

# The Role of Book Covers in Shaping Visual Discourse: A Preliminary Observation on the Stereotyped Istanbul in the German-Speaking Book Market

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**Abstract:** Book covers as visual materials convey what reading audiences can expect from texts. A quick glance at covers of translated Turkish books, translations from other languages and also German books (fiction and nonfiction) in the German-speaking book market shows that covers of works containing the word “Istanbul” in their title are typically decorated with mosques and minarets. Taking this observation as a starting point, this paper aims to question the underlying motivations of this special case focusing on selected literary translations, non-literary works on Istanbul, and local literary productions written in German. The analysis indicates that Istanbul holds a predefined, fixed, and clear-cut image in the minds of professional and nonprofessional German-speaking readers.

**Keywords:** book covers, visuality, Istanbul, publishing habits, circulation of images

**Résumé:** En tant que supports visuels, les couvertures de livres communiquent ce que les lecteurs peuvent attendre des textes. Elles indiquent la visualité discursive qui relie les codes culturels aux réactions inconscientes. Un coup d'œil sur les couvertures de livres turcs traduits sur le marché germanophone montre que celles qui contiennent le mot « Istanbul » dans leurs titres sont ornées de mosquées et de minarets. Partant de cette observation, le présent article vise à interroger les motivations sous-jacentes de ce phénomène en se penchant sur une sélection de traductions littéraires du turc vers l'allemand, d'ouvrages non littéraires sur Istanbul et de productions littéraires indigènes écrites en allemand. L'analyse démontre finalement qu'Istanbul détient une image prédéfinie, fixe et claire dans l'esprit des lecteurs et des professionnels germanophones.

**Mots clés :** couvertures de livres, visualité, Istanbul, publication des traductions, circulation de la littérature

**Resumen:** Las portadas de los libros, en su calidad visual, transmiten lo que el público lector puede esperar de los textos. Indican la visualidad discursiva que conecta los códigos culturales con las reacciones inconscientes. Un vistazo rápido a las portadas de libros turcos traducidos en el mercado del libro de habla alemana muestra que las portadas de las obras que contienen la palabra "Estambul" en su título están "decoradas" con mezquitas y minaretes. Partiendo de esta observación, el presente artículo se propone cuestionar las motivaciones subyacentes de este caso especial centrándose en una selección de traducciones literarias del turco al alemán, obras no literarias sobre Estambul y producciones literarias autóctonas escritas en alemán. El análisis indica que Estambul tiene una imagen predefinida, fija y clara en la mente de los lectores y profesionales de habla alemana.

**Palabras clave:** portadas de libros, visualidad, Estambul, traducciones editoriales, circulación de literatura

**Resumo:** As capas dos livros como materiais visuais expressam o que o público leitor pode esperar dos textos. Elas indicam a visualidade discursiva que conecta os códigos culturais com as reações inconscientes. Uma olhada rápida para as capas dos livros turcos traduzidos para o mercado de livros de língua alemã mostra que as capas das obras contendo a palavra “Istambul” em seu título são “decoradas” com mesquitas e minaretes. Tendo esta observação como ponto de partida, este artigo visa questionar as motivações implícitas deste caso especial com foco nas traduções literárias selecionadas do turco para o alemão, obras não literárias sobre Istambul e produções literárias nativas escritas em alemão. A análise indica que Istambul guarda uma imagem pré-definida, fixa e clara na mente dos leitores e profissionais de língua alemã.

**Palavras-chave:** capas de livros, visualidade, Istambul, publicação de traduções, circulação de literatura

## Introduction

Books that are visible on the front shelves of bookstores sell better (Holzmeier 56; Schneider 238). However, bookstores are not the only place to buy a book in the digital age. Online stores are gaining prominence and dominate the market in some countries. Additionally, in exceptional circumstances, such as the social distancing and isolation that we are experiencing due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the immediate relationship between a prospective reader and a book is not established in bookstores when online shopping is obviously safer. A professional reader, a bookworm, a literature lover, and any reader who searches online bookstores or booksellers, is likely to pay attention not only to textual information, such as reviews, blurbs, and quotes, but also to visual figures, drawings, and photographs. An effective way to win the readers'/customers' over is to attract their attention by using visual materials. In the case of books, this can be achieved through cover images. The very first impression of a book on a reader is formed in most cases by cover illustrations. As Gérard Genette emphasizes, “no one is required to read a preface” (4); however, everyone encounters the cover. Visual materials can show how potential customers are persuaded to buy a product, and book covers may also reveal how cultural codes are conveyed by publishers.

Based on this commercial and cultural focus on book covers, this study focuses on a very specific aspect of cover illustrations. A quick glance at the covers of some literary works in the German-speaking book market, focusing mostly on contemporary novels, reveals that an overwhelming number of books with titles containing the word “Istanbul” are accompanied by covers with images of mosques and minarets.<sup>1</sup> Istanbul is always represented with its traditional and well-known international image as an Oriental megapolis. Considering this packaging style of books from and about Turkey, I will explore cover designs as discursive projections of established publishing habits in the target culture. This exploration will begin with an attempt to answer the following research questions:

- a) Why and how do covers serve as discourses?
- b) How do they reshape a source literature in the target market?
- c) If the specific use of Istanbul on covers is derived from an old publishing tradition, why does it continue today?

Then, based upon these questions, I will analyze the current situation using concrete examples.

