

**REPRESENTING REALITY:
LITERATURE, FILM, AND THE CONSTRUCTION
OF TURKISH-GERMAN IDENTITY**

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A thesis submitted to the faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the Department of History.

Chapel Hill
2006

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ABSTRACT

SARAH THOMSEN VIERRA: Representing Reality: Literature, Film,
and the Construction of Turkish-German Identity
(Under the direction of Konrad H. Jarausch)

The *Gastarbeiter* and the subsequent Turkish-German community in Germany have prompted scholarly debate over the challenges such a settlement has posed to larger German society. Yet few among those involved in such discussions approach these issues from the perspective of the Turkish-German community and thus lack a critical viewpoint. This study seeks to address this limitation; yet, to do so, one must turn to less conventional sources.

In the first chapter, I compare the historiography of Germany's Turkish minority to the literature of Turkish-German writers to determine how the addition of Turkish-German perspective complicates and fills out the findings of historians and social scientists. In the Chapter 2, I analyze films by Turkish-German directors and discuss what these works suggest about that community's development. Ultimately, I find that the Turkish-German artists and their creative works advocate and represent a blended identity that incorporates ethnic background and social and cultural experience.

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INTRODUCTION

Desperate to escape the control and abuse of her father and brother, Sibel Güner, a young Turkish-German woman from Hamburg, convinced Cahit Tomruk, a man nearly twice her age whom she barely knew, to marry her and allow her to move in with him. Freed for the first time from her family's restrictions and safe within a marriage of convenience, Sibel sought out a series of casual affairs. Upon learning of this promiscuity, her father disowned her, burning all pictures of his only daughter, and her brother tried to kill her for bringing them dishonor. Sibel was forced to go into hiding to protect herself from her family.

This tragic situation comprises the basic storyline of the award-winning 2004 drama *Gegen die Wand* [Head-On], written and directed by rising Turkish-German filmmaker Fatih Akin.¹ Though fictional, Akin's story both incorporates and reflects real experiences of Turkish-German society in general, and also of specific persons involved in the film. The inspiration for the story came from an incident in Akin's own life, when a friend asked him to marry her so she could leave her family's house.² And, similar to the situation of her character Sibel, lead actress Sibel Kekilli was disowned by her father after the release of the movie when reporters revealed her earlier involvement in pornographic films.³ This

¹ Fatih Akin, dir., *Gegen die Wand*, prod. Ralph Schwingel and Stefan Schubert, Wüste Filmproduktion (Hamburg), 2004, DVD. While the direct English translation for this film would be "Against the Wall," it has been translated for English-language distribution as "Head-On."

² Fatih Akin, *Gegen die Wand: Das Buch zum Film mit Dokumenten, Materialien, Interviews* (Köln: Verlag Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2004), 204.

³ "From Bare to Bear for Ex-Porn Queen," Deutsche-Welle: Culture & Lifestyle. 18 February 2004. www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,2144,1118125,00.html. (Accessed 5 November 2005.)

interplay between creative works and lived experiences makes consideration of fictional documents, such as films and literature, an intriguing window into the Germany's Turkish minority, as they draw from its experiences and reflect on their broader cultural and social meanings. This growing body of creative works emerges out of and addresses numerous political, economic, social and cultural factors of this community's experience both of its transnational identity and place in larger German society.

The current Turkish community in Germany has its origins in a series of labor agreements between West Germany and primarily southern European countries beginning in 1955, which were meant to address the Federal Republic's labor shortage problems. In 1961, when construction of the Wall halted the flood of labor pouring in from East Germany, the Federal Republic turned to Turkey for labor and thousands of Turks took advantage of the opportunity. The migrant workers were called *Gastarbeiter*, or "guestworkers," both to distinguish them from the term *Fremdarbeiter* [slave laborers], most recently used under the Nazi regime, and to emphasize the intended temporary nature of their stay. The majority of these foreign laborers worked in semi- or unskilled positions in industry, manufacturing, and agriculture, lived in dormitory or barrack-style housing, and intended to return to their homes after completing their term of service or accumulating a certain amount of savings.

However, by the early 1970s, it was becoming apparent to many in Germany that these "guestworkers" were transforming into immigrants. The Turkish workers, being most numerous and considered most "foreign" culturally, became more visible and controversial than any of the other *Gastarbeiter* groups. While many early Turkish guestworkers returned home after a year or so in Germany, increasing numbers of these migrant laborers began renewing their work and residence permits and bringing their families over from Turkey to

live with them. In 1970, approximately two-thirds of the over 300,000 Turkish residents in the Federal Republic were employed. Ten years later, the number of Turkish residents had risen to nearly one and a half million, 600,000 of whom held jobs.⁴

While the majority of Turkish migrants moved to Germany as a result of labor migration or family reunification, a smaller number fled Turkey to escape political or religious persecution, particularly after the military coup in 1980. These asylum seekers, like the labor migrants, are a diverse group, comprised of leftists and rightists, secularists and the religious, urban intellectuals and rural farmers, and have had a fundamental impact on the dynamics of the Turkish minority both in Germany and as a transnational community. Perhaps most visible among these have been the Islamists, whose brand of Islam is more conservative than that encouraged by the Turkish government, and the Kurds, who fled political and military repression and fighting in Anatolia, thereby transferring their conflict into immigrant communities in Germany.⁵ While the line between labor immigrant and political refugee has often been a blurry one, it is still important to recognize the myriad of motivations that brought Turks and Kurds to Germany, as well as how these motivations become a part of their identity in diaspora.

The reunification of families, prompted by the official halt of immigration in 1973 after the first oil crisis, and to a lesser degree the influx of asylum seekers, resulted in two phenomena that significantly increased the visibility of the growing Turkish minority: the formation of immigrant communities and the appearance of Turkish children in German

⁴ Ulrich Herbert, *A History of Foreign Labor in Germany, 1880-1980: Seasonal Workers, Forced Laborers, Guest Workers*. Translated by William Templer. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990), 203.

⁵ For more on the transnational dynamics of Turkish political and religious groups in Germany, see Betigül Ercan Argun's highly informative *Turkey in Germany: The Transnational Sphere of Deutschkei*. (New York and London: Routledge, 2003).

schools. As mentioned previously, when the Turkish workers came as single men and women, they lived largely apart from German society. But when the demographic composition changed from singles to families, Turks moved out of company housing and into neighborhoods, frequented German stores, and set up businesses of their own. In some cases, whole neighborhoods came to be identified as “Turkish,” such as Hamburg’s Altona and Berlin-Kreuzberg. In addition, their children, both those who came from Turkey and those who were born in Germany, began attending German schools. This presented a number of pedagogical, social and cultural challenges to the German school system, which was unprepared for the influx, foremost of which were issues of language and religion.⁶

The emergence of the second generation marked a significant shift in identity from an immigrant worker population to a Turkish-German community. Children of guestworkers and refugees grew up in multicultural neighborhoods, attended German schools, interacted with German classmates, consumed both Turkish and German radio and television, and often spent vacations visiting family in Turkey. In this context, they began to perceive differences between their parents, their classmates, and themselves and struggle to construct an identity that, to varying degrees, incorporated their multicultural experiences. As this cohort reached maturity and began to establish their livelihoods, an emerging cultural elite embraced the creative arts as both a career path and an opportunity to address the real and imagined experiences of the Turkish-German community and comment on larger German society. Poets, writers, and filmmakers, these artists have drawn inspiration from their lives, their imaginations, and their surroundings to produce captivating stories as well as a rich source of inquiry for scholars of post-war Germany.

⁶ See Ray Rist’s study of various efforts by German school systems to address these issues in *Guestworkers in Germany: Prospects for Pluralism*. (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1978), which will be discussed in Chapter 1.

While Turkish-German film and literature provide the historian with a valuable opportunity to study Germany's Turkish minority from that population's perspective, it is important to note they are among the only sources available that do so. Economic immigrants generally have little voice in the host society and this is particularly the case of Turks in Germany. From the outset, both Turkey and the Federal Republic viewed this migration as temporary, resulting in extremely narrow political rights in Germany for the *Gastarbeiter* and, subsequently, their families. In addition, the tenuous political situation in Turkey discouraged Turks and Turkish-Germans (residents of Germany and, in many cases, Turkish citizens as well) from speaking out in ways that would get them into trouble with that government. Vulnerable economically and constrained politically, Turkish-German intellectuals used fictional mediums as a means to make their voices heard and that is where the historian must go to find them.

Using creative works as historical sources, however persuasive they might be, can present a rather prickly opportunity for the researcher. As Gary D. Stark argues in his article, "Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Literatur für die Geschichtswissenschaft: A Historian's View," there are a number of cautions and pitfalls which historians must bear in mind as they look to integrate and analyze fictional documents.⁷ First, and perhaps most obviously, creative works are not a simple representation of reality. Rather, for the sake of good story-telling and to emphasize certain points, some elements may be highly exaggerated while others are diminished or even absent.⁸ Yet this problematic aspect of using fictional sources can, at the same time, be turned around and exploited as one of its strengths as the historian

⁷ Gary D. Stark, "Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Literatur für die Geschichtswissenschaft: A Historian's View," *The German Quarterly* 63, no. 1 (Winter 1990): 19-31.

⁸ Stark, "Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Literatur für die Geschichtswissenschaft," 20.

seeks to understand the justification for these story-telling devices. Why would the writer want to dramatize this event or minimize this relationship? Exploring the artists' choices in creating the story may yield as much fruit as examining the story itself.

One must also remember that, while historians have used literature to gauge trends in cultural or intellectual thought, a book (or film) may not reflect the artist's own point of view; in other words, the voice of the protagonist is not always the voice of the author. To make this determination, historians must seek out other ways of acquainting themselves with the authors and draw on collateral sources to see whether they are using their work to communicate their own ideas or to explore alternate concepts. Similarly, even as one must take into account the work's historical context, so must ideas presented in the text be considered "only in relation to the total context of the work." For, writes Stark, "to abstract them from the larger structure of the whole and examine them in isolation is necessarily to misconstrue them."⁹ To this end, characters, situations, and propositions should be viewed as arising out of and in relation to the whole of the story. Finally, just as certain elements cannot be considered out of relation with the whole of the text, neither can they be separated from the form of the text. This is where working with literature and film presents the most unique and interesting challenges. For the poet, word choice and form go hand-in-hand, as with the filmmaker an image, a gesture, and a setting are all intertwined and dependent on each other. While this aspect of treating creative works can be difficult, it also provides an opportunity for the historian to explore the multiple components involved in the construction of meaning and more fully understand the import of the text.

Yet, historians who wish to engage with creative works need not lose heart. Stark identifies several potentially fruitful approaches to literature, beginning with a focus on

⁹ Ibid., 20.

literature or the literary world as a distinct social institution that may shed light on the historical evolution of a country's political, social and economic systems. Drawing on Germany as an example, he stresses the value of expanding one's scope to include not only the authors, but also publishers, book sellers and reviewers, and the readers themselves.¹⁰ "When seen as a social process or as a socioeconomic institution," Stark asserts, "imaginative literature constitutes an undeniably important segment within German social and economic life."¹¹ Focusing more specifically on the role of the reader, he contends that, since the most widely read popular literature "presumably coincided most closely to that group's mental horizon," these works and their reception could "furnish a valuable source of information about the mental world of ordinary people in the past."¹² Finally, Stark argues that exploring imaginative literature can have significant, though less tangible, effects on how historians view these documents' past and their own work. Fictional literature can give historians room to imagine what might have been and how past writers envisioned alternate futures, as well as remind them that history-writing is also, to a degree, an artistic venture which "relates both the real and the imagined." "Historical scholarship," posits Stark, "is part memory, part imagination."¹³ His pragmatic ideas for the use of literature are also quite useful for the more recently developed imaginative venue of film.

Due to the dearth of other sources, historian Rita Chin has already drawn on literature and film from the Turkish-German community to examine the development of

¹⁰ Ibid., 25.

¹¹ Ibid., 26.

¹² Ibid., 28.

¹³ Ibid., 28-29.

multiculturalism in the Federal Republic.¹⁴ Chin uses a select number of works from four Turkish-German writers and one filmmaker as an entry point to explore the growing discourse surrounding multiculturalism, drawing as well on the creative works' critical, and, to a much lesser degree, popular reception. Ultimately, she finds that the emergence of "multiculturalism in postwar Germany is actually the intersection of two on-going public discussions—one about the labor migration and permanent residence of Turks, and the other about German national identity."¹⁵ Chin's use of creative works as primary sources and catalysts of discourse presents an instructive account of how Turkish-German voices influenced the concept of German identity and belonging even as it reveals the complicated and conflicted position of the intelligentsia from whom those voices were coming.

Bearing in mind Stark's warnings and Chin's example, I propose to approach using creative works as historical source material in three steps. While imaginative texts may not be inherently factual, they are by nature provocative works that suggest new connections and perspectives to the reader. As such, they may be of considerable use to scholars exploring related subjects. In the first chapter of this thesis, I will provide an overview of representative works on the historiography of the *Gastarbeiter* and the subsequent Turkish-German population, bringing out those themes most prominent in the field with a particular eye toward the perspective from which the subject is approached. Next, I will explore fictional literature of Turkish-German writers and attempt to discern how, through a different medium, these writers also address the issues discussed in the historiography and whether they suggest additional themes not brought to the fore by historians and sociologists. Finally,

¹⁴ Rita Chook-Kuan Chin, *Rewriting the "Guest Worker": Turkish-German Artists and the Emergence of Multiculturalism in the Federal Republic of Germany, 1961-1989*, unpublished dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1999.

¹⁵ Chin, *Rewriting the "Guest Worker,"* 2.

drawing on the results of the examinations of the historiographical and fictional literature, I will show how this change in perspective from conventional German-based sources to Turkish-German voices not only fills out scholarly accounts of political, economic, social and cultural issues but also suggests a diversity in Germany's Turkish minority that more traditional scholarly studies fail to capture.

Turkish-German artists have not only contributed to Germany's literary scene; they are, in increasing numbers, becoming active in the world of film. In the second chapter, I will explore this development, beginning with a look at early examples of depictions of *Gastarbeiter* and Turkish immigrants in German-directed film and move to a more in-depth analysis of the movies of Turkish-German filmmakers which followed. Again, my focus will be on how the artists, in this case first and second generation screenwriters and directors, engage with popular representations, topics and tropes and how they have chosen to depict certain social and culture issues facing broader German society and the Turkish-German community specifically. Many of these artists spent their formative years growing up in Germany, attended German schools and universities and largely market their films to a German and Turkish-German audience. Created to tell a story from a Turkish-German perspective while at the same time appealing to the desires of the marketplace, these films address a number of central issues to the construction of one's identity, including issues of gender, culture, and the other. By examining the development of these issues in film over a period of twenty-five years, we can learn how this element of the cultural elite engaged with such subject matter and what changes and stagnations they may have perceived in society.

Finally, by taking into account the identities of the Turkish-German artists and the developments in their creative works, in the conclusion I will explore the process of the

hybridization of identity in this group of cultural elites and the implications this has for larger Turkish-German society. Drawing in part from Stark's suggestions, this paper will take a broad view in considering the different ways to approach this issue. In addition to examining how particular themes or representations are addressed differently over time, I will also consider the artists themselves, the languages in which these creative works are constructed, and, to a lesser extent, who the intended audiences for these works were and what characterized their reception.¹⁶ Ultimately, this thesis will argue that the cultural elite have come to both advocate and represent a blended Turkish-German identity that refuses to fully conform to what they view as essentially "German" or "Turkish," and, in so doing, bridges the space between the two.

The literature and film discussed here encompass themes from the outrageous to the commonplace; the characters include immigrant workers, schoolchildren, parents, artists, criminals and devout believers; and their tone ranges from cynical to anxious to cautiously hopeful. Whether they are presented in a poem of ten lines or a two-hour film, the stories relate both subtle and powerful messages about the challenges and successes of a transnational community within the greater host society. What follows is my attempt to analyze and appreciate this growing body of work in a way that sheds light on the storytellers themselves and begins to incorporate their stories as a part of the discourse of Germany's Turkish community.

¹⁶ As no known studies of popular reception for these works exist, my analysis will be based on anecdotal evidence, such as reviews and awards, as well as the available numerical statistics of movie-going audiences.

CHAPTER 1

Scholars, Writers, and the Story of Germany's Turkish Minority

One man climbs into the back of a cab and, on the way to his destination, strikes up a conversation with the driver. The passenger, in broken German, laments the poor treatment of Turks in Germany, his own co-workers' cold attitudes toward him, and the terribly cold weather. In clear and easy German, the driver replies courteously and sympathetically. However, when the passenger inquires about the fare, the driver responds in Turkish. Confused, the passenger asks him to repeat the fare, which the driver does, again in Turkish. At this point the passenger confesses that he is not a real Turk; he wanted to see how a German taxi driver would treat him if he were.

"Was that really Turkish?" the passenger asks. "Next thing you'll be telling me that you're Turkish!"

"Yes, I'm Turkish," confirms the driver.

The passenger asks how he came to speak German so well, to which the driver answers he was born and raised here. Laughing, the two part ways and another man climbs into the cab. The driver mentions that he just drove a rather "strange Turk."

"Yeah," replies the new passenger. "Our *Kanacken* [ethnic slur] are quite strange!"¹⁷

This story is taken from a dialogue written by Cengiz Kip¹⁸ and well illustrates the conflicting identities and perceptions of the Turkish-German population in the Federal Republic of Germany. Kip first introduces the identity of a Turkish-German as the traditional stereotype of a *Gastarbeiter*, the origins of which are largely seen in the early stages of immigration. However, the driver represents the second generation of the *Gastarbeiter*: those raised in Germany and often indistinguishable from "real" Germans. Finally, Kip offers two forms of German racism. The first passenger, though he may see himself as sympathetic to the Turkish community, perceives the Turkish identity as being the old guestworker stereotype and is surprised that a Turk can speak German so well. The second passenger's racism is less complicated. This brief story illustrates one aspect of

¹⁷ Cengiz Kip, "Seltsamer Deutscher, komischer Türke," in *Türken deutscher Sprache: Berichte, Erzählungen, Gedichte*, ed. Irmgard Ackermann (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1984), 212-213.

¹⁸ Born in Istanbul in 1953, Cengiz Kip moved to Munich in 1978, where he studied German.

Turkish-German identity in German society, an issue that is part of the larger debate taking place in a variety of disciplines over Germany's Turkish minority.

In the early 1970s, social scientists and, later on, historians began studying the *Gastarbeiter* with a professional interest and vigor now reflected in the numerous studies of various aspects related to Germany's post-war labor agreements and foreign resident population.¹⁹ These disciplines examine the *Gastarbeiter* and subsequent Turkish-German population chiefly in regard to their effect on German society and the response of German society to the "unexpected settlement" of so many foreign laborers and their families.

Scholars have focused on topics such as grounding labor immigration historically, analyzing the challenge of educating guestworkers' children, and linking political participation with integration, many with an eye toward assessing levels of integration and changes in identity. As the following examples will show, scholarship in this area excels in explaining the historical context of labor migration and the adjustments made or needed in German society to accommodate for the Turkish settlers.²⁰ However, voices from the Turkish-German community are noticeably absent from these analyses. To hear the issues from this perspective, we must turn to the literature of Turkish and Turkish-German authors.

Writers from Germany's Turkish minority have, since the early 1970s, used literature as their tool for adding their own voices to ongoing debates and for bringing perspectives

¹⁹ See Stephen Castles, "The Guests Who Stayed—The Debate on 'Foreigners Policy' in the German Federal Republic." *International Migration Review* 19, no. 3, Special Issue: Civil Rights and the Sociopolitical Participation of Migrants (Autumn, 1985); Ray Rist, *Guestworkers in Germany: Prospects for Pluralism*. (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1978); Ulrich Herbert, *A History of Foreign Labor in Germany, 1880-1980: Seasonal Workers, Forced Laborers, Guest Workers*. Translated by William Templer. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990).

