Heike Bartel

Writing Food and Food Memories in Turkish-German Literature

by Renan Demirkan, Hatice Akyün and Emine Sevgi Özdamar

Abstract

This essay explores the role of food and eating in the autobiographical fictions of three very different female Turkish-German authors writing in German. It employs postcolonial theory to explore the complex relationship between gender, identity and memory in three close readings. Finally, it highlights the potential of research into food for meaningful intercultural exchange.[1]

Food and drink, their preparation and associated rituals, how, what, where and when people eat and drink – or not – bears great personal, religious, historical, political or socio-cultural significance. Who produces, prepares, pays for and finally consumes food and drink indicates social and gender roles, reflects power hierarchies, can confirm or challenge stereotypes and determine inclusion or exclusion in communities. Remembered food – be it tastes that accompanied certain situations, past feasts or experiences of food shortages and hunger – can also function as powerful personal or collective memory stores. Within national contexts in particular, food plays an important part in producing, confirming or contesting national or racial difference and in supporting forms of political and economic inequality. Culture, literature and art throughout national histories are full of examples: in the German-language context relevant to this essay, examples of derogative terms used for Turkish migrant workers who came to Germany in the 1960s, define these so-called *Gastarbeiter* [guest workers] through food. Closer analysis of the insults "Knoblauchfresser" [greedy, animal-like devourer of garlic] and "Kümmeltürke" [caraway-Turk] highlight the embeddedness of these terms in a long socio-cultural, political and etymological history that links food with ethnic and racial stereotyping. "Kümmeltürke" leads back to eighteenth century associations of Turkey as a

[1] Research for this essay was undertaken as part of the AHRC research network 'Hungry for Words', an interdisciplinary network researching eating disorders in males. The network is exploring, amongst other topics, relationships between personal, cultural and national food rituals and literary representations of anorexia nervosa. Principle Investigator: Heike Bartel.

barren uncultivated country.[2] Since the eighteenth century, and particularly in Nazi Germany, "Knoblauchfresser" has played a part in linking Jews with (perceived) bad odours and filth.[3] With the arrival of the first Turkish migrant workers in (West-)Germany these associations have shifted onto this currently largest German minority group. Other 'foreign' food, in particular spices of 'oriental' origin that were hailed in medieval times as bringing the waft and taste of Paradise to rich European dining rooms, have a long tradition as signs of wealth, prestige and power,[4] and, later, exclusivity and worldly taste. Here, food plays a role in a global history of submission and exploitation of mostly non-European food-producing nations that is marked by hierarchical and political power systems often summarized as colonialisms. In more recent times the humble Doner Kebab with its contested origin as Turkish or German fast food has been the subject of debates on the integration of Turks in Germany. Over the last decades this grilled meat dish has changed its role from a meal presented as 'ethnic', using exotic Turkishness to appeal to its (mainly) German consumers, to "McKebap" or "McDöner" employing Americanized food marketing strategies. The "Döner", in its adapted German spelling, remains of interest to writers and scholars engaging with the over fifty years of negotiations of Turkish-German identity.[5]

These examples highlight the relevance of food in a discourse committed to the critical analysis aimed at changing power hierarchies that is also expressed in postcolonial discourse. This approach can be applied in particular to literary representations of food in the highly divergent writing practices of immigrants – be it from former colonies or elsewhere – who write in the language of their 'new' country.[6] Such (food) writings are at the centre of this

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[2] The term can be traced back to the eighteenth century as part of the German student-language. It generally indicated a student deemed not very worldly from a region of Germany near the town of Halle where a lot of caraway is grown and that is perceived as backward, bleak and thus 'Turkish'. See Friedrich Kluge, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1960), 411.

[3] Ruth Mandel outlines how the term, that can be traced back to historic documents in the nineteenth and eighteenth century, was particularly employed as a tool of abuse and justification of persecution of Jews in Nazi Germany. Ruth Mandel, *Cosmopolitan Anxieties: Turkish Challenges to Citizenship and Belonging in Germany* (Durham NC, London: Duke University Press, 2008), 135-7. For earlier examples of usage see e.g. Julius Fürst, *Der Orient: Berichte, Studien und Kritiken für jüdische Geschichte und Literatur* (Leipzig: Fritsche, 1848), 91.

[4] Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *Tastes of Paradise: A Social History of Spices, Stimulants and Intoxicants*, trans. David Jacobson (New York: Vintage, 1993), 5-7.

[5] For example, Ayse Cagla, "McDoner: Doner Kebap and the Social Positioning Struggle of German Turks", in Janeen Costa and Gary Bamossy, eds, *Marketing in a Multicultural World: Ethnicity, Nationalism and Cultural Identity* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1995), 209-30; Heike Henderson, "Beyond Currywurst and Döner: The Role of Food in German Multicultural Literature and Society", *Glossen* 20 (2004), <http://works.bepress.com/heike_henderson/8/ > accessed 12 April 2017; Rafik Schami, "Kebab ist Kultur", in Rafik Schami, *Der Fliegenmelker: Geschichten aus Damaskus* (Kiel: Neuer Malik Verlag, 1993), 11-24.

[6] From the vast body of literature on this topic see, for example, David Bell and Gill Valentine, *Consuming Geographies: We Are Where We Eat* (London, New York: Routledge, 1997); Eugene N. Anderson,

essay on three texts with autobiographical elements written in German by Turkish-German authors. The following close readings will show how analytical concepts of postcolonialism can be applied to the very different texts of three female authors who were born in the 40s, 50s and 60s in Turkey and have settled in Germany: Renan Demirkan (born 1955 in Ankara), Hatice Akyün (born 1969 in Akpina Köyü, Anatolia) and Emine Sevgi Özdamar (born in 1946 in Malatya, Eastern Anatolia). As Elizabeth Boa comments, although Turkey and Germany do not stand in a post-colonial relationship, there are affinities between the situation of Turkish migrant workers and that of post-colonial subjects.[7] However, I should stress that the historical and methodological situating of postcolonialism, Islam and Contemporary Germany is beyond the scope of this essay.[8] Moreover, the different writing styles, age and date of arrival in Germany, and differences in political and cultural approaches and in personal backgrounds of Demirkan, Akyün and Özdamar highlight the problem of applying *one* term to their diverse works and life experiences. How problematic the use of terms such as 'Gastarbeiterliteratur', 'Migrantenliteratur' or 'Migration Literature' is presents a topic of ongoing international debate by scholars.[9]