## Cover Images as Discourse Builders

Among all the components of the presenting, marketing, and recontextualizing process of literary works, book covers play a major role in advertising strategies as they make the first impression on prospective readers. This very first impression, formed by visual tricks,

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<sup>1</sup> I briefly touched upon the covers of some Istanbul books in my PhD dissertation (see Yılmaz, *Machtasymmetrien* 317-325). However, I did not analyze the book covers in a detailed way, but only referred to the phenomenon that the covers of translations from Turkish bearing the word Istanbul often have similar designs.

illustrated objects, spatial connotations, etc., is mostly an emotional one that encourages us to take a closer look at the book and/or to buy it. Thus, book covers are not solely textual, paratextual, visual, and advertising materials. Their effect involves a psychological process that stimulates our imaginations. Gillian Rose points out that reactions to images are mostly unconscious (103); therefore, they have a psychological side. We are culturally and psychically constructed subjects who learn how to see and what to look (104). As Fairclough stresses: “[T]he way people interpret features of texts depends upon which social [...] conventions they are assuming to hold” (*Language and Power* 16). Readers/customers, as constructed subjects, look at images selected and designed by others. Thus, the intention of the makers of the images should always be taken into consideration (Rose 22-23). Therefore, what to see can be considered a kind of political, ideological, and cultural practice that implies “a site of power struggle” (Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change* 67). This is obviously a discursive practice, a construct that Wodak defines as “anything from a historical monument, a *lieu de mémoire*, a policy, a political strategy, narratives in a restricted or broad sense of the term, text, talk, a speech, topic-related conversations, to language *per se*” (1). In this respect, “a particular knowledge about the world which shapes how the world is understood and how things are done in it” is “discourse” (Rose 136). As Rose points out, visuality is also “a sort of discourse” (137).

Works packaged with visual materials show the discourse that surrounds translated and published literature. Keeping in mind that paratexts carry “messages” (Genette 3) and therefore have a discursive function as well, I consider book covers to be a kind of paratext, more precisely, the publisher’s<sup>2</sup> peritext, pursuant to Gérard Genette’s description of the concept: “[T]he paratext in all its forms is a *discourse* that is fundamentally heteronomous, auxiliary, and dedicated to the service of something other than itself that constitutes its *raison d’être*” (12, emphasis added). Although Genette does not specifically consider illustrations, cover images can be regarded as peritexts because they are in “the same volume” (4) with the main text and they “enable[...] a text to become a book and to be offered as such to its readers and, more generally, to the public” (1). Keeping in mind that Genette focuses on choices made by authors and publishers, I am of the opinion that authors do not play a part in reproducing the discourse in this case. That discourse circulates what is mostly a stereotyped image of Istanbul<sup>3</sup> handed down from the past, not the contemporary authors’ preferences.

### **The Fate of “Translated Men” in a Target Market**

Adopting this conceptual framework as a methodological tool, I argue that covers show how a target literary scene reshapes a source literature in its new (target) context by packaging every unique literary production in the same manner. I suggest that in the case

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<sup>2</sup> The cover illustrations may be chosen by writers, editors, designers, translators, etc. Interviews should be conducted within the scope of a kind of field research to identify exactly who selected them. Because the present paper is only a preliminary study (as mentioned in the title), I use Genette’s term “publisher’s peritext” in general and do not focus on individual or institutional agents.

<sup>3</sup> For a study on textual discourse around Istanbul, see Demirkol-Ertürk (*The City and Its Translators*), who explores the city of Istanbul in literary narratives by Orhan Pamuk and Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar as cultural texts, regarding the city itself as a text. She concludes that these writers are “translators” of the city selected and refract certain specific aspects of Istanbul.

of translated literature, especially of literatures of small diffusion translated for a bigger literary sphere, the fate of the work is more or less the same: They usually represent a people, a national literature, a “third-world literature” (for discussion of “Third World literature”, see Jameson and also Ahmad). They are not considered separate from their own linguistic, political, cultural context; rather, they stand and speak for their own countries, communities, and people. This is the challenge that “writers from outlying spaces” (Casanova 254) or “translated men” (Rushdie 17) are confronted with.<sup>4</sup> Accordingly, I regard literary works in translation as “the metonymies of translation” that construct “representations of history, culture, values, or literary form” (Tymoczko 57), because “such metonyms of translation play a part in establishing a symbolic order within which a people is construed” (Tymoczko 57). A literature or a literary work of a peripheral language is dependent upon translation for worldwide circulation. Paradoxically, it always becomes a piece of the same whole as long as it is translated into a central language.

In a similar vein, I am of the opinion that Istanbul, Turkey’s best-known city, helps prospective readers from all over the world associate translations from Turkish with their source culture. As Tymoczko mentions, “[f]or the receiving audience the translation metonymically constructs a source text, a literary tradition, a culture and a people, by picking parts, aspects, and attributes that will stand for wholes” (57). Thus, the city of Istanbul serves visually as a bridge between the cultural productions of the source context (Turkish literature) and the expectations of the target market (the German-speaking book market). It reminds readers of Turkey and associates a book with Turkey. Just like translations standing for the whole literary field of their source contexts, Istanbul represents Turkey (and the Orient as a homogenous construction). Yet this representation does not construct an autonomous image of the city. Instead, it is recontextualized in accordance with target readers’/publishers’ expectations and habits. From the standpoint of the target book market, “representations of foreign cultures” (Venuti 67) are constructed for receiving audiences: “Foreign literatures tend to be dehistoricized by the selection of texts for translation, removed from the foreign literary traditions where they draw their significance” (Venuti 67). In this paper, I argue that foreign literatures are dehistoricized and recontextualized not only by selecting (certain specific) texts to be translated, but also by representing, introducing, and marketing translated texts in the target literary market as well.