²⁰ I use the word "settler" to describe the reality of Turkish migration to Germany. Though many maintain strong ties to Turkey through family and culture, Turkish-Germans constitute a grounded and enduring segment of German society.

into the public sphere that scholars have failed to explore.²¹ While their subjects and styles are far from uniform, similar themes emerge that provide insight into the personal, familial and societal experiences that historical works have not addressed. Authors such as Aras Ören, Aysel Özakin and Canan Can, in telling stories of intergenerational conflict, shifting roles for women, the effect of unemployment, and the everyday experiences of school children, present a more nuanced and, in the end, more informative discussion of the questioning and construction of identity. Though largely describing the experiences of individuals, these stories, taken as a whole, suggest a picture of a community in tension, negotiating between holding to its Turkish background and assimilating to its German environment.

In order to illustrate these trends, I will first give an overview of the historiography of the *Gastarbeiter* and Germany's Turkish minority, specifically examining the perspectives from which the analyses are made and the themes scholars considered to be of particular interest or importance. Then, drawing on novels, short stories and poetry, I will explore the themes and issues prevalent in Turkish-German literature, with a particular focus on the tensions between traditional and changing identities, and address the discrepancies that result from the literature's and historiography's differing perspectives. Finally, I will suggest both how the research of academics can benefit from a deeper consideration of Turkish-German literature and why certain subjects are better presented through the medium of literature. What subjects have historians and sociologists featured prominently in their scholarship and what have they overlooked? How does the different perspective taken by Turkish-German literature highlight and complicate particular themes addressed in the historiography and

²¹ See Aras Ören, *Please, No Police*, translated by Teoman Sipahigil (Austin: Center for Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Texas at Austin, 1992); Aysel Özakin, *Soll ich hier alt werden? Türken in Deutschland, Erzählungen*. (Hamburg: Goldmann Verlag, 1982).

introduce new ones? Ultimately, how can history and the social sciences benefit from a deeper consideration of this literature and what new directions for research can such an examination suggest?

History and the Social Sciences

The professional and academic interest generated by the *Gastarbeiter* phenomenon in West Germany and the subsequent issues of integration and citizenship in the united Federal Republic has resulted in an impressive amount of research. I have chosen a cross-section of these studies that represent the themes and issues of academic interest from various disciplines. Several prominent themes arise in a study of the historiography: the placing of *Gastarbeiter* immigration into historical context, Germany's economic and political issues regarding immigration, the changing family relationships and gender roles in Turkish families, the challenges of the second generation and their education, and the role of religion in the family and society. Throughout this first section, the organization of these themes reflects the general evolution of the scholarship since the 1970s.

The preeminent work on the historical development of foreign labor in Germany is Ulrich Herbert's *A History of Foreign Labor in Germany, 1880-1980: Seasonal Workers, Forced Laborers, Guest Workers*. Taking issue with the public perception of the *Gastarbeiter* phenomenon as a development of the 1960s, Herbert asserts that the current situation of foreign labor "remains incomprehensible without a critical confrontation with the collective experiences of a society in dealing with the massive employment of foreign

workers in the past and the traditions that have crystallized over decades as a result.”²² Each chapter examines a different phase in Germany’s use of foreign labor, culminating with guestworkers in the Federal Republic after 1955. Herbert treats each stage of foreign labor as a “prehistory” to the next, noting the traditions that evolve both through the legal system and in society.²³

Though other scholars have not chosen to concentrate so heavily on the historical development of foreign labor in Germany, many incorporate the historical perspective into their own studies of the *Gastarbeiter*. Barbara Freyer Stowasser begins her essay “The Turks in Germany: From Sojourners to Citizens” by discussing the development of the concept of German citizenship and how the holdover of early 19th century ideas of citizenship based on *ius sanguinis* affected the position of Turkish immigrants in late 20th century Germany, making attaining citizenship and the rights thereunto practically impossible.²⁴ Ray Rist and Brett Klopp also begin their studies by introducing the historical background of immigration in Germany. Seeking to study the “interrelationship of immigration, integration, and citizenship,” Klopp, similar to Stowasser, concentrates his historical background on the development of immigration and ideas of citizenship.²⁵ Rist largely focuses on the transition of traditional European migration from movements of populations to overseas destinations to labor migration within Europe and the situation in post-World War II Germany that made

²² Ulrich Herbert, *A History of Foreign Labor in Germany, 1880-1980: Seasonal Workers, Forced Laborers, Guest Workers*. Translated by William Templer. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990), 4.

²³ Herbert, *A History of Foreign Labor in Germany*, 4-7.

²⁴ Barbara Freyer Stowasser, “The Turks in Germany: From Sojourners to Citizens,” in *Muslims in the West: From Sojourners to Citizens*, ed. Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 52-53.

²⁵ Brett Klopp, *German Multiculturalism: Immigrant Integration and the Transformation of Citizenship*. (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2002), 1, 33-55.

foreign labor attractive, setting the stage for his argument that German response to multiculturalism was to integrate the foreign residents economically while keeping them separate socially and culturally.²⁶ For these scholars, German society's experience with foreign laborers and Germany's concept of citizenship are issues of primary importance in understanding the historical context of the guestworkers' experience.

Perhaps the most recurring theme in the historiography of the *Gastarbeiter* experience and Turkish-German population is the focus on economic and political issues surrounding their immigration to Germany. Scholars have traced similar paths from the labor agreements of the 1950s and 1960s to the political efforts to promote repatriation and integration, and, more recently, to discussions of citizenship. The labor agreement with Turkey in 1961 was one in a series made by West Germany with mainly Mediterranean countries, and scholars note that supporters of the move saw benefits for both the sending and host countries, particularly in alleviating unemployment in the former and facilitating economic growth in the latter.²⁷ Rist points out the unique situation of Turkey among the other sending countries; until the army overthrew the Menderes regime in 1960 and a year later made the labor agreement with West Germany, very few Turkish workers could be found in Europe. The Turkish government hoped for the return of trained industrial workers and a full membership in the European Economic Community (EEC).²⁸ He also notes the

²⁶ Ray Rist, *Guestworkers in Germany: Prospects for Pluralism*. (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1978), 3-14.

²⁷ See Herbert, 205-213; and Rist, 36-38.

²⁸ Rist, 89-98.

motivations of the workers themselves: a desire for higher wages, better vocational opportunities, and participation in an industrialized economy.²⁹

Scholars see the ambivalence of Germany's political and legal systems towards the *Gastarbeiter* and Turkish minority reflected in its policies regarding the foreign residents' status. Rist comments that the "policies governing the lives of the guestworkers in Germany are confused and contradictory" and emphasizes the lack of specificity in policy that allowed for "abuses and questionable practices to occur," referring to residency and work policies.³⁰ Hermann Korte, in "Guestworker Question or Immigration Issue? Social Sciences and Public Debate in the Federal Republic of Germany," identifies the conflicting policies as oriented towards both the immigration model, which was committed to the original plan of rotational labor, and the classic model of mass migration, which called for "better integration ending in naturalisation."³¹ Peter O'Brien sees more xenophobia than ambiguity in German law before 1973 in his article "Continuity and Change in Germany's Treatment of Non-Germans." Though he notes a shift towards integration and equality in legislation beginning in the late seventies, O'Brien argues that prior to that time Germans concerned themselves largely with controlling the foreign population and cites the resurrection in 1965 of the Aliens Police Decree of 1938 as an example of Germany's "traditional foundation of control—restricted civil rights."³²

²⁹ Ibid., 30.

³⁰ Ibid., 88, 134.

³¹ Hermann Korte, "Guestworker Question of Immigration Issue? Social Sciences and Public Debate in the Federal Republic of Germany," in *Population, Labour and Migration in 19th- and 20th- Century Germany*, ed. Klaus Bade (New York: Berg Publishers Limited, 1987), 164.

³² Peter O'Brien, "Continuity and Change in Germany's Treatment of Non-Germans." *International Migration Review* 22, no. 3 (Autumn, 1988): 115-116.

O'Brien also observes this attempt at control in the housing restrictions of 1975 that gave cities whose population was over twelve percent foreign the ability to apply for and receive the right to deny entry to more foreign residents.³³ While O'Brien sees state courts concerned with constitutionality as the main actors in this restriction's demise, Stephen Castles argues that the restrictions were dropped because employers protested it made the labor market too inflexible and because it could not be effectively enforced.³⁴ Klopp examines the housing debate from a local level, writing about town council meetings in Frankfurt in the late nineties of council members, city planners, and residents who debated the use of quotas to prevent segregation. While some called the use of quotas racist, others questioned whether segregation is such a bad thing if it comes about as a "consequence of self-selection."³⁵

An emerging part of the political situation of interest to historians and particularly sociologists is the relationship between citizenship and political participation. Klopp pays close attention to this relationship in *German Multiculturalism*, arguing that "meaningful political incorporation should be a focal point of immigrant integration plans."³⁶ He first looks at German citizenship laws and the political platforms of dominant German parties regarding integration and citizenship, then turns his attention to the experiments in Frankfurt to create a forum in response to foreign residents' desire to participate politically and to be represented. After examining the functions of the Frankfurt Office of Multicultural Affairs

³³ O'Brien, "Continuity and Change," 119.

³⁴ Stephen Castles, "The Guests Who Stayed—The Debate on 'Foreigners Policy' in the German Federal Republic." *International Migration Review* 19, no. 3, Special Issue: Civil Rights and the Sociopolitical Participation of Migrants (Autumn, 1985): 524.

³⁵ Klopp, 149.

³⁶ Ibid., 187.

and the foreigners' councils, Klopp concludes that, though these organizations demonstrate the willingness and desire of non-citizens to be involved in politics, they fail to meet the goal of incorporating foreign residents "as active participants in civil society."³⁷

As shown, each of these scholars has taken a fairly traditional approach toward understanding the economic and political issues that surround the *Gastarbeiter* phenomenon and Turkish resident minority. By examining the motivations behind the labor agreements, the reactions of the legal system, and the changes in governmental policy, scholars have presented a compelling account of German legal and political structures' initial denial of and belated response to the settlement of numerous foreign residents. This account depicts the Turkish residents as caught between conflicting governmental policies aimed at integrating them into the workforce, but not into greater society. These approaches, however, fail to include voices from the Turkish-German minority and focus mainly on *Gastarbeiter* rather than Turks specifically. This focus is somewhat corrected in the following discussions of family relationships, the second generation, and the role of religion in Turkish families and communities.

Shifting from a focus on political and economic consequences of immigration, recent trends in the historiography reflect a growing concentration on social and cultural issues. In the last several years, scholars have shown increasing interest in the subject of Islam in Europe and have begun to conduct research on what role religion plays in the lives of immigrants in relationships within their families, communities, and German society. As a result, there is now a body of literature addressing the situations of foreign resident families in Germany through the lens of Islam and Turkish culture to complement the existing scholarship which focused on the effects of German political and economic policies on the

³⁷ Ibid., 164-179.

migrant family. Indeed, a conference at Keele University in 1994 concluding the stay of Turkish-German author Emine Sevgi Özdamar as Visiting Writer produced a collection of essays that comes closer to addressing the personal experiences of Turkish-German residents, including the influence of Islam, than much of the other existing scholarship.³⁸ Consequently, as I proceed to examine the historiography of the social and cultural experiences of Germany's Turkish minority, the role of Islam will figure heavily into my analysis.

Scholarship on the Turkish-German population examined from the perspective of religion emphasizes the diverse nature of Islam. Yasemin Karakasoglu states that the term "Muslim" is "primarily a cultural attribution that is by no means synonymous with actual religious practice" that one can choose to express in outward demonstrations or not.³⁹ Andreas Goldberg notes the sectarian divisions, the varied and changing attitudes of Turkish-Germans toward religion, and the tensions that have resulted in German association of Islam with fundamentalism and extremism.⁴⁰ The fact that Islam is not recognized as a legal body on par with the Catholic and Protestant churches, Goldberg argues, results in discrimination against this community evidenced in the illegality of certain slaughtering practices, conflicts over burial requirements in German cemeteries, resistance to the building of mosques, and lack of efficient religious instruction for Muslim students, as will be discussed later.⁴¹

³⁸ David Horrocks and Eva Kolinsky, eds., *Turkish Culture in German Society Today*. (Providence: Berghahn Books, 1996).

³⁹ Yasemin Karakasoglu, "Turkish Cultural Orientations in Germany and the Role of Islam," in *Turkish Culture in German Society Today*, eds. David Horrocks and Eva Kolinsky (Providence: Berghahn Books, 1996), 158.

⁴⁰ Andreas Goldberg, "Islam in Germany," in *Islam, Europe's Second Religion: The New Social, Cultural and Political Landscape*, ed. Shireen T. Hunter (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2002), 30-47.

⁴¹ Ibid., 44-45.

In the initial stages of immigration, neither Germany nor Turkey made any provisions for the religious requirements of the foreign workers. The German government did not see the need to accommodate the religious needs of temporary workers, and the secularist nature of the Turkish government, as Stowasser points out, led them to view religion as a private matter.⁴² Goldberg emphasizes the independent and popular character of practiced Islam in the early stages of immigration, as Turkish Muslims requested space for daily prayer in their hostels and workplaces and took turns acting as imams.⁴³ Karakasoglu agrees with Goldberg's assessment of the early nature of Islam in Germany, noting how the first generation's turn to the culture and values of their home country through Islam played a large role in "defining their identity as a minority."⁴⁴ Both Goldberg and Stowasser also note the traditional, rural backgrounds of many of the early guestworkers as an influence on the character of Islam, basing its practice more on popular customs and understanding than official theology.⁴⁵

Scholars have identified two prominent factors in the growth and development of Turkish families through the early seventies and eighties: contradictory governmental policy and family reunification. Herbert and Rist, along with others, point to the family allowance policy and tax reforms as key factors in the rate of family reunifications in the mid-seventies. With parents receiving more money from the government for children living with them in Germany rather than back in their country of origin, the number of family members joining

⁴² Stowasser, "The Turks in Germany," 60.

⁴³ Goldberg, 38.

⁴⁴ Karakasoglu, "Turkish Cultural Orientations in Germany and the Role of Islam," 160-161.

⁴⁵ Goldberg, "Islam in Germany," 30; and Stowasser, 61.

the working parent or parents increased significantly.⁴⁶ This, combined with an increased number of births, caused the population of foreign residents to rise even with the recruitment ban in place. In 1974, over seventeen percent of all live births in West Germany were to foreign residents.⁴⁷

Family reunification altered both the demography of the Turkish minority and the practice of Islam by that minority in Germany. Workers who once lived in hostels and company barracks moved with their families into apartments and set up mosques, which now received imams from Turkey. Goldberg believes these changes contributed to the isolation of Turks from German society, drawing them more closely to Islam for a sense of identity.⁴⁸ “As women and children settled in Germany,” writes Karakasoglu, “traditional patterns of social control re-emerged along established Turkish-Islamic lines.”⁴⁹ This increased presence and visibility of Muslims “caused discomfort and even anxiety among many Europeans,” Shireen Hunter comments, as it “forced largely homogeneous societies to face their new multiethnic and multicultural realities.”⁵⁰ Though Hunter identifies the Europeans as these “largely homogeneous societies,” her statement also illustrates the situation of the various immigrant populations relating to the multicultural European societies in which they live. Stowasser points out that generational conflict and “degrees of acculturation combined to call forth an increased emphasis by Turkish parents, especially fathers (sometimes also older brothers) on Islamic values, customs, and social rules.” This “lived Islam” is defined

⁴⁶ Herbert, 247; and Rist, 84-85.

⁴⁷ Herbert, 235.

⁴⁸ Goldberg, 38-39.

⁴⁹ Karakasoglu, 160-161.

⁵⁰ Shireen Hunter, ed., *Islam, Europe’s Second Religion: The New Social, Cultural and Political Landscape*. (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2002), xiv.

by Stowasser “as a device to legitimate and prop up the patriarchal family.”⁵¹ Dursun Tan and Peter Waldhoff argue that these tensions “can only be understood in reference to the relationship developed by Turks with Germans.” Perceived hostility from Germans, they say, drives families’ decisions to hold more closely to such traditions that define the relationships between the first and second generations,⁵² just as it results in a continuing tension between the families’ traditional roles and, in this case, the supposed threat of the surrounding culture.

The role and status of women and girls have largely been examined through the lenses of family reunification and education. As previously noted, scholars charge that the changing demographic of the Turkish community that resulted from family reunification prompted a strengthening of adherence to traditional Islamic culture, having direct effects on status of women and young girls. Klopp also focuses briefly on gender roles among Muslim students, interviewing teachers and discussing the issues they see the young Muslim girls and boys encountering.⁵³ Anthropologist Ayse Kudat conducted a study among Turkish women workers, both those in Germany and returnees, aimed toward understanding how the experience of working in Germany affected their sense of identity and if that experience ultimately translated into societal change in Turkey. In the essay analyzing her findings, Kudat explores the tensions in family relationships that result from the woman being the primary breadwinner, the reactions of women to German society and the extent to which they choose to interact, and how the experience changes the women’s perception of their own

⁵¹ Stowasser, 60-61.

⁵² Dursun Tan and Hans-Peter Waldhoff, “Turkish Everyday Culture in Germany and its Prospects,” in *Turkish Cultural in German Society Today*, eds. David Horrocks and Eva Kolinsky (Providence: Berghahn Books, 1996), 140.

⁵³ Klopp, 115-120.

roles within their family and society. Kudat finds that, on the whole, the women view their experience of working in Germany as a contribution to the family's income, but otherwise not relevant to their lives.⁵⁴

Historians and social scientists usually examine the second generation of immigrants in relation to their education, their religion, or both. Peter Mandaville, in an essay entitled "Muslim Youth in Europe," concentrates on what he sees as a progression from the dissatisfaction of European Muslim youth "with the Islam of their parents" to their development towards a "European Islam." Drawing heavily on examples in England, Mandaville emphasizes a more positive view of the second generation's prospects, which he sees as drawing on experiences in European society, interactions with Muslims from other parts of the world, and a more intellectual approach to Islam.⁵⁵ Karakasoglu refers to this generation as "post-modern Muslims," agreeing with Mandaville's assessment of their more intellectual approach to Islam. She argues that behind their blending of Islamic and European culture, evident in young women wearing Western-style clothes with headscarves, "lies the conviction that certain aspects of modern society and technological development can be combined with Muslim traditions and practice," illustrating a growing hybrid identity between the two cultures.⁵⁶ This optimism expressed by Karakasoglu and Mandaville, who sees young European Muslims as "increasingly confident of their place on the continent," is not universally shared by other scholars.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Ayse Kudat, "Personal, familial, and societal impacts of Turkish women's migration to Europe," in *Living in Two Cultures: The Socio-Cultural Situation of Migrant Workers and their Families*. (Paris: The Unesco Press, 1982), 291-305.

⁵⁵ Peter P. Mandaville, "Muslim Youth in Europe," in *Islam, Europe's Second Religion: The New Social, Cultural and Political Landscape*, ed. Shireen T. Hunter (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2002), 220-223.

⁵⁶ Karakasoglu, 172.

