Migrant authors like Emine Sevgi Özdamar of ‘*Das Leben ist eine Karawansere*i‘ and Selim Özdogan of ‘*Die Tochter des Schmieds’* can be considered as the voice of minorities as they are displaced in a position between the cultures of their middle Eastern and Turkish heritage and the Western world. Through their texts they are able to challenge misconceptions regarding the Arab world, tackling clichés of stigmatized cultural heritage that have ultimately created distance between middle Eastern realities and the West. Portrayed through various narrative techniques, the representation of the family is used by many migrant authors to explore the implications of Westernization and Modernization and to paint the harsh realities of many families living in a patriarchal society.

Although very much considered as a significant piece of migrant literature, Özdamar’s ‘*Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei’* in many ways can be considered as a departure from the traditional works of Turkish writers, not only in its linguistic choice, style and length but also in its subject matter. The narrative does not centralize itself around the traditional preoccupations of earlier migrant works where migrants are positioned in the face of a new culture. Here, Özdamar writes about a migration of a different kind as she explores the theme of childhood and adolescence from the perspective of a first-person, female narrator as she and her family travel through Turkey as they follow their father and his desperate need for work. Through the representation of the protagonist and her family, Özdamar predominantly explores the challenges faced by females and their situation among a male dominated society.

Similar in a few ways, Özdogan’s *‘Die Tochter des Schmieds’* can also be considered as a piece of migrant literature that doesn’t thematize itself among the traditional works of other migrant writers as the narrative doesn’t follow the lives of migrants in Germany but instead is concerned about the experience leading up to the emigration to Germany. In regard to subject matter, this text can relate more closely to the works of Özdamar, making these two texts appropriate for contrast and comparison. Additionally, ‘*Die Tochter des Schmieds’* also follows a female perspective, sharing the lives of three sisters and what possibilities of existence there are for women in a male dominated society.

The societal framework of traditional patriarchal society and its implications is apparent across both texts as it outlines the social restrictions and expectations females are subject too. The interactions between family members are used in ‘*Karawanserei’* to express the nature of female sexuality and how it is controlled. For example, the narrator is walking with her father and is slapped across the face for seemingly looking at a boy for too long and this is not objected to by the narrator’s grandmother and mother: “Weine nicht, dort auf dem Gesicht, wohin der Vater schlägt, wird eine Rose blühen”**.** Her mother adds: „Wer seine Tochter nicht schlägt, schlägt später seine eigenen Knie**“** **(**Özdamar, 1992, p.82)**.** The parent’s actions and attitudes here are indicative of the customs that are still present through tradition which they implement on to their daughter and expect her to abide by. Here Özdamar depicts the older generation in a more traditional light, leaving the females to assume a passive role whilst the father asserts his active role through physical abuse. Additionally, the euphemism of the ‘little box’ used here in reference to the vagina is a clear indication of the freedom that is permitted to girls in comparison to boys. “Du führst immer deine Schachtel spazieren.“ whereas **“**Die Jungs können ihre Waren spazieren führen.“ **(**Özdamar, 1992, p.22.). Despite these controlling implications, the narrator is still granted a considerable amount of freedom as she frequently ventures out into the streets of Bursa, where she plays with other boys by the river, typically not returning home till late. She is still subject to her father’s criticism, who asks if she has changed into a boy yet and her mother thinks that she “Bei dir wird ein Pipi wachsen.**” (**Özdamar, 2005, p.147.) yet there is no attempt to discipline her. In fact, her mother even suggests that she will not possess the qualities to be a good wife due to the narrator’s attraction to the outside world as opposed to being content with the domestic sphere of the household.The young narrator’s behavior has also influenced her grandmother Ayse, who also appears liberated as she partakes in the roaming around of the streets. The two would then regularly meet at the end of the day to discuss the days ventures.

