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Comparative Cultural Studies and Ethnic Minority Writing Today: The Hybridities of Marlene Nourbese Philip and Emine Sevgi Özdamar

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Sabine Milz,
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Abstract: In her article, "Comparative Cultural Studies and Ethnic Minority Writing Today: The Hybridities of Marlene Nourbese Philip and Emine Sevgi Özdamar," Sabine Milz examines and compares strategies with which the Caribbean-Canadian woman writer Marlene Nourbese Philip and the Turkish-German woman writer Emine Sevgi Özdamar "de-colonise" ethnocentric Canadian and German discourse respectively and thus create their own spaces of hybridity. She argues that both Philip's and Özdamar's writings -- by going beyond cultural-national categories and boundaries -- display vital stimuli for multi-cultural and inter-national dialogue in a manner that facilitates cultural co-existence in spaces of hybridity. Responding to this stimulus, Milz's study in the mode of comparative cultural studies makes a critical contribution to the opening and broadening not only of the German and Canadian literary canons. In addition to the theoretical premises and the analysis of the writers' work, the study includes attention to and the discussion of the position of the scholar and critic in the context of cross-culturality, inter-nationality, and inter-disciplinarity of academic hybridity.

Sabine MILZ

Comparative Cultural Studies and Ethnic Minority Writing Today: The Hybridities of Marlene Nourbese Philip and Emine Sevgi Özdamar

Introduction

The 1980s and 1990s -- the time when both the Caribbean-Canadian woman writer Marlene Nourbese Philip and the Turkish-German woman writer Emine Sevgi Özdamar came to prominence in Canada and Germany, respectively -- have called for essential changes in the public and academic notions of what constitutes Canadian and German literature. With the displacement of the binary of "major" European and "minor" non-European literature, funding, publishing, and serious-critical reception of ethnic minority writers in both countries have improved considerably. Yet, critics from various academic disciplines in the humanities and the social sciences discern an "exclusion by inclusion" strategy underlying this change for the better. Michael A. Bucknor explains the paradox accordingly: On the one hand, ethnic minority writers are given much public and academic support, while, on the other hand, the very same institutions tend to reduce them to "ethnic ghettos" by racially and ethnically marking their works (13). As woman writers, Philip and Özdamar experience the "exclusion by inclusion" paradox not only through ethnic-cultural but also through gender labels. Their resistance against the marginalisation and categorisation of their art thus turns out to be a highly complex, multi-faceted undertaking. They resist the myths of universal art and fixed gender roles by means of re-contextualisation and reconceptualisation. Breaking genre boundaries and aesthetic norms they create an amalgamation or hybridisation of literary traditions and subsequently their own hybrid spaces of multi-racial, multi-cultural interaction. They re-perform and complicate the invention of national narratives -- of historical origins, linearity, and fixed national identities -- by interspersing them with notions of diaspora, continuous displacement and cultural hybridity. Borrowing from Elisabeth Bronfen and Benjamin Marius, I assert the two texts as "changing narratives" (25-26), narratives that, for one thing, actively and radically change the traditional concepts of national literature in their specific contexts and, beyond it, show that narrative structures in general are not static but in a continuous process of transformation and hybridisation. The two writers' textual search for identity and belonging in the space of literary-cultural hybridity -- which is composed of an Arabic-Turkish-German and African-Caribbean-Canadian cultural and literary mix, respectively -- finds proficient expression in the two texts selected and compared here: Özdamar's prose-drama collection *Mutterzunge* and Philip's work of poetry *She Tries Her Tongue, Her Silence Softly Breaks*.

The theory of "cultural hybridity" -- of the creation of new transcultural forms -- has become widely employed and disputed not only in contemporary literary-academic discourse but also in scientific, philosophical, and sociological disciplines. The person who most decisively shaped the conception is the post-colonial critic Homi K. Bhabha. In his analysis of the interrelations between coloniser and colonised, he comes to the conclusion that any cultural identity in the "contact zone" of intercultural relations is constructed in a hybrid space, which he calls "the Third Space of enunciation … [that] may open the way to conceptualising an *inter*national culture, based on ... the inscription and articulation of culture's *hybridity*" (*The Location of Culture* 37-38). He coins the term "in-between" to characterise the "Third Space [as] the inter -- the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the *in-between ...* that carries the burden of the meaning of culture" (Bhabha, "Cultural Diversity and Cultural Differences" 206). According to Bhabha's definition, living "in-between" cultures does not suggest a mere exchange between cultures; rather, it rather aims at the creation of new cultural forms (Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* 86-88; "Cultural Diversity" 206). Marie Louise Pratt emphasises the "third" space as an ambivalent contact zone that, on the one hand, offers perspectives of "copresence, interaction, interlocking understanding and practices" (Pratt 7). Yet, on the other hand, these points of cultural intersection are tense areas where "disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other" (Pratt 7).

The ensuing discussion will study Philip and Özdamar within various contexts and thus explore the interconnections and hybridisations they originate with respect to the concepts of nationality, ethnicity, culture, and literature. Although Philip and Özdamar have very different ethnic-cultural

