

Theoretical Cross-Fertilization: Barad's Intra-Action and Cross-Cultural Studies

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1. Introduction

In 1994, German studies¹ Scholar Leslie Adelson published an article that proved to be as influential as it was timeless, for the predicaments described by her are still, or again, prevalent when discussing issues of cultural belonging in Germany and elsewhere today. As much as the 1990s – even if amidst rightwing attacks – set out hopeful notions of overcoming these conflicts, the recent rise of right-wing parties and renewed violence against people perceived as culturally foreign proves that a new intervention is needed.

This article's main aim is to exemplify how Karen Barad's theory of agential realism can be adopted to enrich theories of intercultural German studies, where traditionally the *inter* stands for exchanges between people of two cultural groups, while *intra* would refer to exchanges within the same cultural group. This differentiation already underscores the danger of essentializing that frequently accompanies attempts to foster respect for people of different cultural backgrounds. Barad's concept of intra-action offers a fruitful path out of this predicament. It also creates possibilities for including exchanges between humans and non-humans in cross-cultural studies, which so far have been unjustly overlooked, and helps to weaken the artificial walls built between the humanities (proclaimed as academic fields primarily engaging with humans) and the natural sciences (proclaimed as academic fields primarily exploring non-human objects).

1 German Studies is the term widely used for the study of German language, literature and cultures in the US and other English-speaking countries. Compared to *Germanistik*, as the study of German language and literature is referred to in Germany and German-speaking countries, the term German Studies encompasses more of a cultural studies approach and a wider range of interdisciplinary topics.

2. “Opposing Oppositions”

In her article with the telling title “Opposing Oppositions,” Adelson makes a stand against opposing notions of Turkish vs. German and inquires what “methodological alternatives a multiculturally oriented German studies has to offer” to the asserted “shortcomings of intercultural Germanistik², historical constructions of both Turkish and German identity, and contemporary dilemmas of multicultural literary analysis” (Adelson 1994: 306). Adelson criticizes methods of “intercultural Germanistik” as reinforcing fixed poles, thus creating oppositions instead of pointing to the construction and fluidity of identity concepts:

By stressing the communicability of difference and perpetuating a model that seeks to teach ‘them’ how to understand ‘us,’ interkulturelle Germanistik feigns interest in literary text and cultural context but effectively privileges author and reader as fixed poles in a supposed exchange of meaning. This leaves it helpless to account for the various ways in which culture is propelled by the ongoing production and displacement of unstable differences. Nor can it account for the historical-political functions to which such slippage attains. (Adelson 1994: 306)

Adelson cites David Bathrick’s “permanent border action” as a “theoretical strategy concerned with questions of power and cultural representation” (Bathrick 1992: 322 cited in Adelson 1994: 306) and refers to Homi Bhabha’s concept of hybridity, which at that time was able to offer scholarship a new framework for thinking out of binary oppositions and advanced the field of cultural studies. Bhabha famously describes his ideas through the image of the stairwell:

The stairwell as liminal space, in-between the designations of identity, becomes the process of symbolic interaction, the connective tissue that constructs the difference between upper and lower, black and white. The hither and thither of the stairwell, the temporal movement and passage that it allows, prevents identities at either end of it from settling into primordial polarities. This interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy. (Bhabha 1994: 3–4)

Adopting Bhabha for the context of “Turkish-German relations,” Adelson accentuates the “fundamental ambivalence of identity.” She concludes: “This holds for the identity of a given ‘self’ as much as it does for the identity of a marginal ‘other’.” (Adelson 1994: 307) Texts, according to her, “are no longer seen as discrete cultural artifacts but as open-discursive processes infused with sociality[.] [C]ultural studies explore the production of culture as fundamentally hybrid, liminal, and performative” (ibid.: 306–307). Through her analysis of Sten Nadolny’s novel “Selim oder die Gabe der

2 Adelson uses the term *Germanistik* to emphasize that she refers to the scholarship stemming from German-speaking countries.

Rede” (Nadolny 1990), Adelson shows how German and Turkish history are intertwined. An idea that she further explored in her article entitled “Touching Tales of Turks, Germans, and Jews: Cultural Alterity, Historical Narrative, and Literary Riddles for the 1990s” in which she turns her attention to shared and entangled pasts (Adelson 2000).