Through this interaction, Özdamar is depicting an instance where women have been able to “establish independent niches in their lives.” (Horrocks, 1996, p.36.)through familial solidarity, despite still being in a male dominated culture. The relationship between the narrator and her grandmother addresses the notion that “the only way for Muslim women to improve their status is to abandon their native culture and adopt the ways of the West.” (Horrocks, 1996, p.36.), a notion that remains widespread among feminist thinking. It is made apparent that the women in the novel who have adopted a Western lifestyle appear to be the loneliest and inherently are the ones who are leading the most monotonous lives. Eg. The bourgeois wives of the silk-goods shops and the bakery owners who live in the stone houses in Bursa. The narrator’s depiction of this street as ‘seelenlose’ seems accurate as it seems lifeless, not even an apparent smell of cooking seems to arise from the homes where these women are confined to. In stark contrast, Özdamar compares the existence of the bourgeois wives of the stone houses to the women of the next street, who represent the lower- class, indicated by their occupation of wooden houses. On this street, there is a clear sense of community among the women, who leave their doors open and congregate to confide in one another, their conversations typically concerning the wellbeing of each other’s family or gossiping of a light-hearted nature.

The narrator’s transition through puberty is not one lived without suffering, “but at no stage does Özdamar attribute her problems solely to the specific culture in which she is growing up.” (Horrocks, 1996, p.37). In fact, Horrocks suggests the opposite to be the case. Through the exploration of the narrator’s sexuality, we can derive that although the culture in which she inhabits still exercises oppression and control, she is able to find some kind of benefit through her relations with the other women of her family or the ‘verrückte Frauen’ she associates herself with. These women on the margins of society “who have carved out lives of their own, often in the face of powerful social and religious pressures to conform.” (Horrocks, 1996, p.33).However, this also highlights the reality in which these females are situated in. On the one hand they are experiencing Ataturk’s reforms and seizing the opportunities presented by its liberating influences. Additionally, rights in the educational and political sphere are also being granted and new laws regarding polygamy are being put in place. On the other hand, however, the oppressive nature of patriarchal society still exists. Despite the path of education being a form of emancipation, as forwarded by the narrator’s grandmother: ‘Schwester, lerne deine Bücher, damit du nicht die Füβe des Mannes waschen muβt.” **(**Özdamar, 1992, p.213), the relationships formed and the lessons she has learned from other female figures serve to liberate her just as much.

In a similar fashion, the social framework appears as a backdrop in *‘Die Tochter des Schmieds’* as the narrative primarily follows the protagonist of Gül and the lives of her sisters. Dictated through tradition, Gül involuntarily assumes the maternal role at the age of six as she is the oldest daughter. Once assumed, her role and responsibility for her two sisters does not change over time even till the point where the age difference between them would no longer play a role. This occurrence can be traced back to societal norms according to which, in the absence of a parent, the oldest sibling is expected to take on the role of the mother. Gül submits to this role and does not challenge it:

* „Menschen laufen hin und her, Gül weiß nicht, wo Melike und Sibel sind, sie sieht Tante Hülya und Onkel Yücel, sie sieht Nachbarn und auch Menschen, die sie noch nie vorher gesehen hat. Sie hat aufgehört zu weinen und denkt: Ich muß ein großes Mädchen sein, ich muß auf Melike und Sibel achtgeben.“ **(**Özdogan, 2005, p.60).