This essay contributes to the discussion of Turkish-German literature in a postcolonial context by highlighting the very different approaches to writing about food and, in particular, the differing descriptions of memories of food in the works of these three authors. My key analytical move is to link the representations of (remembered) food in a Turkish, German or other context with the writing/rewriting of notions of culture, nation and gender. Food functions here as an important element not just of culture but in the production of culture, be it by repeating or deconstructing Turkish or German stereotypes of gender, culture and ethnicity or by creating alternative images. Each close reading will challenge the often employed "two worlds paradigm" that assumes the existence of Turkey and Germany as two homogenous worlds.[10] The aim is here to query Turkish-German identities in their position within, between or outside a conceptual Turkish-German, Oriental-Western dichotomy. The

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Everyone Eats: Understanding Food and Culture (New York, London: New York University Press, 2005); Kyla Wazana Tompkins, *Racial Indigestion: Eating Bodies in the 19th Century* (New York, London: New York University Press, 2012).

[7] See Elizabeth Boa, "Özdamar's Autobiographical Fictions: Trans-National Identity and Literary Form", *German Life and Letters* 59.4 (2006) [Special Number *Crossing Boundaries*, ed. Jim Jordan], 526-39.

[8] See Monika Albrecht, "Postcolonialism, Islam, and Contemporary Germany", *Transit: A Journal of Travel, Migration, and Multiculturalism in the German-speaking World* 7.1 (2011), 1-9.

[9] See, for example, Brigid Haines and Margaret Littler, *Contemporary Women's Writing in German: Changing the Subject* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 118-9; Jim Jordan, "More than a Metaphor: The Passing of the Two Worlds Paradigm in German-Language Diasporic Literature", *German Life and Letters* 59.4 (2006) [Special Number *Crossing Boundaries*, ed. Jim Jordan], 488-99.

[10] See, for example, Jordan, "More than a Metaphor" (note 9).

analysis will further draw upon key concepts of postcolonial studies drawn from the seminal works of Edward W. Said, Homi K. Bhabha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak.[11] What I call 'food memories' contributes in this context to a process of memory making that – as research in the field of memory studies over the past decades has highlighted – is never straightforwardly 'accurate' but has to be considered as constructed in a narrative that employs tools such as perspective, selection, emphasis or invention.[12]

A multicultural smorgasbord: **Renan Demirkan**

Renan Demirkan's 1991 debut novel *Schwarzer Tee mit drei Stück Zucker* [Black Tea with Three Sugars][13] was one of the first novels by an author with a Turkish background writing in German to head the best-seller lists in Germany. Since then the author, journalist and actress, who was named in 1997 as one of the "most prominent minority authors in German",[14] has published several other novels.

Schwarzer Tee is written from the perspective of a female third-person narrator whose life-story bears strong parallels with Demirkan's own. "Maika" is in a clinic expecting the birth of her first child who for medical reasons has to be delivered by C-section. However, the anaesthetist has not arrived yet and Maika is forced to wait alone, confined to her bed, at the mercy of mostly uncommunicative hospital staff and with the child's German father somewhere else in transit. This is the situation, described by Petra Fachinger as a "crisis", which instigates the narrative.[15] In an episodic sequence of flash-backs, the narrator returns in memory to her childhood and youth as the eldest of two daughters of Turkish parents who migrated to Germany in the 1960s as so-called *Gastarbeiter*. The memories are marked by the child's yearning to adapt to her German environment and be like German children,

[11] See Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Pantheon Books, 1978); Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London, New York: Routledge, 2000); Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?", in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, eds, *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Urbana, Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 271-313.

[12] From the many relevant publications in the field, I found the following particularly relevant for this essay: Aleida Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Western Civilizations: Functions, Media, Archives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[13] Renan Demirkan, *Schwarzer Tee mit drei Stück Zucker* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1991). Henceforth *Schwarzer Tee,* and ST with page numbers in parentheses in the main text. All translations from this novel are my own.

[14] Arlene A. Teraoka, "Turkish-German Literature", in Friederike Ursula Eigler and Susanne Kord, eds, *The Feminist Encyclopedia of German Literature* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1997), 529.

[15] Petra Fachinger, *Rewriting Germany from the Margins: "Other" Literature of the 1980s and the 1990s* (London, Ithaca: McGill-Queens University Press, 2001), 58.

intermingled with the desire to stay loyal to her Turkish family, in particular her increasingly religious mother. Maika's adolescent decision to move out of the parental household, which causes friction in the family, comes across as protest against what the narrative portrays as 'traditional Turkish life' coupled with the protagonist's sense of guilt mixed with the "unvergeßlichen Reste der religiösen Erziehung aus den Kindertagen" [unforgettable remnants of religious education from childhood days] (ST 117). These remembered religious remnants still affect the adult Maika in her hospital bed. Outwardly she appears to break with the trope of 'the Turk struggling to communicate' outlined in other passages. She seems to be confidently taking control of the situation by talking back and threatening to sue the hospital in the event of any medical complications. However, this stands in contrast to her inner panic caused by remembering sentences that were the mantra of her grandparents and accompanied her childhood: "Das Kind von einem Ungläubigen ist Sünde" [A child by a non-believer is sin] or "Alles ist vorherbestimmt" [everything is pre-determined] (ST 117). Ultimately the flashbacks of her earlier life and her current situation and the imminent birth of her child culminate in the protagonist emphasizing her current life: "Heute. Jetzt. Nicht morgen, nicht gestern" [Now. Today. Not tomorrow, not yesterday] (ST 133). The novel ends with the promise of the birth of a daughter marking a new generation of mother-daughter but also Turkish-German relationships. Remembering her early childhood in Turkey (Demirkan was seven when she came to the Federal Republic of Germany and Maika seems to echo this) and later in the diasporic context of her Turkish family now in Germany shows how this past still has a mostly unwanted hold over her, but also initiates a process of critical distancing.