Although Adelson’s intervention has been influential and undoubtedly made a difference in the field of Turkish-German studies, as much as Bhabha’s concept of hybridity made a difference in the field of cultural studies, scholarship in the field of intercultural German studies, unfortunately, has not ceased to operate with oppositions. This might be attributed to the fact that binary thinking is too prevalent. Yet it might also indicate that concepts such as hybridity still rely on the poles they derive from. Even if those poles are delineated as hybrid in themselves, their hybridity is mostly described as a compound of two predecessors. This might be a simplifying misreading of Bhabha’s original theory but it has been inscribed in the praxis of intercultural scholarship.³

Whereas Adelson’s text from 1994 can hardly be criticized for inquiring about the “relationship” between “Turks and the German Past” (Adelson 1994: 321), from today’s standpoint it rather has to be credited as a milestone that needs to be built on – as relationships still require at least two entities. Karen Barad’s concept of intra-action offers a way of incorporating the potential of the concept of hybridity, while at the same time providing a vantage point from which to progress further. While ideas of performativity still play a role in Barad’s work, Barad is less concerned with the shifting of identities or borders. In fact, pre-relational boundaries do not exist. The same is true of individual boundaries and agency: they are created in certain settings, and they are not only created discursively, but bodily. I will explore this further in staying with Adelson’s topic of the Turkish guest worker, yet with a stronger focus on material implications.

3. Guests in the Machine⁴

Whereas Karen Barad’s work has been well received in the field of feminist studies, it has not yet been applied to the field of intercultural studies with the

3 Cross-Cultural Studies is commonly used as the English equivalent of the German field of *Interkulturelle Studien*. In this article, I use the term *intercultural Germanistik* as Adelson in her programmatic article did. I mainly refer to scholarship that was produced in the context of *interkulturelle Literaturwissenschaft* (intercultural literary studies) or *interkulturelle Literaturdidaktik* (intercultural literary didactics/pedagogy).

4 I borrow this expression from Kerry Howley who uses it to describe the living conditions of guest workers in Singapore (Howley 2007).

important exception of a 2016 article by German studies scholar Margaret Littler (Littler 2016) which I will explore in more depth below. In the following, I will show how Barad's concept of agential realism initiates much-needed interventions in the field of intercultural studies. For a number of reasons, I will turn to the figure of the guest worker, more specifically the Turkish guest worker in Germany, as an example. First of all, the Turkish guest worker is a pivotal sociological and, by now, historical figure that has been widely depicted in literature and film, as it plays a central role in post-war Germany's debates around cultural belonging. Secondly, the figure of the guest worker represents a human as part of machinery. Thirdly, the figure of the guest worker cannot be interpreted in different fields without situating it in a wider discourse. I will illustrate how literature and literary studies (although the argument can be extended to the visual arts and their academic fields respectively) offer opportunities to question boundaries on a thematic as well as a structural level and how Barad's agential realism gives room for a range of interpretational approaches.

In 1975, the writer, artist, and art critic John Berger published the study "A Seventh Man." He writes:

Migrant workers do the most menial jobs. Their chances of promotion are exceedingly poor. When they work in gangs, it is arranged that they work together as foreigners. Equal working relationships to indigenous workers are kept to a minimum. The migrant workers have a different language, a different culture and different short term interests. They are immediately identifiable – not as individuals – but as a group (or a series of national groups). As a group they are at the bottom of every scale: wages, type of work, job security, housing, education, purchasing power. (Berger et al. 1975: 253)

As is obvious from the title and cover photograph⁵, Berger restricts his study to the male guest worker. While male guest workers were the first to arrive in Germany, female guest workers followed shortly thereafter. They occupied an even lower rank than the male guest workers. Both male and female guest workers were first placed in gender-separated special hostels, where a number of them shared a room with bunk beds.⁶ In her novel "The Bridge of the Golden Horn" (1998), renowned Turkish-German writer Emine Sevgi Özdamar puts the experiences of first generation female guest workers on the stage. It seems consequential (as an implicit acknowledgment of the shortcomings of Berger's initial focus on male guest workers) that the foreword to the English translation was provided by John Berger, who describes Özdamar as an "irresistible, all-night story-teller" who "late in the morning wakes up telling another story" (Berger). Özdamar has frequently been cited for her