The importance of the role of the mother is stressed as her father wants to marry as soon as possible as to not burden his oldest daughter with the responsibility of raising the family. “In ein paar Tagen gehen wir zurück ins Dorf. Wir sind wieder alle gesund, Gül muß in die Schule, Tante Hülya wird mitkommen und auf euch aufpassen. Und bald ... bald ... werdet ihr eine Mutter haben." **(**Özdogan, 2005, p.66). Her father’s remarriage doesn’t aid the family’s situation as Gül must still maintain her role as the mother figure to the extent that she must neglect her studying and eventually drop out. The societal norms and expectations distinctively influence each sister individually, both in how they are perceived and abided by. As these expectations were applied to Gül from such a young age, the responsibility of others is what has determined her life, whilst her own fate has been neglected consequently. As a result, Gül has become submissive as everything seems already predetermined for her. The instance where Gül’s school friend Recep gives her the New Years ticket illustrates how deeply societal pressures have affected her. She hides the ticket in her stocking but doesn’t know what to do with it and ends up throwing it into the stream. We later find out that the ticket would have won her the third prize in the draw. The throwing away of the ticket can be interpreted as also her discarding her future and any opportunity that may defer her from her predetermined path. Her submissiveness has resulted in an attitude that refuses the idea of any other kind of outcome for her as she demands nothing for herself. Her attitude and submissiveness are maintained throughout her entire life as she marries Fuat against her will and moves to Germany where she spends the remainder of her life. Her willingness to feel responsible for others is not limited only to her younger sisters but also extends to her own children who she raised and was able to guarantee a place in society. Gül, who has orientated her life entirely around being responsible for others is presented with a circumstance in which her role is no longer needed and as an old woman we see her reflect on her mission shortly before her death:

„Ich habe keine Angst mehr, wirklich nicht. Meine Mission ist fast zu Ende, ich habe zwei Kinder großgezogen, ich habe versucht, ihnen eine gute Mutter zu sein, und sie haben beide einen Platz gefunden im Leben. Es ist niemand mehr da, der noch auf mich angewiesen ist, ich kann in Ruhe gehen.“**(**Özdogan, 2005, p.317).

The fact that she ‚kann in Ruhe gehen’ is an indication that she feels like her mission has been fulfilled and yet she still demands nothing for herself, thus it seems natural for her that she can hardly talk about happiness in her life: „Manches Mal, wenn ich unglücklich bin, wache ich morgens auf und denke: Verflucht, ich bin schon wieder aufgewacht. Hätte ich nicht ewig schlafen können." **(**Özdogan, 2005, p.317)

Alongside Gül, her two sisters can also be examined in contrast to illustrate forms of female emancipation due to not having to adopt the maternal role. Melike does not adhere to social norms and grants herself the freedom to do what she wants. She is a non- conformist who seeks relative independence and self-realization. In comparing the characters of Melike and narrator of ‘*Karawanserei*’, both are attracted to the outside world and the idea of emancipation despite living in a patriarchal society. Additionally, this also indicates the difference in attitude between generations. The parent figures (including grandparents) of both characters all serve to convey the social norms and expectations which have been established through tradition. This is demonstrated in Timur’s need for a maternal figure for his family and so quickly marries another woman in order to upkeep the domestic demands of the household and the narrator’s father in ‘*Karawanserei’*, who feels he has the right to exercise his beliefs through physical abuse of his daughter when she seemingly is looking at boys for too long. The attitudes adopted by the daughters in contrast can also be considered to embody ideas of modernization and the changing attitudes towards women, as in particular for the case of ‘*Karawanserei*’, the setting is at a point in history at which the reforms implemented by Ataturk are taking place.

Melike exerts her independence frequently in comparison to Gül who has no chance to assert herself in life: "Statt selber den Mund aufzumachen, leidet sie [Gül] lieber im stillen. Wofür soll man schon aufstehen in einer Welt, die nicht Gutes für einen bereithält. Sie duldet, während Melike kämpft“. **(**Özdogan, 2005, p.307)

This quote sheds light on to Gül’s passive attitude whereas Melike’s more active attitude comes to the fore. Additionally, Melike has been able to make it to University in Istanbul, an immediate indication of emancipation but also brings her boyfriend to their home to introduce him to her parents with almost no regard of the opinions of the other town people:

* „In dem Sommer, der vor ihnen liegt, dem Sommer, den Gül in Deutschland verbringen wird, will Melike Mert mit heimbringen, um ihn ihren Eltern vorzustellen, [...] Melike wird ihn heiraten, [...] und sie wird glücklich sein mit diesem Leben, das sie sich selbst ausgesucht hat.“ **(**Özdogan, 2005, p.312)