### **Istanbul and Its Imaginative Connotations**

A large number of the translated and compiled literary works with titles containing “Istanbul” are presented with stereotyped images of the city. On the one hand, this may imply that the book covers, as culturally, physically, and visually constructed discourses, reproduce Istanbul’s fixed, common picture as an Oriental Islamic city. On the other hand, it may also be claimed that this Oriental image still “sells” since cover illustrations are designed to attract readers/customers. The following section takes a closer look at some

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<sup>4</sup> Turkish literature published in the German-speaking translation market is a peripheral foreign literature in a relatively bigger literary sphere. In twenty-first century literary production, authorial profiles and thematic preferences in the source culture have changed. The translatorial and editorial profiles in the target field have changed as well. Yet the image of Turkish literature is still the same (for a detailed analysis, see Yilmaz, *Machtasymmetrien* and “Under the Shadow”).

early descriptions and presentations of Istanbul in the writings of scholars in Oriental studies. It then focuses on the current image of Istanbul in the German-speaking world.

Literary history denotes that Istanbul's stereotyped visuality is a deep-rooted tradition. In his 1822 city guide *Constantinopolis und der Bosphoros* [Constantinople and the Bosphorus], the prominent Orientalist Joseph von Hammer makes a record of his "topographical view of the Levant" and points out that "European literature does not lack topographical works on Constantinople and the Bosphorus" (Hammer, foreword; my translation). He informs his readers of Constantinople's climate, geographical features, the flora and fauna of the region, fortresses, palaces, courts, and public places such as cafeterias, schools, synagogues, churches, mosques, etc. Hammer's view of "the Levant" is that of a colourful and multicultural city in the Orient with its multi-faceted ways of life. Friedrich Schrader, another Orientalist, describes everyday life in Istanbul in the early twentieth century. However, Schrader's Constantinople is more Islamic than Hammer's "Levant." In his 1917 work *Konstantinopel. Vergangenheit und Gegenwart* [Constantinople: The Past and Now], Schrader always describes streets, districts, buildings, etc., with a focus on the mosques. For instance, he briefly describes the well-known Historical Peninsula area with the Obelisk and its Hippodrome district and the Fourth Crusade in the early 13<sup>th</sup> century before the conquest of Constantinople by the Ottomans. He points out that the Blue Mosque (the Sultan Ahmed Mosque) had not been built at that time (23). Elsewhere he stresses that many mosques were old Byzantine churches (37; 47), and he spots the "enormous dome of the big mosque" when he looks through its windows (1; my translation). Schrader's Constantinople is, therefore, a city of mosques.

Compared to this image of late Ottoman Istanbul by two well-known Orientalists, the contemporary image of Istanbul in German-speaking cultures is only slightly different. For example, Sebastian Gietl examines food culture in Istanbul and its perception in German-speaking travel guidebooks. He emphasizes that Turkish luxury food includes hookah, tea, and coffee in touristic booklets, although the Ottoman metropolis had already been historically decontextualized in the twentieth century (Gietl 85). He draws attention to a continuous transmission in the image of Istanbul that never follows a linear course (*Istanbul – eine Weltmetropole im Wandel* 16) and observes that the city is at once perceived<sup>5</sup> as a "boomtown," a "Third-World-City" and a "World Metropole" today (*Weltmetropole* 9). He stresses that Istanbul has been recorded and contextualized in accordance with exotic-Oriental pipedreams and the image of a commercial boomtown in the travelogues and guidebooks from the nineteenth century to the present (*Weltmetropole* 15). Yet he also points out that the image of Istanbul has dramatically changed in the German media since the Gezi-Park protests (*Weltmetropole* 10). As a result, Gietl observes a "divergency between the self-perception of the city and its reflection in the media" (*Weltmetropole* 12; my translation) that leads to misinterpretation, because the media reproduces preserved stereotypes that were handed down from the

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<sup>5</sup> The sentence in the German original is "Die heutige Multi-Millionen-Einwohner-Stadt ist in unserer Wahrnehmung Weltmetropole, Boom-Town und Dritte-Welt-Stadt in einem" (9). The expression "in unserer Wahrnehmung" (in our perception) is a bit vague. It is not clear if it means the city is regarded this way by the Germans, by the Europeans (if so, by which Europeans exactly?) or by Western societies in general. Yet because the writer mentions the German perception ("Die deutsche Wahrnehmung" [*Weltmetropole* 16]) in his study about Istanbul's cultural transition in relation to its touristic character, I assume that he is alluding to how Istanbul is received in the German-speaking world.

past. In addition, he observes that the dominant touristic image of Istanbul has not been the same since 2013, as the period from 2013 to 2018 was politically tumultuous. In the words of a bookseller cited by Gietl, “Istanbul as a travel destination is dead” (“Ohne Tabak” 86-87; my translation). Apparently, Istanbul is not attractive anymore, because it is not considered a safe place for tourists.

The book covers of contemporary works containing the name of Istanbul in the title are thus not isolated cases but are partially situated in a historical context. This also depends upon the “political and ideological presuppositions” (57) in the target market that Tymoczko refers to. Gillian Rose’s concept of discursive visibility is applied within the scope of this article to describe and define this deep-rooted perception of Istanbul as an Oriental city of Islam and to build a bridge not between different texts, but between different eras. The book covers described below will reveal these “bridges.”

### Istanbul on Covers of Translations from Turkish

By the time that Orhan Pamuk’s well-known book *Istanbul: Erinnerungen an eine Stadt* (Turkish title: *İstanbul: Hatıralar ve Şehir*; English title: *Istanbul: Memories and the City*) was first published in German in 2006, the writer had already been awarded both the German Book Trade’s Peace Prize (2005) and the Nobel Prize in Literature (2006). This international success of a relatively young writer from the Middle East caused tremendous excitement and drew attention to his hometown that is the world of his childhood and youth, while also serving as a leitmotif, back story, setting, etc., as well. The book has been published many times in German. The covers of the first and the last German editions of *Istanbul* are shown in Figures 1 and 2, respectively.