and historical backgrounds and live in different cultural, national, and lingual environments, the experiences they undergo as non-White writers in a dominant White Western society show significant similarities on the social, political and academic-critical levels. With the comparative study of their writings, writerly positions, and reception, I endeavour to draw attention to the specific potential and forte comparative work and co-operation between the disciplines of Canadian and German literary-cultural studies -- in this case contemporary postcolonial, cultural, comparative, and feminist studies -- can effect. In support of Werner Sollors' criticism of the group-by-group or mosaic method and its conception of "pure pluralism" as an organising device of literary study and criticism (Sollors 151-54), my comparative method suggests a trans-ethnic, inter-national procedure that recognises cross-cultural interplays and literary-aesthetic connections between different ethnic-cultural groups and thus avoids a reduction of literature to ethnic typicalities. I agree with Aldo Nemesio's statement that "what happens within the boundaries of a culture [a language, a literature, an academic discipline as a heterogeneous construct] can be understood only if we relate it to what happens elsewhere" (see Nemesio <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol1/iss1/1/>). Accordingly, the group-by-group method turns out to be too narrow and lacking for a study of literatures. Discussing the conditions and possibilities that develop from the coexistence and dialogue of different cultural notions and practices, Bronfen and Marius -- who propose the theory of a postmodern, global, hybrid culture in *Hybride Kulturen* (25) -- maintain post-colonial literature and theory/criticism as means of bringing "order" and "meaning" into the "hybrid, heterogeneous, and poly-contextual post-modern world" (29; my translation). I argue that *Mutterzunge* and *She Tries Her Tongue* -- each text in its own individual way -- put this idea into literary practice as they perform possibilities of identification and belonging in spaces of Arabic-Turkish-German and African-Caribbean-Canadian literary and cultural hybridity, respectively. My method then will be to choose as an organising device the comparison of Özdamar's and Philip's "cutting edges of translation and negotiation" (Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* 38) between the cultures and artistic expressions they are influenced by. With this approach, I take a distance from the traditional understanding of the discipline of comparative literature -- the traditional centres being the United States and Europe, especially France and Germany -- as its limitation to national, Eurocentric perspectives stands in clear contrast to the positions of "ex-centricity" Philip and Özdamar take and proclaim in their writings. Connecting to their "ex-centric" positions on a theoretical-methodological level, I am instead corresponding to Steven Tötösy's notion of "comparative cultural studies" that relates the "peripheral," which means non-Eurocentric comparatist procedures to European ones and especially to the impact of the field of cultural studies (see Tötösy 1998, 13-41, esp. 15-18, 1999a). Tötösy's theoretical and methodological postulate is "to move and to dialogue between cultures, languages, literatures, and disciplines ... The claim of ... institutional power of national cultures [being] untenable in this perspective" (<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol1/iss3/2/>). His postulate and conception of the discipline of comparative cultural studies is significative of a more general shift of focus taking place in the discipline of comparative literature: A shift from poststructuralist (textualist, formalist) criticism to a cultural studies (contextualist) emphasis (see also Pivato; Hutcheon; Zima and Strutz; Zelle; Bernheimer; Kadir).

In keeping with this development, my comparative approach here will study Philip and Özdamar from and within (re)contextualised perspectives that reflect present multicultural realities in Canada and Germany. In the 1995.2 issue of *World Literature Today*, Nathalie Melas' essay "Versions of Incommensurability" (275-80) suggests a mode of comparison along the lines of "conceiv[ing] of equivalences that do not unify ... that might not synthesize similarities into a norm" set up by traditional comparative standards (275). I fully agree with Melas's claim which I try to follow here; but yet I am also aware of the fact that my comparative method, in turn, is influenced by my academic and ethnic-cultural context that again shapes a "common ground" on which I build the ensuing comparison. Aware of this bias, namely that it provokes the question whether there could ever be a procedure that would not be restrictive, assumptive, and normative -- I deem it indispensable to apply a comparative cultural studies perspective in its given multi-cultural, inter-national, and multi-lingual context.

Critical, Public, and Academic Reception

Özdamar and Philip both belong to the first waves of Turkish and Caribbean immigrants to Germany and Canada, respectively, and they have chosen their new countries as their permanent residence consciously. In this context, their works and in turn the reception of their works have to be viewed within the framework of immigration: they deal with the political, social-cultural, and economic conditions they were and are confronted with in the host countries. The question of how Germany and Canada define their notions of the nation-state and especially of its different members living therein is of essential significance to an understanding of Özdamar's and Philip's writings discussed in my study. From the legal-political viewpoint, the two writers seem to be confronted with completely different circumstances. While the Canadian nation-state is defined by the *jus soli* -- the law of citizenship according to soil and parentage, which adjudges its immigrants the right of Canadian citizenship (a right Philip chose to assert for herself) -- Germany bases its national self-understanding on the *jus sanguinis* -- the law of citizenship according to blood that delimits the non-German immigrant from most civil and political co-determination (Özdamar is not a German citizen but a so-called "resident alien"). Yet, in spite of these notably different conceptions of the nation-state and the place of its residents, the definitions and implementations of the countries' immigration policies -- termed politics of multiculturalism in Canada and integration politics in Germany -- show a striking similarity of "exclusion by inclusion." Multicultural policy in both countries reveals the paradoxical ideal of the multi-cultural and at the same time homogeneous nation-state, of cross-cultural understanding and at the same time cultural retention (see, for example, O'Brien 451-52; Brinkler-Gabler and Smith 6-7; Harney; Hutcheon and Richmond, "Introduction"). It is a paradox that decisively influences the concept of national literature and -- as exemplified in the following -- of public and critical literary reception.