Much like her sister Melike, Sibel will also be able to decide on what she wants to do with her life and opportunities to do so present themselves as she possesses artistic talent:

* „Sibel ist immer noch blaß, dünn und kränklich, doch sie hat sehr gute Noten, obwohl sie im Winter dreimal eine Woche im Bett lag und nicht zur Schule konnte. Im Kunstunterricht ist sie die beste in ihrer Klasse,“ […]. **(**Özdogan, 2005, p.131)

Through her talent she manages to go to art school and eventually become an art teacher. Much like Melike as well, she marries a man that she has chosen herself and ultimately is able to carry out life as she pleases:"Die Ehe wird kinderlos bleiben, und sie werden friedvoll und harmonisch in einem kleinen Haus am Rande der Stadt leben.” **(**Özdogan, 2005, p.312). It is clear that the characters of Melike and Sibel have adopted the ideals of the West by doing things like going to University and marrying partners of their choice and essentially going against Turkish tradition and Özdogan makes it abundantly clear that this is a form of female emancipation. Contrasting this notion with that of ‘*Karawanserei*’, this statement is contradicted as Özdamar portrays the women who have adopted a Western lifestyle as leading boring and monotonous lives. The point that can be deduced from these two seemingly contradicting ideas is that although the influences of Westernization and Modernization may present females with opportunities of potential emancipation, adopting these western traits is not the only form of emancipation as demonstrated by the narrator of ‘Karaweanserei’, who finds benefit from being among other female figures who are a strong influence and pave their own independence among a male dominated society. Additionally, it can be argued that it is not Melike’s and Sibel’s adoption of a western lifestyle alone that has strictly allowed them to become emancipated but is due to other factors like Sibel’s artistic talent or Melike’s stubbornness that has propelled them to challenge social norms that are expected of them and their adopting of a Western lifestyle is just an indication of them doing so.

Here, Özdogan has used three female figures to illustrate potential life paths of life embodied by three sisters, each of who present a possibility of a women’s existence in Turkish society. In addition to portraying the impossibility for Gül to liberate herself from the shackles of social restrictions, Ozdogan thus also shows, as mentioned by Karakus, „zeigt der Autor also zwei weitere quasi Möglichkeiten, sich trotz der genannten Restriktionen in einer Gesellschaft doch durchzusetzen, die den Frauen auf ihrem Werdegang etliche Hürden in den Weg zu stellen scheint.“ (Karakus, 2007, p.152). The path achieved by Sibel couples education with her artistic talent. Her talent provides her with a career as she goes on to become an art teacher, thus Sibel exemplifies in one aspect the extraordinary qualities a woman must have in order to pave their way into society. The other way embodied by Melike, who possessed more active qualities such as stubbornness from an early age, an exception among her family and in society and her non- conformist attitude has permitted her to progress in life as she also is able to get an education. Although the path of education is promoted in both texts as a suitable form of emancipation as demonstrated by these two sisters and is forwarded by the narrator’s grandmother as well, the point that it doesn’t necessarily have to be the only form of emancipation is reiterated here as Özdamar offers an alternative through the other female figures of the narrative who serve to liberate the narrator just as much.

Female emancipation is essentially made dependent on the individual characteristics of the woman, a notion iterated by Karakus, as „Der gesellschaftliche Rahmen wird nicht als ein bestimmender Faktor behandelt, sondern erscheint hier im Gegensatz zum Werk von Özakın als Kulisse.“ (Karakus, 2007, p.152). Similarly in ‚Karawanserei‘, “at no stage does Ozdamar attribute her problems solely to the specific culture in which she is growing up.” (Horrocks, 1996, p.37**).** In this sense, a parallel can be drawn to the two texts as in both the patriarchal society in which both the families of both texts live in serve as a backdrop and that alone and thus to ultimately illustrate how the obstacles presented to them can be overcome.