Many of the flashbacks that interrupt the situation in the hospital are instigated by food or drink. The eponymous sweet Turkish black tea frequently signals a constructed return to an idyllic slow-paced Turkey that has been left behind by the protagonist's parents on coming to Germany. As Maika looks back from her sterile German hospital bed, Turkey is evoked as a sensuous country of "Gerüche und Düfte" [smells and fragrances] where "unbelievable sunrises and -sets" ("unbeschreibbare Sonnenauf- und -unteränge") turn the "shabbiest village" ("das schäbigste Dorf") into a "golden palace" ("in einen goldenen Palast") and with tea houses where old men "share their sorrows" ("ihre Sorgen teilen") over "black tea with three pieces of sugar" ("schwarzem Tee mit drei Stück Zucker"; ST 16-17). Passages like this one, positioned early in the novel, have drawn criticism for delivering "exotic commonplaces",[16] reducing 'Turkishness' to tea or "affirming only the readily acceptable,

[16] Teraoka, "Turkish-German Literature" (note 14), 529.

picturesque elements of Turkishness".[17] For Petra Fachinger this view is often employed by "second-generation narrators [who] seem to look at Turkey through 'western eyes'".[18] The choice specifically of Turkish tea, so often hailed as "an integral part of Turkish culture" and associated with Turkish "hospitality, sharing, togetherness"[19] and a slow yet welcoming lifestyle, can of course be read, with Edward Said in mind, as an orientalist stereotype. This image has also long been exploited by the tourism industry and exemplifies the role of food in upholding stereotypes and dichotomies, and Demirkan's novel may be criticized for not turning it explicitly into a trope for deconstructing an orientalist discourse. However, the black tea of Demirkan's title functions as a *leitmotif* throughout the text and the novel constructs shifting images and memories of Turkey using it, not merely as an unchanging nostalgic prop but as a marker for different forms of Turkish-German identity formation. Thus the novel deserves more critical attention as its nuanced reading can unfold the potential of food and drink to drive a narrative of immigration, even if ultimately the individual images it creates may be subject to criticism.[20]

After the introduction of black tea as a nostalgic evocation of picturesque and stereotypical Turkishness as outlined above, the protagonist refers to it again and differently in other passages. In one, Maika's memory of drinking sweet Turkish tea with a Turkish male friend in the German city of Dortmund serves to mark the story of a failed immigration. Using the "two worlds paradigm" to describe Turkish-German identities,[21] this friend is caught in a no-man's-land between cultures. An indicator for this is his food memory, or rather lack of it. For this man from the Black Sea region, who describes himself as disillusioned and robbed of dreams, the tea has lost its Proustian power to evoke memories – famously exemplified in the tea and madeleine episode in *À la recherche du temps perdu*. In contrast to Proust's protagonist, the Turkish man in Germany is left only with "Geschmack" [the taste of the tea] (ST 99): a purely physiological effect that does not bring with it any images. This signifies the loss of connection to any context at all, whether a remembered experience or a particular

[17] Tom Cheesman, *Novels of Turkish-German Settlement: Cosmopolite Fictions* (Rochester, New York: Camden House, 2007), 60.

[18] Fachinger, *Rewriting Germany from the Margins* (note 15), 64.

[19] Güliz Ger and Olga Kraverts, "Special and Ordinary Times: Tea in Motion", in Elizabeth Shore, Frank Trentmann and Richard Wilk, eds, *Time, Consumption and Everyday Life* (Oxford, New York: Berg, 2009), 189-202 (p. 194).

[20] That this *leitmotif* of tea has evolved throughout her work can be seen in Demirkan's 2008 novel about the death of her mother in September 2005, tellingly entitled *Septembertee*. Here, Demirkan describes how on return to her mother's Turkish village for her funeral she is offered in an almost comical self-reference "black tea with three sugars". Renan Demirkan, *Septembertee oder das geliehene Leben* [September-tea or the borrowed life] (Berlin: Kiepenheuer, 2009), 37.

[21] See Jordan, "More than a Metaphor" (note 9).

country. Demirkan seems to evoke the reference to Proustian memory here deliberately to highlight the inability of this migrant to integrate his past into his present, his Turkishness into his German life. At their next encounter, the Turkish tea is substituted by a dark brew served with artificial lemon essence on board a German Intercity Express Train. The connotations of this image, however, in further juxtaposing 'oriental' slowness with Western speed, sits dangerously close to confirming stereotypes.

The metaphorical thirst for the "unique black tea served with three pieces of sugar" ("auf den einzigartigen schwarzen Tee, der mit drei Stück Zucker serviert wurde"; ST 43) is also a narrative tool to describe another failed immigration, and a complicated memory. In this novel that deals with four generations of mother-daughter relationships in Turkey and Germany, the protagonist gives us insight not only into her own but also her mother's memory. The narrative transports the old and "hurting" mother from the kitchen of her German flat, that functions at the same time as a refuge and a prison, into an idyllic rural Anatolian landscape (ST 43). Here, tea functions as a metaphor for an imagined 'remembered' homeland that has never existed. The motifs of cooking, eating and food express longing for a return to an ideal imagined world and the fear of losing imaginary roots.[22] However, in the novel both roots and idealized homeland are only constructed to counter the mother's experience of migration as a loss of feeling at home. For the protagonist's mother, cooking elaborate meals and observing food rituals to honour religious festivals in Germany takes on a significance that it never had for her in Turkey. Feasting and fasting become part of imagining and constructing a home and express the desire to (re-) connect with a religious past that has never existed in that way. In Demirkan's novel these elaborate festive meals laboriously prepared by the mother go to waste. They remain uneaten and empty food rituals as there is no current family or community to partake in them and, as the mother only took to these rituals in Germany, there is no past history and no memory of them either (ST 41). Here food and food rituals, themselves meaningless, function as part of a desired yet ultimately absent system of belief and belonging. This food does not nourish anyone physically or spiritually but is a sign of the mother's endlessly unsatisfied

[22] See also Sandra Vlasta, *Contemporary Migration Literature in German and English: A Contemporary Study* (Leiden, Boston: Brill/Rodopi, 2015), particularly chapter 3: "Identity and the Search for Identity in Migration Literature Expressed by Cooking, Eating and Food".

metaphorical hunger ultimately inducing the psychosomatic symptom of an ulcer that manifests itself – tellingly – in her stomach.[23]

