



The Bridge of the Golden Horn

Emine Sevgi Özdamar , Martin Chalmers (Translator)

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In 1966, at the age of 16, our unnamed heroine leaves her native Istanbul and signs up as a migrant worker in Germany. Lying about her age, she gets work on an assembly line in West Berlin making radios, and lives in a women's factory hostel.

'The Bridge of the Golden Horn' is a witty, picaresque account of a precocious teenager refusing to become wise; of a hectic four years lived between Berlin and Istanbul; of a young woman who is obsessed by theatre, film, poetry and left-wing politics.

The Bridge of the Golden Horn Details

Date : Published 2007 by Serpent's Tail (first published 1998)

ISBN : 9781852429324

Author : Emine Sevgi Özdamar , Martin Chalmers (Translator)

Format : Paperback 258 pages

Genre : Asian Literature, Turkish Literature, Historical, Historical Fiction, Fiction, Novels, Contemporary

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From Reader Review The Bridge of the Golden Horn for online ebook

Riet says

Dit boek gaat over de eerste jaren van de Turkse gastarbeiders in Duitsland, Berlijn in dit geval. De schrijfster heeft het zelf allemaal meegemaakt en weet het goed en soms heel vermakelijk te beschrijven. Vooral haar beschrijving over het leren van de Duitse taal en de Duitse gewoontes is heel humoristisch. In het tweede deel van het boek is ze weer terug in Istanbul en beschrijft dan de situatie daar in 1968, toen er overal in West-Europa studentenopstanden waren. Kennelijk deden ze in Turkije ook mee. Dat was mij niet bekend. Een leuk en ook wel leerzaam boek.

Bill says

this novel is about a teenaged girl who lives between istanbul and berlin,loses her virginity and becomes a socialist.it was ok but could have been a lot better.unfortunately,i found the author's writing style to be fairly boring and repetitious in parts.maybe other readers would like it better.

Annegret says

As Europe goes through political upheavals a young turkish girl comes to Berlin and learns about love, big ideas and herself. I wouldn't go so far as to call it an enjoyable read but it was insightful, lyrical, beautiful and showed a world that's so far away from my reality. Recommended.

Andrea says

I found this quite exhausting, it is a constant flow of those strange images and ideas that enter your head so many times a day, the beautiful reflections on a puddle, a chance phrase, a funny comparison, a face, an author you try to remember to read later... Never does it stop to think, to really feel, to self-reflect. There is no depth, only surface. Written by a young woman who is clearly beautiful and desirable as she flits around Berlin and Istanbul being beautiful and desirable with no depth and no intellectual growth and no real or lasting connections to people. It sort of feeds into my general impressions of actresses and beautiful women and I really hate that. Not even the harsh realities of Turkey in the 1960s and police repression could save it, nothing felt real.

She did quote one of my favourite Neruda poems, *Verde que te quiero, verde*, I'm not sure if that made me happy or sad, and had a great chapter heading 'A Cigarette is the Most Important Prop of a Socialist'.

Tadzio Koelb says

From my review for the New Statesman:

"At times a prose poem, at others a laborious index of minutiae, partly autobiographical, and with a hint of political confession, *The Bridge of the Golden Horn* is by turns beautiful, infuriating, funny and obtuse. Those who love Georges Perec's *Life: a User's Manual* will find some of its charms here in a sort of reverse. While Perec describes a single moment as if it were an epic, Özdamar presents half a decade as if it were a single moment, and the past as an indivisible unit."

Read the rest of it at <http://www.newstatesman.com/books/200...>

Jeffrey says

There are several questions I pose to myself when I read a book I don't like that has been translated from another language: Is the reason I don't like it because of the way it has been translated—the attempt to translate the original stylistic intent of the author having failed. Or does the seed of my dissatisfaction begin with the author's style?

Almost 10 years ago I attempted to read Ozdamar's book *Life is a Caravansary* in a class in a doctoral program at Bosphorus University. I found it unreadable, and I can't remember why, but I know that every one of the students in my seminar felt the same way. The professor, a fine person who was well educated somewhere in the States, was shocked. Later. After reading reviews of the book on Goodreads, it's not surprising. Don Vyteta had the book in his top ten books that have been translated, and Jeff Bursey at Rain Taxi rating it a one star.

