In search of a lost past: David Horrocks

* Intro: in many ways, the novel can be considered as a departure from the traditional works of Turkish writers, not only in its linguistic choice, style and length, but also within 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, yet here Ozdamar writes about a migration of a different kind.
* From the perspective of first-person female narrator, Ozdamar explores the theme of childhood and adolescence as the protagonist and her family travel through Turkey as they follow their father and his desperate need for work.
* The family… members/ relationship can all be explored… generational difference/ impact of westernization/ modernization/ reclaim of female voice/ present views

Images of Turkish society and History **WESTERNIZATION**

* Follows family as they are in a state of constant relocation, following their father and his search for employment. Through their hardship and by displaying the insecure nature of their existence, Ozdamar is able to portray the impacts of Westernization and the repercussions it has had on post- war Turkey.
* Parents’ generation- some obvious influence on their lifestyle/ desires: attractiveness of the America/ Hollywood indicated by father’s Chevrolet and sporting dark glasses. Mother also takes inspiration as she curls her straight hair appearing ‘as if she had lots of thick macaroni on her head’.
* Both parents frequent the cinema to see their favorite actors eg. Ava Kartener, Humprey Pockart and Erol Flayn.

Images of women

* Feature women, who act as a counter to the stereotypes typically exhibited in the West regarding their roles in Islamic society.
* Abundance of strong independent female figures, who form their lives despite the surrounding pressures of social and religious conformity.
* 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, also how they have been granted rights in the educational and political sphere, new laws in regard to polygamy. On the other hand: still combating the nature of the patriarchal structures that are still in place which also includes the oppressive nature of religious implications.
* Exemplified most extremely through the attitude and actions of the grandfather Ahmet, who also provides his view and by extension the older generations attitudes towards traditional gender roles. 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 ‘a merciless bandit’ which can reinforce societies shift in attitude as Mustafa still disapproves of Ahmet’s past actions.
* However, 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 2 brothers on how they should treat their future wives to the extent where beating them is acceptable.
* After many instances like this that, Ozdamar refrains from making any authorial comment. The only form of criticism instead comes from Ayse, who condemns Ahmet as ‘merciless’.
* 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.
* **SEXUALITY**
* interactions between family members used to express the nature of female sexuality and how it is controlled. For example, when the narrator is walking with her father and is slapped across the face for seemingly looking at a boy for too long and her grandmother and mother deem this as acceptable. **‘Don’t cry, wherever your father strikes you in the face, a rose will bloom’.** Her mother adds: **‘Any man who doesn’t slap his daughter ends up slapping himself on the knees’.**
* fathers/ mothers etc. expectation on their daughters still follow customs that have integrated into their societal structures that are still present through tradition.
* Additionally, the euphemism of the ‘little box’ used here in reference to the vagina is a clear indicator of the freedom that is granted to girls in comparison to boys. ‘you are always taking your little box out for a walk’ whereas ‘the lads can promenade their wares’.
* Despite the controlling customs which have been implemented on to the narrator, she still is granted a considerable amount freedom. She frequently ventures out into the streets of Bursa, where she plays with other boys by the river and would usually not return home until 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 ‘will grow a willy’, 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 her attraction to the outside world, rather than being content with the domestic sphere of the household. **LINK**
* The young narrator’s behavior seems to have 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, Ozdamar is presenting an instance where woman been able to ‘establish independent niches in their lives’, through familial solidarity, despite still being in a male dominated culture.
* Here Ozdamar, through representation of the relationship between the grandmother and narrator, 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’, a notion that remains widespread among feminist thinking.
* it is apparent that the women in the novel, who have adopted a Western lifestyle appear to be the loneliest and 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 no apparent smell of cooking seems to arise from the homes where these women are confined to.
* In stark contrast, Ozdamar 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 warm light-hearted nature.
* Through the exploration of the narrator’s sexuality as she enters puberty, we can derive that although the culture in which she inhabits still exercises forms of oppression and control, she is still able to find some kind of benefit through her relations with the other women of her family or the ‘mad women’ she associates herself with.
* Despite getting an education being a form of female emancipation, as forwarded by her grandmother: ‘Sister, study your books, so that you don’t end up having to wash your husbands’ feet’, these relationships with other females also serve to liberate her in a different way…