Through its depiction of food, cooking and eating the novel illuminates the mechanisms of coping – and not coping – with the socio-cultural challenges of migration in a specifically Turkish-German context. Whilst the mother reverts to the stereotypical gendered sphere of the kitchen as a place for the Muslim woman, the daughter rejects this space of food production and consumption in an act of open rebellion against her family and her Turkish background: As a young adult she moves out embracing the spirit of the German 1960s generation. Earlier, as a teenager living at home, her protest manifests itself through the rejection of food. This denial of food is also contextualized by Maika's early attempts to gain confidence to compete with "tall and blonde" ("groß und blond") German girls by aiming to be even thinner than them and fitting into the skinniest jeans (ST 26-7). The rejection of the orientalist stereotype of the Turkish woman associated with food preparation and eating in favour of the – equally stereotypical – Western ideal of the size-zero female marks the protagonist's rejection of a supposed traditional Turkish lifestyle and the rebellion against her family. That she presents the medical symptoms of anorexia nervosa discloses the would-be emancipatory turn not only as an act of denial of her socio-cultural background but also of her body. The protagonist's relationship with her body and her appetite change, however, as pregnancy marks a new generation of mother-daughter relationship. In the sterile environment of the maternity ward with the medical instruction to take nil by mouth the protagonist expresses hunger and thirst. In a turn that emphasizes her self-proclaimed status as "Kosmopolitin" (ST 57) she is craving the – by now almost exhausted motif of – black tea, but also a regional German delicacy of her (and Demirkan's own) adopted hometown of Cologne: "Speckpfannkuchen auf echt Kölsch" [pancakes with bacon fat, a hearty Cologne dish] (ST 101). This surprising and almost comical turn – in culinary, cultural, linguistic, geographical and narrative terms – may support readings of Demirkan's first novel within the postcolonial framework outlined in the introduction. Boa sees in this culinary overstepping of boundaries a reflection of Demirkan's attempts to transgress boundaries in the realms of languages and cultures.[24] Monika Albrecht observes how the novel brings together the tension of tradition – the performed repetition of the always-the-same – and change – the

[23] In Rainer Werner Fassbinder's 1974 film "Angst essen Seele auf" [Fear eat Soul] the connection between the stress of migrant life and psychosomatic intestinal diseases such as stomach-ulcers is famously and prominently stressed in the figure of the main protagonist Ali, a Moroccan worker in Germany.

[24] Elizabeth Boa, "Sprachenverkehr: Hybrides Schreiben in Werken von Özdamar, Özakin und Demirkan", in Mary Howard, ed., *Interkulturelle Konfigurationen: Zur deutschsprachigen Erzähllliteratur von Autoren nichtdeutscher Herkunft* (Munich: iudicium, 1997), 115-38 (pp. 134-5).

breaking free from this repetition and creating of new meaning.[25] Indeed, the hunger for the regional German dish leads Maika to enter the last realm of food memories that now connect Turkey with Germany. Here, food memories of German festive and everyday food form important stages in the *Bildungsroman* of the Turkish-German girl, even if the new food and festive customs go against the beliefs of her first-generation Turkish parents: Easter eggs, Christmas treats, sliced bread with cold pork meat and candy-floss during the "Schützenfest" season (folkloristic village fair) as well as coffee and cake every Sunday (ST 101-15). However, many of these 'traditional' German foods and food rituals are equally problematic in their typecasting of German culture as the repetitive associations of Turkey with sweet black tea.

In the final part of the novel the *leitmotif* of tea is dished up again to add to a multicultural smorgasbord of food, food memories and other German and Turkish ingredients. In a turn that Tom Cheesman criticizes as reducing cultural differences to a "spectrum of options, from which one can pick out the best"[26] the protagonist creates here a desired world for her unborn daughter. This takes the shape of a cultural and culinary self-service that offers an array of personal and national images and food memories in indifferent harmony. The scene presents a utopia of reciprocal cultural enrichment that borders on the naïve. Here, Heine and Goethe are recited between Kurdish folksongs and visits to an Andy Warhol exhibition. In a move that deliberately resembles a child playing with building blocks she places her grandparents' Anatolian village next to Cologne cathedral – or the other way round – and uses Turkish kilim rugs, soft feather pillows from Austria and German cuddly toys to make a cosy bed for the infant under a Turkish/oriental night sky. Food features heavily in this idyllic scenario that serves up nearly all the Turkish and German food mentioned in the text including "Speckpfannkuchen" and black tea. This creation of an alternative imagined place without differences may give food for thought for some critics in contemplating Demirkan's contribution to the creation of a postcolonial 'third space' (Homi K. Bhabha). However, for others the ultimate effect of this novel culminating in an indiscriminate presentation of a self-service cultural buffet clearly induces stomach pain.

Culinary and cultural commutes: Hatice Akyün

[25] Albrecht, "Jenseits des 'Dazwischen'" (note 8), 552.
[26] Cheesman, *Novels of Turkish-German Settlement* (note 17), 61.

In her 2005 novel *Einmal Hans mit scharfer Soße: Leben in zwei Welten* [A portion of Hans with hot sauce: living in two worlds][27] Hatice Akyün presents a female protagonist who bears strong autobiographical resemblances to the author herself down to her name. "Hatice" firmly asserts her position not in-between but *within* two "parallel worlds" (H 7), as the title emphasizes: on the one hand her life as daughter in a 'traditional' Turkish family with parents who came as first-generation Turkish migrant workers in the 1960s to the Ruhr area of West Germany from rural Anatolia and stayed; on the other hand her life as a young urban professional journalist, a German-Turkish woman with "Mediterranean-type", not Turkish, good looks (H 7) on a constant quest to find a suitable male partner. What drives the narrative of this comedy is when Hatice's "parallel worlds" collide, for example when she brings home a German boyfriend to meet her parents or when her parents visit her Berlin flat. Resulting faux-pas regarding eating practices and food rituals are an essential catalyst for this humour.

With her passion for revealing clothes, cosmetics, Manolo Blahnik shoes and her doomed romantic encounters Hatice performs a Turkish-German mixture between *Sex and The City's* Carry Bradshaw and Helen Fielding's Bridget Jones. The novel presents a stark contrast to what Lauren Selfe captures as one particular trend in engagement with Turkish-German issues: 'Turkish' "misery memoirs" dealing with suppressed, victimized and abused daughters of "Muslims" in Germany.[28] In contrast to these memoirs, Karin Yesilada, Heather Benbow and others characterize Akyün's novel as "Turkish German 'Chick Lit'"[29] drawing on this contested term for a genre authored by women. Supposedly introduced by Cris Mazza in 1991 it initially set out to summarize "fiction that transgressed the mainstream or challenged the status quo" but was appropriated by the mass market and popular culture as a term for best-selling stories, films or serials about a "career girl looking for love".[30] The protagonists of Candice Bushnell's column-turned-novel-turned-US TV series *Sex and the*

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[27] Hatice Akyün, *Einmal Hans mit scharfer Soße: Leben in zwei Welten* (Munich: Goldmann, 2007). Henceforth *Hans*, and H with page numbers in parentheses in the main text. All translations from this novel are my own. The novel was made into a film in 2013 and has been succeeded by Akyün's 2011 'food-novel' *Ali zum Dessert* [Ali for Dessert].