I'm not shocked at either response after reading *The Bridge of the Golden Horn*. I have a middling view of the book but there's nothing muddled about my criticism or my praise.

The first section of this non-fiction autobiography spiced with poetic bildungsroman uses vague language and word repetition. The vague and sometimes irritating qualities of the writing in the beginning of this book are related to the nature of Turkish written in German and then translated into English. She is trying to use Turkish grammatical constructs to express how her voice is trapped in Germany in a Turkish bubble. Sound difficult? Some say it's impossible, and I have to agree with them. The comma splices, weird grammar and non-specific nature of the language in the *Gastarbeiter* section were frustrating. Any number of times I thought: This book is a vexation. I'm getting rid of it. Rendering inarticulation is a formidable task, and I salute Akdamar's attempt, even if I don't feel it was successful. More importantly, I'm glad I kept reading.

If the reader is patient, the style becomes clearer and more concrete as it goes on. The book becomes articulate. In turn the pleasure builds because the English language loves the concrete and the specific. One also appreciates the directness of her speech. She speaks freely and openly about issue related to *namus*, which is the traditional social code that still very much exists in Turkey. At first speaks of her virginity as her 'diamond,' using a poetic flourish that most probably comes from the ornate tradition of Ottoman Turkish. Then the word *orgasm* finds its way into the conversation, until she's unsparing in her description of her sexual life, which becomes very active. I suppose she can speak like this because she is as much German by the end of the book as Turkish, but I found the directness refreshing as I am reading Ozdamar in the Turkish context as I lived and experienced it. Turkish literature tends not just to the vague in English but often the Baroque. Writing in German allows her a directness of speech that might not have been possible in her mother tongue.

I also enjoyed this book because it is so difficult to find material in English that really describes what Turks call the '68 generation. Özdamar becomes a communist, and the deep anxiety, fear, even claustrophobia of the period in which the leftist Deniz Gezmi? and his friends were running wild like revolutionary bandits, kidnapping and then releasing American GIs and eventually being caught and hung by a Military Junta that took power, is my favorite section of the whole book. She catches the feeling of the times.

Many a general reader will have problems with this book without understanding the context it was written from. We have no problem reading the great English language novels of today from the Indian subcontinent

because they are written in English simmered in the great British novelistic tradition. English is their mother tongue. It binds the educated classes of India together. The Bridge of the Golden Horn is seriously flawed, but a bit of knowledge of Turkey and patience go a long way to providing some sense of satisfaction by the end.

Jenna says

"It's difficult for me to comment on Sevgi's writing because I love it, and analysing something you love is a daft activity. Of course she's a story-teller, an irresistible all-night story-teller, and late in the morning wakes up telling another story. And when you hear them, you realise the extent of the emptiness they have filled." - John Berger, "About Badness"

Saranga says

Extremely fast paced. Between two pages, you will have traveled to Berlin from Istanbul and back. Initially, I was quite disturbed by the speed of the narration but once you get adjusted, you find the story compelling and thrilling. It's a story of a turkish young girl on her way to discover herself, her ideas, beliefs and is obsessed with theatre, communism and love. Ther era is the good ol' 60s. You get to understand the political scenario of europe and especially turkey. Makes a good read.

Matt says

This was another one I picked up off the new release wall, kind of curious about Turkish culture and all that, and this one, ostensibly about a young woman who is an economic migrant to Berlin, was close enough to what I know from reading Pamuk that I thought I might like it.

And I do like it, but I feel like it's too very different books, sort of stuffed together. The stuff in Berlin is all in the first half, which is kind of a book about finding love and following art in the late sixties in Berlin. It reminded me a little of the second part of Persepolis mixed with a little of the Highsmith I read. It's got some funny takes on morality and the main character's desire to lose her virginity, it's got strong characters who are very idiosyncratic and has some great set pieces. The first section of that part of the book is great-- these weird little lyrical sections that are beautiful and strange and give voice to a collective experience, a we, as often as they do to a singular speaker. The later two chapters aren't as good-- there are attempts to be artful, like the weird conceit of people in love doubling, sort of to show how you watch yourself when you're in love, but I felt that awkward; if it worked, I would love it, but here I didn't feel it did work.