Through the portrayal of the family, more specifically the three sisters, the novel thus underlines how women during this period had to distinguish themselves by means of extraordinary qualities in order to break out of the barriers of small-town society and to create a free space for themselves. The path of education is shown to be a way in which a woman can guarantee themselves a position in society contrasted with Gül, whose path was determined, leading her to never achieving happiness. However, besides highlighting the emancipation of Sibel and Melike, the significance of Gül’s role as a maternal figure should not be ignored nor be considered as an alternative to female emancipation. The events of Gül’s life are certainly made to be contrasted with that of her sisters; they are able to choose what they want to do and marry partners of their own choice, choices that were not permissible to Gül. Yet, the emancipation of the two younger sisters could not have been facilitated without Gül assuming the maternal figure, allowing them to ultimately determine their own paths as they did not have to bear the responsibilities of maintaining the domestic keepings of the household. Özdagan thus emphasizes the importance of the maternal figure and paints the stark reality of many migrant mothers, who give their entire lives to providing for their families typically at the expense of their own happiness and the chance of self- emancipation. In relation to ‘*Karawanserei’*, the narrator’s grandmother can also be interpreted as serving a similar role as she arguably assumes the role of the paternal mother even more so than the narrator’s own mother, as it is the relationship with the grandmother in which the two can confide in each other and establish “independent niches in their lives,” (Horrocks, 1996, p.36). In this sense, the comparison that can be drawn here is the significance of the ‘mother’ role is reiterated in both texts. Although not the narrator’s actual mother in ‘Karawanserei’ and it is Gul who assumes the maternal role for her sisters, the role of the mother is filled and alleviates the ‘children’ (Gul’s sisters and the narrator of ‘Karawanserei’) to achieve emancipation albeit in different forms.

Although both texts primarily revolve around the narratives of the central female protagonists, other family members like the narrator’s grandfather Ahmet serve to provide his views and by extension the older generations attitudes towards traditional gender roles. It is evident that women are still combating the nature of the patriarchal structures that are still in place which includes the oppressive nature of religious implications. This is exemplified most extremely through the grandfather Ahmet. He alludes to an older time, a more violent age exhibited by the knives, whips and rusting swords hung up on his wall. Also, the story in which he kills one of his wives in a violent manner, tying her hair to the tail of a horse and dragging her till she eventually dies is a prime of example of the old patriarchal principles and its extremity’s. Although an obvious hideous act, what can be seen is a development in regard to societies thoughts and attitudes towards such violent patriarchal implements, as Ahmet has repented for his actions by the 1950s and seems to have made peace with the protagonist’s mother, who was the daughter of the wife he killed. Despite there being peace between Ahmet and the protagonist’s mother, Mustafa still considers him “…ein unbarmherziger Bandit”. **(**Özdamar, 2005, p.307.)

Despite this, Ahmet’s views on traditional gender roles act as a contradiction to the former idea that his old patriarchal views and attitudes have changed and perhaps him repenting the act of killing his wife was for the sake of maintaining peace among the extended family would be more feasible. When he goes to visit the family when they are living just outside Ankara, he instructs his granddaughter not to tread her feet so heavily when she’s walking as doing so would instigate the arousal of men. Additionally, he advises the two brothers on how they should treat their future wives to the extent where beating them is acceptable. After many instances like this that, Özdamar refrains from making any authorial comment. The only form of criticism instead comes from Ayse, who condemns Ahmet as ‘unbarmherziger’. Although Ahmet can be considered as a form of an anachronism, his views are never questioned, and the granddaughter is succumbed to suffering in silence. This particularly illustrates how the status of women within Turkish society still remains inferior as many women are still expected to uphold certain expectations after marriage, despite how much they seem to be protected during their youth.