In looking at the education of the guestworkers' and Turkish-German children, social scientists and historians have produced a large body of literature that exhibits more pessimism. Rist, who believes that the immigrants' children "wander in cultural limbo,"⁵⁸ explores the responses of the various *Länder* to the educational challenge posed by *Gastarbeiter* children in the seventies, examines the progression of federal education policies (which were unenforceable), and finally narrows his focus to two emerging models in Bavaria and Berlin. These models, he argues, represent Germany's encouragement, on one hand, of the return of foreign residents to their country of origin and, on the other, demand for their complete integration into German society.⁵⁹ Over twenty years after Rist's study, Klopp similarly finds, after analyzing educational policy and interviewing teachers, that the main obstacle to "schools acting as a force for integration in Germany has been the government's and society's slow and reluctant acknowledgement that a significant portion of the immigration population was indeed taking root and settling in Germany."⁶⁰ Herbert looks at governmental policy and education statistics, and concludes that the result of these policies "has been the creation of a generation of bilingual illiterates" whose greater situation "reflects nearly all the serious problems that have emerged as a consequence of foreign labor in the Federal Republic."⁶¹ Overall, scholars have portrayed the educational policies as contributing factors to the Turkish population's continued internal contestation over its place in and relationship to larger German society.

⁵⁷ Mandaville, "Muslim Youth in Europe," 228.

⁵⁸ Rist, 27.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 207-235.

⁶⁰ Klopp, 103-104.

⁶¹ Herbert, 242-243.

In regard to the religious education of the second generation, scholars have largely focused on the unique relationship between the German state and the federally recognized churches which allows for religious education in schools. As Islam does not yet have a central organization in Germany that can legitimately claim to represent all Muslims, it is not allowed the same attention in German schools as Catholic and Protestant theologies. Klopp, Karakasoglu, and Stowasser each examine the alternatives of Islamic education that have resulted from its exclusion from the German curriculum: the North Rhine-Westphalia program, which is designed in Germany and taught by state-hired teachers, the model more prominent in the other *Länder* in which the materials and teachers are supplied by Turkey, and the final alternative, the Koran schools operated by mosques. While Klopp focuses on the importance of equal opportunity in religious education in the “social integration of foreigners,” Stowasser looks at the roles of the mosques, ranging from more traditional to politicized, in shaping the nature of their Islamic identity.⁶²

Religious education for youth is just one example of the ways Islamic organizations have stepped in to serve the largely Turkish Muslim community. Karakasoglu’s essay “Turkish Cultural Orientations in Germany and the Role of Islam” details the development of Islamic organizations and the roles they play in society. Initially serving only as meeting places, these associations grew in response to economic recession and unemployment to provide social and educational opportunities, as well as assistance with the German bureaucracy. “Islam thus emerged as a common core of Turkish identity,” argues Karakasoglu, “and gained a prominence which it had not possessed when migration into Germany first began.”⁶³ She goes on to study the larger umbrella organizations that formed

⁶² Klopp, 112-114; Karakasoglu, 163; Stowasser, 65-66.

to advocate on the federal level, noting the increased emphasis on serving Turks in Germany, rather than relating back to Turkey, and also the increased political experience of these organizations within the German bureaucracy and their desire to involve their members in the political sphere.⁶⁴

The last area of scholarship I will discuss here has been little covered in history or the social sciences, though literary criticism has addressed an aspect of it. I am referring to the cultural sphere of the Turkish-German community, as discussed in Tan's and Waldhoff's essay in *Turkish Culture in German Society Today*. Recognizing that Turkish culture in Germany "is a heterogeneous affair," Tan and Waldhoff examine changes in the use of language from the first to third generation of immigrants and styles of dancing and music to illustrate both the acceptance of certain aspects of German culture and adherence to Turkish traditions.⁶⁵ They also address the struggle of Turkish-German artists to keep from being relegated to the periphery of the German cultural scene and explore the situation of Turkish-German academics and their small but increasing presence in the student population and academic circles.⁶⁶ "Without a German-Turkish professional culture," they predict, "without the contribution of a German-Turkish middle class and intellectual life, German-Turkish everyday culture will tend to look back, retrench, segregate."⁶⁷

As previously discussed in the introduction, Rita Chin examines the role of Turkish-German intellectuals, specifically four writers and a filmmaker, and their work in

⁶³ Karakasoglu, 166.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 169-175.

⁶⁵ Tan and Waldhoff, "Turkish Everyday Culture in Germany and its Prospects," 137, 143-148.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 149-151.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 153.

contributing to and helping shape the growing discourse of multiculturalism in the Federal Republic. At the heart of this issue, Chin locates an intersection of two distinct but related public debates, one concerning the permanent settlement of “guestworkers” and the other the German concept of identity and national belonging.⁶⁸ Lacking political and economic power, Turkish-German artists used these “cultural contributions” to challenge stereotypes and frame the debate by replacing the concept of immigrant integration with “mutual adaptation and cross-cultural enrichment.” By testing “the limits of what it meant to be ‘German,’” Chin argues, Turkish-German intellectuals “introduced the prospect of a multicultural Federal Republic.”⁶⁹ Her use of creative works as a historical source is unique in the historiography and provides an insightful look into the shaping of the discourse and implications of multiculturalism, ultimately showing the Turkish-German artists to be more influential than the community activists in Klopp’s study of more overtly political approaches to the same issue.

Now, with an eye toward this type of inquiry into more creative spheres and bearing in mind trends in the wider scholarship, the following section examines the prevalent themes in Turkish-German literature.

The Literature of Turkish-German Authors

From the 1950s to the early 1970s, very little of the literature from the immigrant community reached German society, with the exception of the works of Aras Ören, who had an established literary career before immigrating. Writers were often hindered by their

⁶⁸ Rita Chook-Kuan Chin, *Rewriting the “Guest Worker”: Turkish-German Artists and the Emergence of Multiculturalism in the Federal Republic of Germany, 1961-1989*, unpublished dissertation (University of California, Berkeley, 1999), 2.

⁶⁹ Chin, *Rewriting the “Guest Worker,”* 25-26.

personal situations, writes Barbara Fennell, “isolated within national groups or stuck in literary ghettos.”⁷⁰ The media and commercial press largely ignored the early anthologies and independent works published in the later seventies, making writers more dependent on private organizations for financial and publishing assistance. Turkish writers more often could use newspapers and journals as forums to present their work. In the 1970s, a number of Turkish writers seeking political asylum after fleeing extremists and then a military dictatorship in Turkey joined the guestworkers in Germany. Though most originally wrote in Turkish and had their works translated into German, a growing number of Turkish writers turned to writing in German.⁷¹ “When the Turks in Germany began to write and did so in German,” writes Turkish German intellectual Zafer Senocak, “the Germans were quite surprised. After all, the formal agreements regulating the recruitment of foreign laborers had not said anything about literature.”⁷² Many of the second generation, who were born in Germany and often spoke better German than Turkish, published exclusively in German. While the literature of Italian writers in Germany was often highly political, that of Turkish writers was considerably less so. Fennell attributes this difference to the more tenuous political position the Turks had in Germany, as opposed to writers from EEC countries. As members of a non-EEC country, Turkish writers were more susceptible to the restrictions of

⁷⁰ Barbara A. Fennell, *Language, Literature, and the Negotiation of Identity: Foreign Worker German in the Federal Republic of Germany*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 94.

⁷¹ For example, Aras Ören writes exclusively in Turkish and has his works translated, Aysel Özakin originally had her works translated and now writes in German and English, and Zehra Çirak, part of the second generation, writes primarily in German.

⁷² Zafer Senocak, “Which Myth Writes Me?” in *Atlas of a Tropical Germany: Essays on Politics and Culture, 1990-1998*, ed. and trans. Leslie A. Adelson (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 78.

the Foreigners Law and subject to the will of authorities in Turkey, who could choose not to renew their passports.⁷³

As more foreign-owned presses opened and German companies increased their publication of *Ausländerliteratur* [foreigner literature], immigrant writers gained a wider readership and an increased literary recognition of their works. In 1983, the Bavarian Academy of Fine Arts awarded the Förderpreis to Aras Ören and Franco Biondi. These same authors shared the Adalbert von Chamisso Prize two years later when it was awarded for the first time. In 1984, the Altona district of Hamburg honored Aysel Özakin and in 1985, Offenbach similarly recognized Saliha Scheinhardt.⁷⁴ Perhaps even more significant was Emine Sevgi Özdamar's reception of the Ingeborg-Bachmann Prize for German literature in 1991 as this particular award is given to German literary figures and not just to those writing in German.⁷⁵ Another consequence of the widening recognition of these literary contributions was the growing debate over how to categorize them, a debate that is yet unresolved. “Guestworker literature,” “immigrants literature,” “foreigners literature,” “minority literature,” and the “literature of the affected” are some of the labels being contested by literary critics, scholars, and the writers themselves.⁷⁶

The concern of this chapter, however, is not the classification of this growing body of literature, but rather how the literature addresses many of the same issues broached by academic scholarship. The following examination of Turkish-German literature reflects

⁷³ Ibid., 99-100.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 96.

⁷⁵ Karen Jankowsky, “‘German’ Literature Contested: The 1991 Ingeborg-Bachmann-Prize Debate, ‘Cultural Diversity,’ and Emine Sevgi Özdamar,” *The German Quarterly* 70, No. 3 (Summer, 1997), 262.

⁷⁶ For more information on this debate, see Heidrun Suhr, “Ausländerliteratur: Minority Literature in the Federal Republic of Germany.” *New German Critique*, no. 46, Special Issue on Minorities in German Culture. (Winter, 1989): 71-103.

many of the subjects raised in the historiography, from the historical context of immigration to the experience of Turkish students in German schools. Yet, upon close inspection, a significant difference emerges. By telling their stories from the perspectives of Turkish-Germans, the writers introduce themes that these disciplines, in largely leaving out the voices of Germany's Turkish minority, have missed. At the same time, these stories, taken as a whole, reflect a larger picture of a community between two, oftentimes conflicting, cultures in search of a new, blended identity and thus bring out a new perspective both missing from and valuable to the academic historiography.

Turkish-German writers have taken a different perspective on historical context than historians and social scientists, preferring to focus on what first prompted Turks to move and, even more, why they decide to stay in Germany. While there are many stories about coming to Germany for work-related purposes, writers also recognize that money was not the sole motivation. Aysel Özakin,⁷⁷ in “Was kommt nach Hamburg?” [What comes after Hamburg?], describes the interaction between a woman on her way to Hamburg and a young man who stopped at the train station on his way from school for ice cream. In talking with the young man, the woman learns that he and his family fled Turkey after extremists killed one of his brothers and burned down the family home. The decision to move to Germany was influenced by the fact they already had family there.⁷⁸ Özakin, having moved from Turkey for political reasons herself, creates this interaction between the woman and the

⁷⁷ Aysel Özakin grew up and was an established writer in Turkey before moving to West Germany in 1981 as a political refugee. She later moved to England, finding Germany too “political” for her to be accepted as a writer first and Turkish second. See interview in Annette Wierschke, *Schreiben als Selbstbehauptung: Kulturkonflikt und Identität in den Werken von Aysel Özakin, Alev Tekinay und Emine Sevgi Özdamar. Mit Interviews* (Frankfurt: IKO, 1996), 232-240.

⁷⁸ Aysel Özakin, “Was kommt nach Hamburg?” in *Soll ich hier alt werden? Türken in Deutschland, Erzählungen*. (Hamburg: Goldmann Verlag, 1982), 49-50.

young man as a counter to the popular perception that immigration from Turkey to Germany was prompted solely by economic reasons.

An examination of the literature reveals both motivations for first coming to Germany and also how unexpected developments often led to a change in plans for either returning to Turkey or staying in Germany longer than anticipated. Özakin, in *Soll ich hier alt werden?* [Should I grow old here?], introduces three women whose changed circumstances thwart their original plans. In the short story “Kleinbürgers Leiden” [The Suffering of the Petty Bourgeoisie], middle-aged Selma planned on moving back to Turkey before the children started school, but was stopped when the country succumbed to “that damned anarchy.” By the time the military took power and restored order, the children were already in school and she did not want to take them out.⁷⁹ Other than referencing the economic motivations, scholars have largely ignored how events in Turkey influence the decisions and actions of Turkish-Germans.

Staying for the children’s sake also motivates Birsen, a character in “Früh die erste U-Bahn” [Early on the First Subway]. Birsen, who came to Germany ten years earlier with her husband, works in a factory all day and cares for her four children at night while her husband, unemployed, spends his time in a bar. Though she dreams of moving back to Turkey, buying an apartment with central heat, and spending her days as a carefree housewife, Birsen knows “that is a return home that will never be a reality, while the longing for security and the future of her children holds her fast.”⁸⁰ Birsen’s friend, Nuran, with a decent paying job and a lover she has no intention of marrying, has no desire to return to

⁷⁹ Aysel Özakin, “Kleinbürgers Leiden,” in *Soll ich hier alt werden? Türken in Deutschland, Erzählungen*. (Hamburg: Goldmann Verlag, 1982), 67-69.

⁸⁰ Aysel Özakin, “Früh die erste U-Bahn,” in *Soll ich hier alt werden? Türken in Deutschland, Erzählungen*. (Hamburg: Goldmann Verlag, 1982), 62-65.

Turkey. “Why should I go back to Turkey?” she asks Birsen. “I’ve invested my youth and my strength here.”⁸¹ In “Mutter hat ihre Arbeit verloren” [Mother lost her job], Sevim faces deportation after losing her work permit as a result of spending most of the last two years in the hospital following a suicide attempt. In Germany, Sevim receives unemployment assistance and health care, and her neighbors look after her and her children. Her return to Turkey means a loss of all financial and social support for her and her two young daughters.⁸² Here we see how the writer chooses to comment on the effects of governmental policies, such as the residency permits and social welfare, by exploring the consequences on a personal level.

Writers also introduce characters who did return to Turkey, only to find themselves so changed by their experience in Germany that they did not want to stay. In Tülin Emircan’s⁸³ “Entfremdung” [Alienation], the narrator’s friend, once enthusiastic about learning German and interacting with society, becomes disheartened when that society shuts him out and so returns to Turkey. Only two weeks later, he is back in Germany and, when asked why, replies, “Better a stranger away from home than a stranger in your own land.”⁸⁴ The friend’s exclusion from German society reflects the ambivalent governmental and housing policies discussed earlier, but here Emircan chooses to concentrate on the contradiction of the man’s personal experience. Emircan’s story also illustrates a theme reflected in other short stories

⁸¹ Özakin, “Früh die erste U-Bahn,” 63.

⁸² Aysel Özakin, “Mutter hat ihre Arbeit verloren,” in *Soll ich hier alt werden? Türken in Deutschland, Erzählungen*. (Hamburg: Goldmann Verlag, 1982), 43-44.

⁸³ Tülin Emircan, born in Turkey in 1961, was raised in West Germany and studied history.

⁸⁴ “Lieber Fremder in der Fremde als Fremder im eigenen Land.” Tülin Emircan, “Entfremdung,” in *Als Fremder in Deutschland: Bericht, Erzählungen, Gedichte von Ausländern*, ed. Irmgard Ackermann (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1982), 20.

and poems: the Turkish-German community, even while it is not fully accepted by German society, becomes “alienated” from the culture of their country of origin.

This sense of being a stranger in one’s own land pertains to the situation of a professional couple who return to Turkey after living for some years in Munich. In “Die Heimkehr oder Tante Helga und Onkel Hans” [The Trip Home or Aunt Helga and Uncle Hans], Alev Tekinay⁸⁵ describes how the couple, homesick for Germany after the move, follow German media, wait on letters from German friends, and play a comparison game between all things German and Turkish. Just as they feel out of place in their “home,” so are they perceived as outsiders by their neighbors, who refer to “your Germany”, and their nephew, who calls them his Uncle Hans and Aunt Helga (not their real names). Finally, they decide to move back to Germany, but even as she steps off the plane, “Aunt Helga” feels like a foreigner again. When their taxi driver, who takes them for Germans, asks if they are returning home from vacation, “Aunt Helga” answers yes, but reflects that “‘at home’ is a vague concept.”⁸⁶ The theme of feeling foreign in both cultures, though not a constant, is present in much of the Turkish-German literature and is one element used in the construction of hybrid identities of the Turkish minority in Germany.

Writers, in addressing this cultural hybridity, use language as a means to explore its implications. In his poem “Doppelmann” [Double-man], Zafer Senocak⁸⁷ describes his difficulty living in “two worlds.” Through his use of imagery, Senocak communicates the

⁸⁵ Born in Izmir in 1951, Alev Tekinay moved to West Germany in 1971 to study for her doctorate and works as a lecturer at the university in Augsburg.

⁸⁶ Alev Tekinay, “Die Heimkehr oder Tante Helga und Onkel Hans,” in *Türken deutscher Sprache: Bericht, Erzählungen, Gedichte*, ed. Irmgard Ackermann (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1984), 40-51.

⁸⁷ Zafer Senocak, born in Ankara in 1961, moved to West Germany in 1970. He studied Germanics, politics and history and is currently a visiting professor at the University of California at Berkeley.

external and internal natures of that challenge, with his feet planted on two independently moving worlds and a border passing through the middle of his tongue.⁸⁸ In Emine Sevgi Özdamar's⁸⁹ collection of short stories, *Mother Tongue*, the narrator wonders when and where she lost her native language. "I can remember sentences now," the narrator reflects, "sentences she [her mother] said in her mother tongue, except when I imagine her voice, the sentences themselves sound in my ears like a foreign language I know well."⁹⁰ Later, the narrator decides to learn the Arabic alphabet, thinking that "perhaps only by going back to Grandfather will I be able to find my way back to my mother, back to my mother tongue. Inshallah."⁹¹ These examples reflect the centrality of language to identity and how struggles with language mirror the challenges of a hybrid identity.

In addition to depicting push and pull factors between Turkey and Germany, physically and linguistically, writers also portray the relations Turks experienced with German individuals and the larger society to comment on how governmental policies and public sentiment affect those experiences. As many of the interactions in the early stages of immigration occurred at the workplace, the literature reflects the relationships of *Gastarbeiter* and Turkish-Germans with their co-workers. Ali Itir, in Aras Ören's⁹² *Please*,

⁸⁸ Zafer Senocak, "Doppelmann," in *Türken deutscher Sprache: Bericht, Erzählungen, Gedichte*, ed. Irmgard Ackermann (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1984), 39.

⁸⁹ Emine Sevgi Özdamar was born in Turkey and first came to West Berlin as a guestworker from 1965-1967, when she returned to Turkey. After nine years, Özdamar moved to East Berlin to work in the theater. Currently, she works as both an actress and a successful writer in Germany.

⁹⁰ Emine Sevgi Özdamar, "Mother Tongue," in *Mother Tongue*. Translated by Craig Thomas (Toronto: Coach House Press, 1994), 9-10.

⁹¹ Özdamar, "Mother Tongue," 15. Here, the narrator refers to her "Grandfather tongue." Turkish was written in Arabic script until Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's writing reforms in 1927, when Arabic was outlawed and Turkish was rendered with the Latin alphabet. "Inshallah" is an Arabic word meaning "God willing" and is still commonly used in Turkey.

No Police, came to West Germany to work, though he was technically in the country as a tourist. Ali's interactions with his co-workers and boss show the uncertain nature of his employment and their lack of appreciation of his situation. His boss, who knowingly hires him illegally and will only guarantee him one day of work at a time, constantly asks Ali where his "friends," other Turkish day workers, are and if they will show up. Ali, who treats his boss as he did his commanding officer, cannot tell if the man is serious or teasing him.⁹³ Waiting in line at lunchtime, Ali feels very conspicuous, "as if on all sides his body took up too much space." A condescending cafeteria worker who kept demanding a meal ticket no one had given him almost denies Ali lunch (pea and sausage soup—not halal) and the only co-worker to speak to him about anything not directly pertaining to his job is another Turkish worker.⁹⁴ This perspective of a Turkish man's experience at work, despite all the attention paid to foreigners as workers, is absent from the historiography, which has chosen to focus on the *Gastarbeiter* through the lens of German labor policy rather than the workers' lived experience.