[28] Lauren Selfe, *Representations of "Muslim" Women in Public and Academic Discourses in Germany 1990-2015*. Unpublished doctoral thesis (University of Nottingham, 2017).

[29] Karin E. Yeşilada: "'Nette Türkinnen von nebenan' – Die neue deutsch-türkische Harmlosigkeit als literarischer Trend", in Helmut Schmitz, ed., *Von der nationalen zur internationalen Literatur: Transkulturelle deutschsprachige Literatur und Kultur im Zeitalter globaler Migration* (Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi, 2009), 117-42; Heather M. Benbow, *Marriage in Turkish German Popular Culture: States of Matrimony in the New Millenium* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington, 2015), 59.

[30] Benbow quotes from: Cris Mazza, "Who's Laughing Now? A Short History of Chick-Lit and the Perversion of a Genre", in Suzanne Ferriss and Mallorey Young, eds, *Chick-Lit: The New Woman's Fiction* (New York, London: Routledge, 2006), 17-28 (p. 26); Benbow, *Marriage in Turkish German Popular Culture* (note 29), 21. See also Annette Peitz, *Chick-Lit: Genrekonstruierende Untersuchungen unter anglo-amerikanischem Einfluß* (Frankfurt, Bern, New York: Peter Lang, 2010).

City or Helen Fielding's British novel-turned-film *Bridget Jones' Diaries* are testimonies to the fact that women's physical appearance, clothing and sexual desirability play a pivotal role in this genre. Consequently, eating features heavily too either as desire for highly eroticized food that supplants or instigates sex or as a constant battle with weight to become or stay slim in order to fulfil a certain physical female stereotype. The writings of critics like Naomi Wolf in her 1991 study *The Beauty Myth* have been used to attack this genre as "women's postfeminist disempowerment"[31] whilst other writers state that it is simply reflecting culturally expected, even sanctioned behaviour.

Many of these points resonate in Akyün's novel, the very title of which announces the crucial role played by food and dating in the plot. However, in an 'ethnic' variation of the genre, 'Turkish spice' is added to the formula. The desire for a "Hans with hot sauce" reflects the protagonist's wish to 'spice up' a stereotypically reliable yet boring and passionless German boyfriend with the – equally stereotypical – passionate 'hot' qualities of a Turkish lover, thus creating the perfect, yet ultimately unattainable, mixture between her two worlds. Akyün's text deliberately employs an array of stereotypes and orientalist clichés, many surrounding food, eating and cooking.[32] Hardly any of them are critically undermined, though, but rather are mainly used to create comic contrasts.[33] 'Ethnic' (food) differences between Germans and Turks are played for a superficial multicultural laugh by a mass market of readers of such mainstream literature. Particular focus seems to be on the target readership of the genre: "white, middle-class, twenty- and thirty-something […] women".[34]

The narrative structure of the novel reflects an emphatic two worlds paradigm: the homogenous German and the equally homogenous Turkish world are both inhabited simultaneously and without causing any conflict by the protagonist. But this holds good only for her, not for the other Turkish or German figures in the novel. Hatice only needs to undertake a few tweaks to guarantee a smooth, daily cultural commute between them without

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[31] Alison Umminger, "Supersizing Bridget Jones: What's Really Eating the Women in Chick Lit", in Suzanne Ferriss and Mallorey Young, eds, *Chick-Lit: The New Woman's Fiction* (New York, London: Routledge, 2006), 239-52. (p. 239).

[32] A number of recent commercially successful novels with a similarly light-hearted comical approach to Turkish-Germanness make references to food in their titles and in their plot. Two examples by female Turkish-German authors are: Asli Sevindim, *Candlelight–Döner: Geschichten über meine deutsch-türkische Familie* [Candlelight-Döner: stories about my German-Turkish family] (Ullstein: Berlin, 2005); Lale Akgün, *Tante Semra im Leberkäseland: Geschichten aus meiner deutsch-türkischen Familie* [Auntie Semra in Meatloaf-Land: stories from my German-Turkish family] (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 2010).

[33] A serious passage towards the end of novel about the horrendous, xenophobic arson attacks against Turks in the German town of Solingen in 1993 is certainly well-intended but seems somewhat misplaced in this generally light-hearted comedy.

[34] Suzanne Ferriss and Mallorey Young, "Introduction", in Suzanne Ferriss and Mallorey Young, eds, *Chick-Lit: The New Woman's Fiction* (New York, London: Routledge, 2006), 1-16 (p. 7).

compromising her identity: dropping the hemline of her skirt before a visit to her parents, exchanging her Starbucks Latte Macchiato for olives and yoghurt for breakfast. Everything is based on the notion of a free choice the protagonist can make.[35] Even the breaking of taboos connected with food that may carry strong repercussions in other contexts does not have any real consequences for her. On a visit to her family's Anatolian village Hatice has to serve the traditional bridal mocha to a suitor and his family. However, she spoils the ritual making her views on arranged marriage clear, and is ultimately supported by her father in this. Issues regarding forced marriage or cultural clashes between generations are light-heartedly dismissed or trivialized as when Hatice, turning from independent woman to Daddy's girl, toys coquettishly with the benefits of "Baba" choosing a husband for her when another date goes wrong. Other aspects of deep socio-cultural and religious concern are dealt with in equally superficial manner. Yet despite her modern lifestyle Hatice displays obscure signs of an internalized Muslim identity. This manifests itself in unexplained and severe physical reactions whenever she attempts to eat pork. No reflection upon a potential (internalized) identity struggle is undertaken, however. The consequences of breaking the Muslim taboo of consuming this explicitly forbidden food are portrayed as a strange food intolerance.[36] In contrast and in line with the genre, this female's practices regarding alcohol are very relaxed, with Prosecco even playing a pivotal role in her approach to dating and seduction.