Fig. 1. Orhan Pamuk, *Istanbul*. Hanser, 2006.

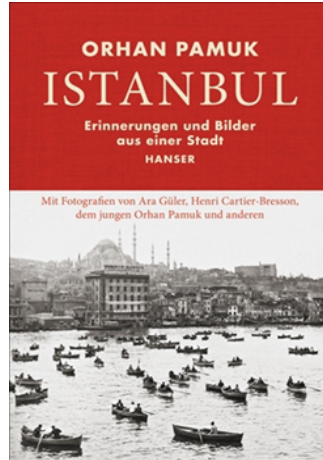


Fig. 2. Orhan Pamuk, *Istanbul*. Hanser, 2018.

The latter edition (Fig. 2) is visually enriched with works by the famous photographer Ara Güler. Although the latter version was published 12 years later, the mosque and minarets are still visible on the cover.<sup>6</sup> As Pamuk identifies as an author with the city of Istanbul and is recognized as *the* writer of Istanbul, it is not surprising to see his work illustrated with common and familiar images of the city.

In addition to this book of memoirs, some of Pamuk's novels whose titles do not refer explicitly to the city have the same visual patterns on their covers; e.g., the novel *Das neue Leben* (Turkish title: *Yeni Hayat*; English title: *The New Life*), which was received very enthusiastically on the German-speaking literary scene, has a familiar picture of Istanbul (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3. Orhan Pamuk, *Das neue Leben*. Hanser, 1998.

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<sup>6</sup> There are two covers of *Istanbul* for the editions of the Turkish source text (published in 2003 by YKY and in 2008 by the publishing house İletişim) that feature a black-and-white photo showing the writer in the foreground and a mosque with minarets in the background. The cover of the other version (*Resimli İstanbul*, 2015), enriched with photos by Ara Güler, also has an image of a mosque.

This novel is not a typical Istanbul novel by the writer.<sup>7</sup> Its narrative structure has a kind of allegorical road-trip theme. The golden car in the centre of the photograph alludes to the concept of “being on the road.” For foreign readers it is not clear whether the photograph on the front matter is of Istanbul or not. Yet it might be assumed that a reader unfamiliar with Turkey would associate it with Istanbul, Turkey’s biggest and most famous city. For readers familiar with Turkey, however, the licence plate code on the car makes it clear that it is Istanbul. The well-known New Mosque (Valide Sultan Mosque) built in the seventeenth century, and the Eminönü Quarter, which is the historical centre of ancient, Byzantine, and Ottoman Istanbul, are some famous images of this city. Eminönü, located in the Historical Peninsula area encircled by the Golden Horn, the Bosphorus, and the Marmara Sea, is the touristic oldtown within the Walls of Constantinople today, the district of the famous buildings Hagia Sophia, the Topkapı Palace, and the Blue Mosque.

The covers of *Das Museum der Unschuld* (Turkish title: *Masumiyet Müzesi*; English title: *The Museum of Innocence*) stand as another interesting case. This novel was Pamuk’s first after he was awarded the Nobel Prize and it is one of his most famous books about Istanbul, with its melancholic, sorrowful atmosphere marked by the grief and love pangs of the protagonist. The first German edition, published by the prominent independent publishing house Hanser, has a cover photo that will remind readers of Istanbul with its backdrop of ferries and the sea (Fig. 4). Yet it could be argued that the city in the picture is not obviously Istanbul. It could possibly be Izmir or Çanakkale, because ferries serve as public transportation vehicles in these cities too. This ambiguous cover was replaced by a different cover photo in the later editions by the Fischer publishing house (Fig. 5).



Fig. 4. Orhan Pamuk, *Das Museum der Unschuld*. Hanser, 2008.

<sup>7</sup> I have encountered two different covers of this novel in Turkish (1997 and 2013), neither of which have any pictures of mosques or minarets.





Fig. 5. Orhan Pamuk. *Das Museum der Unschuld*. Fischer, 2010.

The second cover image, which also appeared on the original Turkish cover (the first edition),<sup>8</sup> is an old snapshot of a family or a group of friends in Istanbul. It is such a typical image of Pamuk's novels that even a nonprofessional German-speaking reader would be able to associate it with the city. The familiar image of Istanbul, the Bosphorus and the Historical Peninsula with the Blue Mosque and its minarets can also be seen in the background. But this cover photo was not created specifically for the German edition. Because it replaced the first cover, we can assume that the picture with the landscape of the Historical Peninsula is the preferred packaging. These images are used again and again to contextualize literary works as familiar metonymies of the Orient. Nonprofessional readers, as culturally and psychologically constructed subjects (Rose 104), view these covers just as the publishers intended. Although Pamuk is Istanbul's best-known writer, we do not see Pamuk's Istanbul on the covers of his novels, but the usual reproduced image of the city. Pamuk's Istanbul is a personal one, that is to say, a communicative memory (for the term "communicative memory" see Assmann), not a city of mosques. These kinds of metonymic refractions, which recontextualize books and authors, function as the symbols of the city. However, the minarets and mosques are not equivalent to the Eiffel Tower, Brandenburg Gate, Big Ben, the Tower of Pisa, or the Statue of Liberty. Each cover illustrates a different mosque because the representation of a specific mosque is not of primary importance.

Further examples from contemporary Turkish literary productions reflect the same pattern by presenting foreign works to German-speaking readers. Figures 6, 7, and 8 show the covers of three such novels.

<sup>8</sup> The first edition of the source version, published in 2008, has the same image as the second German edition. In later editions (e.g., the 2013 edition), there is the same group/family photo in the pink car; however, instead of the Bosphorus and the mosque there is a car and a woman in a retro style outfit in the background.