When addressing tensions with Germans and German society, Turkish-German authors point out that not all prejudice is blatant and confrontational, nor is it a fault of Germans alone. In Sabri Çakir's⁹⁵ poem "Was ich nicht verstehen kann" [What I can't understand], the narrator relates that during the work hours, he and his German co-worker are good colleagues and friends, but once work is over, "I am foreign to him/ He is in another

⁹² Aras Ören, born in Istanbul in 1939, moved to West Berlin in 1969, where he has worked in the theater, as a writer and a journalist.

⁹³ Ören, *Please, No Police*, 37-40.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 92-94.

⁹⁵ Born in Denizli, Sabri Çakir, traveled by train with her family to West Germany in 1978 as a young adult and currently works as a teacher for Turkish children.

world.” This feeling of alienation follows the narrator as he takes the bus home and ends only when he is again in the company of his *Landsleute* [countrymen].⁹⁶ Özakin’s Selma from “Kleinbürgers Leiden” interacts with her co-workers outside of the workplace, but does not share a real friendship with them. In the story, Selma spends her day readying to host a dinner for some of her colleagues. She makes sure the apartment is sparkling clean and prepares an elaborate and delicious feast of traditional Turkish foods, hoping that her co-workers will appreciate her and her culture more after experiencing this amazing meal.

As her guests arrive and compliment her, Selma thanks them, but silently doubts their niceties, as she has “experienced how harsh the Germans can suddenly get, how quickly the complaints come.”⁹⁷ During the meal, however, no one tries the chicken dish, her masterpiece, and Selma is convinced they must think it dirty. When one of her guests calls dolma a Greek dish, Selma is so incensed she imagines herself smashing the platter on the table and screaming. But, so that she will not “destroy the picture of the fine manners of a Turkish woman,” she lightly laughs and informs her co-worker that dolma is actually “a true Turkish food.”⁹⁸ The dinner party scene reveals how even smaller cultural misunderstandings act as wedges between people and also how Selma’s preconceptions of Germans (that they are prejudiced and insincere) keep her from considering her German co-workers as possible friends. When addressing prejudice, scholars focus almost exclusively on German discrimination against Turks and fail to account for Turkish stereotypes of

⁹⁶ Sabri Çakir, “Was ich nicht verstehen kann,” in *Türken deutscher Sprache: Bericht, Erzählungen, Gedichte*, ed. Irmgard Ackermann (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1984), 91-92.

⁹⁷ Özakin, “Kleinbürgers Leiden,” 71.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 72-73.

Germans and how these may affect their interactions with Germans individually and with society as a whole.

Experience with vocal and explicit racism also enters into the literature, though less often than encountering “coldness.” Levent Aktoprak⁹⁹ notes a connection between the present day racism against Turks and Nazism in his poem “Entwicklung” [Development]. He describes studying the German language and history and then observes “Turks out” scrawled on the wall outside. He finishes the poem, saying “My exam question said, ‘What were the sources of German fascism?’”¹⁰⁰ This connection is felt, rather than stated, in a bar scene in Ören’s *Please, No Police*. Bruno Gramke, unemployed and angry that “Turks” have his old job, blasts that they know nothing about the job, “the only thing they know is how sweet the Mark is.” Another man in the bar, “souring up his face and giving a serious air to his voice,” protests that the Turks are “good people.” Bruno replies, “When they’ve lived through what I’ve lived through, then we’ll be equals.... Otherwise, that they’ve mustaches or that their breaths stink of garlic is of no consequence to me.” Ören describes the reception to Bruno’s tirade as “a nasty silence in which no one knew what to say.”¹⁰¹ Bruno and the others mentioned in the bar were young adults during the war and are aware of what Aktoprak labels “the sources of German fascism.” Ören uses this situation to reflect on the relationships of Germans to their own past—in this case, ranging from embarrassment and guilt to anger—and how this past bleeds over into the present situation with foreign workers, particularly Turks.

⁹⁹ Levent Aktoprak, born in Ankara in 1955, moved to West Germany in 1964, studied sociology and art, and currently lives and works in Cologne.

¹⁰⁰ Levent Aktoprak, “Entwicklung,” in *Als Fremder in Deutschland: Bericht, Erzählungen, Gedichte von Ausländern*, ed. Irmgard Ackermann (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1982), 67.

¹⁰¹ Ören, 88-89.

One of the most prominent themes in the literature written by Turkish-German authors in addressing the experiences of the first and second generations is the tensions between generations and genders as traditional roles are challenged by living in a “foreign” society. The presentations of these conflicts prevent the reader from making any sweeping generalizations about the agents of traditionalism or progressivism. On the contrary, the literature provides more complicated and interesting characters and situations that present a mosaic of experiences defying easy categorization, particularly in regards to the changing roles of women within their families and society at large. By telling stories of family relationships, young people, and women, the writers comment on the various ways they see the Turkish population addressing its unique situation within German society and making compromises toward a new, more blended identity.

Writers often use the husband-wife relationships of the first generation as a vehicle for discussing the (sometimes) changing status of women. In Özakin’s short story “Yusuf,” two friends, both Turkish guestworkers, walk along a canal enjoying the sunny weather. Despite the warmth of the day, Yusuf wears a dark jacket so he can carry with him pictures of his family, who are still in Turkey. When talking with his friend about his family, Yusuf says that “with us back home the women are slaves. But I don’t torment my wife. She lives the same life as me.” When he began to learn about more progressive ideas that contradicted the strict traditionalism he learned as a child, he would go home and share them with his wife. That his own wife chooses to wear a headscarf is because of “societal pressure,” as he does not order her to do so.¹⁰² Yusuf’s genuine love for his family and his more open attitude towards his wife’s status challenge the stereotype of the repressive husband and the

¹⁰² Aysel Özakin, “Eine Frauenstatue,” in *Soll ich hier alt werden? Türken in Deutschland, Erzählungen*. (Hamburg: Goldmann Verlag, 1982), 59-60.

oppressed wife. It is also interesting to note that Özakin chose for this development of Yusuf's character to occur in Turkey, not Germany, which complicates the more widespread perception in the scholarship that interaction with European culture prompts such change.

In “Eine Frauenstatue” [A Statue of a Woman], Özakin uses male characters to argue both sides of the debate over women’s roles. The story takes place as a group of friends spend an evening together in their local bar, drinking, dancing, and chatting. At one point, three of them get involved in a conversation about the movement for women’s equality. Cemal, a verbose and effusive poet, discounts the movement’s goal of equality for women, seeing it rather as an excuse for women to oppress men. Hüseyin Efe, himself married with children, disagrees. He recounts that, when he was young, he used to beat his wife since that was the example he observed while growing up and “that’s what it says in the Koran.” But he came to understand, of his own accord, that nothing gave him the right to treat his wife like a slave. The third person involved in this conversation is Suna, a sculptor, who adds only that she believes Hüseyin Efe’s ideas are more realistic than Cemal’s. She stays quiet after Cemal’s following tirade, however, as she had “no desire to discuss this topic with so many men.”¹⁰³ By employing male characters to represent both sides of the issue, Özakin again suggests that the debate over women’s rights is not as one-sided as many would think.

Even as being a wage-earner in Germany brought Turkish women increased power, so did it also present them with new challenges. In *Please, No Police*, Hatçe works as a cleaning woman at two jobs and cares for her four children. Her husband is rarely at home, living mainly with the German woman with whom he is having an affair. Hatçe sees the money she earns as the power that holds her husband to their marriage. “What can’t these

¹⁰³ Ibid., 14-15.

marks change?” she asks herself. “Look, they’ve even changed your man.”¹⁰⁴ Without the money, she believes he would have “taken off and never come around and then [she’d] be nowhere with four kids on [her] hands.” After one of his last visits left her pregnant, she tried for days to give herself an abortion and, successful, miscarried while at her morning job. She contrasts the way she gave herself an abortion with the extreme care she took with her first pregnancy and how she gave birth while working at her home in Turkey. When a co-worker finds her miscarrying and calls the doctor, Hatçe is upset because she knows it means she will lose the job.¹⁰⁵ While earning money may indeed give her some power over her husband, it does not change the instability of her job or lighten the load of work she must do both at her jobs and at home, nor does Ören suggest it improves her life from what it was in Turkey.

Shades of Hatçe’s story can be seen in Kudat’s case studies in her essay on the multi-faceted impact of labor migration on Turkish women, though Hatçe’s experience is more desperate than the women Kudat interviewed. Why does Ören choose to portray her situation in this way? His other female Turkish character, Sultan, the wife of Ali’s cousin, appears to have a much more stable life. Both she and her husband (who is presumably faithful) are legally in the country, work at full-time jobs, and have no children living with them.¹⁰⁶ As the only Turkish women featured, Ören uses Hatçe and Sultan as representative of what he sees as the range of experiences of the Turkish women *Gastarbeiter*, illustrating to his readers the possibly dramatic effects that family life and employment can have.

¹⁰⁴ Ören, 68.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 66-69.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 24.

Turkish-German writers draw heavily on interactions between generations to illustrate the tensions involving traditional Turkish and Islamic culture and more secular, European culture. In Özakin’s “Die dunkelhaarigen Kinder von Berlin” [The dark-haired children of Berlin], the narrator watches a young Turkish girl hesitantly taking part in the fun of a neighborhood party of mostly Germans. She wants to talk with the girl, whom she describes as being dressed like “a poor, older woman—headscarf, long coat, thick socks,” to understand what she is thinking, and is curious about what she will think of her childhood as she grows older.¹⁰⁷ When the narrator approaches her, the young girl immediately thinks she is in trouble from this “black-haired woman in blue jeans who speaks Turkish” for participating in the festivities.¹⁰⁸ After she answers the narrator’s questions about her family, she takes off into the party again. The narrator watches as the girl dances about in the crowd of Germans and reflects that though she “had opportunities to develop [herself], to become free” and could join the dancing, something holds her back. She tries to stay out of sight of the girl, to not spoil her fun, but at one point the girl stops dancing. “Suddenly,” Özakin writes, “her whole joy, the freedom, froze. She was ashamed of the movements of her little body and left the crowd” and then the party.¹⁰⁹

Özakin’s story is one of contrasts: the young, traditionally dressed girl who participates in the party though she knows her parents would not approve; the older, more “integrated” woman who could take part, but holds back. It addresses the struggle of children, particularly girls, with their parents’ expectations and their own desires. Özakin

¹⁰⁷ Aysel Özakin, “Die dunkelhaarigen Kinder von Berlin,” in *Soll ich hier alt werden? Türken in Deutschland, Erzählungen*. (Hamburg: Goldmann Verlag, 1982), 5.

¹⁰⁸ Özakin, “Die dunkelhaarigen Kinder von Berlin,” 7.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 9.

also uses the example of the narrator to remind her readers that integration is more complex for women than being independent and looking “Western,” two of the attributes most often cited by scholars trying to measure one’s level of integration. It is also interesting that Özakin describes the narrator as believing that the young girl sees her as a “black-haired woman in blue jeans who speaks Turkish,” rather than simply a Turkish woman in blue jeans.¹¹⁰ Özakin seems to suggest that the narrator feels that other Turks will not recognize her as a fellow *Landsmann* [compatriot] because of the compromises she has made between her Turkish background and her German experiences.

Ertunç Barin¹¹¹ addresses family relationships and integration in the short story, “Eine integrierte Familie” [An integrated family]. This family, unlike many others depicted in literature, deliberately tries to integrate into German society, with mixed results. Barin uses each member of the family to comment on how the various compromises the Turkish community makes often can result in a new identity that fits in neither Turkish culture, nor German. Told by the eldest of three daughters and a son, the narrator notes, at times with irony, her family’s attempts at “integration.” Her mother takes off her headscarf one day when she goes to renew her residency permit and never puts it on again. Her father starts drinking German beer instead of raki and, when he starts staying out all night, her mother calmly explains that “he’s searching for a change.” Her thirteen year-old sister wears makeup to school to avoid being seen as a foreigner, but applies it so thick she stands out that much more. At what the narrator wryly calls the “highpoint” of her family’s integration, her nineteen year-old sister moves in with her Turkish boyfriend, visiting her family only to do

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 7.

¹¹¹ Ertunç Barin was born in 1951 in Aydin and moved to West Germany in 1970 to study. She has worked as a translator and a teacher and been involved in research into the situation of guestworkers in Germany.

laundry and get money. When she and her boyfriend fight, she moves back into the house, saying she will always be a Turk and want to live with her family. However, when they make up she moves out again, justifying her actions by claiming that is what German girls do.¹¹² The narrator eventually moves out of the family home, tired of playing the “sometimes German, sometimes Turk game,” and views this move as a necessary step in establishing her own identity. “I want to live free,” she says, “free from self-deception, free from loss of identity. But self-assured, independent, and consistent.”¹¹³

The rest of the family’s experience contrasts sharply with that of the youngest child, a boy. One day when the narrator picks him up from kindergarten, he asks his sister why he has such a foreign name. Though her initial reaction is to laugh, she later reflects that to him, his name is indeed foreign. Her brother, born in Mannheim, is at home there, “but the rest of the family constantly searches for something that we can hold on to.” She asks herself if her family did the right thing by trying to integrate, but concludes that the only thing she knows is that they are not a real Turkish family like they were before.¹¹⁴ Barin uses this story to illustrate how the family’s efforts at integration lead them to adopt different aspects of what they see as German culture; integration does not have a single meaning or path nor do the various compromises each family member makes result in successful integration. The only truly “integrated” member of the family is the son who was born in Germany.

Zehra Çirak¹¹⁵ tells the story of another family, with much more traditionally minded parents, in “Das Kopftuch” [The Headscarf]. The parents, though they try to control their

¹¹² Ertunç Barin, “Eine integrierte Familie,” in *Türken deutscher Sprache: Bericht, Erzählungen, Gedichte*, ed. Irmgard Ackermann (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1984), 118-120.

¹¹³ Barin, “Eine integrierte Familie,” 121.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 121-122.

two teenage daughters, are unaware of the girls' secret lives. Hanife is an eighteen-year-old seamstress who is not ready for marriage, though her parents constantly try to find a husband for her. When she can get away unnoticed, she takes off her headscarf, shortens her skirt, and meets with friends in cafes, drinking red wine and smoking cigarettes. Her younger sister, Aynur, is fifteen and meets with her German boyfriend during the time her parents think she is in gymnastics class. Her boyfriend does not like her to wear a headscarf and, at one afternoon meeting, threw it in the garbage. Aynur, unfazed, told her parents it was stolen during her class.¹¹⁶ Though depicting the girls as actively seeking to shed—physically in the case of the headscarf—some aspects of their Turkish identity while holding on to others, Çirak keeps the parents strongly tied to their “traditional” values, to the extent that they employ a matchmaker to find a suitable husband for their older daughter.

In one scene, a matchmaker brings a young Turkish man and his parents to their house as part of Hanife's parents' search for a suitable son-in-law. During the course of the visit, Hanife and the young man, who have never met each other before, interact only when she serves him tea. Late that evening, after the company leaves, the sisters retreat to the bathroom to talk. Hanife knows that her parents will be upset when she turns down this most recent suitor and reflects that when she finally decides who she wants to marry, it will likely set her permanently against parents. Aynur, after trying to arrange her headscarf in a more appealing way, goes out to her father and innocently asks if she could wear a hat instead if she cut her hair very short. Her father laughs at her apparent joke and returns to watching the news. Returning to the bathroom, she cuts a centimeter off the bottom of her hair and tells

¹¹⁵ Zehra Çirak, born in 1960 in Istanbul, joined her family in West Germany three years later, has worked as a cosmetician, and currently lives in Berlin, a successful poet and writer.

¹¹⁶ Zehra Çirak, “Das Kopftuch,” in *Türken deutscher Sprache: Bericht, Erzählungen, Gedichte*, ed. Irmgard Ackermann (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1984), 199-203.

Hanife she will keep cutting it bit by bit. One day, Aynur says, she will get rid of her headscarf and tell her parents someone cut off her hair during gymnastics class.¹¹⁷ These characters and their situations illustrate a customary struggle between parents who think they know what is best for their children and the children who want to live their own lives, but this time the struggle is also between conservative Turkish values and the desire to adopt the liberal values of the host society. Çirak uses the differing levels of sisters' rebellion to reflect how she sees the variety of young people's responses to this conflict.

When Turkish-German writers address the second generation apart from the family setting, they often use experiences at school to comment both on social interactions with German children and the receptivity of the school system to the educational challenge posed by the Turkish children. Canan Can's¹¹⁸ "Die Chance" [The Chance] tells the story of a young Turkish girl whose parents bring her to Germany after the grandparents she was caring for passed away. The girl does not speak any German when she arrives, but is put directly into a German classroom, where she receives little individual attention. Though she puts concerted effort into her lessons and does make progress, she cannot keep up with the class, who laugh at her difficulty speaking German. Six months after she starts school, her teacher calls her parents to a conference. The anxious girl promises her parents before they leave that she will try even harder and work over the break to catch up, as she is afraid her teacher wants to hold her back a year. The teacher, however, informs her parents that though they "gave her a chance," their daughter is not keeping up and needs to be transferred to a

¹¹⁷ Çirak, "Das Kopftuch," 202-203.

¹¹⁸ Canan Can, born in Istanbul in 1965, moved to West Germany with her family as a teenager and later studied in Düsseldorf.

Sonderschule [school for the mentally handicapped]. The young girl, when she learns of this decision, is absolutely crushed.¹¹⁹

This story reflects a very real situation faced by many *Gastarbeiter* children when German school officials, unable to address the needs of foreign students, labeled them as learning disabled and sent them to a *Sonderschule*. While scholars such as Rist address this phenomenon, they approach it from the perspective of failed educational policies and illustrate the situation through the use of statistics. Can's story-telling concentrates the attention of her readers on the position of the person least heard but most affected in the educational policy debates, the young Turkish student, injecting personal hopes and fears into a discussion of strategies and statistics.

The school, however, is also held up as a forum with potential to bring German and Turkish children together, albeit not without difficulty. In “Der Tag, an dem Andreas zu Ali kam” [The day that Andreas came to Ali], Barin describes how Andreas, Ali’s closest friend at school, turns around and teases him mercilessly one day, seemingly without cause, and encourages their classmates to do the same. Ali, hurt and embarrassed, skips school the next day and wanders around, feeling lonely and trying to toughen up. When he returns home, Andreas is waiting for him. He explains that one of the students told their teacher what happened to Ali the day before and the teacher, in turn, began to reprimand the class.¹²⁰ “I don’t want anything to do with foreigners!” Andreas had yelled. “I didn’t bring them here.” The teacher responds that government their parents voted for did, and “we are a part of that decision if we believe in democracy.” After speaking with the whole class, the teacher took

¹¹⁹ Canan Can, “Die Chance,” in *Türken deutscher Sprache: Bericht, Erzählungen, Gedichte*, ed. Irmgard Ackermann (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1984), 177-179.

¹²⁰ Ertuğrul Barin, “Der Tag, an dem Andreas zu Ali kam,” in *Türken deutscher Sprache: Bericht, Erzählungen, Gedichte*, ed. Irmgard Ackermann (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1984), 171-174.

Andreas aside and told him to leave his family's problems at home—he knew Andreas' father was out of work. Andreas apologizes to Ali and their friendship is restored.¹²¹ This story illustrates Barin's belief that the school has the capacity to either perpetuate division or to be an agent of positive change and she suggests that, if led by thoughtful and sensitive teachers, children can have the opportunity to move past the things that keep their parents apart and establish real friendships.

The writers rarely refer to religion directly, nor do they choose to focus on the organizational manifestations of Islam in Turkish-German society. For the most part they prefer to address religious culture more indirectly, through social expressions such as the headscarf or family structures discussed earlier. Ören, however, gives his character Ali a more direct relationship with God. Ali considers himself a good servant of God, though his actions are less than devout, and sees God as sympathetic to his situation. “God doesn’t sit up there, waiting on me, to write down sins,” he thinks, “surely he sees how hard-pressed I am. Surely he sees it and waits for a chance to turn it into something favorable for me.”¹²² Ali calls out to God when in need and praises him when something good happens. This type of relationship reflects the scholarship’s discussion of the popular faith exhibited by the early *Gastarbeiter*. Outside of this example, there is little in this literature that speaks directly to the organized practice of or personal devotion to religion.