The protagonist's memories of Turkey, having left the country at a very young age – the author of this auto-fiction was three when she left Anatolia – are restricted to holiday-visits to her family's village, always with a certain return-date to her German "parallel world" at the end of the summer in mind. These memories remain depoliticized, nostalgic snapshots of family gatherings, bustling markets with exotic fruit and colourful spices that are clearly viewed through a Western lens and confirm stereotypes of Turkey as a charming yet backward rural country. Belonging to a generation that has never (or only for a very short period during a pre-memory age) lived in Turkey, the protagonist's memories of this country present the view of an uncritical tourist. Tellingly, memories of later visits present views from the literal and metaphorical balcony of a five star hotel.

In the title and throughout the novel Akyün cultivates stereotypes of her protagonist as the fiery temptress, an exotic and sexy man-eater with a big appetite ready to devour a white male, so evoking tropes of the 'oriental female' that have a long tradition in colonial

[35] Benbow links this to Butler and Desai's notion of "neo-liberal feminist subject-making" Benbow, *Marriage in Turkish German Popular Culture* (note 29), p. 69).

[36] On food, culture and Islam, see for example Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik, eds, *Food and Culture: A Reader* (New York, London: Routledge, 2013).

imaginary. Preparing herself for romantic encounters, Hatice bathes in milk and honey, thus turning from the seemingly emancipated female subject into a commodified object to be devoured. The fact that she specifies the fat-content of the milk and the particular brand-name of the honey comically introduces aspects of consumer-culture and dieting and emphasizes the food-like character of this and other beauty rituals. With its reputation as an accompaniment to love spells, the bath in milk and honey evokes orientalist clichés of luxurious sensuality. However, Akyün's intention to mock these connotations turn out to play to the long tradition in literature and the visual arts of (male) voyeuristic fantasies of 'oriental' bath scenes when she parades the protagonist alone in her living room in nothing but her designer high heels and her super soft skin in front of the reader. Depending on the reader's viewpoint, this can come across either as a celebration of her emancipation or as a dubious pandering to voyeurism. The protagonist's beauty rituals of plucking, soaking and preparing bear strong parallels to food preparation, substituting the stove for the bathroom and using the fridge to store face masks. Yet the substitution of traditional food-preparation for body-preparation cannot challenge the very similar and highly gendered roles engrained in both socio-cultural practices: the preparation by/of the subservient female for male consumption.

Whilst such Western figures as Bridget Jones often fight out their struggle with food within the *one* world of their singleton life, Hatice's relationship with food is played out in the *two* worlds she inhabits: In her flat in Berlin she undergoes juice-diets in preparation for a date; when visiting her parents in Duisburg she consumes vast amounts of food in a mixture of willing indulgence and being force-fed by her mother. The latter exemplifies the stereotype of the over-nurturing matriarch who prepares uncountable dishes of 'traditional' food for her family and serves husband and children meals that keep the family together. Although the rare image of a woman tucking heartily into her meal is here not confined to the "secretive, illicit" space Rebecca Bell-Meterau assigns to Western women eating in literature and culture,[37] this kind of eating nevertheless only happens in the restricted environment of the Turkish home. Despite all urban and cosmopolitan bravura "the narrative remains claustrophobically confined to the immediate family".[38] Many pages of the novel are devoted to the domestic tasks of buying, eating and preparing food – be it to be eaten or bathed in.

[37] Rebecca Bell-Meterau, "Eating and Drinking, Men and Women", in Murray Pomerance, ed., *Ladies and Gentlemen, Boys and Girls: Gender in Film at the end of the 20th Century* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 90-113 (p. 94).

[38] Beverly Weber, *Violence and Gender in the 'New Europe': Islam in German Culture* (London, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 166.

The view into the Turkish family home reveals no new insights that could challenge perceptions, but only what Yesilada calls a "Turkish-German Biedermeier".[39] Rather than adding to, let alone revising stereotypical images of Turkishness or Germanness, the depictions serve only to reinforce perceived differences between 'Turks' and 'Germans'. The main aim of the parallel Turkish world is to provide a stereotypically traditional, gendered and ethnic foil against which the 'untraditional' protagonist is set. Confirming the arguments of critics like the feminist bell hooks, the 'ethnic' seasoning applied to the German "Hans" reveals itself as a spice produced by a commodity culture used to "liven up the dull dish that is mainstream white culture" [40] without inventing any new recipes to challenge hierarchies, tastes and traditions.

Polymorphous appetite: Emine Sevgi Özdamar

The work of Emine Sevgi Özdamar has been critically acclaimed in a vast and still growing body of research since the award of the prestigious Ingeborg Bachmann prize in 1991. Rather than inhabiting two parallel worlds, both within commuting distance as proposed by Akyün, or writing beyond cultural differences as Demirkan attempts in *Schwarzer Tee*, Özdamar's novels and plays written in German can be read as 'hybrid texts' in a postcolonial framework. Experimental, innovative, ironic and provocative in her use of language, the author who has also a long and successful career in theatre in Turkey, as well as in East and West Germany, is constantly developing an innovative style of writing. She infuses German with Turkish and Turkish with German, and other languages relevant to her background or narrative context, like Arabic – her grandfather's language – or American English, are also woven into her poetic and multilingual idiom. Stereotypical divisions between German and Turkish, self and foreign are transcended in Özdamar's work and the power-relationship between 'correct' and 'incorrect' (German) grammar subverted. Taking into account the question of how to position Turkish-German literature in the field of Postcolonial Studies, various critics have made a strong case to read Özdamar's texts within the relevant methodological framework. Elizabeth Boa highlights the affinities that "Özdamar's mixing of languages [has] with Spivak's

[39] Karin E. Yesilada, "Mittendrin und unterwegs. Trends der jungen türkisch-deutschen Literatur – und ein Blick auf die neue 'Chick-Lit alla turca', die den Minirock nicht mit dem Kopftuch, dafür mit der Küchenschürze verbindet", www.migrazine.at online maganzin von migrantinnen für alle, <http://www.migrazine.at/artikel/mittendrin-und-unterwegs#4>, accessed 15 April 2017.