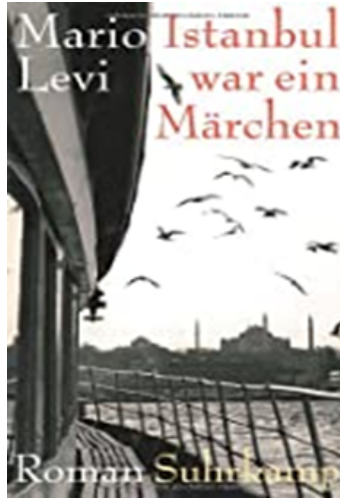


Fig. 6. Mario Levi, *Istanbul war ein Märchen*. Suhrkamp, 2008.



Fig. 7. Ahmet Ümit, *Die Gärten von Istanbul*. btb, 2017.



Fig. 8. Burhan Sönmez, *Istanbul Istanbul*. btb, 2017.

All these three novels<sup>9</sup> were published by prominent publishing houses and would thus have been widely accessible in both brick-and-mortar and online bookstores, just like Pamuk's novels. A huge number of Turkish literary works in the German-speaking book market have been published by boutique publishing houses devoted to a small group of readers with a special interest in Turkish literature. These kinds of publishing companies have always had problems with distribution, so their books are usually not available in mainstream bookstores. In contrast to such boutique publishing houses, the publishers of these three novels have wide distribution networks. Their titles will not fall into oblivion and are always available even though they are not typical long-sellers.

Mario Levi's much-praised novel *Istanbul war ein Märchen* (Turkish title: *İstanbul Bir Masaldır*; English title: *Istanbul Was a Fairy Tale*), published by the well-known independent publishing house Suhrkamp, describes the multicultural Istanbul of the twentieth century (1920 to 1980) with a focus on a Jewish family. On its cover (Fig. 6) we see a typical picture of Istanbul with ferries, seagulls, and a glimpse of the Historical Peninsula. In contrast with the ambiguity of the cover to the first edition of *Das Museum der Unschuld* (Fig. 4), this cover refers directly and unambiguously to Istanbul because the title includes the city's name. The silhouette of the mosque with minarets on the horizon belongs to Hagia Sophia, the famous Byzantine church converted into a mosque after the Ottoman conquest. The cover of Ahmet Ümit's murder mystery *Die Gärten von Istanbul* (Turkish title: *İstanbul Hatırası*; English title: *A Memento for Istanbul*) bears the picture of the New Mosque as well (Fig. 7). On the cover of Burhan Sönmez's novel *Istanbul Istanbul* we see an illustration of mosques, minarets, and towers evoking Istanbul again (Fig. 8). These three novels were published by different publishers, but they all show the image of imperial Ottoman and Islamic Istanbul as a fixed picture on their covers. Although they were all published by leading publishers, they have all been visually introduced in exactly the same manner, reinforcing the discourse around literary productions by Turkish authors and the impression that all writers and books dealing with Istanbul view the city as an Islamic, melancholic, Oriental city of mosques. This same pattern can be found in literary works other than novels too.

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<sup>9</sup> There are several cover designs of these novels in their source editions in Turkish. Mario Levi's novel has four different covers by different publishers. The editions by Doğan Kitap (published in 2006 and 2009) do not have any images of mosques or minarets. The first edition (published by Remzi in 1999) has a little mosque picture that is not eye-catching. The edition by Everest (2018) has a graphic design on the cover with seagulls and a mosque with minarets in the background. There are mosque and minaret silhouettes on the cover of Ahmet Ümit's novel in its two editions by different publishing houses (by Everest and by YKY). Burhan Sönmez's novel has a black-and-white picture of Leander's Tower and a ferry in front of it.



Fig. 9. Tevfik Turan, *Von Istanbul nach Hakkâri*. Unionsverlag, 2005.

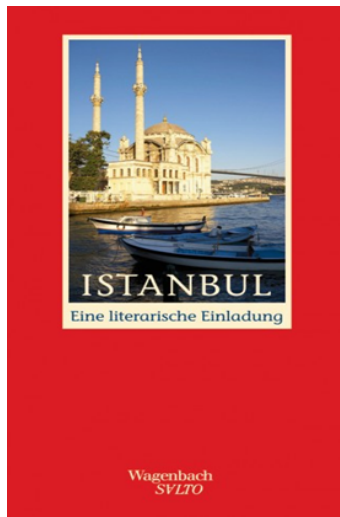


Fig. 10. Börte Sagaster and Manfred Heinfeldner, *Istanbul: Eine literarische Einladung*, 2008.



Fig. 11. Saït Faik Abasiyanik, *Geschichten aus Istanbul*. Manesse, 2012.

*Von Istanbul nach Hakkari* [From Istanbul to Hakkari] is an anthology in the Turkish Library series.<sup>10</sup> The work, compiled by the translator and publisher Tevfik Turan, is not a translation of a specific book but a collection of translated stories, essays, and excerpts set in different cities, villages, and regions of Turkey. The title refers to the whole Turkey from west to east. Actually, while Hakkari is indeed Turkey's easternmost town, on the border with Iraq and Iran, the country's westernmost town is Edirne, located on the border with Greece and Bulgaria. We may assume that Istanbul was chosen instead of Edirne to make the title sound more familiar to readers. The familiarity established by including the name of the city in the title is supported by the image of Hagia Sophia on the book cover.