5 The photographs for the study were taken by Jean Mohr.

6 A very resourceful documentation of the Turkish guest worker migration has been published by Eryılmaz and Jamin 1998. DOMiD, the Documentation Centre and Museum of Migration in Germany, has been archiving objects that document migration to Germany in general (<https://domid.org>; last accessed April 29, 2020).

associations with the word *guest worker* through which the inherent contradiction in the term is blatantly brought to attention: “The word: ‘guest worker.’ I always see two people in front of me: one is a guest and sits there, and the other one is working.”⁷ (Özdamar 1993)

In her comprehensive analysis of “The Bridge of the Golden Horn”, Margaret Littler was the first to link a cultural studies approach (influenced by Leslie Adelson’s interventions⁸) with the work of Gilles Deleuze and situate it in a larger context of material studies for which Karen Barad’s work has been influential. Littler’s thorough reading of the novel and its aesthetics in the context of Deleuze’s “Powers of the False” and machinic agency leads her to conclude that the novel’s “non-representational aesthetics” (Littler 2016: 294) cannot be reduced to a “familiar narrative of migrant labour” (ibid.: 290). Rather, it opens up a “world’s potential to become” (ibid.: 312). My reading of the novel in the context of human and machine builds on and profits from Littler’s profound analysis (with a stronger emphasis on Barad’s work) while differing from it in a number of ways:

Although my argument is embedded in the larger field of material studies, in which machinic agency plays an important part, my main focus here is narrow rather than broad, which is to engage with Barad’s agential realism to enrich the field of intercultural literary studies as a way to explore potential interactions and intersections in both fields within German studies. What I specifically want to draw attention to is Barad’s concept of intra-action as a border-making practice. Intercultural literary studies has focused on the connection of separate (cultural) entities that had not been connected before, while Barad (and material studies more generally) point us to the entanglements that have only artificially been separated in dualistic thinking. As Barad explains with reference to physics experiments, entities do not pre-exist, they are created in an apparatus that encompasses the experiment as much as the researcher. I want to go further than showing that humans and machines are entangled in an assemblage à la Deleuze (and Guattari). Though Littler seems to use these two terms interchangeably, insisting on the differences between the two is of vital importance in my approach. Last but not least, where Littler applies Deleuze’s “Powers of the False” to describe Özdamar’s narrative technique as non-representational, I use the term *poetic alterity* (*poetische Alterität*) as introduced by Norbert Mecklenburg. While there are overlaps between falsifying narration and poetic alterity, the former focuses on narration inspired by film, while the latter is established in the field of intercultural studies, thus enabling the cross-fertilization of intercultural studies and material studies.

7 My translation (Y.D.-Y.). Original: “Das Wort ‘Gastarbeiter’: Ich liebe dieses Wort, ich sehe vor mir immer zwei Personen, eine sitzt da als Gast, und die andere arbeitet.”

8 Littler’s main point of reference is Adelson’s 2005 study “The Turkish Turn in Contemporary German Literature” (2005).

The importance of poetic alterity in the context of intercultural literary studies has been repeatedly emphasized by Norbert Mecklenburg. According to Mecklenburg, poetic alterity finds its expression in any literary depiction that precludes a one-sided interpretation of a literary text and thus evokes several possible meanings. These can be (among others) voids, contradictory utterances that can be expressed through free indirect discourse, and utterances that are reminiscent of other utterances, such as unlabeled intertextual references.⁹ All of the above can be applied to obtain humorous effects. While cultural alterity is represented on the thematic level of the text, poetic alterity is part of the particularly-literary structure of the text. The interplay of both forms of alterity in a literary text will enhance the likeliness of gaining intercultural competency through the study of literature. Mecklenburg devotes a chapter to interculturalism and humor in the texts of Özdamar, where he describes the “Bridge of the Golden Horn” as a *female picaresque novel* (“weiblicher Schelmenroman”) (Mecklenburg 2008: 509).