In 1994, the English translation of Özdamar's prose-drama collection *Mutterzunge* (*Mothertongue*) was enthusiastically reviewed in *The New York Times Book Review* as one of the best works of fiction published in that year (Horrocks and Kolinsky 419). It is only recently that academic and public interest in non-mainstream "ethnic" writing -- even on an international range -- has increased discernibly. In the course of multicultural politics initiated in Canada and Germany in the late 1960s and the subsequent protest of ethnic minority writers against being ignored by dominant literary discourse, non-White writers in the two countries have progressively received more serious public and critical attention (see Khalil 115; Bucknor 13). In 1991, Özdamar's novel *Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei* was the first "non-originary" German text -- the first text written by a writer who is not an "originary" German according to the law of *jus sanguinis* but a German of Turkish origin -- to win the prestigious Ingeborg-Bachmann Prize, organised annually by the German-speaking countries of Austria, Switzerland, and Germany in order to give authors and critics who work in the German language the chance to publicly discuss literary texts and "consider what constitutes good literature" (Jankowsky 261). Philip has received several literary prizes as well (Bucknor 139). She was the first Anglophone woman and the second Canadian to win the illustrious Casa de las Americas Prize for the manuscript version of *She Tries Her Tongue* in 1988 (back cover of the poetry collection). Clearly, the pluralisation of the conceptions of Canadian and German literature, a process instigated by multicultural policy, has given publication support and visibility to ethnic minority authors, in this case to Caribbean-Canadian and Turkish-German writers. The considerable success of writers such as Philip, Dionne Brand, Claire Harris, and Austin Clarke in the late 1980s AND '90s would not have been possible without the funding of the Canada Council, the Multiculturalism Directorate of the Secretary of State, or the Ontario Arts Council. Likewise, Özdamar's artistic prestige in Germany has -- among other factors -- depended on and profited from political-literary financial support given, for instance, through the *Deutsche Literaturfonds e.V.* (The German Literary Fund) or *Arbeitsstipendien der Länder* (specific scholarships funded by the German federal states).

However, the improved reception of non-mainstream, non-White writing within the German and Canadian fields of literary studies and public-political spheres cannot be acknowledged without reservation (for a selected bibliography of criticism in Canadian ethnic minority writing, see Tötösy 1999 <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweblibrary/canadianethnicbibliography>). Its development

and current practice has a paradoxical nature, which -- in my opinion -- is hard to evaluate since it remains rather vague whether its workings result from a purposeful, subtle strategy or, instead, from engrained taken-for-granted assumptions. In spite of the increased interest by German literary scholars since the 1980s, for instance, the circulation of reviews on non-originary German literature is still relatively limited and exclusionary, this especially with respect to ethnic minority writers who are still conventionally reduced to an interesting but minor addition or enrichment of the normative German canon (see Suhr 75; Khalil 115, 120-21). The widely held, stereotypical reception of Turkish society and culture -- as that of the non-intellectual, exotic "Other," of, in Sargut Sölcün's words, "rückständigen Bauern, gastfreundlichen Hirten, [Geschichtenerzählern], fanatischen Moslems und einer Minderheit nicht weniger fanatischen Stalinisten" / "backward farmers, hospitable shepherds, [storytellers], fanatic Muslims, and a minority of not less fanatic Stalinists" (144; my translation) not only leads to national but also to literary categorisations (Sölcün 145-46). In the Canadian context, Bucknor also observes that the gesture of literary and political consideration "often reduces Caribbean-Canadian writers to an 'ethnic ghetto'" (11); the majority are marginalised because they do not fit the conventions of the established literary institutions. Philip describes her own problematic positioning of "exclusion by inclusion" in the introduction to *She Tries Her Tongue* when she emphasises that "as a female and a black presently living in a society that is, in many respects, still colonial ... and a society which is politely but vehemently racist, while I may have gained some control of my word and its i-mage-making capacities, control of information and production is still problematic" (25).

Correspondingly, Özdamar playfully and subtly denounces the well-meaning and yet highly patronising and condescending attitude of German artistic discourse by talking about an incident of discrimination concerning the première of her play "Karagöz in Alamania" in the German newspaper *Die Zeit*: "Vor der Premiere ließ das Theater, ohne mich vorher zu fragen, aus Liebe zu diesem Stück an die Zuschauer ein Flugblatt verteilen, in dem das Theater versuchte, das Stück zu erklären: 'Manchmal werden Sie sich fragen: Wo ist nun wo? Sind wir in der Türkei, sind wir in Alamania? ... Vielleicht haben Sie einige Mühe, sich die Szenen zu gliedern, sie sind nicht logisch geordnet wie in den uns vertrauten Theaterstücken?.'" / "Before the première the theatre, out of love for the play and without asking my permission in advance, had leaflets distributed amongst the audience, in which it attempted to explain the work: 'In the course of the play you will occasionally wonder: Where are we now? Are we in Turkey, or are we in Germany? ... It may well be that you will have problems ordering the scenes. They are not logically structured as in the plays we are familiar with...'" (Horrocks and Krause 63). The "Charwoman" prose-drama of *Mutterzunge* also displays ethnic-sexist misrecognition and stereotyping in artistic circles by means of the female protagonist's tragic-comic "career story" which ends followingly: "`Ich bin so eine schöne Frau, ich kann auch Schauspielerin sein an diesem Theater,' habe ich gesagt. `Hier ist die Bohnermaschine, die Bühne wird täglich gebohnert,' haben sie gesagt ... Das war es" (*Mutterzunge* 120) / "'I'm such a beautiful woman, I can be an actress in this theatre,' I said. 'Here is the floor-polisher, the stage is polished daily,' they said ... And that was that" (*Mothertongue* 151-52).

The Taxonomies of National Narratives and of the Nation-State

Notably, the term "ethnic" has carried a sense of marginalisation or marginality ever since its earliest English use which pertained to culturally different "heathen" or "pagan" nations (*OED*). In contemporary usage, it suggests cultural groups that are not traditionally identified with the dominant national mythology of a country or other social grouping (Ashcroft et al 82). The ethnic marker serves mainstream/dominant literature to justify the denial of non-mainstream writers' potential to constitute Canadianness and Germanness, respectively. The subsequent binarisation not only fosters the preservation of the myth of a normative Canadian and German literature but consequently that of the ethnically and culturally homogeneous nation-state (Bucknor 12-13; Suhr 72-73). The cultural-artistic scene becomes a projection of the political-national sphere insofar as it constantly (re)invents the collective identity of the -- in Benedict Anderson's words -- 'imagined community' of the multicultural and yet homogeneous nation-state. In accordance with Anderson's line of argumentation in "Kulturelle Wurzeln" (31, 44-48), I locate the Canadian and German

nation-states in the landscape of the mind. The ideal of the multicultural nation-state on equal ethnic-cultural terms is far from being practice let alone fact; rather, it is a collective invention and idealisation proclaimed by dominant discourse in order to preserve its superiority.