*Istanbul: Eine literarische Einladung* [Istanbul: A Literary Invitation] is one of the "literary invitations" published in the SALTO series by the Wagenbach publishing house. The series also includes "literary invitations" to Berlin, New York, Paris, Vienna, Prague, Madrid, Lisbon, Amsterdam, Venice, Buenos Aires, and other cities. The editors, journalist Manfred Heinfeldner and Turkologist Börte Sagaster, have chosen texts, poems, and essays by famous and unknown writers focusing on several districts of the city, such as the Bosphorus, the Golden Horn and Beyoğlu. The picture on the cover is a mosque again, but the Ortaköy Mosque, a touristic Ottoman mosque built in the eighteenth century and located in Beşiktaş, not in Istanbul's oldtown on the Historical Peninsula.

*Geschichten aus Istanbul* [Stories from Istanbul], which was published by the major publishing house Manesse (a branch of Random House) as part of the Manesse Bibliothek der Weltliteratur (Manesse Library of World Literature) series, features translations of selected stories by Sait Faik Abasıyanık, a well-known short story writer of the twentieth century. The book cover shows a typical illustration of Istanbul, a ferry on the sea and a mosque in the background.

As is obvious in these examples, the publishing houses are different, some books were published in series, and others were published twice. Yet all the book covers place the work in a specific context; they refer to the deep-rooted image of Istanbul as a city of mosques and minarets. This image has a big influence on the publication of Turkish literature, reinforcing the idea that Turkey's literary production is always the same, as the texts chosen for translation speak for a homogeneous culture metonymically. The handicap of such representations is that metonymic attributions refer to a whole culture, a literature, or a literary tradition by ignoring cultural, linguistic, historical, economic, and personal dislocations and differences. There are no divergent themes, linguistic features, motifs, authorial images, etc. Every single cover shows the same picture discursively and metonymically: Istanbul is an Islamic metropolis of the Orient. Whether it is a murder mystery, a melancholic love story, a city guide, or a story collection, every book always shows the same fixed image. It is therefore not surprising that the aforementioned visual motifs of Istanbul accompany other genres and non-fiction works as well.

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<sup>10</sup> The Türkische Bibliothek (Turkish Library) project was supported by the Robert Bosch Foundation, a non-profit and non-governmental organization in Germany from 2005 to 2010. Within the scope of this project, 20 books by various writers of different periods of modern Turkish literature were published by the Swiss publishing house Unionsverlag. For translator-, editor- and process-oriented analyses of the series, see Yilmaz, *Machtasymmetrien* 126-146.

## Istanbul on Covers of German Nonfiction Works

Some notable examples of how Istanbul has been introduced on covers of non-fiction works are given below.

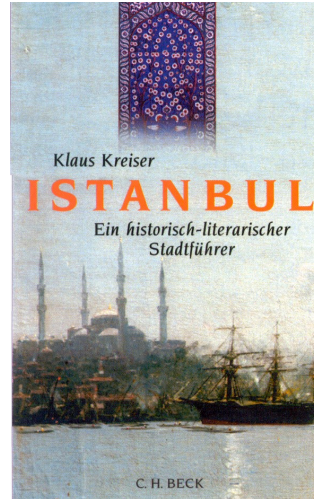


Fig. 12. Klaus Kreiser, *Istanbul: Ein historisch-literarischer Stadtführer*. C. H. Beck, 2001.



Fig. 13. Klaus Kreiser, *Istanbul: Ein historischer Stadtführer*. C. H. Beck, 2009.



Fig. 14. Klaus Kreiser, *Geschichte Istanbul: von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*. C. H. Beck, 2010.

The first two historical city guides, published by the Turkologist Klaus Kreiser, are the first and the second editions of the same work. The painting of a harbour in the Historical Peninsula on the cover of the first edition (Fig. 12) includes a mosque with its minarets. The cover of the second edition (Fig. 13) is a picture of the New Mosque taken from the Galata Bridge on the Golden Horn. The cover of *Geschichte Istanbul* [Istanbul's History] (Fig. 14), another book by Kreiser dealing with Istanbul, is decorated with a painting of the Bayezid II Mosque, located in Beyazit Square in the Historical Peninsula.



Fig. 15. Malte Fuhrmann, *Konstantinopel - Istanbul: Stadt der Sultane und Rebellen*. Fischer, 2019.

Another book that uses the same image is Malte Fuhrmann's *Konstantinopel-Istanbul: Stadt der Sultane und Rebellen* [Istanbul-Constantinople: City of Sultans and Rebels] (Fig. 15), which explores the history of the city with special attention to its cultural, economic, and political changes from the early Byzantine period until today. Although Fuhrmann approaches the city from a different standpoint from Kreiser, the books of both authors can be said to have become key topographical works on Istanbul. For a nonprofessional reader Fuhrmann's book does not present a new or unfamiliar "image." This cover serves to connect the stereotyped and deep-rooted image of the Oriental city



with twenty-first century Istanbul. In this sense, it is not surprising that the cover features a painting of the Bayezid Mosque.

### Istanbul on the Covers of Translations from Languages Other than Turkish

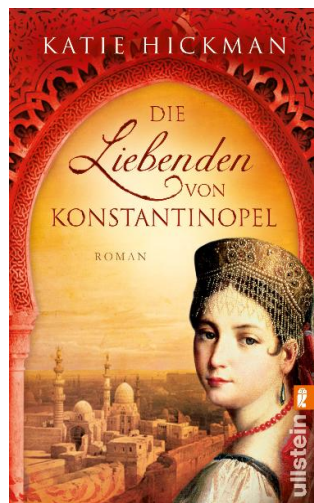


Fig. 16. Katie Hickman, *Die Liebenden von Konstantinopel*. Ullstein, 2010.