Male members of the family also depict the expectations and roles of the man conditioned by their gender. The father of the narrator in ‘Karawanserei’ in many ways exhibits the typical traits assumed by a father in a Turkish society. He frequently will use physical abuse as a consequence of his daughter challenging social norms that are expected of her and he assumes the active role of trying to provide for his family as they relocate from place to place as a result of Turkey’s unstable economy during the 1950’s to the 70’s. Although his role is very much determined by his gender, the implications of Westernization of Turkish middle-class society are clearly indicated by the acts of the father as he seemingly loses his Muslim identity and visits brothels and drinks alcohol to deal with not being able to provide for his family’s monetary needs. Additionally, it is evident that Westernization has had some obvious influences on his lifestyle and desires. The father’s Chevrolet and his sporting of dark glasses are indicative of his attraction to the ideals of America and Hollywood. This notion is also consistent in the character of Fuat, who also wishes to achieve materialist wealth and is infatuated with images of Westernization after watching American movies- he is obsessed with cars, the image of drinking whiskey, moving away somewhere and he also drinks to numb his hardships and the disappointment of his failure to achieve this.

Ozdamar depicts in many ways an accurate depiction of a traditional father figure among a Turkish society but also is able to portray the implications of the historical context as it influences the father and ultimately the fate of the family as they are in a constant state of relocation. The fact that the impact of Westernization has such a carryover across both the characters of Fuat and the narrator’s father illustrates the prospect of many other men who ultimately chase financial prosperity, leading many moving to Germany in search for work.

The father of Gül can be examined in stark contrast to that of the narrator’s father in ‘Karawanserei’. Timur and his relationship with his daughter Gül is one that was marked with love and tenderness from the outset and he very much played a role in his daughter’s upbringing as he welcomes her into his workshop and the two bond over his trade:

* Er [Timur] hat sie [Gül] gern um sich, meine Tochter, die meine Uhr gefunden hat, nennt er sie, oder auch die Tochter des Schmieds Timur, er nennt sie Schatz und meine Rose und Glanz meiner Augen, wie ihre Mutter es häufig getan hat. Oft nimmt er sie mit, wenn er etwas zu tun hat, er freut sich, wenn sie in die Schmiede kommt. Egal, worum er sie bittet, sie sagt nie, sie habe keine Lust, wie Melike es häufig tut. **(**Özdogan, 2005, p.96)

After their mother’s death, Timur quickly remarries another woman. In one aspect this act can be seen to adhere to Turkish tradition by which the significance of the maternal role is important in a Turkish household but when viewed more subjectively, this act can be considered as a sincere gesture by Timur as to not burden his daughter with the responsibility of assuming the maternal role which unfortunately becomes the case.

Although Timur can be held in stark contrast to the narrator’s father in ‘Karawanserei’ as he is considerably a much better father who provides for his family, a commonality between the two can be seen as Timur spent his younger days in Istanbul getting drunk, portraying it as an escape from death, marriage and the harsh reality of the responsibilities of being a father. Much like there are societal expectations for females to adhere to and assume certain roles, there is very much an expectation of males and particularly fathers to be the provider for their family and there are also immense pressures that come along with such a role, given also the context of Westernization and Modernization which can act as obstacles and in order to deal with these pressures the two fathers indulge in the act of drinking. Perhaps a notion that is looked over in the two texts that primarily centralize around the hardships of the female protagonists, but one that should be acknowledged as to illustrate an accurate portrayal of many migrant families.

Emine Sevgi Özdamar’s and Selim Özdogan are authors of two migrant pieces of literature that aim to not only depict the realities of migrant families in which female members of Islamic society are subject to adhere to certain expectations but to also debunk certain stereotypes attributed onto Turkish women and thus prevent them from being viewed in this way by the reader. This is achieved through the representation of the families in both texts, that consist of females who have been able to pave their own path by achieving different forms of emancipation within a societal framework that in many ways would allow them not to.

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