[40] bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston: Southend Press, 1992), 21.

intellectual mediating between cultures".[41] Margaret Littler shows in her analysis of the texts "Mutterzunge" and "Großvaterzunge" (1990) how Özdamar's hybrid work that writes against binary oppositions and homogenous identities "lends itself to postcolonial analysis".[42] Dirk Göttsche emphasizes Özdamar's poetic creation of a 'third space' (Bhabha) beyond the dichotomy of self and other in philosophical and socio-cultural terms.[43]

Özdamar's first novel *Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei – Hat zwei Türen – Aus einer kam ich rein – Aus der anderen ging ich raus* (1992; *Life is a Caravanserai – Has Two Doors – I Came in One – Went out the Other*, 2000)[44] combines autobiographical writing with a fiction that has been described as a blend between social and magical realism. It presents the recollections of an unnamed female first-person child-narrator about her childhood in Turkey. However, multiple layers of meaning and the structuredness of this novel written in German clearly highlight other voices in this text which are shaped through the experiences of emigration and adulthood. The point of view from which the novel is looking back onto childhood is kept deliberately ambiguous and inscribes the German present into the Turkish past just as it shows the hold of the past over the present. The text constructs a memory that brings together and divides different worldviews resisting the notion of *one* history – be it personal or national – in the same vein as it resists the cultural dominance of *one* language.

The novel follows the life story of the I-narrator from within her mother's womb till her departure for the Federal Republic of Germany as a young adult in the wake of the 1960s recruitment drive for migrant workers. Due to the changing work of her father in the construction industry in economically and politically unstable times, the family moves from place to place within Turkey. Intertwined with this nomadic personal life, that drives the family from pre-industrial villages to urban centres, is the turbulent history of political, religious and socio-cultural upheaval and change in Turkey in the 1950s and 60s. Just as the author disturbs the notion of a 'correct' German language in assembling a new literary style or the notion of *one* personal memory, she resists the well-known stories of Turkey defining

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[41] Boa, "Özdamar's Autobiographical Fictions" (note 7), 534.

[42] Margaret Littler, "Diasporic Identity in Emine Sevgi Özdamar's Mutterzunge", in Stuart Taberner and Frank Finley, eds, *Recasting German Identity: Culture, Politics, and Literature in the Berlin Republic* (Woodbridge, Rochester, New York: Camden House, 2002), 219-34 (p. 220).

[43] Dirk Göttsche, "Emine Sevgi Özdamars Erzählung *Der Hof im Spiegel*: Spielräume einer postkolonialen Lektüre deutsch-türkischer Literatur", in Jim Jordan, ed., *German Life and Letters* 4 - *Special Number: Crossing Boundaries* (2006), 515-25 (p. 524).

[44] Emine Sevgi Özdamar, *Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei – Hat zwei Türen – Aus einer kam ich rein – Aus der anderen ging ich raus* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1992). Henceforth *Karawanserei*, and with K and page numbers given in parentheses in the main text. Unless indicated otherwise, all translations from this novel are my own.

these decades. Özdamar presents a country that is politically and socio-culturally fractured, mirrored in the fractured family life of the child-protagonist who is also constantly on the move. Family, especially the protagonist's maternal grandmother, and the highly individual rituals and prayers practiced by the child provide some stability. Turkish society as experienced by the narrator is not homogenous but complex, diverse, even fractured. Annette Wierschke outlines how *Karawanserei* illuminates differences between rural and urban areas, lifestyles, cultural practices, ethnic groups, political affiliations, languages and dialects as well as western and 'traditional Turkish' influences.[45] This stands in stark contrast to the idyllic, mostly rural and fairly homogenous stereotypical images of Turkey presented by our previous two authors. Moreover, it constructs the protagonist as an intercultural hybrid self long before migrating to Germany. The complex negotiation of cultures, religions, languages and dialects as well as experiences of alienation, xenophobia and 'otherness' are already part of the protagonist's life in Turkey, and provide the bedrock sustaining her personal identity.

Unsurprisingly, in Özdamar's writing food and eating do not stereotypically transmit homogenizing Turkish clichés but rather help to construct multiple meaning in a polyphonic text. References to feasts and food practices, rather than confirming orientalist clichés, change or subvert them. In addition, descriptions of food shortages, poverty, black market trade and the influence of American imperialism further challenge the stereotypical notions of Turkey as the land of sweet black tea, exotic spices or milk and honey. In addition, Özdamar engages with food and food consumption as a highly political tool that drives the narrative. In one passage the protagonist's aunt tips milk powder donated as food aid by the Americans to the Turkish population into the street (K 164). This 'food fight' is a public act of female political rebellion against the ruling Democratic Party and also a form of protest against the colonizing imperial power of the US allies. Defiance against a male militaristic world through a fleshy and culinary celebration of femaleness is further expressed in a scene in a Turkish bath described as a "Mösenplanet [and] Mutterbauch" [a planet of vaginas,[46] a womb] (K 50). Withdrawing from the "Kriegsspiele" [war games] of the men into this female space with its "kilometres of hair" and "kilos" of fleshy bosoms and bellies to bathe, talk and indulge in

[45] Annette Wierschke, *Schreiben als Selbstbehauptung: Kulturkonflikt und Identität in den Werken von Aysel Özakin, Alev Tekinay und Emine Sevgi Özdamar. Mit Interviews* (Frankfurt/M.: IKO, 1994), 187-8.

[46] The translation of "Mösenplanet" is difficult as 'vagina' does not really cover the deliberate and liberating vulgarity of the term whilst a word like 'pussy', introduced in the 2000 translation in "planet of pussy", is too often used in abusive or pornographic male-dominated discourse. This problem hints in general at the challenging task of translating Özdamar's innovative hybrid idioms but also show once more how deeply gendered language is. Emine Sevgi Özdamar, *Life is a Caravanserai. – Has Two Doors – I Came in One – Went out the Other*, trans. Luise von Flotow-Evans (London: Middlesex University Press, 2000), 201.

delicious food is a culinary, political and carnal celebration of femaleness (K 50). Any danger of stereotyping is averted through changing perspectives and what Michael Hofmann calls Özdamar's "verfremdenden Blick des weiblichen Schelms" [the transgressive gaze of the female picaro],[47] for example when the girl's naïve play with a pear between her legs is overlayered with sexual interpretation by the adult women. Food and food consumption as explored by Özdamar introduce a wealth of associations and meanings ranging from socio-cultural, sexual and political contexts to the highly individual world of the protagonist with her personal food rituals and practices.