Interestingly, the exclusionary notion of "major" German national narrative and identity finds extensive reflection in public and literary-academic terminology. One major reason why it has taken non-originary German writers so long to be recognised and taken seriously is the persistent usage of the terms *Gastarbeiterliteratur* (the literature of the so-called *Gastarbeiter* meaning "guest workers" who, in the 1960s, were recruited from southern European countries and especially from Turkey to compensate for shortages in the German labour force) and *Ausländerliteratur* (literature of foreigners/aliens) for all kinds of non-originary German writing. The ethnic-cultural categorisations inherent in these literary terms ignore the fact that more and more contemporary German writers of a non-German background have never been guest workers and have never lived in their countries of ancestry (see Khalil 115, 120; Suhr 74, 78-83; Müller 133-34). Whereas the halt to immigration -- caused by the economic crisis in the 1970s and the need for trained labour -- allowed foreign workers to permanently settle in Germany with their families, the image of the *Gastarbeiter* as well as the term itself are still prevailing and dominant in social as well academic/scholarly discourse. In his essay "Social and Economic Integration of Foreigners in Germany," Wolfgang Seifert appropriately notes that "the guest-worker system was abandoned; however, the ideology of temporary migration survived" (84). Even in the most recent contexts of mass migration and internationalisation (burning examples being the construction of a United Europe and the massive emergence of war diasporas), political, social, public, media, and academic German discourse largely refuses to recognise Germany as the country of immigration it is. Writing about German participation in international postcolonial discourse in the 1995.3 issue of *World Literature Today*, Paul M. Lützeler, for instance, exemplifies how German writers such as Bodo Kirchhoff, Peter Schneider, Günter Grass or Franz Xaver Kroetz "participate in postcolonial discourse through their travel reports [with which] they wish to raise their readers' as well as their own awareness of the dilemma facing the Third World" (540). Yet, at the same time, he also acknowledges that "the theory of postcolonialism was worked out by Third World intellectuals [he names Edward W. Said, Homi K. Bhabha, Gayatri C. Spivak, Djelal Kadir, and Rejeswari S. Rajan] who are currently teaching at leading universities in Europe or the U.S. ... that it is above all the so-called hyphenated intellectuals who are involved" (539). The paradoxical nature of these two statements -- a) the necessity of "German" writers to travel to so-called Third World countries in order to partake in postcolonial discourse and b) the recognition that postcolonialism as an academic-political-social movement is most active in Western countries; that it thus cannot be limited to the geographical space of the "Third World" -- in my opinion clearly shows the (subconscious or conscious) non-recognition of the multicultural, and also postcolonial, reality prevalent in German society and culture, including literature. This misconception subsequently pervades all levels of discourse: non-originary Germans and immigrants continue to be represented as *Gastarbeiter*, *Ausländer*, and/or *Zuwanderer* (meaning newcomers/migrants; the term *Zuwanderer* results from the latest change in official terminology and is hardly known and used in public discourse). While the immigrant would be perceived as "a person who migrates into a country as a [permanent] settler" and subsequently a citizen (*OED*), the *Ausländer* unmistakably remains "a subject of another country than that in which [she]/he resides" (*OED*). She/he is a "resident foreign in origin [and] excluded from (the citizenship and privileges) of the nation" (*OED*), which makes her/him "a stranger, outsider; a person *other* than oneself" (*OED*; my emphasis). Through this process of "Othering," the originary German imposes a label of identification that depersonalises and homogenises the immigrant at the same time that it stresses the distinctness or distinctiveness of the foreign "Other" from the familiar "Self" (Itwaru 12-14; Kristeva 19-20). However, more recent terms employed in German such as *Migrantenliteratur* (literature of migrants), *Minoritätenliteratur* (ethnic minority literature) or *Schreiben in der Diaspora* (diaspora literature) are no less problematic (Fischer 63; Wierschke 203-204) as they are still conceptual categorisations established from a dominant Eurocentric viewpoint that classifies the culturally unfamiliar or unknown as strange or "Other." Commenting on the ambiguous nature

underlying her winning the Ingeborg-Bachmann Prize, Özdamar ironically remarks that "I was accepted, but merely as a 'guest writer'" (afterword to the *Mothertongue* collection). The Austrian, Swiss, and German critics evaluating *Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei* did not address her as a German but as a foreign writer who had chosen the German language to express herself. Even though the critical discussion of her work reckoned the multicultural diversity of writers in German, the very acknowledgement re-enforced the division of migrant and originary German literature by ethnically marking Özdamar and her work (Jankowsky 262-63, 267).