The second half of the book sees narrator return home to Istambul and become radicalized as the country does. The poetic lyricism of the first section is mostly abandoned to make room for the politics, which are no doubt admirable but a little trenchant-- the narrator is left-socialist, but that's a hard story to tell from this distance, because it doesn't turn out well-- the last chapter is about the crackdown, about the torture of artists and students and police leaving bloody footprints, and you really can't come back from that, nor do things get any better, really. It's just a slog.

I believe in the portrait, btw; It feels very real, and it's a chapter of history, greater Europe's reaction to the student movements of the sixties and seventies that I feel more and more like I don't understand, and I'm

always interested. But it really does feel like a totally different book than the one I read under the same cover. And it's a book that I don't think I like quite as much.

So, a good book, but one that works a bit at cross-purposes, at least to me, and one in which the political commitments are no doubt sincere, but left unresolved by the book's conclusion.

Madeline says

Well - I don't quite know what I think about *The Bridge of the Golden Horn*. It reminds me a bit of this French movie, *La faute à Fidel!*, which is a charming movie about a very young girl in the 1970s. This book has some of the same exuberance and high-spirits, although I think it aims for a more universalist feeling (I might be too easily fooled by "nameless protagonists"). There's an underlayer of violence and grit that this book has which, I think, the movie lacks.

The style, at least in translation, is abrupt and stream-of-consciousness. I don't know if it really worked for me - I think it alienated me more from the heroine than something a little smoother in style and tone might have done, although as a technique I found it valuable. Also, I tend to prefer reflective characters and there don't seem to be any in this book, only obsessed ones.

But I still found it intriguing - perhaps if I'd read it in one sitting, it seems like the kind of book that would reward that kind of momentum, I would have less complicated feelings about it.

Berseri says

Puke! A brainless and disgusting book=/

Joey Diamond says

When I started reading this I felt giddy with discovering how good it is. Like a secret treat I had found. Ozdamar is such a master of voice, she creates this character (herself?) I just wanted to hear everything from but she also put great voices into all her other characters. It's hard to articulate why I like this tale of a young Turkish woman in the 1960s so much but I do. It is loving and knowing about radicalism and foolishness and the foolishness of radicals. And it's very very funny. And there is fucking. Set in Berlin and Istanbul.

M. T. Moscariello says

Un linguaggio semplice, o forse si potrebbe definire infantile, ma davvero poco ordinario, costellato di frasi poetiche, è quello che caratterizza il racconto di alcuni anni di vita della protagonista, che narra le sue vicende in prima persona, ma in uno stile freddo e impersonale, a volte meccanico. Ci sono pochi dati precisi: all'inizio del romanzo la protagonista è ancora un'adolescente quando decide di andare in Germania per lavorare per poter un giorno diventare un'attrice; lì diventa socialista, ma più per aggregazione che per convinzione; in seguito l'aspetto politico diventerà sempre più predominante nella sua vita, e al ritorno in Turchia - attraversando più e più volte il Corno d'Oro che separa l'Asia dall'Europa e le due anime di Istanbul

- la sua storia sarà sempre più legata alla storia stessa di questo paese e al suo impegno politico. Gli anni descritti partono all'incirca dal '65, e l'ultima data citata è il 21 novembre 1975: anni importanti per l'Europa e la Turchia stessa, ricchi di movimenti studenteschi e proteste dei lavoratori, e durante i quali la Turchia vive il suo secondo colpo di stato (12 marzo 1971).

Un romanzo non da tutti sia per lo stile che per gli argomenti trattati, ma utile nell'esplorare sia la storia che la letteratura di questo paese.

Michael says

Written when Ozdamar was in her early 50s, this picaresque, semi-autobiographical novel is an account of a young girl's intellectual and sexual coming of age from the mid-60's into the 70's. Arriving as a "guest worker" in West Berlin in 1966, her story shifts between Berlin, Paris and Istanbul. She shares a world of multiple identities/roles, enriched rather than compromised by languages, cultures, the flux and intensity of lived experience.

atemschaukel says

Herta Müller' in Türk versiyonu. Ve ne yazık ki kendi ülkesinde s?n?rl? bir cevrenin haberi var bu yazardan