After having explored the academic consensus on Germany’s Turkish minority and Turkish-German writers’ representations of that population and addressed the effects of their differing perspectives, it is possible to examine what these differences could suggest. In the following, I will address how history and the social sciences might benefit from deeper

¹²¹ Barin, “Der Tag, an dem Andreas zu Ali kam,” 175.

¹²² Ören, 27-28.

consideration of the literature. Also, bearing in mind the themes addressed in this chapter, I will explore how certain subjects may explained differently, perhaps better, in literature than in history and the social sciences.

Conclusion: A Change of Perspective

While historians and social scientists have shed considerable light on many of the issues arising from the *Gastarbeiter* program and the subsequent Turkish-German population, in failing to incorporate more fully the voices of Germany's Turkish minority they overlook or simplify elements of that population's experiences within German society. Focusing on the literary works of Turkish-German authors produces a more nuanced understanding of the experiences and identities of Germany's Turkish minority. That discussion ultimately illustrates a far more diverse set of experiences than offered by the standard scholarly interpretations and reveals the picture of a community in tension, particularly young girls and women, that contends between conservative Turkish and Islamic values and the more secular and Western customs of German society. The academic scholarship largely discusses the Turkish population's search for identity in the context of governmental and educational policies that, through their conflicting goals, discourage that population's stability within German society. Turkish-German writers, on the other hand, approach the subject of identity by depicting the compromises their characters make, such as learning German, rebelling against their parents, or shedding their headscarves, in their quest for an identity that blends their ethnic background with their social and cultural experiences in Germany.

Though these fictional accounts do not carry the same evidentiary weight of the sources traditionally used by scholars, each story does present an argument. By choosing to represent the Turkish-German community or individual in a particular way, the writer challenges the readers to consider their own understanding of the situation. In this way, these fictional sources suggest several new directions for historians and social scientists to take in their further research of Germany's Turkish minority. Each suggestion calls for a change in point-of-view, for approaching partially familiar subjects from a different perspective. In a sense, they call for using the experiences of the Turkish-German community as the reference point and viewing German society as "the other." This change would constitute a reversal from the customary position of scholars, who view Turkish-Germans through the lens of German society, to considering that society from the perspective of its Turkish minority.

First, a greater concentration on the wider historical context encompassing developments in Turkey would contribute significantly to a deeper understanding of the unique position of the Turkish-German population and the influence of events in Turkey on their lives in Germany. Historians and social scientists have focused too narrowly on the influence of developments in Germany and need to adopt a broader, more transnational approach. In Rist's words, there are "literally hundreds of thousands of hyphenated Germans" who retain an identity distanced but not entirely divorced from their or their parents' homeland.¹²³ While not all Turkish-Germans now are strongly connected to events in Turkey, this was not always the case. As we have seen in the literature, decisions to leave Turkey and to stay in Germany were often affected by events unfolding in Turkey.

Second, while academic scholarship has addressed labor agreements and policies, it has yet to investigate at the ground level and focus the more immediate experiences of early

¹²³ Rist, 57.

Turkish *Gastarbeiter* in the workplace. Ören's depiction of Ali's experiences at work with his boss and co-workers provides an individual perspective of a phenomenon most often discussed in broad generalizations. As these early experiences served as a basis for the settlement of hundreds of thousands of people and for their very identity within society, it is curious that we have yet to hear of these experiences from the workers' own mouths. Research using personal interviews with these early Turkish *Gastarbeiter* would enhance the scholarship's discussion of economic and labor policies from the 1960s and 70s by providing a deeper analysis of the direct and indirect consequences of these policies and also what the Turkish workers understood the goal of these policies to be. More generally regarding sources, this change in scholarly perspective suggests a broadening of the source-base to include voices from the Turkish-German community, such as personal interviews and newspapers.

A more nuanced approach to the shifting status of women and young girls that considers the influences of Islam, secular Turkish culture, and the German host culture is a third possible direction for future scholarship. Turkish women and young girls, as presented in the literature, are caught up most sharply in the tensions between traditionalism and secularism and face challenges from their families, communities, and German society. Scholars have failed to define exactly what they mean by "integration," particularly in regards to how women become a part of German society, yet seem to measure the level of integration by asking whether they are independent from traditional family pressures, manage their own earnings, and abandoned the headscarf and donned jeans. Özakin's "Die dunkelhaarigen Kinder von Berlin" and other stories imply that there is more to the reality of integration, that these questions alone are inadequate. An in-depth discussion of the shifting

identities of women, grounding itself in their own perspective and experience, would be much more insightful and nuanced understanding of the reality of integration.

Lastly, going beyond policies and statistics in discussions of the second and third generations to incorporate the voices and personal experiences of the youth, perspectives often unnoticed in academic scholarship, is essential to understanding how these generations interacted with their families, with their schoolmates, and with the sometimes conflicting German and Turkish cultural expectations. Their search for and struggle with their own identity and values are prominent subjects in Turkish-German literature and these subjects, when pursued by historians and social scientists, would provide a better awareness of this group's particular place in both the Turkish-German community and German society as a whole and illustrate the degree to which this growing population identifies itself with that society.

Exploration of the literature of Turkish-German writers produces a wealth of characters, events, and dilemmas that challenge our previous conceptions of Germany's Turkish minority and suggests new directions in which to take our research further by adopting a change in perspective. These stories, taken generally, also suggest how some subjects are approached differently, maybe more effectively, in literature than in history and the social sciences. Academic scholarship focuses its energies on what it feels it can prove, conclusions justified by marshaled evidence. Despite their increasingly creative approaches and arguments, history and the social sciences are bound by the necessity to ground their story-telling in citable sources. Literature has no such restrictions. It concerns itself with many of the same issues as history, as we have seen, but, by using fiction, is more free to speak for those whose voices have not been recorded for history and illustrate situations not

as available for the sociologist to quantify. This difference is brought into sharpest focus when dealing with family relationships and the experiences of children. The inner workings of an immigrant family's life are often closed to history and the social sciences and the voices of children rarely reach into academic scholarship. Yet literature, as well as film, can incorporate these mediums freely, using them to bring forth particular ideas for their readers to consider. The value of creative works in these situations is considerable, for even as they involve our emotions in the telling of a story, they provide insightful and provocative avenues of reflection for our minds.

CHAPTER 2

Identity, Gender, and the Other in Turkish-German Film

When the jury announced the winner of the 2004 Golden Bear Award at the Berlin International Film Festival, the decision's dual significance struck spectators across Europe. As an international festival similar to those in Cannes and Venice, the Berlinale considers entries from around the world and rarely grants the top honor to a German film. Indeed, in the fifty-four years of its history, only seven German entries received the coveted Golden Bear, the most recent being *Stammheim*, a 1986 drama directed by Reinhard Hauff.¹²⁴ And so on one hand, the choice confirmed the reemergence of German film, after a period of relative stagnation, on the international stage. Yet it was the subject of the film and the identity of the director who strode happily forward to accept the small golden statue that reflected the second, and more remarkable, significant aspect of the jury's decision. The film, *Gegen die Wand* [Head-On], tells the story of two Turkish-German characters who, in running from their own fears, collide into each other with destructive consequences.¹²⁵ The director was Fatih Akin, a thirty year old Turkish-German from Hamburg with a growing list of films to his credit. *Gegen die Wand* went on to win the top honor at the European Film

¹²⁴ "German Film Wins Berlinale's Golden Bear," Germany Info Home: Culture & Life. www.germany-info.org. (Accessed 27 October 2005).

¹²⁵ Fatih Akin, dir., *Gegen die Wand*, prod. Ralph Schwingel and Stefan Schubert, Wüste Filmproduktion (Hamburg), 2004, DVD. While the direct English translation for this film would be "Against the Wall," it has been translated for English-language distribution as "Head-On."

Awards Ceremony in Barcelona that same year, as well as several other prizes from around the world.

Akin's recognition at the Berlinale signals a growing awareness, appreciation, and mainstream acceptance of Turkish-German films within the broader framework of German cinema. In the earlier phases of Turkish migration to Germany, even reference to such immigrants was rare in German film, but with the emergence of a permanent Turkish minority in Germany, and especially with growing Turkish-German involvement in film, this community became more visible on screen in the theater even as it did outside.

For the historian of modern Germany, these films present both a promising and a problematic opportunity to explore the development of the Turkish-German minority; problematic because the sources are not "factual" documentation, and promising because the issues they address are presented from the perspective of a Turkish-German individual or group. This perspective can be overlooked or marginalized in scholarly discussions, as shown in the previous chapter, which tend to tell the story of the Turkish-German population from the vantage point of the German sources; that is, from the outside looking in. With these films, scholars have the opportunity to examine a document, albeit fictional, that is formed from the inside, looking around and out. As historical documents, they were created and received within a specific context and by directors consciously communicating relationships, conflicts, and situations they believed would find resonance in their audience. It is by exploring the ways in which the directors conceptualize the dynamics within the Turkish-German community and its interactions with German society that the scholar can begin to engage with the multi-layered issue of the construction of Turkish-German identity.

For the purpose of this study, I have selected ten films from 1979 to 2004 whose protagonists are mainly Turks or Turkish-Germans and whose stories revolve around relational or situational issues faced by Germany's Turkish minority.¹²⁶ The limited availability of these films outside of Germany unfortunately bars one from procuring an all-inclusive collection.¹²⁷ However, this "limitation" enables me to focus more deeply on the ten films discussed in this essay and draw out both the common and conflicting themes more fully than addressing a wider selection would allow. In selecting the specific films for this essay, I chose to include those with a range of themes and situations, from a banal slice of daily life to the more fantastical fringes of society. Doing so allows me to form conclusions based on analysis of the broader spectrum as well as draw inferences on societal and cultural norms and expectations by comparing the fringes to the center. First generation Turkish immigrants or second generation Turkish-Germans wrote and directed the majority of the films, while two in the sample had German writers and directors. These are included to establish the early themes present in films dealing with Turkish-Germans, themes with which the later films actively engage. I will focus the majority of my analysis on how directors chose to construct the people and conflicts that drive their stories, paying particular attention to the engagement with or refutation of characterizations or themes present in similar films. Finally, I will also address, to a lesser extent, the aesthetics of the films and how these visual markers suggest or support the various arguments at play.

By approaching these films as historical sources, I will explore various prominent and connecting themes for clues to more fully understand the development of the Turkish-

¹²⁶ For a comprehensive list of the films analyzed, including plot summaries and information on their reception, see the Appendix.

¹²⁷ I would like to thank Dr. Katherine Ewing at Duke University for loaning me several movies from her own collection. Without her generosity, the scope of this essay would have been much more limited.

German community through their fictional representations. First, how do these films address questions of transnational identity or cultural hybridity? Regarding these issues, of particular interest is whether a distinct trend develops toward a fuller identification with German culture and identity, or whether the “myth of return” still occupies a significant place in people’s ideas about their future, as well as what factors directors consider as influential in this phenomenon. Next, as the issue of gender roles has been particularly contentious in the public discourse, how do the directors choose to communicate the way gender influences or defines one’s adherence to traditional values, assimilation to societal norms, or construction of a compromised identity between the two? Inherent in this question is if the understanding of what it means to be a “good” Turkish-German man or woman has changed over the past three decades. Third, how do the films represent the place of the Turkish minority within larger German society and how do they characterize German society’s understanding of and interplay with that segment of the population? Important to note in this discussion is whether the directors show Germans increasingly familiar with and accepting of a previously maltreated, misunderstood minority or if German society is represented by hostile bigots or well-meaning but ignorant do-gooders. Finally, what does approaching these films as historical sources suggest in general about the development of the Turkish-German population and the direction in which it is moving?

The Early German Films on *Gastarbeiter* in the Federal Republic

As the population of guestworkers rose, Germany became increasingly aware of their presence, with approximately one-half of working-age Germans in the early 1970s interacting with guestworkers either in the workplace or, to a much lesser extent, socializing

privately.¹²⁸ The place of the foreigner in film in the Federal Republic largely reflected popular understandings of the *Gastarbeiter* phenomenon, based primarily on interactions in the workplace. Often, directors used this perception as a basis for challenging German-held stereotypes of and prejudices against these *Gastarbeiter*. It is helpful to take a brief look at the *Gastarbeiter* in German film prior to the emergence of Turkish-German film to understand the context onto which these later films would build. Two films made by Rainer Werner Fassbinder in the late 1960s and early 70s are perhaps the most well-known examples of this trend. The earlier film, *Der Katzelmacher*, follows a group of shallow young adults through their monotonous daily routines in Munich.¹²⁹ When a Greek named Jorgos rents a room in an acquaintance's apartment, his presence on the street evokes suspicion and hostility from the German characters living there. Rumors grow about the Greek's sexual appetite, bathing habits, violent temper and Communist sympathies.

Throughout the film, Fassbinder addresses very real social and economic difficulties imposed on the *Gastarbeiter* by their German "hosts." Motivated by hardships at home, *Gastarbeiter* traveled to Germany and were often met with misunderstanding and prejudice. In the film, the two male leads represent this hostile reception and are particularly vehement in their aversion to "the Greek," belligerently asserting that "we belong here and no one else." In addition to social prejudice, German landlords frequently overcharged their foreign tenants for their rooms. "You can [ask for more rent] because they're dumb and don't know

¹²⁸ Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, ed., *The Germans: Public Opinion Polls, 1967-1980*. (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1981): 282-283. It is interesting to note that the earlier volume of polls put together by the Allensbach Institute for Polling for 1947-1966 does not even include questions regarding the *Gastarbeiter*.

¹²⁹ Rainer Werner Fassbinder, dir., *Der Katzelmacher*, prod. Peer Raben, Antiteater-X-Film GmbH (Feldkirchen), 1969, videocassette. "Katzelmacher" is a derogatory term for guestworkers, particularly those from Italy.

any better," says a male lead in the film.¹³⁰ Fassbinder uses the callousness of the money-obsessed landlord Elisabeth to symbolize the broader German political and economic motivations that brought *Gastarbeiter* to the country without sufficient regard for how society would receive them. Though Fassbinder is quite adept at depicting German characters and stereotypes, Jorgos (played by Fassbinder himself) receives little development—he exists in the film solely to expose the hostility and prejudices of the German characters.

Fassbinder's next treatment of the subject of foreigners in West Germany, the 1973 film *Angst essen Seele auf* [Fear Eats the Soul], centers around the marriage of an older German cleaning woman named Emmi to a younger Moroccan *Gastarbeiter* and the reaction their relationship generates from her children, her co-workers, and society in general.¹³¹ "Ali," the Moroccan character who has abandoned his real name for the one Germans always call him anyway, experiences similar prejudices to those suffered by Jorgos, yet Ali's character receives more attention and development. The viewers watch both how he responds to the challenges and prejudices of German society and, in a more limited way, how he interacts with his Moroccan friends. Despite this increased attention to the character of the foreigner, it is still mainly within the context of German society that the viewer learns about who Ali is and what motivates him.

However, unlike in *Der Katzelmacher*, Fassbinder presents a minority of German characters who exhibit more tolerant views of their relationship and of foreigners in general. When the tenants in Emmi's building call the police to force Ali's party guests to leave, the

¹³⁰ Fassbinder, *Der Katzelmacher*, 1969.

¹³¹ Rainer Werner Fassbinder, dir., *Angst essen Seele auf*, prod. Fassbinder and Michael Fengler, Tango-Film (Munich), 1973, videocassette.

police politely ask Emmi to turn down the music, and, in response to the tenants' distress with Arabs being in the building, admonish the tenants that not all Arabs are terrorists.¹³² In another scene, their landlord responds to the tenants' protests by saying he sees "nothing indecent" about Emmi's and Ali's relationship and no reason to intrude on their happiness. Through these situations and through Emmi, Fassbinder suggests that there are indeed a minority of Germans learning to be more tolerant of the country's foreign residents. And so, despite the more nuanced character development of the foreigner and the deeper examination of the relationship between Emmi and Ali, *Angst essen Seele Auf* is still a film primarily concerned with German reaction to how foreigners challenge their racial prejudices and social preconceptions.

Forerunners to a New Genre in German Cinema

The late 1970s and 80s witnessed a significant shift in the focus and characterization of foreigners in German cinema. While the earlier films separated the foreigner from families and communities and concerned themselves primarily with German reaction to this growing population, a new trend altered this representation in three ways. First, films increasingly focused on the non-German character as the center of the storyline, a move that necessitated deeper character development. As a result of this shift in focus, the films began to emphasize and explore the foreign character's ethnic and cultural identity more deeply. Unlike previous films involving foreign residents, viewers would now learn more about the non-German characters than just that their homeland was "*viel schön, aber nix Arbeit*" or that

¹³² Fassbinder, *Angst essen Seele auf*, 1973. The historical context of this film is particularly important, as it was released approximately one year after Palestinian terrorists took Israeli athletes at the Olympic Games hostage and subsequently murdered them. Ali refers to this event as a turning point in how Germans treated Arabs and the tenants are certainly considering that event as they try to convince the police to do something more drastic about the presence of Arabs near their homes.

they enjoyed a specific kind of food.¹³³ Finally, these films placed the new leading character back into the immigrant community and drew the story from this setting and its corresponding relationships. The shift in focus of the films represented the changing reality of the guestworker population, as during this time the number of family members joining their working relatives in the Federal Republic increased considerably.¹³⁴

This shift had a powerful impact on the representation of the foreign resident population in German film, particularly for the Turkish communities. Now that the Turk was not simply explained as “not German,” writers and directors had to define what Turkish culture was—the dynamics of family life, the accepted roles of men and women in society, etc. Furthermore, they had to present believable and interesting conflicts within that society. Many directors saw this challenge as an opportunity to educate the audience and encourage mutual tolerance. Three films from this phase of cinematic development exemplify both the shift of perspective to the Turkish minority and the desire to foster links of cross-cultural understanding: the 1979 children’s television movie *Metin*, the 1986 drama *40 m² Deutschland*, and the 1988 film *Yasemin*.

Metin, a charming and light-hearted story about the friendship between a six-year-old Turkish boy (the namesake of the film) and German girl, was directed and written by Thomas Draeger.¹³⁵ This German director of children’s films is also responsible for a later film

¹³³ Fassbinder, *Angst essen Seele auf*, 1973. Here I am referring to a conversation between Ali and Emmi when he explains that Tismet, his hometown, is “very beautiful, but without work” and also his craving for couscous, a food that Emmi is not able, or willing, to make for him.

¹³⁴ Ulrich Herbert, *A History of Foreign Labor in Germany, 1880-1980: Seasonal Workers, Forced Laborers, Guest Workers*. Translated by William Templer. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990), 235.

¹³⁵ Thomas Draeger, dir. and prod., *Metin*, Cikon Filmproduktion (Hamburg), 1979, videocassette.

about an Italian immigrant family in Germany.¹³⁶ With his parents at work, his older brother in school and his younger sister in day-care, Metin spends much of his day alone, doing the grocery shopping for the family and playing by himself at home. When Anne, a German girl his age, moves with her family into the apartment across the courtyard, the two quickly become friends. Yet Anne and Metin are not just playmates; they become each other's entry points into the other's culture by teaching each other their languages and explaining aspects of their cultures, during which Draeger brings out commonalities between the two.