The close connection between the mouth as place of food consumption but also for the production of spoken language and as a place of sexual pleasure is emphasized throughout Özdamar's work. Right from her first publication *Mutterzunge* in 1990 the word "Zunge" [tongue] plays a key role. Its various connotations include: the flexible – and thus adaptable – muscle producing language(s), national and personal identifier of a particular 'mother tongue' (or in the author's innovative term, 'grandfather tongue'), the organ vital for tasting and consuming food as well as for kissing and other sexual pleasures. In *Karawanserei* the closely connected word "Geschmack" [taste] is also used in various contexts, often reflecting the translation of Turkish expressions into German or the negotiation a new poetic language – or both. "Geschmack" highlights the physical sensation of tasting food, yet it is also associated as "sweet taste" with (female) sexual pleasure and it marks the particularities of a specific language. Describing the experience of the seven-year old narrator returning to Istanbul after having spent the summer with family in Anatolia combines these connotations: "Ich küßte meinem Onkel die Hand mit meinem Mund, in dem ich unter meiner Zunge den Dialekt dieser Stadt festgeklebt hatte […]" ["I kissed my uncle's hand with my mouth, under my tongue I had fastened the city's dialect […]"[48]] (K 52). Returning to Istanbul, her mother is shocked to hear her daughter who is just about to start school speak with her grandmother's Eastern Anatolian dialect. This will, she fears, disadvantage her in a school-system that is dominated by the state-prescribed discrimination of certain groups and communities, Kurds in particular. Political, socio-cultural and deeply personal experiences of identity formation are intertwined when the protagonist is forced to abandon the word for 'mother' in the Anatolian dialect for the Istanbul variation that does not leave "einen süßen Geschmack auf der Zunge" [a sweet taste on the tongue] (K 53). The image of fixing the rural dialect with its

[47] Michael Hofmann, *Interkulturelle Literaturwissenschaft: Eine Einführung* (Munich: Fink, 2006), 214. The translation is my own.

[48] Özdamar, *Life is a Caravanserai* (note 46), 35.

sweet taste under her tongue to prevent losing it emphasizes both the concept of language as tangible and tasteable matter and the body as keeper and producer of such language. It also evokes chewing-gum, which is referred to several times in the novel underlining an orality of language.

Words as desired nourishment or sweet treats are recurrent themes in *Karawanserei*. It is the food that the protagonist craves in particular when the onset of her period marks her transition from child to womanhood at the end of the novel. The narrator has to dry her sanitary towels and underwear in a small room strictly hidden away from the eyes of the men. This room, that is also used for storing and ripening melons, becomes her bedroom and study. Here the protagonist starts writing and then hangs her "Sätze" [sentences] (K 326) on sheets of paper next to her laundered sanitary towels where the paper takes up the scent from the ripening fruits (K 326-8). Marking a shift from oral to written language the author combines here images of female sexual and intellectual awakening, of bodily fluids, juices from ripening fruit and writing (K 326-30). The protagonist starts then to develop a grotesque and excessive polymorphous appetite that transgresses reality and expands the narrative into a surreal sexual fantasy. In unveiled yet highly poetic language the narrator describes how the "Feuer" [fire] (K 330) of her awakening sexuality spreads. From the obsession with the mouth of a male relative it develops into experimentations with kissing and leads to experiences of masturbation and orgasms. These oral and sexual pleasures expand into much wider-ranging oral activities of kissing and biting. They culminate in her eating an array of palatable and unpalatable objects. These range from bread, the table top, paper, melons, a snail shell, soap, her mother's cigarette to her little sister's finger (K 330) down to "die großen Buchstaben aus den Zeitungen" [the big letters in the newspapers] (K 330), the "Brief meines Großvaters" [letter of my grandfather] (K 330) and finally a whole "Weltatlas" [atlas of the world] (K 330). The surreal tableau of this truly polymorphous appetite expresses a main narrative trait of this novel: to establish unexpected relationships between sexual, political, linguistic, family and personal matters as part of a highly interconnected yet multidirectional system that forms the world of the protagonist and the magical and social realism of the novel.

Conclusion: The Empire bites back?

In all three texts analysed in this essay the very different literary representations of food give insights into various power hierarchies and forms of Eurocentrism that can be approached via concepts of postcolonial methodology: a highly gendered exoticism and a dichotomy of an orientalist versus a Western world, as outlined by Said, remain largely unchallenged in Akyün's text. Bhabha's concept of a 'third space' may be envisaged by Demirkan in the final intercultural food-tableau of her novel, yet remains ultimately problematic. Özdamar's hybrid writing, however, challenges dominant norms and mediates between cultures, thus echoing Spivak's intellectual mediation. All three Turkish-German writers approach, in different ways, questions of intercultural communication allowing analogies to those postcolonial literatures, namely English and French, that are longer established than German. All three texts engage with aesthetic representations of identity formation of migrants rather than engaging explicitly with a notion of German postcolonialism, though – a concept that has arrived in German academia[49] but perhaps not yet in literary or public discourse.

This essay underlines the potential of food and food memories for Turkish-German narrative scenarios in which, possibly, 'the Empire bites back'. However, food does more than driving – or stalling – such narratives but can also act as an important methodological tool. Alois Wierlacher, theorist of intercultural hermeneutics in German Studies (Interkulturelle Germanistik) and founder of an interdisciplinary network researching "Kulinaristik" [Culinary Studies as an intercultural discipline], identifies food as an anthropological constant across cultures (a "Kulturthema" and "soziales Totalphänomen").[50] He stresses that the understanding of the underlying similarities between the different manifestations of the role of food in various cultural contexts is an important tool to facilitate intercultural communication on an encompassing and interdisciplinary scale. This approach highlights the key role food can play in meaningful and qualified intercultural exchange – be it in academic, literary, educational or practice-orientated contexts. Whilst due caution has to be taken with regards to who should define such cultural constants, the potential for research into food and eating in the context of Postcolonial Studies is clearly on the table.

[49] See Dirk Göttsche, Axel Dunker and Gabriele Dürbeck, eds, *Handbuch Postkolonialismus und Literatur* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2017).

[50] See Alois Wierlacher, "Der Diskurs des Essens und Trinkens in der neueren deutschen Erzählliteratur: Zur Literaturwissenschaft eines 'sozialen Totalphänomens'", *Jahrbuch DaF* 3 (1977), 150-67. The term "soziales Totalphänomen" is based on the theory of French sociologist Marcel Mauss of *The Gift* (first published in 1925) as a phenomenon that in most cultures transcends the division between the material and the spiritual and has strong socio-cultural meanings, a "fait social total" or "total social fact".