In “The Bridge of the Golden Horn,” Özdamar humorously describes how female guest workers spend their lives in the factory and the hostel. The hostel for female guest workers is referred to as *Frauenwohnheim* (hostel for women), but by spelling the word *Wohnheim* in a way that points to the articulation with a Turkish accent (*Wonaym*), it is being alienated. Alienation and humor are not only thematic but structural means through which literature creates polysemy. The English translation uses *hossel* instead of the correct *hostel*. The Turkish guest workers speak Turkish to each other, but they incorporate the German word *Wohnheim* as if it were a Turkish word. The *hossel* as well as the factory are gendered spaces. The working women are the majority, led by the German male *Herscher* and the Turkish male translator who also resides in the *hossel*. While harassment of the female guest workers is depicted elsewhere in the novel, female characters are still not shown as victims. On the contrary, the protagonist, a young girl who dreams of becoming a theater actress, regards losing her diamond, a metaphor for her virginity, as a means of becoming a good actress. Sexuality, thus, is not something that can be taken away from her, but something that empowers her to progress.

Power relations are also illustrated in a similarly humorous way:

“The factory boss’s name was Herr Schering. Sherin, said the women, they also said Sher. Then they stuck Herr to Sher, so that some women called him Herschering or Herscher.” (Özdamar 2007: 7) Here, a seemingly coincidental occurrence opens up a discursive field of power relations and exploitation. Calling the factory boss *Herscher* (which reads as *Herrscher*, the German word for *ruler* can be considered an act of mimicry in Bhabha’s

9 Norbert Mecklenburg contextualizes the concept of poetic alterity in detail in his chapter on the relation between cultural and poetic alterity (Mecklenburg 2008: 213–237). He especially points out the relevance of Bakhtinian dialogism (ibid.: 229–230).

sense.¹⁰ The language of the people in power is subverted through the means of the guest workers' language abilities in the majority language to call out the exploitative act while at the same time ridiculing the ones in power. This can be further exemplified through a close reading of the following sequence:

We all worked in the radio factory, each one of us had to have a magnifying glass in our right eye while we were working. Even when we came back to the *hossel* in the evening, we looked at one another or the potatoes we were peeling with our right eye. A button came off, the women sewed the button on again with a wide-open right eye. The left eye always narrowed and remained half shut. We also slept with the left eye a little screwed up, and at five o'clock in the morning, when we were looking for our trousers or skirts in the semi-darkness, I saw that, like me, the other women were looking only with their right eye. (Özdamar 2007: 6–7)

In this description of the work done by the guest workers in the factory and its effect on their lives outside the factory, three aspects stand out. The fact that the guest workers continue using their right eye in their leisure time shows that the magnifying glass used in the radio factory has been inscribed on their bodies. The material magnifying glass might be left at the factory, but the impact it has on their bodies continues to affect them beyond working hours in a bodily and thus also material way. This quote also proves the inseparable entanglement of the labor force and means of production. Humor again is applied as an aesthetic device that creates distance and thus invites the (skilled) reader to delve deeper into the issues depicted here. Littler also points to the entanglement depicted in this scene when she writes that “the novel obscures the determinate distinction between the worker’s body and the apparatuses deployed, presenting them as entangled, relational phenomena across which different agencies are dispersed” (Littler 2016: 293) and references the “parodic elements” through which a “‘truthful’ representation” is rendered obsolete (ibid.: 294). I would, however, suggest that these humorous depictions can be seen as a form of poetic alterity, something I will come back to later in more detail.

One could argue that the image of the female guest workers with their magnifying glasses inscribed on their bodies represents an assemblage as defined by Deleuze and Guattari. In “Two Regimes of Madness,” Deleuze and Guattari explain their understanding of an assemblage:

There are two ways to suppress or attenuate the distinction between nature and culture. The first is to liken animal behavior to human behavior (Lorenz tried it, with disquieting political implications). But what we are saying is that the idea of assemblages can replace the idea of behavior, and thus with respect to the idea of assemblage, the nature-culture distinction no longer matters. In a certain way, behavior is still a contour. But an