This theme of the friendship as a place to learn about and accept one another's culture culminates at the end of the film when Metin's and Anne's friendship becomes the mediator between the Turkish and German neighborhood children. In a dispute over the ownership of a collection of scrap wood, which the German children insist is theirs since they "lived here first," it is Anne's assumed hybrid identity (she dressed up as a Turkish girl in order to help the Turkish children gather the wood) that allows the Turkish children to keep the wood that they collected.¹³⁷ By the end of the scene, both groups move past their differences and hostilities to enjoy their shared identity as children. The movie closes with a playful and carefree shot of all the children dancing together in the rain. Draeger, who throughout the film presents the friendship of Anne and Metin as an idealized model for his audience to follow, uses this final scene to reemphasize a point Anne made earlier in the film, that the "Turks aren't really so different" and that the differences between them were not much more than clothes and language.¹³⁸ For Draeger and his characters, the Turkish children's

¹³⁶ "Die grosse Sehnsucht: La nostalgia Mythos Migration im Kino," Instituto Italiano di Cultura. www.iic-colonia.de/em.htm. (Accessed 5 November 2005).

¹³⁷ Draeger, *Metin*, 1979.

¹³⁸ Ibid. "Türken sind na so anders."

reluctance to play with the German children stems directly from the hostility of the latter group towards the former. It is, then, the German children who need to be more welcoming of their Turkish neighbors before they can all play well together. While the theme of German hostility toward the Turkish community would be a recurring one in films to follow, rarely would this obstacle be so cheerfully and quickly overcome.

None of the light and happiness present in *Metin* pervades the dark and confining apartment that serves as the primary setting for the 1986 drama *40 m² Deutschland*.¹³⁹ The project of Turkish writer and director Tevfik Baser, this film tells the story of a young woman brought to Germany from her home in Anatolia by her new husband, a Turkish *Gastarbeiter*. Baser was himself a Turkish immigrant, having moved to London in 1973 and then to Hamburg in 1978, where he studied at the Hamburg School of the Fine Arts.¹⁴⁰ One review of the film recounts his efforts and research in putting together the film's story, how he studied the lives of the Turkish *Gastarbeiter* and spoke with many of the women about "their feelings, thoughts and wishes," in addition to drawing on his own experiences as an immigrant. Indeed, in that same review and printed on the video case itself, Baser is quoted as saying that through the film he "would like for the Germans to get to know us [Turkish immigrants], because misunderstanding leads to fear and produces hate."¹⁴¹

This sentiment is particularly interesting when one considers the story that Baser tells through *40 m² Deutschland*. The day after Dursun brings his young wife, Turna, to Germany, he locks the door behind him as he leaves for work, an action repeated every

¹³⁹ Tevfik Baser, dir. and prod, *40 m² Deutschland*, Tevfik Baser Filmproduktion (Hamburg), 1986, videocassette. The title of the film refers to the size of the apartment in which Turna was confined.

¹⁴⁰ "Tevfik Baser," [filmportal.de](http://www.filmportal.de), www.filmportal.de. (Accessed 30 October 2005). Baser later returned to Turkey, but has still been involved in German film.

¹⁴¹ Heike Mundzech, review of *40 m² Deutschland* by Tevfik Baser. *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 18 January 1986.

morning. Turna is left alone in their small, dark apartment, “imprisoned like an animal, always alone day after day, used for sex by her husband when he returns home from work, without connection to life around her.”¹⁴² Months pass and she remains inside, watching what thin slice of life she can see out her window and silently protesting her imprisonment by cutting off her two long, thick braids. It is only with the death of her husband that Turna escapes the apartment, pushing his dead body out of the way of the door, and walks through the building’s front door into the sunlight beyond.¹⁴³

This film presents a bleak and heavy-handed message about the consequences of the repressive gender roles of a “traditional” Turkish society. In a flashback, the viewer sees this repression at its source: Dursun returns to rural Anatolia to ask for Turna’s hand in marriage and the girl’s father sells her to the suitor. Once in Germany, Dursun expects her to be completely submissive to his needs—to cook, clean, have sex with him, and bear him a son. Interestingly, one reviewer explains Dursun’s imprisonment of his wife by writing that “he is not brutal or cruel; Dursun is a Turk, conservative, and he finds the liberal lifestyle of people in Germany repellent and alarming.”¹⁴⁴ Regardless of his motives, one message is starkly clear in a film filled with silence and dark corners; the Turkish woman is a helpless victim of the domineering men in her life and lives under the patriarchy of rural Turkey in the midst of a German city. One wonders if this is the understanding that Baser hoped would dispel the fear and hate that accompanied German misunderstanding of the Turkish culture. When he first presented his script to the committee of producers, they were supposedly so enthusiastic

¹⁴² Mundzech, 1986.

¹⁴³ Baser, *40 m² Deutschland*, 1986.

¹⁴⁴ Mundzech, 1986.

about the project that they invested the necessary money without hesitation.¹⁴⁵ The film went on to be nominated for the Federal Film Prize in 1987 and received awards for the performance of Özay Fecht (Turna) and the musical score by Claus Bantzer. However, “this national recognition,” argues Germanics scholar Deniz Göktürk, “only served paradoxically to further cement ‘immigrant culture’ in its sub-national status.”¹⁴⁶

These themes of Turkish women’s victimhood and male domination would continue to figure strongly in Turkish-German film and are played out in the context of a father-daughter relationship in Hark Bohm’s 1988 drama *Yasemin*.¹⁴⁷ Bohm, considered the “main representative of the critical youth film,” has been involved in over sixty films since the mid-1960s, including acting in Fassbinder’s *Angst essen Seele auf*.¹⁴⁸ *Yasemin*, the story of a young Turkish-German woman torn between living the life she wants and the expectations of her traditionally-minded father, has been called the greatest popular success of any migration film in the 1980s and is still shown throughout the world at Turkish-German film festivals and Goethe Institutes.¹⁴⁹ Though Bohm, like Baser, intended to encourage cross-cultural understanding, the film actually plays to many of the “long-held stereotypes according to which German society is considered enlightened and civilised, while Turkish patriarchy is

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Deniz Göktürk, “Beyond Paternalism: Turkish German Traffic in Cinema,” in *The German Cinema Book*, ed. Tim Bergfelder, Eric Carter and Deniz Göktürk (London: British Film Institute, 2002), 250.

¹⁴⁷ Hark Bohm, dir. and prod., *Yasemin*, Hamburger Kino-Kompanie Hark Bohm Filmproduktion KG and Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen (Mainz), 1988, videocassette.

¹⁴⁸ Sabine Hake, *German National Cinema*. (London: Routledge, 2002), 164; and “Hark Bohm,” filmportal.de, www.filmportal.de. (Accessed 30 October 2005).

¹⁴⁹ Göktürk, “Beyond Paternalism,” 251.

bound to archaic rituals and traditional beliefs” and reinforces the idea that young women must break free from traditional Turkish society to pursue their own lives.¹⁵⁰

Yasemin, the second daughter of a Turkish immigrant family, is the embodiment of the “German by day, Turkish by night” identity; while running errands for her family or working in their grocery store, she wears long skirts and baggy sweaters, but once she arrives at school, she shortens her skirt and removes the sweater to reveal a more trendy tank top. She excels in school and dreams of becoming a doctor, a goal her father largely supports until he feels his honor has been impugned by his eldest daughter. The “loving father” is then transformed into “the brutal patriarch” or “despot.”¹⁵¹ He refuses to let Yasemin leave the house without her male cousin and forces her to stay home from school and work in the store. When her father discovers her at the window with her German boyfriend, he and the cousin throw Yasemin into their van to take her to Turkey. The film ends with Yasemin threatening suicide rather than going to Turkey before jumping onto the back of her German boyfriend’s motorcycle and riding away with him.¹⁵²

Clearly, Bohm’s *Yasemin* is closely related to Baser’s 40 m² *Deutschland* in that it is the story of a young Turkish (-German) woman unable to freely make her own decisions because of the repressive role a male relative plays in her life. However, *Yasemin* introduces a new element into this conflict, specifically that the main character in this case is a young woman well-integrated into German society; indeed, she was born in Germany and considers it her home. Her negotiation between these two competing cultures is central to her identity

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 251.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 251; and Hans-Dieter Seidel, review of *Yasemin* by Hark Bohm. *Frankfurter Allegemeine Zeitung*, 20 February 1988.

¹⁵² Bohm, *Yasemin*, 1988.

and the conflict she faces. In addition, Bohm introduces the well-meaning, if not completely understanding, German into the situation, primarily in the character of the boyfriend, who becomes Yasemin's vehicle for escape from the controlling Turkish men and their "traditional" customs. Thus, it is the themes of Turkish women's subjugation to authoritarian men, the negotiation of identity between what are portrayed as competing cultural values, and the conflicting roles of Germans either as bigots, do-gooders, or mediators that characterized early Turkish-German film and set the stage for the emergence of second generation film.

The Second Generation—On Screen and in the Director's Chair

Similar to its depiction in *Yasemin*, the Turkish-German population at this point had developed into an established and, in many ways, a self-contained community within larger German society, with its own businesses, places of worship and forms of media. A major point of intersection between the Turkish-German residents and German society was in German schools. The majority of Turkish-German youth attended public schools and it was in this venue that many in the second generation began to struggle with and form their own identity as both Turks and Germans. A minority progressed to institutes of higher learning, such as the Hamburg School of Fine Arts, and during the mid-1990s a distinct cohort of Turkish-German writers and directors began producing films that introduced new levels of complexity and nuance to the inherited themes from the earlier migration films. This multi-faceted treatment reflected the breadth of new challenges faced by the second generation and presented a growing audience with plotlines and characters that embodied struggles over

cultural identity, challenges to traditional concepts of gender, and interactions between the Turkish minority and German society.

Transnational Identity and Cultural Hybridity

Within this growing body of Turkish-German film, the construction and understanding of the character's own identity plays a consistently important role. By introducing a new level of attention and subtlety to depictions of their subjects, directors have been particularly effective in their explorations of the complex and sometimes elusive conception of the national and cultural identities of Turkish-Germans. The director and writer Thomas Arslan is one of these filmmakers. Born in Germany in 1962 to a bi-national family (one parent was Turkish, the other German), Arslan grew up mainly in Germany, though he spent several years of elementary education in Ankara. His films reflect a sensitivity to the situation of the second generation as caught between multiple sets of norms, expectations and limitations, and his 1996 film *Geschwister —Kardesler* [Siblings] presents a thoughtful exploration of how the children of bi-national parents both construct their own identity and react to the expectations of others.

Geschwister —Kardesler follows the daily lives of three siblings in Berlin as they interact with their parents (a German mother and Turkish father), their friends in school and on the street, and elements of German society.¹⁵³ The three siblings each have distinct, and distinctly different, ideas of who they are and how they fit into the world around them. The oldest brother, Erol, was born in Turkey and moved with his parents to Germany as a young boy. Arslan portrays Erol as a tough guy: a Bruce Lee fan who dresses in black leather and lifts weights. Having dropped out of school, he is a small-time dealer in stolen goods and

¹⁵³ Thomas Arslan, dir., *Geschwister —Kardesler*, prod. Albert Kitzler, Trans -Film GmbH (Berlin) and Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen (Maniz), 1997, videocassette. *Geschwister* and *Kardesler* are the German and Turkish words, respectively, for “siblings.”

spends most of his time roaming Kreuzberg¹⁵⁴ with friends and ducking into side streets to avoid people to whom he owes money. Erol is also the sibling who most strongly identifies himself as Turkish. He is proud of his Turkish heritage, has only Turkish friends, and, despite his mother's strong reservations, decides to return to Turkey to perform his required military service, a source of pride for his father. This decision stems from both Erol's ethnic pride and identification as well as from his feelings of disadvantage and hopelessness concerning his chances for success within German society. "What could I do?" he asks his brother, Ahmed. "Do you want me to work at a döner stand?"¹⁵⁵

Ahmed, the younger brother, could not be more different. While Erol lifts weights and deals in stolen goods, Ahmed reads and does well in school. Erol's friends are all Turks, but Ahmed's girlfriend is German and, when he does hang out with his brother's friends, he does not or cannot converse with them in Turkish. At one point, two racist German youths make a comment that incites Erol and his friends to beat them up, but Ahmed neither joins in the fray, nor does he even look insulted, to the shame of his brother. Arslan makes clear that the younger brother not only does not share the older's sense of disadvantage, he does not identify himself as Turkish. It is interesting to note that for these roles Arslan chose an actor with a darker complexion to play Erol, while Ahmed looks considerably more "German." Is Arslan suggesting that, had Erol looked more "German," his experience would have been similar to his brother's? Or that if Ahmed looked more "Turkish," he could not have integrated/assimilated so fully?

¹⁵⁴ Kreuzberg, sometimes referred to as "Little Istanbul," is characterized by its large Turkish-German population.

¹⁵⁵ Arslan, *Geschwister—Kardesler*, 1997. "Döner" refers to a Turkish kebab sold at ubiquitous Turkish-operated fast food stands and restaurants throughout Germany that are frequented by Turks, Germans, and tourists alike.

In Leyla's character, the younger sister, the viewer notes the absence of both Erol's frustration with his place in German society and Ahmed's discomfort with his Turkish background. Leyla, unlike her cinematic predecessor Yasemin, remains consistent in her casual but fashionable dress and independent personality both at home and with her friends. While her closest friend is Turkish-German, they converse mainly in German and interact with other teenagers of diverse backgrounds.¹⁵⁶ The degree to which each sibling identifies with his or her Turkish and German heritage is influenced by multiple factors, from how they are perceived by German society to their own personal choices such as how they dress and whom they choose for friends. From Erol's fierce pride and frustration, to Ahmed's "Germanness," to Leyla's quiet self-confidence and independence, Arslan suggests that if such diversity could come out of one family, surely the experiences of an entire generation cannot be boiled down into a simple slogan of "living between two worlds."

Yüksel Yavuz introduces another family in his 1998 film *Aprilkinder* [April Children], a drama about a Kurdish family from Turkey living in Hamburg.¹⁵⁷ Unlike *Geschwister*, this family's relationships and outside interactions take place almost entirely within the Turkish immigrant community. The mother, a quiet woman who appears outside of their apartment only twice in the course of the movie, cannot speak or understand German—which her children use to their advantage when they do not want her to understand their conversation—and repeatedly refers to Germany as “this foreign land.” Suffering from persistent ill-health and over-work, the father speaks basic German and one gets the sense he does not have the time to interact with anything other than the time-clock and his bed. This

¹⁵⁶ Arslan, *Geschwister—Kardesler*, 1997.

¹⁵⁷ Yüksel Yavuz, dir., *Aprilkinder*, prod. Thomas Kufus, Zero Film GmbH (Berlin), 1998, videocassette.

family's most obvious black sheep is the middle son, Mehmet, who finds his criminal activities much more lucrative and satisfying than *Geschwister*'s Erol found his. For Mehmet, his cultural identity becomes a part of his street-wise persona; his friends and fellow drug dealers are Turkish and his underworld mentor has close ties to his family. Dilan, his younger sister, rejects any attempts by her family to curtail her teenage independence, though her rebellion is largely limited to clandestine and fairly innocent meetings with a friend of Mehmet's in whom she is interested. A relatively "normal" teenager, she wears fashionable clothes and makeup, values her privacy, listens to loud Turkish pop music, and covers her walls with posters of celebrities.¹⁵⁸ Rather than rebel against her family by embracing undesirable elements of German culture, Dilan chooses to challenge her boundaries within the context of the Turkish community.

Surprisingly, the most serious challenge to the family's cultural identity comes from the eldest, least rebellious son, Cem. While Dilan talks back to their mother and Mehmet worries her with his illegal activities, Cem is deferential and uncomplainingly performs his job at a sausage factory. As the story progresses, he meets and falls in love with a German prostitute, Kim, and increasingly stays away from home to be with her. While his constant absence at the dinner table produces some tension in the family, his mother's announcement of his impending arranged marriage to his cousin causes intense strain on Cem, as he is torn between his forbidden love for Kim and honoring his parents and culture. Though he tentatively suggests to his mother that the marriage be postponed (a proposal flatly rejected as the seemingly soft mother reveals her iron-will), ultimately he is unable to break with his parents' expectations and, in despair, marries his cousin.¹⁵⁹ Yavuz presents Cem's

¹⁵⁸ Yavuz, *Aprilkinder*, 1998.

submission to his parents' expectations as an act of weakness and resignation, a capitulation that communicates a sense of confinement rather than the act of a man freely honoring his sense of cultural identity.

Fatih Akin puts the issue of cultural hybridity at the center of his award-winning drama *Gegen die Wand*, in which he explores both the internal tensions of personal identity construction and the at times painful strain of negotiating between competing expectations and desires.¹⁶⁰ Born in Turkey but now a German citizen, Cahit, the male lead, maintains no contact to his family and continually distances himself from being identified as Turkish. In one scene, when a Turkish driver tries to kick Sibel, the female lead, and Cahit off his bus after overhearing Sibel's plan to deceive her parents, Cahit refuses to respond in Turkish and instead, in German, asserts his right to ride the bus. When he visits her family to ask permission to marry her, Sibel's brother tells him that his Turkish is "shitty" and asks what happened to it. Without hesitation, Cahit replies, "I threw it away." In another scene, when a group of Turkish men in a dance club beat Cahit up for trying to defend Sibel, he refers to them as "fucking Turks" while he nurses his wounds outside, to which she laughingly reminds him that he is Turkish, too.¹⁶¹ Despite all of this, Cahit, with Sibel's influence, slowly opens up to his Turkish heritage, evidenced by the improvement in his language skills and his decision to continue on to his hometown from Istanbul, where he traveled to reunite with Sibel, even when she fails to join him.

Unlike Cahit, Sibel more readily identifies herself as Turkish even as she violently rebels against her traditionally-minded and abusive father and brother. She enjoys her

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Akin, *Gegen die Wand*, 2004.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

mother and her female Turkish relatives, converses in Turkish easily, and likes to cook traditional foods. Yet, Sibel also closely relates her suffering with traditional Turkish-Islamic culture, strikingly communicated through her choice to listen to the album of an arabesque singer as she attempts suicide after learning Cahit killed a man to defend her honor. Her move to Istanbul after this event is not portrayed as a homecoming, but a last resort necessary to be safe from her family. Sibel's struggle with her own sense of identity and with her family, however, stem most directly from issues of gender to be discussed later in this chapter.

Though one character threatens suicide to escape being dragged to Turkey and another flees to Istanbul as a last resort, filmmakers have not uniformly portrayed the second generation as having negative associations with their parents' homeland. In Fatih Akin's *Kurz und Schmerzlos* [Short Sharp Shock], Gabriel, a young Turkish-German man recently released from prison, shares his dreams of moving to Turkey in a moment of vulnerable conversation.¹⁶² As he speaks of the warmth and peace of the desired sea-side town, his voice grows quiet and he smiles. His father, a distant and deeply religious man, typifies a first generation tendency to hold tightly to one's culture, illustrated in the film by his continued use of Turkish and his religious piety. Though his father often asks his son to pray with him, Gabriel repeatedly declines, an action not portrayed as dismissive or disrespectful of his father's beliefs but rather as a reflection of his tendency to deal with his problems in a more hands-on way that does not accept prayer as a viable option. It is not until Gabriel is preparing to leave for Turkey that he finally agrees to pray with his father; this time it is more to share a moment with his father (a relational decision) than to seek spiritual guidance (a

¹⁶² Fatih Akin, dir., *Kurz und Schmerzlos*, prod. Ralph Schwingel and Stefan Schubert, Wüste Filmproduktion (Hamburg), 1998, videocassette. The direct English translation is "Short and Painless," but it is marketed for English-language distribution as "Short Sharp Shock."

cultural or religious decision). Unfortunately for Gabriel, his decision to leave for Turkey at that moment is predicated by his need to flee the country after killing a man out of revenge for murdering his friends, not the joyous fulfillment of a dearly-held dream.