The covers to two translations from English into German support the claim that books whose titles allude to Istanbul invariably feature mosques and/or minarets.<sup>11</sup> The first (Fig. 16) is a book that was packaged with various similar cover designs.<sup>12</sup> *Die Liebenden von Konstantinopel* is the German translation of Katie Hickman's 2008 novel *The Aviary Gate*. Although the original title does not include a city name, it was decided to add the name "Konstantinopel" to the title in the German translation. The book is about the Ottoman Sultan's Harem in Constantinople in 1599 and it is because of this plot that the city's former name was chosen for the German title. There is a light-skinned woman of European appearance in the foreground and a mosque in the background of the cover illustration, which adheres to clichéd connotations of beautiful women in the Ottoman Harem. This choice correlates with the discursive practice of contextualizing Istanbul in accordance with the exotic-Oriental pipedreams that Gietl refers to, not very different from a construct found in the travelogues of the nineteenth century. The image of Istanbul as an Oriental city of mosques is thus reproduced and reinforced in such cover illustrations. The cover to Hickman's book places it in the context of books which, on the one hand, are repackaged with images of mosques and minarets on their covers, and on the other hand, include the city's name in their titles, even though the novel is not a translation from Turkish. Nevertheless, this cover, which might equally remind us of mosques in Iran or

<sup>11</sup> An interesting example could be Stéphane Yerasimos' book *Konstantinopel. Istanbul's historisches Erbe* (translated from French in 2007). The book cover of the 2009 second edition shows the interior walls of a mosque while the first edition has the same cover as its English translation, *Constantinople: Istanbul's Historical Heritage*, showing an interior dome. Due to space restrictions, these covers are not included here. Additionally, the use of these kinds of pictures is understandable, because the book is about architectural history.

<sup>12</sup> This publication has several editions with different covers in German. Because all the editions have similar cover illustrations with mosques and minarets, I cite only the latest one.



India, differs from the mosque and minaret pictures and illustrations described above, which depict a real mosque or a district in Istanbul. In this sense, the illustration seems to be informed by the visual discourse of Istanbul as an Islamic city.



Fig. 17. Elif Shafak, *Der Bastard von Istanbul*. Eichborn, 2007.

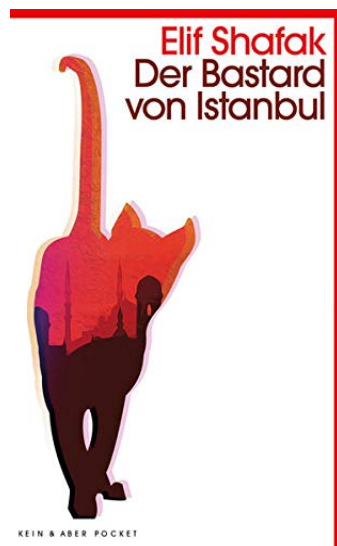


Fig. 18. Elif Shafak, *Der Bastard von Istanbul*. Kein & Aber, 2015.

Another novel translated from English is the Turkish-British writer Elif Shafak's well-known novel *Der Bastard von Istanbul*. This book, which faced heavy criticism in Turkey, was published by two different publishers (first by Eichborn and then by Kein & Aber) in Germany. In contrast with Hickman's novel (Fig.16), the city's name was present in the original title in this case (*The Bastard of Istanbul*). However, the cover to the first German edition by Eichborn has the same illustration as the Turkish edition (*Baba ve Piç*, published in 2006). The second edition, by Kein & Aber, bears a mosque dome silhouette with minarets seen through a cat motif on its cover. Similar to the case of Orhan Pamuk's

*Das Museum der Unschuld* (Fig. 4 and Fig. 5), one of the versions bears the same image as the Turkish edition, although in this case it is the first edition. The element common to both cases is that the second version bears a design of a mosque in each case, suggesting an effort to maintain a 200-year-old stereotype.



Fig. 19. Geert Mak, *Die Brücke von Istanbul*. Pantheon, 2007.

Another relevant example is Geert Mak's travel book *Die Brücke von Istanbul*, which is a translation from Dutch (translated into English under the title *The Bridge*). This book relates the writer's observations from the Galata Bridge with its street vendors, pickpockets, fishermen, tourists, and illegal tea-, book- and cigarette-sellers. It invites readers to think of the bridge as a city and sheds light on Turkish history between present and past. The book does not reflect Istanbul as an Islamic city and the narrative focuses on the Galata Bridge, yet that bridge does not take a central position on the cover (Fig. 19), which shows the Süleymaniye Mosque in the Historical Peninsula, an Ottoman mosque built in the sixteenth century.

### **Istanbul on the Covers of German Books**

The image of Istanbul as an Oriental Islamic metropolis is a stereotype. Regardless of genres, contents, styles, writers or epochs, all book titles containing the name "Istanbul" are informed by a visual discourse contextualizing them as artworks from an Oriental Islamic city. This discourse is so strong that the use of the stereotyped image of Istanbul is not limited to translations. Two contemporary novels of German origin are interesting examples suggestive of the imaginative power of Istanbul. The first, *Zweimal Istanbul und zurück* [Twice to Istanbul and Back] by Claudia Tenit, is a travel and (summer) love novel.

The plot of Tenit's book is not a typical Istanbul story. The story is set both in Istanbul and in small provinces of southern Turkey (and also in Austria). The title, however, refers only to Istanbul. The cover photograph (Fig. 20) differs from the aforementioned cover images, since it does not depict a metropolis, even though Istanbul is mentioned in the title. Nevertheless, the minaret in the background signifies that the plot has something to do with a Muslim country or region.

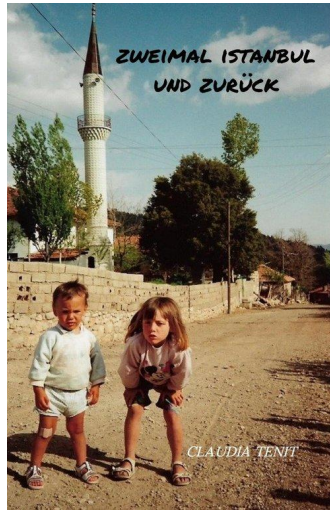


Fig. 20. Claudia Tenit, *Zweimal Istanbul und zurück*. Epubli, 2020.



