very little has been written about Dal in Turkey. This may change with the forthcoming republication of his works by the Istanbul-based Dünya publishing house.

[8] Quotations from the Turkish text will be indicated by *IS* followed by the page number. Quotations from the German translation will be indicated by *Ali* followed by the page number. Throughout this article, all translations from Turkish are my own, unless otherwise indicated.

[9] Personal letter from Güney Dal, 27 May 2003.
[10] Of course, the migration of 'Gastarbeiter' is always related to politics in some sense. I am referring here to the coup that took place in Turkey in 1971 precipitating a crackdown on left-wing sympathizers and activists which was the reason for Dal's departure for Germany. For a rare description of the circumstances surrounding this move, see his 1996 essay "Und das Exil und Berlin und die Angst und ich und…".
[11] Personal letter from Güney Dal, 27 May 2003.
[12] Although this title is largely unremarkable, it is worth noting the deliberately provocative use of the term 'exiles' rather than 'migrants' to refer to the Turkish workers in Germany.
[13] Mehmet Âkif Ersoy (1873-1936) is one of Turkey's most famous twentieth-century poets and was the author of the lyrics to the Turkish national anthem.
[14] The date is given in the German text as being c.1920, although no date is given in the Turkish original since presumably it would be a familiar reference to Turkish readers.
[15] I have translated this passage particularly literally in order to allow the particularities of the Turkish construction to remain visible to readers of the English translation.
[16] See Lewis, 175.
[17] Ersoy was unable to reconcile his form of (Islamic-oriented) nationalism with the secularism of the new Turkish Republic. As a result of his disillusionment with the republic created after the successful War of Independence, he left Turkey for Egypt in 1924, returning only in 1936 in order to die in his homeland.
[18] For a discussion of Zaimoglu's distinctive linguistic style in this early collection of texts, see Tom Cheesman's article 'Akçam – Zaimoglu – "Kanak Attak": Turkish Lives and Letters in German'. Quotations from Zaimoglu's text will be indicated by *KS* followed by the page number.
[19] It should be acknowledged that the name 'Ali' itself has become a generic term for foreigners in Germany, so in a sense the title does retain an element of generality.
[20] Edgar Hilsenrath states: "Kadir wird allmählich zum Weib. Hier kann ein Vergleich gezogen werden zu Kafkas "Metamorphose", "Die Verwandlung". Ein Mensch wird zum Insekt." The transcript of this broadcast was kindly provided by Güney Dal. Leslie Adelson regards Kadir as resembling an "odd blend of two famous characters in European history – Gregor Samsa and Hamlet" (915).
[21] My reading of Kafka's text has particularly been informed by Elizabeth Boa's chapter "The Double Taboo: The Male Body in *The Judgement*, *The Metamorphosis*, and *In the Penal Colony*", in her 1996 book *Kafka: Gender, Class, and Race in the Letters and Fictions* (107-47). Kadir's transformation is perhaps the more obviously sexualized of the two, since the growth of breasts appears physically and literally to be turning him into a woman. As Boa convincingly demonstrates, however, Gregor's transformation also denotes "if not feminization, then demasculinization" (123).
[22] For an introduction to the ideology of beards and moustaches in Turkey, see Chris Morris, "Moustaches Under Threat", 17 June 1998, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/from_our_own_correspondent/112759.stm> [accessed 7 December 2004].
[23] When translating from Turkish, it is often useful to read the sentences backwards: the final

position gives us the verb and the subject: 'istiyordu', *he wanted*; moving back one position in the sentence tells us what he wanted: 'kanıtlamak', *to prove*; to prove what? 'erkekliğini', *his masculinity*; to what/whom? 'bu et parçalarına karşın', *to these pieces of flesh*; which pieces? 'kendi erkek gövdesinde büyüyen', *the ones growing on his male body*; and then the crucial modifier: 'Tanrının bir lâneti gibi', *like a punishment from God*.

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