A comparable process of ethnic-cultural labelling of foreignness can be observed in Canadian literary studies. In the introduction to *Other Solitudes*, Linda Hutcheon argues that already the label "ethnic" for non-Anglophone and non-Francophone Canadian writings is exclusionary and thus enhances the clear-cut ethnic-racial boundary underlying the binary assumption of normative, "non-ethnic" White literature and peripheral, "ethnic" non-White literature. Non-White writers are "Othered" by White writers' ignorance (whether subconsciously or consciously is a widely disputed issue) of their privilege of Whiteness, which reduces the concept of the "writer" to an ethnocentric White category. Although unlike in Germany, immigration and multiculturalism are legal matters of Canadian national self-definition -- the conception of the Canadian nation-state is constructed politically, based on the aforementioned concept of *jus soli* and accompanied by a governmental policy of multiculturalism (Cook 5-12; Harney) -- the traditional understanding of national identity and canonical literature shows distinct signs of Anglo-Canadian and Franco-Canadian ethnocentrism. According to Bucknor, the political promotion of the ideal of multicultural difference/pluralism in the unified Canadian nation-state gives decisive impetus to the ghettoisation and misrecognition of non-White writers in the field of literary studies, especially in literary theory and criticism (14-15). On the one hand, the Multicultural Act of 1988 makes a call to "(c) encourage and promote exchanges and cooperation among diverse communities of Canada," whereas, on the other hand, it endeavours to "(e) encourage the preservation, enhancement, sharing, and evolving expression of the multicultural heritage of Canada." In spite of the fact that the pluralist conception of multicultural politics has improved the situation of ethnic minority writers, its paradoxical and asymmetrical composition leads to compartmentalisation and "exclusion by inclusion" that keeps alive the myth of a genuine Anglo/French literary canon. The political claim to uphold one's ethnic identity and at the same time to participate to the full in national life turns out to be rather spurious in reality. "Canada ... is located in the landscape of the mind" (Itwaru 20); the ideal of the multicultural nation-state on equal ethnic-cultural terms is not a fact but a collective invention and idealisation -- in Anderson's words "an imagined community" -- proclaimed by dominant White discourse in order to preserve its superiority (Anderson 31, 44-48). Under these conditions, the ideal of mosaic-like cultural and literary pluralism turns out to be a mere metaphor for a pedagogy that leads to the proliferation of labels, to compartmentalisation, and to further entrenchment of ethnic boundaries, a dilemma Philip depicts in her collection of critical essays *Frontiers*: "I carry a Canadian passport: I, therefore, am Canadian. How am I Canadian, though, above and beyond the narrow legalistic definition of being the bearer of a Canadian passport; and does the racism of Canadian society present an absolute barrier to those of us who are differently coloured ever belonging? Because that is in fact, what we are speaking about -- how to belong -- not only in the legal and civic sense ... but also in another sense of feeling at "home" and at ease" (16-17) . In the following, her reaction to this dilemma is outspokenly resistant, a resistance that she endeavours to conduct through her writerly activities: "But more importantly than that, Canada *needs* to m/other us. Her very salvation depends on m/othering all her peoples. ... In the words of my only mother tongue, the Caribbean demotic: 'We ent going nowhere. We here and is right here we staying." In Canada. In this world so new. To criticize, needle and demand; to work hard for; to give to; to love; to hate -- for better or for worse -- till death do we part. And even after -- in the African tradition of our ancestral role after death of advising and guiding our offspring -- our descendants. African Canadians -- Canadians'" (*Frontiers* 20-21, 23).

Writerly Resistance in Spaces of Hybridity

"True" belonging in the German or Canadian nation-state is envisioned through the re-performance of German or Canadian national community away from the traditional conception of the organically grown, homogeneous nation towards an imagined community that -- as a heterogeneous, culturally hybrid amalgamation -- builds on the productivity of internal differences: Philip: "she / swung / a skilled trapezist -- / no net / below / no one / to catch / her / ... /one breast / white / the other black / headless / in a womb-black night / a choosing -- /one breast /neither black nor white/ (*She Tries Her Tongue* 40, 33). And Özdamar: "Ein gestandener Gastarbeiter sprach: 'Sonra Dolmetscher geldi. Meisterle konustu. Bu Lohn steuer kaybetmis dedi. Finanzamt cok fena dedi. Lohnsteuer Yok. Aufenthalt da yok, Fremdpolizei vermiyor. Wohnungsamt da yok diyor. Arbeitsamt da Erlaubnis vermedi" (*Mutterzunge* 77) / "A guest worker, standing there, said: 'Sonra interpreter geldi. Formanle konustu. Bu income tax kaybetmis dedi. Tax office cok fena dedi. Income tax Yok. Residence da yok. Immigration police vermiyor. Housing office da yok diyor. Employment office da permit vermedi" (*Mothertongue* 96)

In the latter quotation, German words are interspersed in the mother tongue in order to name concepts and institutions that are specifically German and thus cannot be named in the Turkish language. The heteroglossia that emerges from this blend poses a problem for both originary speakers of German and of Turkish. It is created by and tailored to the context of those living in-between languages and cultures, those who "sew their Turkish clothes out of German materials"/ "aus deutschen Stoffen ihre türkischen Kleider nähen" *Mothertongue* 115; *Mutterzunge* 92). It is the space of personal and national-cultural instability (of the "skilled trapezist -- not net below"), displacement ("one breast white, the other black"), and in-betweenness/hybridity ("one breast neither black nor white") that opens possibilities of mutual ethnic-cultural competence and interaction in the two women's writings. The polyvalence of Philip's and Özdamar's art, especially their imaginative mobility, skilfully displays the cracks and gaps in cultural-literary Canadian and, similarly, German discourse. Both writers are well aware of the fact that they cannot write outside of the traditional conventions of German and Canadian literature; yet, what they can do and actually do in their writings is enter into a critical, challenging dialogue with the mainstream. They take -- what Hutcheon calls -- "ex-centric" or "frontier" positions at the margins of dominant culture and literature (*The Canadian Postmodern* 3). It is with and in their "ex-centric" narratives that they problematise and re-envision the notions of a "pure" literary canon and national identity.