Fig. 21. Angelika Overath, *Ein Winter in Istanbul*. Luchterhand, 2018.

Another contemporary novel with the word “Istanbul” in its title is Angelika Overath’s *Ein Winter in Istanbul* [A Winter in Istanbul]. The cover (Fig. 21) portrays a wintry atmosphere. At first sight it looks like a European city, but the silhouette of the well-known Blue Mosque of Istanbul can be seen in the misty background. The visual material is connected to the title. Although this book is not a translation, the cover design reminds us of the covers of Turkish literary works in German translations.

The two aforementioned German-speaking novels adopt a marketing trick that has also been used in literary translations from Turkish. The cover images of all translated Turkish books with the word Istanbul in their titles portray mosques and/or minarets without any exceptions. The analysis shows that not only translations, but also anthologies, nonfiction texts and original German works make use of the authentic resonance of the city of Istanbul by packaging and presenting it to German-speaking readers. They try to catch potential customers by stimulating unconscious emotional reactions (Rose 103-104) to a foreign world that can be interesting to read about. This

foreign world is being contextualized with familiar images, so that this “specific visuality” draws attention to “certain things”<sup>13</sup> (Rose 137), in this case to mosques and minarets of imperial, Islamic and/or Oriental Istanbul, and makes “other things unseeable” (Rose 137). The “unseeable” things are all the specific, distinctive, historical, political, and cultural features of literary works. These “unseeable things” are the essential parts of an independent literary universe, not of a “Republic of Letters.” They struggle against metonymies of translation.

## Conclusions

With special attention to book covers bearing the name Istanbul in the titles, this study has shown that there is a fixed stereotyped image of Istanbul in the German-speaking publishing market. The examples mentioned have revealed that the city has been presented and marketed using the same historical, architectural, religious buildings on the covers of books of different authors, at different times, and in different editions, genres, and series by different publishers. The discourse surrounding Istanbul that has been constructed using visual images invokes a tradition, a presupposition, and a habit of receiving and advertising the city. Cover designs not only play a role in presenting Istanbul, but also reflect an image that has remained unchanged over the centuries. What was written about Istanbul in the early twentieth century is being visually reproduced today.

The established discourse on Istanbul makes publishers, editors, and other professionals reproduce this discourse metonymically by selecting certain specific aspects of the city. It could be argued that not only nonprofessional literature lovers, but also professional readers deal with texts in accordance with this established discourse. Everyone knows how to look at and what to think about Istanbul as it is such a deep-rooted tradition, even though the roots of this tradition are not familiar anymore.

The present study has also shown that the established, stereotyped image of Istanbul is adapted as a marketing device. This visuality is so entrenched that German-speaking productions focusing on Istanbul and translations from other languages are packaged and marketed in the same way as works translated from Turkish. The persistence of this publishing tradition suggests that these images have a favourable effect on readers. As this visual motif is used again and again, readers/customers, as “constructed subjects,” look at the same image over and over.

When considering the role of cover designs in persuading and encouraging prospective readers/customers to buy a book, one might conclude that the commercial and cultural aspects feed each other. How Istanbul has been received culturally and

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<sup>13</sup> A different perspective should be taken into consideration here. Şule Demirkol-Ertürk conducted a field study in Slovenia, observing the image of Istanbul in the minds of two Slovenian student groups: one group that reads and Orhan Pamuk’s *Istanbul* and the other that does not. She draws the conclusion that Istanbul, which is an Islamic, Oriental city for the students who do not read the book is quite different for the students who do read it. By perceiving the city as a text she points out that translations “challenge and modify (...) the stereotype images” of the city (“Images of Istanbul” 200). My study draws a different conclusion, as I encounter the same images that represent the city metonymically. Yet it should be emphasized that I do not consider the city as a text and do not explore translated texts as a linguistic layer, but rather as a way of presenting, illustrating, and marketing the original texts.

historically is not unrelated to the commercial promotion of the city. Marketing strategies keep that *tradition* of images alive today. Thus, the visual discourse around Istanbul is a construction that does not aim at changing or transforming the stereotyped image. Keeping in mind that it is not translators but publishers or editors (marketers, in a sense) who are interested in maintaining it, it can be assumed that the ongoing use of the same images has a commercial rationale today. What it offers customers is a familiarity that is, at the same time, foreign.

Finally, I would like to highlight some questions that could be tackled in future research. As Genette emphasizes befittingly, “no reader should be indifferent to the appropriateness of particular typographical choices, even if modern publishing tends to neutralize these choices by a perhaps irreversible tendency toward standardization” (34). With this in mind, future studies could explore how covers affect the purchasing habits of nonprofessional readers, how readers react to cover images, and whether readers like them or question them. A challenging case is the artwork personalization on the international streaming service Netflix. As is explained on the Netflix Technology Blog, this platform produces and designs more than just one poster for movies, series, cartoons, etc., and every user meets “personalized recommendations” differing according to their own “viewing histories” (Chandrashekar et al.). These posters may well be regarded as visual devices designed to “pique [...the] interest” of the prospective audience. Advertising paratexts are therefore not standardized anymore, but personalized. This personalization introduces a new aspect of piquing interest: Paratexts (posters) not only function as advertising, but also indicate how they connect the “text” to potential users. In this sense, standardization and personalization of visual materials, including book covers, would be a fruitful research topic. Another relevant question that is worth analyzing is how Istanbul is recontextualized in other languages and whether its Oriental image is reproduced in bigger and smaller literary markets.

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