10 Bhabha dedicates a chapter in his seminal study “The Location of Culture” to his concept of mimicry. “Of Mimicry and Man. The ambivalence of colonial discourse” in Bhabha 1994.

assemblage is first and foremost what keeps very heterogeneous elements together: e.g. a sound, a gesture, a position, etc., both natural and artificial elements. (Deleuze 2006: 179)

The assemblage of guest worker and magnifying glass blends together the means of production and the labor force as well as the inanimate object and the human body. In Levi Bryant's paraphrase of Deleuze and Guattari's understanding of assemblage, objects that are in one way or the other visible are juxtaposed to sensations. Bryant stresses that assemblages can contain only objects, but not only sensations.

Assemblages are composed of heterogeneous elements or objects that enter into relations with one another. These objects are not all of the same type. Thus you have physical objects, happenings, events, and so on, but you also have signs, utterances, and so on. While there are assemblages that are composed entirely of bodies, there are no assemblages composed entirely of signs and utterances. (Bryant 2009)

4. Setting Out for Intra-Active Intercultural Studies

The magnifying glass on the women's eyes clearly encompasses bodily objects, behavior, and also sensations. In Bryant's paraphrase as well as in Deleuze and Guattari's original, the expression "heterogeneous elements" is being used. Bryant also writes about "elements and objects that enter into relations with one another," which can be appropriated to Adelson's quest for the relationship between Turks and the German past (cf. Adelson 1994: 321). This is why Barad's use of the term apparatus offers a much more precise description of the sort of inseparable entanglements that are depicted in the scene from "The Bridge of the Golden Horn." The magnifying glass is inscribed into the materiality of the bodies of the female guest workers, turning them to labor force and means of production at the same time. It is not a metaphor; it has an impact on their material bodies. Thus, what is depicted here is not mere discourse in the Foucauldian sense. Interestingly enough, Foucault's notion of *dispositif* has been translated as apparatus. Yet, Barad distinguishes her position from Foucault's:

The closest that Foucault comes to explicating this crucial relationship between discursive and nondiscursive practices is through his notion of *dispositif*, usually translated as *apparatus*. Foucault explains that *dispositif* is "a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions – in short, the said as much as the unsaid" (Foucault 1980: 194 cited in Barad 2007: 63).

So how exactly does Barad's notion differ from an assemblage or a *dispositive*? Barad describes her understanding of apparatus by distinguishing six sub-items:

(1) apparatuses are specific material-discursive practices (they are not merely laboratory setups that embody human concepts and take measurements); (2) apparatuses produce differences that matter—they are boundary-making practices that are formative of matter and meaning, productive of, and part of, the phenomena produced; (3) apparatuses are material configurations/dynamic reconfigurings of the world; (4) apparatuses are themselves phenomena (constituted and dynamically reconstituted as part of the ongoing intractability of the world); (5) apparatuses have no intrinsic boundaries but are open-ended practices; and (6) apparatuses are not located in the world but are material configurations or reconfigurings of the world that re(con)figure spatiality and temporality as well as (the traditional notion of) dynamics (i.e., they do not exist as static structures, nor do they merely unfold or evolve in space and time). (Barad 2007: 146)

From the elaborate definition of her use of the term *apparatus*, one item particularly stands out: “apparatuses are boundary-making practices.” Looking at intercultural encounters through that lens, one can state that boundaries, and thus binary oppositions, don't pre-exist. They are created in a certain moment, set-up, or entangled timespace. It might not be possible to generally rid ourselves of binary thinking. But it is possible to learn to think in a way that sees these binary oppositions emerging out of densely entangled situations that encompass materiality, discourse, and interpretation. However, Barad goes further than stating that apparatuses partake in boundary-making practices. In her concept of agential realism, individual objects do not pre-exist and neither does individual agency.

Interpreting the scene in the novel “The Bridge of the Golden Horn” from a cultural studies perspective, we might focus on binary oppositions and how they are challenged, for instance in focusing our attention on a Turkish girl in German culture and how she is influenced by it. We might rightly interpret the girl's sexual liberalism as proof of the hybrid culture within Turkey, thus deconstructing cultural stereotypes.¹¹ We might focus on how 1968 was a global movement that happened in Turkey as well as in Germany.¹² We might also consider the girl's encounters in Germany and with Germans as an endeavor to understand the other or the foreigner.