In "Discourse on the Logic of Language," Philip breaks with Eurocentric poetic structural-formal norms by decentring the poem on the page and surrounding it with a mythical short story, historical edicts, and a physiological-scientific description of how speech takes place that is underlined by multiple choice questions. With the conjunction of these different texts she disrupts the modernist poetic convention of humanism, which she refers to as "Eliot's objective correlative" that dehistoricises and depersonalises poetry by averring its autonomous and universal nature (Hutcheon, *The Canadian Postmodern* 1-2, 10). Interspersing the elements of mythic vision, colonial history, and scientific, racist, sexist masculine discourse, Philip deliberately "put[s] the poem, that particular poem, back in its historical context, which is what poetry is not supposed to do" (Philip in Williamson 228). She thus alludes to a subtle process Arun P. Mukherjee overtly denounces in her essay "Canadian Nationalism, Canadian Literature and Racial Minority Women" when she points out that "what seems universalist and apolitical on the surface often turns out to be a Euro-Canadian conceptualization" (429). Unveiling the seemingly universal Canadian values as culture-specific, Eurocentric constructs, Philip attributes a significant role to the mythical Afro-Caribbean short story, which is not only thematically distinguished from the other textual parts of the poem but also through its particular positioning. It is the only text for which the reader needs to turn the page in order to read it. By this accentuation of the ancestral African story, Philip seems to interrogate the relevance and hence to challenge the dominance of the western texts juxtaposed with it. I argue that she thus indicates to her readers how important the aspects of perspective and context are in the production of meaning(s), how important it is to read the different texts of the poem in their relational co-existence that forms a new, trans-cultural/textual "whole."

Challenging the traditional Western notion of the universality and the generic categorisation of art, Özdamar who herself is an actress, director of plays, and writer creates the narrative space in-between theatre and prose. Her *Mutterzunge* stories can be characterised as prose drama or -- depending on the perspective -- dramatic prose. In a conversation with Annette Wierschke, Özdamar claims that the theatre, her first active encounter with art, has always been part of her writing ("Das Theater ist immer drin in meinem Schreiben" 252). The Karagöz story, for instance, was first written as a play before she transformed it into a prose text that still expresses her experiences of staging it. In both play and prose text, Özdamar reviews her artistic relationship with the Turkish and Western European theatre (for more details see Milz, "Introduction"). Doing so, she creates an inseparable blend of the tradition of the Turkish Karagöz shadow-play with that of Brecht's epic theatre and Heiner Müller's avant-garde theatre. What her prose-drama shares with all three pretexts is an actor-recipient relationship that is not based on the western classical aesthetics of realistic representation and sympathetic identification but on a critical understanding of social processes, of how we act our roles in society. Özdamar's conjunction of the Brechtian drama and the Turkish shadow-play in the Karagöz story is not coincidental. A precursor of the absurd and epic, the Karagöz play can be described as a socially critical comedy or caricature of society and its morals (Wierschke 198; van Heyst 115-16). Like the shadow-play, Özdamar's story is named after the main character Karagöz (*Schwarzauge* in German and *Black Eye* in English) who -- in both the original and re-contextualised version -- is performed as a rough, uneducated Turk or Arab. Together with his intellectual friend Hacivad (represented by the donkey in Özdamar's text), he gets into numerous tragic-comic situations and arguments, which reveal and challenge social, political, and economic inequality. The prologue to the original Karagöz shadow-play clearly anticipates what Özdamar only insinuates in her version: the performance is not meant to be a piece of universal fiction but rather a critical mirror, a parody or caricature of real life (Kühn 5). As exemplified in the Karagöz tradition, Özdamar complicates her stock characters (the guest worker, the financially dependent and constantly pregnant wife, the simple-minded villagers, the Marxist intellectual, the fascist, the bourgeois German and numerous other character types) and thus demonstrates the inconsistency and senselessness of stereotypes. In *Mutterzunge*, the construction of identity is performed as a multi-dimensional, dynamic process. It is ambivalent and indeterminable insofar as it rejects both an assimilation into German culture and a return to Turkish cultural practice.

Özdamar's hybrid prose-dramas oppose thematic, linguistic, and stylistic norms as they inseparably combine the oral with the written, the traditional with the modern, European-German culture with the Turkish-Arabic. If compared to western literary norm, her narrative style is bumpy and unsmooth; it abounds with abrupt changes of narrative perspective. Özdamar lines up grotesque, ambivalent, and fractured scenes that do not seem to make much sense when one first reads them. Another means of confusing her German (European) readership is that of constantly interspersing conventional themes and structures with unfamiliar Turkish-Arabic elements. The *Mutterzunge* stories abound with Turkish and Arabic words, phrases, proverbs (worldly wisdoms), folklore, songs, and fragments of Islamic religious texts. With the help of these insertions, Özdamar creates her own polyvalent space of textual and cultural hybridity. Blurring the strange or foreign with the common or familiar, Özdamar's writing calls upon her German as well as upon her non-German readers to re-think their often one-dimensional and tenacious national-cultural expectations of each other.

As my discussion here indicates, Özdamar and Philip re-perform German and Canadian national narratives in *Mutterzunge* and *She Tries Her Tongue* as they choose not to belong exclusively to any national community or literary model (Wierschke 266; Philip, *Frontiers* 22). In the interview with Wierschke, Özdamar declares that for her home and belonging is wherever her friends are (258-60). Giving an account of the circumstances and experiences as stage-director of her play "Karagöz in Alamania," she subtly brings ethnic-national identification ad absurdum with a seemingly farcical anecdote: "Einmal biß der Esel den türkischen Star in den Nacken ... Ein türkischer Star sagte: 'Ein türkischer Esel würde so etwas niemals tun.' (Der Esel war ein Frankfurter Esel.) Ein deutscher Star: 'Ich verstehe mich mit dem Esel gut, er würde mir so etwas