The characterization of Gabriel's father in *Kurz und Schmerzlos* introduces another theme that weaves its way into the background of many films: religion. To directly address the role and characterization of religion, specifically Islam, and religious values is a particularly tricky task, as religious and cultural values are so tightly intertwined in the films where they are introduced or subtly suggested as motivating forces. The example of the father in *Kurz und Schmerzlos* is perhaps the most transparent depiction of a practicing Muslim in all the films; it is through him that the viewer witnesses an Islamic communal prayer service, a scene not present in any of the other films.¹⁶³ Directors portray the role of Islamic cultural values largely within the realm of the family, and then almost entirely as a cultural identifier and an instrument of control wielded by the older generation to the frustration and, sometimes, harm of the younger generation. Intimately tied up in this is the concept of honor. In *Yasemin*, it was the father's sense of the honor that determined the degree of leniency or restriction he gave his children.¹⁶⁴ The father and brother in *Gegen die Wand* disown Sibel when her actions contradict their religious and cultural values, violating their sense of honor.¹⁶⁵ As we will see, directors use gender roles as a way of addressing and challenging these conservative religious and cultural values.

¹⁶³ Akin, *Kurz und Schmerzlos*, 1998

¹⁶⁴ Bohm, *Yasemin*, 1988.

¹⁶⁵ Akin, *Gegen die Wand*, 2004.

A Changing Concept of Gender?

Gender has played a role in post-war German film about foreigners since those bored youth in Munich started spreading rumors about Jorgos' sexual appetite in the late 1960s.¹⁶⁶ Turkish-German films like *40 m² Deutschland* and *Yasemin* embraced this theme and elaborated entire plotlines around it, focusing on the oppression of women by "traditional," domineering men. Have directors in the following years presented any change in these rigid gender roles? Are young women of Turkish descent portrayed as more independent, their fathers and brothers more tolerant and less fearful of dishonor?

Returning to Arslan's *Geschwister—Kardesler* Leyla steps forth as a confident, independent young woman who controls her own future and whose frustration with her parents is based on them not allowing her a level of autonomy that few seventeen-year-old German girls enjoy, such as taking a weekend trip to Hamburg with her boyfriend, and not on the severe curtailing of personal freedom that Yasemin experiences. Leyla and her friend, unlike Yasemin, roam the streets of Kreuzberg, go to parties, and plan on moving in together when they turn eighteen—and they take for granted that these are all options available to them. Leyla's brothers have only a cursory interest in her life and her father, though resistant to her trip to Hamburg and angered by her backtalk, is clearly not about to throw her into a van and start driving south. While Leyla's freedom may be attributed to her mother's being German, it is important to note that her friend's mother is not and she enjoys the same freedoms as Leyla.¹⁶⁷

Perhaps closer to Yasemin's situation is Yavuz's Dilan, the daughter of first-generation Kurdish parents in *Aprilkinder*. While her brother Mehmet and her mother (who

¹⁶⁶ Fassbinder, *Der Katzelmacher*, 1969.

¹⁶⁷ Arslan, *Geschwister—Kardesler*, 1997.

herself is portrayed as largely submissive and easily evaded—to a point) try to exert authority in her life, Dilan pays them only enough heed to keep her interest in Mehmet’s friend secret, but not enough to keep her from meeting him surreptitiously. With her loud music, revealing clothes and tendency to talk back, it is hard to imagine Dilan ever filling the role her mother plays in the family. Therefore, while there are echoes of Yasemin’s situation, Yavuz portrays her as having boundaries, but ones expanded noticeably farther than the former’s.¹⁶⁸

Two Akin films, *Kurz und Schmerzlos* and his 1999 road movie *Im Juli* [In July], each feature a relatively minor role for a Turkish-German woman, but these female characters nonetheless reveal a striking change from the earlier examples of women in Turkish-German film. In *Kurz und Schmerzlos*, Akin constructs the character of Ceyda, Gabriel’s younger sister, as a strong-willed woman with flamingly dyed hair and trendy clothes who runs her own jewelry-making business with a German friend. She also maintains an equal, if not dominant, footing in her relationships with men, including breaking up with one of her brother’s closest friends in the beginning of the movie and promptly taking up with a German man shortly thereafter. She does not hide her relationships from her brother, or even the fact that she is sexually active. However, it is suggested that their father is not fully aware of her relationships and, rather than act as a protector and enforcer of the family honor as the cousin in *Yasemin*, Gabriel sees himself as Ceyda’s friend and confidant, keeping her secrets and shielding his father from learning about aspects of her life that he would find objectionable.¹⁶⁹ The bond between Gabriel and Ceyda represents a significant shift from the family relationship in *Yasemin*, as its focus changed from maintenance of honor to mutual support.

¹⁶⁸ Yavuz, *Aprilkinder*, 1998.

¹⁶⁹ Akin, *Kurz und Schmerzlos*, 1999.

In *Im Juli*, Idil Üner plays Melek, a beautiful young Turkish woman passing through the city on her way to Istanbul.¹⁷⁰ Melek, particularly in the beginning of the movie, is a completely independent character. The viewer and Daniel, the German man who quickly develops a crush on her, learn very little about her background and can only make observations—she travels alone, dresses fashionably, and enjoys getting to know new people. At the end of the film when Melek appears again, the viewer learns she has a Turkish-German boyfriend, one who sees no problem with her traveling thousands of miles alone.¹⁷¹ Any meaningful comparison between their relationship and the marriage in *40 m² Deutschland* is impossible in this situation.

Yet in looking at a later movie of Akin's, *Gegen die Wand*, the theme of the woman as a victim of male relatives asserts itself clearly, albeit with trendier clothes and punk music. Sibel, angry and traumatized by her father's and brother's attitudes and abuse, tries to commit suicide. In her first extended conversation with Cahit, she relates the story of her crooked nose; her brother Yilmaz, after finding her holding hands with a boy, struck her and broke it. To escape this abuse, Sibel concocts a plan to marry Cahit, a marriage of convenience designed only to free her from her male relatives. Once married, she embraces "immoral" life at a level likely unimagined even by her father. She visits dance clubs, has a series of one-night stands, and gets tattoos. Yet, when faced with an unpleasant situation, usually an unwanted man's attention, Sibel immediately claims her status as a married Turkish woman and demands to be left alone, trying to trade one identity for another to avoid dealing with the consequences of either. When her family learns of her infidelity, her father

¹⁷⁰ Fatih Akin, dir., *Im Juli*, prod. Ralph Schwingel and Stefan Schubert, Wüste Filmproduktion (Hamburg), 2000, DVD.

¹⁷¹ Akin, *Im Juli*, 2000.

disowns Sibel, burning all pictures of her, and her brother sets out to fulfill his earlier threats against her. Sibel outruns him on the street, but, in fear, leaves for Istanbul and her cousin, Selma. Akin portrays Selma as a beautiful, divorced businesswoman, confident in herself and her abilities and sure of her direction in life, a distinct contrast to Sibel.¹⁷² It is particularly interesting that Akin uses a Turkish woman as the self-assured and successful counterpart to Sibel's own struggle for direction, perhaps a challenge to German preconceptions of a "backward" Turkey.

In Sibel's situation, we see a distinct and even more violent continuation of the woman-as-victim theme. Why does Akin choose to focus this movie on the extreme case?¹⁷³ On one hand, Akin acknowledges that the characters in the film do not represent the majority of the Turkish population in Germany and sets out rather to create a film that communicates conflict, primarily generational conflict, which he does feel applies on a larger scale.¹⁷⁴ By painting this generational conflict in its extremes, Akin can convey its potential harm more clearly. On the other hand, even as he addresses what he sees as wider issues in the Turkish-

¹⁷² Akin, *Gegen die Wand*, 2004.

¹⁷³ Akin maintains that the idea for the premise of the story came from an incident in his own youth, when a friend of his, a girl from a Turkish family, asked Akin to marry her so she could leave her parents' house. Akin, in love with his future wife, declined the offer, but often reflected on what kind of movie such a situation would make. His original notion that it ought to be a romantic comedy was tempered as he considered the situation the young girl faced which led her to seek such an escape, and eventually this developed into the basis for the screenplay *Gegen die Wand*. (See Fatih Akin, *Gegen die Wand: Das Buch zum Film mit Dokumenten, Materialien, Interviews* (Köln: Verlag Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2004), 204.)

And, while they represent the extreme case, some young Turkish-German women do still experience similar types of abuse. Sibel Kekilli's own family disowned her after learning, through the media, that she starred in pornographic films, mirroring the situation faced by her character in the movie. (See "From Bare to Bear for Ex-Porn Queen," Deutsche-Welle: Culture & Lifestyle. 18 February 2004. www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,2144,1118125,00.html. Accessed 5 November 2005). Finally, Germany has, in the past decade, witnessed a growing number of honor killings of Turkish-German girls and women. A Turkish women's organization in Tübingen has documented 40 honor killings in Germany since 1996. (See Jody K. Biehl, "The Death of a Muslim Woman: The Whore Lived Like a German," Spiegel Online. 2 March 2005. <http://service.spiegel.de/cache/international/0,1518,344374,00.html>. Accessed 5 November 2005).

¹⁷⁴ Mitchell, Wendy, "Going to Extremes: Fatih Akin on His Turkish-German Love Story 'Head-On'" indieWIRE: People, <http://worldfilm.about.com>. (Accessed 24 September 2005).

German minority, Akin positions himself as a director of more broad-based, commercial films that appeal to his audiences' emotions.¹⁷⁵ The story of beautiful young woman who wants to escape her abusive and repressive family so she can live a promiscuous, rock ‘n roll lifestyle has much more emotional appeal than Arslan’s more minimalist, reflective films about the daily lives of normal teenagers in Kreuzberg.

Far from minimalist is Kutlug Ataman’s 1997 film *Lola und Bili dikiid* [Lola and Billy the Kid], a movie that turns every accepted notion of gender on its head.¹⁷⁶ Lola is the lead dancer of a group of Turkish transvestite belly dancers that call themselves “*Die Gastarbeiterinnen*” [The Women Guestworkers] and perform to traditional Turkish music in clubs in Berlin. Lola’s lover is Bili, a macho Turkish-German male prostitute who wears a black leather biker jacket and refers to Lola as a “chick.” Bili wants a “normal family life” with Lola and tries to convince her to go to Turkey where she can have a sex change operation, but Lola is happy with how she is. That these traditional gender values play such a strong role in a transgender relationship suggests to the viewer both the permeation of these values in society and the absurdity of the roles in general.

Traditional concepts of gender are employed as a defense, even as they are being challenged, in the scene in which Calypso (Lola’s friend and fellow transvestite dancer) moves out of her apartment. In the stairway, she encounters her headscarf-clad middle-aged neighbor. Calypso, on deciding to move out, also decided to come out as a woman. To this point, she had always dressed as a man whenever she was not performing on stage. So when she meets her neighbor in the hall, the neighbor sees Calypso dressed as a woman for the first

¹⁷⁵ “Not only but also: ‘Turkish-German cinema today,’” filmportal.de, www.filmportal.de. (Accessed 24 September 2005).

¹⁷⁶ Kutlug Ataman, dir., *Lola und Bili dikiid*, prod. Martin Hagemann, Zero Film GmbH (Berlin), 1998, DVD.

time and is appalled. “I knew there was something unnatural about you!” she contends, assuming that Calypso is actually a woman who had been dressing as a man, though in reality, the situation is the exact opposite. Calypso plays to this woman’s misunderstanding and explains that dressing up as a man was the only way she, as a single woman, could feel safe on the streets, at which point her traditionally-minded neighbor begins to look half-convinced and sympathetic.¹⁷⁷ That “the Turkish women on German streets in *Lola und Bilidikid* are really men,” offers Göktürk, reminds us, “perhaps, that the binary oppositions such as male/female or German/Turkish are constructions on shift sand.”¹⁷⁸

The penultimate scene brings these challenges to traditional gender roles and the fear that such challenges evoke to the intimate level of a nuclear family. Murat, Lola’s gay teenage brother, confronts Osman, the eldest brother, with Lola’s murder. Osman, who murdered Lola to keep his own homosexual tendencies secret from the rest of the family, tells their mother to go to her room so she will not hear what Murat has to say. Though she faithfully followed the orders of her husband and, after his death, of Osman, this time she hesitates in the hall, out of sight of her two sons. In the confrontation that follows Murat becomes a man as he faces the brother that previously he always ran from and condemns him as a murderer. Their mother emerges from the hall, wordlessly strikes Osman across the face, and leaves the apartment. As Murat runs to catch up with her, she pulls off her headscarf and casts it onto the street, a brief yet unambiguous image of her rejection of the submissive role she held within the family.¹⁷⁹ Thus their story ends with Murat having

¹⁷⁷ Ataman, *Lola und Bilidikid*, 1998.

¹⁷⁸ Deniz Göktürk, “Turkish Women on German Streets: Closure and Exposure in Transnational Cinema,” in *Spaces in European Cinema*, ed. Myrto Konstantarakos (Portland, OR: Intellect Books, 2000), 74.

¹⁷⁹ Ataman, *Lola und Bilidikid*, 1998.

grown in his identity as a man and a homosexual and his mother revoking her willing submission to traditional forms of authority.

Directors often employ two common and contradictory characterizations of “being a man,” depicting Turkish-German men as enforcers of “honor” and traditional values in the family or as operating on the fringes or outside of the law. Examples of this first stock characterization are already present in the earlier Turkish-German films, such as in *Yasemin* with the father and older son and in *40 m² Deutschland* with the husband.¹⁸⁰ Particularly in *Yasemin*, the male characters are depicted as warm and kind until a perceived threat to the family or father’s honor surfaces, at which point they quickly transform into reluctant but determined guardians, taking whatever measure the father deems necessary to put the family back on the right course. This theme plays out in a distinctly more loveless way in *Gegen die Wand*, where the father disdainfully disowns his daughter for her “crimes,” and the older brother threatens his transgressing sister with death.¹⁸¹ While clearly not every male relative depicted puts himself in such a proactive role of policing his family, the trope reoccurs in several films and never to the benefit of the family, suggesting a distinct judgment on this role by the directors.

The other common characterization of Turkish-German men, particularly young men, shows them as petty criminals operating on the fringes of society, often as the neighborhood drug dealer.¹⁸² Arslan’s 1999 film *Dealer* centers on Can, a young man who, after years as

¹⁸⁰ Bohm, *Yasemin*, 1988 and Baser, *40 m² Deutschland*, 1986.

¹⁸¹ Akin, *Gegen die Wand*, 2004.

¹⁸² The situation of young Turkish-German men has been a particularly difficult one since family reunification began in earnest in the 1970s, marked by socio-economic disadvantage and cultural struggle. Similar to their depiction in these films, some are involved in criminal activities. A look at German Police Criminal Statistics Reports confirms that arrests of non-Germans, from 1991 to 2001, ranged between 23.5% and 33.6% and that, within that group, Turks and Turkish-Germans accounted for between 15.8% and 21.9%.

small-time drug dealer, decides he wants legitimate work. After working briefly as a dishwasher, Can decides that dealing drugs is preferable: he makes more money without having to perform menial labor or wear an embarrassingly “uncool” uniform.¹⁸³ Similarly, the younger son in Yavuz’s *Aprilkinder*, Mehmet, sees dealing drugs as both a good way to earn money and a part of the street-wise, dangerous persona he cultivates.¹⁸⁴ Aspiring to carve out a significant place for himself in the underworld, he actively seeks out opportunities to take more risks and make more money. In Arslan’s *Geschwister—Kardesler*, the oldest son, Erol, is a small time dealer in stolen goods, seemingly without much success, and is quite literally “on the fringes” of society as he ducks down alleyways and into courtyards to avoid his creditors.¹⁸⁵ For each of these characters, “being a man” is equated with being perceived as tough or dangerous, a disregard for the law, and camaraderie with similarly-minded peers. As directors remain fairly consistent in utilizing this particular trope, they rarely create the young man as an entirely sympathetic character or directly suggest he has no other choice, despite allusions to a lack of attractive alternatives.

Germans as Friends, Germans as Foreigners

As the number and nature of encounters between Turkish-Germans and Germans grew, the reactions to such interactions ranged from assimilation or integration to xenophobia and ghettoization. Despite the heart-warming friendship of little Anne and Metin, early films

Interestingly, while the total percentage of non-German arrests has been declining, the percentage of Turkish and Turkish-German arrests has either stayed even or slightly increased. (See Bundeskriminalamt, “Polizeilichen Kriminalstatistik Berichtsjahr 2003” and “Polizeilichen Kriminalstatistik Berichtsjahr 1997,” www.bka.de, 2003. Accessed 3 December 2005.) While these statistics do not include a breakdown in age cohorts, they do suggest a phenomenon within society that Turkish-German directors draw on in their characterizations of young men.

¹⁸³ Thomas Arslan, dir., *Dealer*, prod. Käte Ehrmann, Transfilm GmbH (Berlin), 1998, videocassette.

¹⁸⁴ Yavuz, *Aprilkinder*, 1998.

¹⁸⁵ Arslan, *Geschwister—Kardesler*, 1996.

about the Turkish population in Germany depicted a separation between communities and cultures that, when breached, caused confusion at best and violence at worst. Anne and Metin must face a gang of hostile neighborhood children who mock them, Yasemin's affection for a German boy provokes her father to send her to Turkey immediately, and Turna, from *40 m² Deutschland*, is separated from any interaction with Germans by a locked door and a foreign language. One would assume that the longer the Turkish community lived in Germany, the closer the two societies—if they can be so neatly divided—would grow and the more interaction there would be. Do depictions of the place of the Turkish minority within German society bear out this assumption? Is the relationship between these two neighbors shown as one of growing understanding and involvement or of estrangement and indifference?

Geschwister—Kardesler is unique among these films in portraying a bi-national family, though the parents do not have a large presence in the movie. Conflicts arise between the parents on two occasions, the first revolving around Erol's decision to return to Turkey for his required military service. His German mother, distraught by his choice, tries to dissuade him, which upsets both Erol and his father, who is proud of his son's decision to return to Turkey. A second scene involving more direct confrontation is sparked by an argument between Leyla and her father. Leyla, upset that her father flatly refused her request to go on a weekend trip to Hamburg with her boyfriend, begins yelling at her father and he, angry at the disrespect, slaps her across the face. At this point, her mother rushes into the room, every muscle tensed. “Don’t you ever strike her again!” she commands. “Do you understand that?”¹⁸⁶ Leyla’s and her mother’s reactions to her father’s rebuke suggest his action was an unusual one. While Arslan portrays the mother as an advocate for what she

¹⁸⁶ Arslan, *Geschwister—Kardesler*, 1997.

sees as her children's best interests, he chooses not to focus on the relationship of the parents or specifically on the “Germanness” of the mother. Instead, Arslan examines how having bi-national parents affected their children's sense of identity.

In *Aprilkinder*, Yavuz reverses the positions of belonging and foreignness by placing Kim, the German prostitute, in the role of outsider in a wholly Turkish community. The bordello where she works is run by a Turkish man, her clients are largely Turkish men, the people that she and Cem encounter on the street are acquaintances of his. Kim's foreignness comes into sharpest relief when she attempts to visit Cem at his family's home. His mother, unable to understand German, seems utterly confused by the appearance of this woman at her door and when his father comes to the door, he tells this disreputable-looking foreigner that there is no one named Cem who lives there. While Kim waits uncertainly in the stairwell, unsure of what to do, Dilan passes by and stares at her, as if she cannot fathom why a German woman would be there looking for her brother.¹⁸⁷ Yavuz tells the story of *Aprilkinder* entirely from the perspective of a Kurdish family wholly separate from German society and immersed in their immigrant community; Kim is the single German character that receives more than a few moments attention from the director. For this family and the viewer, Kim is the foreigner, the one who cannot understand the conversation going on in front of her and who seems out of place in the neighborhood. Not since *40 m² Deutschland* has there been such a clear delineation between Turk and German, yet here it is not the story of one woman behind a locked door, but an entire community apart from the larger society.