As elaborated above, many of the concepts applied in cultural studies, such as hybridity, liminality, and alterity, theoretically still need two sources from which the place in-between can derive. Boundaries such as colonialist and colonized exist but get blurred and questioned through mimicry. The role of the material world can be buried under conceptual thinking. Thus, one could argue that the colonized engaging in mimicry only challenges the

11 Both done by McGowan 2000.

12 As done by Schonfield 2015.

colonizer without actually changing anything about power relations. Barad offers a way out of this predicament without dismissing power relations.

As Adelson pointed out, intercultural studies in the German context especially have been pre-occupied with the notion of overcoming foreignness through an understanding of the culturally *other*. Werner Wintersteiner, one of the experts in the field, published a programmatic study with the title “Transcultural Literary Education” in 2006 (Wintersteiner 2006). As the quote below indicates, the parameters have slightly changed since Adelson’s critical intervention:

One of the concerns of literary didactics should be to disclose, to appreciate and to sustain the otherness of the other as it is expressed in the literary text (and in the discursive field it is attributed to) while at the same time seeking communalities and connectivities and thus overcoming the foreignness of the other at certain points in time. (Wintersteiner 2006: 187)¹³

Wintersteiner does not ask for an all-encompassing understanding of the cultural “other.” On the contrary, he urges us to accept the “otherness of the other.” Yet, the search for communalities and temporary overcoming of “foreignness” are still goals in his approach. Kaspar Spinner, a renowned scholar in the field of literary didactics, describes every kind of literature, not only inter-cultural literature, as “a medium for developing the understanding of the foreign.” According to him, “a fundamental goal of literary education should be to promote the overcoming of egocentrism, the practicing of empathy and the ability to connect differing modes of experience with each other.” (Spinner 1999: 600)¹⁴ As desirable as these goals are, they – again – focus on encounters. They also bear the danger of neglecting the aesthetic value and structural characteristics of literature. Coming from Wintersteiner’s school, Nicola Mitterer published a study in which she operates within the philosopher Bernhard Waldenfels’ phenomenology of the foreign and calls for a responsive literary didactics (Mitterer 2016). This approach allows for the acceptance of “radical foreignness” (Waldenfels 2006) and is much closer to recent theoretical developments in the course of the material turn and subfields like object-oriented ontology. For instance, Mitterer refers to Wintersteiner’s thought that every encounter with a literary text is an encounter with something foreign (Wintersteiner 2006: 187). Mitterer’s responsive literary didactics could thus be extended to interrogating encounters between

13 My translation Y.D-Y. Original: “Es geht ihr [der transkulturellen Literaturdidaktik] darum, die Andersheit des Anderen, wie sie im literarischen Text (und dem Diskursfeld, dem es verpflichtet ist) zum Ausdruck kommt, herauszuarbeiten, wertzuschätzen und zu erhalten, zugleich aber auch darum, Gemeinsames und Verbindendes zu finden und somit die Fremdheit des Anderen punktuell zu überwinden.”

14 (My translation Y.D-Y.) Original: “Literatur ist [...] auch ein Medium für die Entfaltung von Fremdverstehen. Daraus ergibt sich als ein grundlegendes Ziel für den Literaturunterricht eine Förderung der Überwindung von Egozentrik, der Einübung in Empathie und die Fähigkeit, verschiedene Erfahrungsweisen miteinander in Beziehung zu setzen.”

humans and non-humans. Whereas Mitterer is still engaged with encounters and relationships, Barad's agential realism opens further possibilities to include exchanges between humans and non-humans in cross-cultural studies, which so far have been unjustly overlooked, and helps to weaken the artificial walls build between the humanities (proclaimed as academic fields primarily engaging with humans) and the natural sciences (proclaimed as academic fields primarily exploring non-human objects).