nie antun.' Dann trat ihn der Esel aber auch" / "On one occasion the donkey bit the Turkish star in the back of his neck ... One of the Turkish stars said: 'A Turkish donkey would never do a thing like that.' (The donkey was from Frankfurt.) A German star replied: 'I get on very well with the donkey. He'd never do anything like that to me.' But then the donkey kicked him too" (Horrocks and Krause 61-62). In this scene, the mutually prejudiced, multi-ethnic cast goes so far as to attribute ethnic-national characteristics to the donkey incapable of this kind of discrimination. The persistent myths of ethnic-national identification and belonging are brought ad absurdum and thus demythologised (Horrocks and Krause 67). Özdamar's assertion that she simultaneously feels related to many places (Wierschke 265) shows affinities to Philip's self-understanding as an exiled subject, for whom "be/longing *anywhere* is problematic" (*Frontiers* 22): "From one exile to another, island hopping, first to Trinidad 'for an education' ... next to Jamaica for a continuation at the tertiary level, and then to a more permanent exile in North America. Only to understand, finally, that exile had begun a long time before I left Tobago for Trinidad" (*Frontiers* 9-10). In *She Tries Her Tongue*, Philip describes her people as a diaspora, which Western colonialism has deprived of its belonging and identification: the African cultural space. On the endless search for belonging and being they have become "wanderers/ in the centuries of curses / the lost I's / the lost equation:/ you plus I equals we / I and I and I equals I / minus you ("African Majesty" 48).

Employing the trope of the "Black Atlantic" in his discussion of the Black diaspora, Paul Gilroy manifests place as a continually shifting passage; the metaphor suggests that all places are places of repeated displacement. The diasporic condition thus unsettles the static cartographical markers of the nation-state. In her latest collection of critical essays, *A Genealogy of Resistance*, Philip also perceives the identification of displacements as the precursor to the identification of place (58). She thus attributes a positive force to the state of being displaced, which also shows in *She Tries Her Tongue*. Re-appropriating Ovid's Ceres and Proserpine story in the poem sequence "And Over Land and Sea," she makes use of the quest narrative to describe her people's search for the lost place, language, memory and identity. In the interview with Barbara Carey, she pronounces that "'finding out' ... is the quest itself, and not its result" (Carey 20).

Belonging and home are provisional, fluid and dynamic processes for Özdamar as well. As the long title of her *Karawanserai* novel indicates, life - like a caravanserai - is a place where one stays for a short while and then leaves again: "Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei: hat zwei Türen, aus einer kam ich rein, aus der anderen ging ich raus" ("life is a caravanserai: has two doors, I entered through one of them, I exited through the other"). In the *Mutterzunge* collection, traveling by train is used as a common image to express the fluidity of belonging: "Bahnhof. Die Züge fahren ab, die Züge kommen an" / "Train station. Trains leave, trains arrive" (*Mutterzunge* 76; *Mothertongue* 95). In the Karagöz story, the guest worker and especially his wife continually travel back and forth between Turkey and Germany, between "where they're from" and "where they're at" (Gilroy, "It Ain't Where You're From"). Remembering the wisdom of her grandmother, the farmer's wife describes her problematic positioning in-between the two cultures: "Meine Großmutter sagte: 'Der Mensch ist ein Vogel. Machst du Augen auf, bist du da. Machst du Augen zu, bist du dort.' Wiedersehen Alamania!" / "My grandmother used to say: 'Humans are like birds. Open eyes and you are here. Close eyes and you are there.' Goodbye, Alamania!" (*Mutterzunge* 75; *Mothertongue* 93).

"Where" is the Space In-Between?

The performative, ex-centric positions presented in *Mutterzunge* and *She Tries Her Tongue* draw attention to a highly complex problem, namely that of finding creative spaces in-between cultures. Ien Ang's claim of a politics of diaspora that neither privileges the (real or imaginary) country of immigration nor the (real or imaginary) homeland but that instead keeps a "creative tension" between the two (Ang 16) proves to be a very complicated, if not impossible, undertaking in both texts (and I would presume in any text) as each one, in its specific socio-cultural, literary context, reveals biases and positions that can become rather delicate (for a detailed discussion see Milz, Chapter 2 and Conclusion). In the light of this complication the question if Philip's and Özdamar's third spaces of hybridity can really offer a viable alternative to the binaries investigated and challenged in their writings evokes itself. To affirm this provocative question, I want to expose a

significant parallel in the two women's artistic endeavours: Notwithstanding the problematic issues their writerly politics and thus their works raise, they display vital possibilities and stimulus for multi-cultural, inter-national dialogue and competence. With their writing, Philip and Özdamar go "beyond" cultural-national categorisations and boundaries, which means that they re-perform cultural coexistence from spaces of hybridity. In *Frontiers*, which is dedicated to "Canada in the effort of becoming a space of true be/longing," Philip voices the conciliatory call to find out "what we [all Canadians] can offer to and accept from each other. It is the only way we will transform this place from a stranger place to one of true be/longing" (25). Likewise, Özdamar envisions German society as a multicultural community of relational difference where "you see people without judging them, set out to find the tragic and the comic in their lives, and proceed on the assumption that every person is a novel and that the life of every person is a novel. And that one never loses the interest in this novel. And that one sets out to search for all the great feelings in the life of this person" (Özdamar in Wierschke 266; my translation). Constantly pointing out the importance of relational differences, *Mutterzunge* and *She Tries Her Tongue* suggest a multicultural Canadian and German nation-state respectively, in which diasporas and ethnic minorities are highly problematical but nonetheless constitutive, integral parts. Yet, as actualities show multicultural German and Canadian societies on equal terms are still visions; but I want to stress here that they are visions that are widely shared and enforced by a polyphony of artists and critics in both countries. Critical texts on ethnic minority writers such as Philip and Özdamar or on cultural-literary hybridity are numerous, especially in the areas of minority discourse, post-colonialism and feminism. However, linkages between the areas of a) German and Canadian literary research on writings of ethnicity/nationality and of b) cross-disciplinary comparative studies are, in spite of the rich comparative potential unfolding between the two countries' ethnic-cultural and receptive situations demonstrated here, still rare. The line of argumentation chosen in this comparative study implies that critical-academic contributions to the opening and broadening of the (German and Canadian) literary canons have to be multi-perspectival, cross-cultural, inter-national, and inter-disciplinary approaches that acknowledge and constitute identity and belonging as fluid processes in-between cultures, ethnicities, literatures, histories, and languages correlating in invented collective spaces such as the imagined geographical community of the nation or that of national literature.

Literary-Academic Discourse Revised

As Özdamar playfully yet satirically shows in the Karagöz story of the *Mutterzunge* collection, the alternative proposed above turns out to be a highly complex and problematic undertaking in dominant literary-academic discourse. She discloses intellectual patronising and stereotyping by depicting a German intellectual who -- reminiscent of Peter Weiss' challenging mise en scène of the life of the French revolutionary Jean-Paul Marat in the drama *Verfolgung und Ermordung Jean-Paul Marats* -- sits in a bathtub in front of the "Door to Germany" (*Mutterzunge* 90-92; *Mothertongue* 112-16). Employing the devices of irony and exaggeration, she exposes the intellectual's unwitting complicity with dominant discourse. The intellectual "Others" the Turkish German *Gastarbeiter*, who wait for their admittance in front of the "Door," in a "benevolently" racist-totalising manner: "Der Erleuchtete zog seine Hose aus -- aus Leidenschaft, ging auf Knien, sprach: 'Versteht ihr, wie wichtig es ist, für *diese Leute* etwas zu tun. Are you feeling that? Was meint ihr, der Kulturschock der Gastarbeiter stellt alles in Frage. Economical -- cultural -- political. Versteht ihr, wie wichtig das ist?'(*Mutterzunge* 91-92; my emphasis) / "The intellectual took off his trousers -- passionately, dropped to his knees, said: 'Understand how important it is to do something for *these people*. Are you feeling that? Believe me, the culture shock of the Gastarbeiter puts everything into question. Economical -- cultural -- political. Do you understand how important that is?' (*Mothertongue* 114; my emphasis)

Instead of entering into a serious dialogue with the donkey -- which represents the perspective of the intellectual immigrant -- the German intellectual is much too fixated on his own, one-perspectival vision of the interstitial cultural, economic, and historical space in-between backward-Ottomanic Turkey and progressive-Western Germany: "'Ich glaube ... meine Phantasie reitet mich wieder, das ist vielleicht otomanisch'" / "'I believe?that my imagination gets the better of me

again, that is perhaps ottomanic'" (*Mutterzunge* 92; *Mothertongue* 116). The donkey's ironic-sarcastic reply to this racist, condescending utterance is "manic" / "manisch" (*Mothertongue* 116; *Mutterzunge* 93). With the provocative "Ottomanic -- manic"/ "otomanisch -- manisch" wordplay, he overtly mocks the intellectual's stereotyping image or invention of the Ottomanic-Oriental immigrant. Yet, the evident sarcasm in his remark remains unrecognised by the addressed person, the self-important intellectual.

Being a "White woman intellectual" who approaches the field of ethnic minority and non-White women's literature in the contexts of Philip's *She Tries Her Tongue* and Özdamar's *Mutterzunge*, I am fully aware that the donkey's thought-provoking criticism of Western intellectualism includes the field of academic literary study which I am part of. By means of the donkey-intellectual scene, Özdamar asks me -- the White academic reader and critic of her text -- to self-reflexively and self-critically re-think my position within dominant Western discourse. And I realise that my very position "within" -- especially if lacking awareness and self-reflexion -- might turn this study, against its intentions, into an accomplice of dominant literary discourse. Once alert to this danger, the question arises whether it is still justifiable or wise of me to write on the given issues? My answer is affirmative since I believe that the critical recognition and questioning of my "complicit" status is constituent to the challenge and unlearning of traditional White discursive patterns and privileges. I argue that multi-ethnic/cultural co-operation and cultural-literary equality in the imagined communities of the German and Canadian nation-states are only possible if White academics are willed to unlearn the ethnocentric perspective offered to them through their status and to instead choose alternative, multi-ethnic and comparative perspectives. The texts of Philip and Özdamar take on new significance in light of the comparative context that -- as Diana Brydon and Helen Tiffin point out in the introduction to their work *Decolonising Fictions* (15-20) -- cuts across the ethnocentric Canadian and German nexus to focus instead on the polyphony of transethnic encounters. Philip's *She Tries Her Tongue* and Özdamar's *Mutterzunge* reveal an impressive artistic potency in "decolonising" ethnocentric Canadian and German discourse respectively, which means in writing back against imperial, universalised fictions and subsequently in incorporating alternative, re-contextualised ways of seeing, living, and speaking in the Canadian/German societies (Brydon and Tiffin 11). Both writings accentuate that to "decolonise is not simply to rid oneself of the trappings of imperial power [but] also to seek non-repressive alternatives to imperialist discourse" (Brydon and Tiffin 12). The de-universalised alternatives Philip and Özdamar offer are contextualised in the hybrid spaces of African-Caribbean-Canadian and Arabic-Turkish-German cultures and literatures respectively. *Mutterzunge* and *She Tries Her Tongue* seek to enter into a vital dialogue with their non-White *and* White audiences by opening possibilities of multi-racial, multi-cultural discussion on the issues of racism, nationalism, (hetero)sexism and gendering. A comparative dialogue with the texts opens the possibility of an effectual immersion in the specific contexts they are imbedded in.

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