How then should literary didactics informed by agential realism operate? If we tie these explorations back to the magnifying glass scene, agential realism directs our sight to entanglements rather than encounters. These entanglements incorporate humans and other living beings as much as non-humans and discourses. Rather than deconstructing ideas of polarity as overlooking the inherent fluidity of individual and collective identities, agential realism focuses on the act of boundary-making itself. But what are the specifically literary means that correspond with an agential realistic approach? Humor has always been a means to challenge those in power through its ambiguity. Thus, one could argue that humor oversteps boundaries. This would in certain ways be in accordance with Bhabha's concept of mimicry. Shifting the focus to boundary-making practices, I would, however, argue that the means of humor, of polysemy, and more generally poetic alterity as explained above (Mecklenburg 2008) applied in "The Bridge of the Golden Horn," operate as literary devices that uncover these boundary-making practices, that point to the moment, the timespace of boundary making, and that have material and discursive implications. Thus, they point to more than just deconstructing fixed identities etc. – one could argue that they show that boundaries do not pre-exist, because, to stay with the example of "The Bridge of the Golden Horn," Turkish guest workers do not pre-exist. They are created in a certain timespace.

What Spinner assigns to the literary medium, can of course be extended to the medium of film. One movie that has indeed succeeded in creating understanding of the older generation of Turkish guest workers through entangling pasts and presents in a different way, is the comedy drama "Almanya." Sisters Yasemin and Nesrin Şamdereli's comedy drama "Almanya" was released in 2011, the year of the 50th anniversary of Turkish guest worker migration to Germany. It depicts the couple Hüseyin and Fatma Yılmaz, who moved to Germany in the 1960s. Their four children now have families of their own. As the youngest grandchild, Cenk, cannot find an answer to the question of whether he is German or Turkish (his mother is of German descent, while his father moved to Germany as a child), grandfather Hüseyin decides to take the whole family on a trip to their home village. The movie employs various comical devices that – in spite of their distancing effect – create empathy for the characters. For instance, at the beginning of the movie, everything that is being said in Turkish is being rendered as High German,

while the Germans speak gibberish. Thus the perspective of the Turkish guest workers who don't speak German yet can be comprehended by the audience. Other comical scenes encompass the nightmare Hüseyin has before he is supposed to become naturalized, in which he is asked to eat pork twice a week and spend his summer vacation on Mallorca every second year. When Hüseyin dies on the trip to Turkey, past and present blend into each other in a moving scene in which the protagonists encounter their younger selves. In the foreword to "Meeting the Universe Halfway," Barad explains her understanding of intra-action in a broader context that I have here tried to exemplify with examples from Özdamar's "The Bridge of the Golden Horn" and to some extent the Şamdereli sisters' "Almanya":

This book is about entanglements. To be entangled is not simply to be intertwined with another, as in the joining of separate entities, but to lack an independent, self-contained existence. Existence is not an individual affair. Individuals do not preexist their interactions; rather, individuals emerge through and as part of their entangled intra-relating. Which is not to say that emergence happens once and for all, as an event or as a process that takes place according to some external measure of space and of time, but rather that time and space, like matter and meaning, come into existence, are iteratively reconfigured through each intra-action, thereby making it impossible to differentiate in any absolute sense between creation and renewal, beginning and returning, continuity and discontinuity, here and there, past and future. (Barad 2007: ix)

The movie "Almanya" does not merely (re)enact, but plays with binary oppositions. Yet, humor and humoristic aesthetic devices do not only question the existence and validity of boundaries, but they also serve as tools that foreground boundary-making practices. Thus, they point to material circumstances while still being embedded in a discursive field. The Yılmaz family was not a guest worker family before they came to Germany. "Existence is not an individual affair." (Barad 2007: ix)

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the anonymous reviewer and the editors for their valuable feedback on previous versions of this article.

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DOI: 10.2307/j.ctv1gbrzc3.10

URN: urn:nbn:de:hbz:465-20240912-160607-6

Dayıoğlu-Yücel, Y. (2021). Theoretical Cross-Fertilization: Barad's Intra-Action and Cross-Cultural Studies. In J. Büssers, A. Faulhaber, M. Raboldt, & R. Wiesner (Eds.), *Gendered Configurations of Humans and Machines: Interdisciplinary Contributions* (1st ed., pp. 61–76). Verlag Barbara Budrich. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1gbrzc3.10>

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