Whatever boundary between the Turkish population and German society that exists in *Gegen die Wand* appears much more porous, at least for those Turkish-Germans who fit more readily into “Western” culture. That Cahit and Sibel are ethnically Turkish is not an

¹⁸⁷ Yavuz, *Aprilkinder*, 1998.

issue among their German acquaintances or lovers, at least until news of their unorthodox marriage surfaces. Even at this point Maren, both Cahit's occasional lover and Sibel's friend, seems more confused than judgmental.¹⁸⁸ Similarly, the German character Alice in *Kurz und Schmerzlos* is depicted as a natural and welcome addition to the circle of friends. That she is Ceyda's close friend and business partner causes no conflicts and it is the issue of betrayal and not ethnicity that makes her and Gabriel's affair a disastrous decision.¹⁸⁹

It is in *Lola und Bilidikid* that the racist German stereotype emerges most forcefully in the characters of three young, blond, clean-cut German high schoolers. The trio, or at least duo, as the third seems to go along for acceptance more than out of conviction, persistently harass Lola as she goes home in the evening and spout ethnic slurs at Murat whenever they encounter him. Before going out one evening, the ringleader asks the newer member, “Are you ready for the hunt, little wolf?”—a phrase evoking imagery from the Nazi past. Their earlier threats of violence convince Bili of their guilt in Lola’s death and prompt him to seek violent revenge.¹⁹⁰

Contrasting sharply with these racist youth are the two other more central German characters, a successful middle-aged architect and his elderly, domineering mother. Friedrich, the architect, falls in love with the young Turkish male prostitute, Iskender, who at first is interested in Friedrich only for his money and the older man’s classic automobile. As Iskender is faced with his friend Lola’s death, he realizes he cares more for Friedrich than he thought and the two men start seeing each other seriously. Friedrich’s mother is quite upset with the relationship, but not for the reasons that would first come to mind. That Iskender is

¹⁸⁸ Akin, *Gegen die Wand*, 2004.

¹⁸⁹ Akin, *Kurz und Schmerzlos*, 1998.

¹⁹⁰ Ataman, *Lola und Bilidikid*, 1998.

Turkish and a homosexual do not trouble her nearly so much as the fact that he is poor, for Friedrich's mother is a “*klassenbewußte Dame*” [class-conscious lady] who assumes Iskender is interested only in her son's money.¹⁹¹ Her suspicions are somewhat allayed when the young man forcefully rejects her attempt to bribe him to break off the relationship with her son.¹⁹²

Ataman's choice to highlight the class conflict between the wealthy German woman and the poorer Turkish man is revealing in two respects. First, it challenges the notion that conservative Germans, particularly the older ones, would automatically discriminate against a person like Iskender because of his ethnicity or sexual orientation. In addition, it brings to light the hardship of class prejudice that persists against those financially disadvantaged. Because Turkish *Gastarbeiter* were largely employed as unskilled laborers and due to economic downturn and the lack of success of Turkish-Germans, young men particularly, in the school system relative to their German peers, the Turkish-German community has been and continues to be largely a working class community. As such, they can experience dual discrimination, both on the basis of their ethnicity and their lower class status.

Conclusion

In the past twenty-five years, Turkish-German film has explored conflicts over the negotiation of one's national and cultural identity, the implications and effects of a challenge to traditional gender roles, and the interactions between the Turkish minority and larger German society. Through these explorations, Turkish-German filmmakers challenge any

¹⁹¹ Jörg Thomann, review of *Lola und Biliqidikid* by Kutlug Ataman. *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Nr. 63, 15 March 2001.

¹⁹² Ataman, *Lola und Biliqidikid*, 1998.

uniform description of this dynamic community and instead urge the viewer to consider its diversity, understand its challenges, and appreciate its accomplishments.

Regarding presentations of national identity and cultural hybridity, directors have tended to come at these issues from three different angles: the personal construction of or struggle with identity, the effect of the struggle within the context of the family, and the reception of that identity in greater society. Very rarely have characters been portrayed as wholly rejecting their Turkish heritage in favor of complete assimilation to German culture. With few exceptions, filmmakers largely portray second generation Turkish-Germans as challenging certain aspects of Turkish cultural values while choosing to remain faithful to others. For other characters, their perception of Turkey highlights the second generation's internal struggle for identity and belonging; one man's dream is another woman's last resort.

Most often this struggle is depicted as taking place primarily within the context of the family, as a generational conflict. Whether it is young men worrying their mothers with their questionable money-making activities or young women worrying their fathers with their growing rebelliousness, directors consistently portray the struggle for identity and the forging of cultural hybridity as a defining feature of generational conflict and vice versa. The parents' response to their children varies. Some are shown as reacting out of fear, either for the safety of the child or the potential for dishonor, while others seem mildly supportive, unaware or unequipped to deal with the challenge. Enmeshed in these generational conflicts are issues of religious and cultural traditions, particularly the concept of honor and its preservation. Finally, directors place the construction of one's identity within the context of larger society and reflect on how that construction is affected by society's reception of the individual. Sometimes this reception is shown in a positive light, as in the case of a teacher

who takes a personal interest in a student's education.¹⁹³ Yet in other examples, directors comment on society's tendency to mark one a "Turk" regardless of how much the person identifies with that label. Friendships with individual Germans have been a prevalent theme throughout Turkish-German film, but there is considerably less depiction of more broad-based interaction, suggesting the limitations of the current state of cultural integration.

Conflicts stemming from the challenge to traditional gender roles have been a favorite topic of directors since the early stages of Turkish-German film, with the Turkish-woman-as-victim trope being both disputed and reinforced, occasionally even by the same director.

After the earlier depictions of women in *40 m² Deutschland* and *Yasemin*, Akin's *Sibel* stands out as the most extreme example of repression at the hands of male relatives, and this film was made nearly twenty years after the first two. Yet, at the same time, directors are creating films that portray a gradation of young Turkish-German women's independence of and acceptance by their families.¹⁹⁴ What is perhaps the most visually striking element brought into play in these films is how the director chooses to dress the female characters and what this is supposed to say about their sense of self and independence. Most often, the more recent Turkish-German films do not employ the same on-scene costume change that Bohm did in his portrayal of Yasemin's "German by day, Turkish by night" identity. And the headscarf, possibly the most popularly recognized signifier of Turkish "traditional" culture, is largely absent from these films, worn mainly, if at all, by the first generation mothers. Its general absence from these films is perhaps even more intriguing and evocative than its presence would be. Possibly the filmmakers want to move beyond the stereotypical forms of

¹⁹³ Bohm, *Yasemin*, 1988.

¹⁹⁴ Yavuz, *Aprilkinder*, 1998; Akin, *Kurz und Schmerzlos*, 1998; and Arslan, *Geschwister—Kardesler*, 1996.

gender and intergenerational conflict to engage with the thoughts and beliefs at play behind the visual symbols.

The portrayal of the brother-sister relationship over the course of Turkish-German film presents itself as a useful tool for understanding the change in gender roles over the past twenty-five years. While the cousin in *Yasemin* served foremost as a protector of the family honor, Gabriel in *Kurz und Schmerzlos* acts as his sister's friend and a shield between her and their father.¹⁹⁵ Yet the earlier protector of family honor model did not end, as the example of Sibel and her brother plainly shows.¹⁹⁶ The middle brother in *Aprilkinder*, on the other hand, appears to want to have authority over his sister's life, but does want to take the time or effort to seriously exercise that authority.¹⁹⁷ These brother-sister relationships suggest that, even as some men increasingly see their role as protector of the family honor as unnecessary or unappealing, others still cling to that authority and excuse to control the actions of their female relatives. Women, in turn, either benefit from the increased personal independence and support or must find ways to circumvent their brothers' assumption of authority.¹⁹⁸

Along with the portrayal of men as fathers and brothers determined to protect the family honor, directors employ another prominent gender construct: the young man as a small-time criminal. Often dealing in stolen goods or drugs, these young men are shown as valuing a distinctly different type of reputation, one built of a tough, street-wise identity rather than of moral integrity. Directors refrain from seeking to justify these characters' choices, but do allude to the undesirable nature of what the young men see as their

¹⁹⁵ Bohm, *Yasemin*, 1988; and Akin, *Kurz und Schmerzlos*, 1998.

¹⁹⁶ Akin, *Gegen die Wand*, 2004.

¹⁹⁷ Yavuz, *Aprilkinder*, 1998.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

alternatives. The gap between these two male identities, defender of morals and minor thug, suggests a sharp struggle over the meaning of being a Turkish-German man in German society.

Interactions between the Turkish minority and larger German society play a role in Turkish-German film, but rarely as the dominant theme. By and large, the stories are told from the point of view of a Turkish-German person or community and the German appears as the outsider, the foreigner. This is most pronounced in Yavuz's *Aprilkinder* through the character of the German prostitute who operates on the fringes of the Turkish community and is wholly foreign within it.¹⁹⁹ Some Germans are characterized as good friends, while others fit into stereotypical, racist molds. Such presentations communicate that German reaction to and acceptance of the growing Turkish-German community is hardly uniform; instead it is marked by advances and regressions, friendships forged and racisms resurfacing.

Bearing all of this in mind, historians can greatly benefit from the use of these sources and the issues that arise from their examination to enhance their understanding of the development of the Turkish-German population throughout the past twenty-five years. These films indicate a dynamism and diversity that sometimes escapes the scholar who focuses only on his or her own small part of the picture or considers the population only from the perspective of German sources. As with literature, the films illustrate the necessity and benefit of telling the story from the inside out: of using the Turkish-German population itself as a base for exploration and looking to the German as the “other.” Only when scholars approach the issues of identity, gender, and place in society from the perspective of the Turkish-German population will their examinations of those communities be as “truthful” as those stories presented to us by the filmmakers.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

CONCLUSION

Since one knows that even bridges have an end
one doesn't need to hurry in crossing over
yet it is coldest on bridges.²⁰⁰

Zehra Çirak's brief poem on bridges speaks about the basic nature of transitions. In only three lines, Çirak describes the universal experience of going through a transition and the loneliness that accompanies this process. Deceptively simple, this poem provides us with a helpful metaphor as we consider how to draw together these studies of film and literature and reflect on what they have to offer scholars of modern German history, as well as helping us understand the development of the Turkish-German cultural elite.

These creative works serve as a connection, or bridge, between the writer and the reader through the medium of story-telling, which the writer uses, in varying degrees, to communicate ideas, to educate, and to entertain. In chapter one I explored literature as a bridge between the creative writer and researcher by examining prominent themes in the historiography and in fictional literature. The resulting comparison highlights the need for historians and sociologists to incorporate the perspective of Turkish-Germans into their scholarship, instead of attempting to study that population solely from the vantage point of traditional or official German sources. Additionally, the comparison suggests that some

²⁰⁰ Zehra Çirak, "Sich Warm Laufen," in *Vogel auf dem Rücken eines Elefanten* (Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1994), 93. "Weil man weiss dass auch Brücken ein Ende haben/ braucht man sich beim Übergang nicht zu beeilen/ doch auf Brücken ist es am kältesten."

subjects, such as personal experience and the dynamics of family life, are better explored through the medium of literature, with its ability to employ imagination rather than being grounded in citable sources.

In the second chapter I examined Turkish and Turkish-German filmmakers and their work to form a bridge between representation and reality; that is, by studying the treatment of certain themes in film over the course of twenty-five years, I sought to uncover what the filmmakers were suggesting about the development of Germany's Turkish minority. Interestingly, rather than depicting it as simply becoming more "integrated" or "separated," the filmmakers describe a community growing more diverse and complex. With Turkish-German filmmakers now beginning to come into their own, it will be interesting to watch how their perceptions of the dynamics of the Turkish minority present themselves on film in the future and how scholars choose to approach and incorporate their work.

Another element of transition, Cirak's poem also describes the situation of being on the bridge, of the discomfort and loneliness. The Turkish-German artists, standing in the middle of the bridge they are building between their two seemingly disparate societies, identify with both while not fully belonging to either. Rejecting the concept of labeling themselves as either "Turkish" or "German" writers or filmmakers, these artists and their work have come to represent and advocate a blended identity that takes into account the multiple influences of ethnicity, religion, culture, and society. In other words, through these cultural elite, we can see a part of the cultural hybridization of the Turkish-German community. While cultural elites by definition are not a representative slice of society, they and their works reflect certain dynamics and struggles at play within and around it, as can be shown through an examination of their personal circumstances as well as the various

components of their creative works such as subject matter, use of language, intended audience and reception.

The artists themselves are hardly a uniform group. Out of the seventeen discussed throughout this study, twelve are writers and five filmmakers, eight are women and nine men. Seven constitute a part of the first generation immigrants, nine are from the second, and one cannot be classified as either.²⁰¹ Of those from the first generation, three came to Germany specifically to study and one was a political refugee. These differences are quickly evident when looking at individual cases. Born in 1939, Aras Ören was an established writer in Turkey before moving to West Germany in 1969, did not speak German when he arrived and started out by working at semi-skilled jobs before becoming one of the most widely known and well-established Turkish-German writers.²⁰² Fatih Akin, on the other hand, was born in Hamburg in 1973, the son of Turkish immigrants, attended German schools, including Hamburg's School of the Fine Arts, and is a rising director in the German film industry.²⁰³ Emine Sevgi Özdamar originally came to West Berlin as a *Gastarbeiter* in 1965 and stayed for two years, during which time she fell in love with German theater and Bertolt Brecht in particular. After she returned to Turkey, she studied acting and moved back to East Berlin in 1976, having little luck with her career at home.²⁰⁴ Since then, Özdamar has worked as a playwright, an actress, an author, and an essayist.

²⁰¹ Kutlug Ataman, writer and director of *Lola und Bilidikid*, grew up in Istanbul, studied at film schools in Paris and Los Angeles, moved to Berlin and directed the aforementioned film, and then moved back to Turkey. It is unclear that he ever intended on settling in Germany and seems more likely he lived there for the purpose of creating the film.

²⁰² Marilya Veteto-Conrad, *Finding a Voice: Identity and the Works of Germany-Language Turkish Writers in the Federal Republic of Germany to 1990* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1996), 16.

²⁰³ "Fatih Akin: Biographie," [filmportal.de, www.filmportal.de](http://filmportal.de/www.filmportal.de). (Accessed 13 March 2006).

Yet despite these obvious differences, the artists' commonalities are significant. Whether their initial position in Germany was as a *Gastarbeiter* or not, most are connected in some way to that phenomenon, be it through a family or friend relationship. Similarly, the public regards them as part of that immigration and largely has expected the artists to speak on behalf of the *Gastarbeiter* or to produce stories involving them in some way. Many artists, such as Aysel Özakin, resent this association and want to be considered as individual writers on the basis of their own literary merit.²⁰⁵ Writer Alev Tekinay, who identifies her work as "Brückensliteratur" [Bridge Literature] labels this popular conception as a false one, contending that "we are academics."²⁰⁶ Yet when asked if she feels herself a speaker for her generation, Tekinay replied that though she knows she cannot speak for everyone, she does "speak for many other migrants," because she wants people to know "their fate," acknowledging "I am in a position where I can speak and I will be heard."²⁰⁷ And so, each is caught between contending forces: the desire for an artistic career recognized for its own merit, the need to publish, the expectations of the market, and the realization of being in a position to speak for a group with whom one is identified and, to varying degrees, connected.²⁰⁸ Such a situation is not unlike that in which many Turkish-Germans have found themselves. Often identified with the earlier stages of the community's development both in

²⁰⁴ David Horrocks and Eva Kolinsky, eds., "Living and Writing in Germany: Emine Sevgi Özdamar in Conversation with David Horrocks and Eva Kolinsky," in *Turkish Culture in German Society Today* (Providence: Berghahn Books, 1996), 45.

²⁰⁵ Annette Wierschke, *Schreiben als Selbstbehauptung: Kulturkonflikt und Identität in den Werken von Aysel Özakin, Alev Tekinay und Emine Sevgi Özdamar. Mit Interviews* (Frankfurt: IKO, 1996), 240.

²⁰⁶ Wierschke, *Schreiben als Selbstbehauptung*, 241–242.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 245.

²⁰⁸ Rita Chook-Kuan Chin, *Rewriting the "Guest Worker": Turkish-German Artists and the Emergence of Multiculturalism in the Federal Republic of Germany, 1961-1989*, unpublished dissertation (University of California, Berkeley, 1999), 16–18.

the public eye and also in the historiography, the diversity of the subsequent minority and the blended identity of individuals are overlooked.

Just as the artists' circumstances reflect the blending of identity and a refusal to fit into neat categories, so too do their creative works, through subject matter and construction, suggest the growing diversification and cultural hybridization of the community. Throughout the literature and film, generational conflict has continued to play a dominant role in the story-telling. While the parents continually seek, at different levels, to hold their children to some form of "traditional" culture, what has changed is the level of disobedience which the children exhibit. The form of this rebellion varies, as does the extent of the parents' awareness of it, but generally artists have chosen to depict their adolescent characters as increasingly resistant to and disinterested in their parents' authority. Yet this does not suggest that writers and filmmakers have made their parent characters consistently more lenient—an idea which a quick look at the treatment of gender relationships quickly dispels.

Gender has received the focused attention of Turkish-German artists since they began publishing, and from that time the relationship between male and female family members has been the most prominent vehicle to explore this topic. Writers and filmmakers have depicted a gradual emancipation of women through their choice of friends, jobs, and clothing, but even as some go farther to suggest a more thorough independence, others have continued to portray wives and daughters as dominated, sometimes violently, by their husbands, fathers and brothers. Yet daughters are no longer the only children worrying their parents. Outside of their role as defenders of the family honor, Turkish-German men have increasingly been depicted as drug dealers or small-time criminals, a characterization especially strong in film. The artists have continued to use the challenge to gender roles as a means to express

struggles within the Turkish German community and between this community and larger German society and its conceptions of gender.

The characterization of Germans has consistently been ambivalent, as has the Turkish-German's relationship to Turkey. Earlier works typified Germans as either exclusionary bigots or well meaning outsiders. While these representations continue, more recently artists have utilized and developed the depiction of the German as the outsider or "other." Though there are levels on which the Turkish-German and the "other" can relate and have a friendship, a sense of separation still exists. Similarly, while artists have consistently portrayed an ambivalent attitude toward Turkey, that attitude has shifted from being based on Turkey as a physical place to more of a mental homeland or a symbol of cultural meaning that is defined by one's experience in Germany. Through the use of these two themes, writers and filmmakers have continued to suggest levels of familiarity and separation in the Turkish-German community.

More recently, as Turkish-German artists have become more established in their fields and are challenging the "migrant" niche, many are shifting focus from the themes which have come to characterize their work to less Turkish-German-specific stories. For example, Emine Sevgi Özdamar wrote a novel about a young girl growing up in Turkey during the 1950s and 60s called *Life is a Caravanserai Has Two Doors I Came in One I Went Out the Other*, for which she was awarded the Ingeborg Bachmann Prize for German Literature in 1991.²⁰⁹ Germany features only very briefly in the last pages of the book when the main character decides to go there to work and ends when she is traveling by train.

²⁰⁹ For an account of the controversy surrounding this award, see Karen Jankowsky, "'German' Literature Contested: The 1991 Ingeborg-Bachmann-Prize Debate, 'Cultural Diversity,' and Emine Sevgi Özdamar," *The German Quarterly* 70, No. 3 (Summer, 1997): 261-276.

Though written in German, Özdamar weaves in Turkish words throughout the story.²¹⁰ In 2000, Zehra Çirak published a book of poetry called *Leibesübungen: Gedichte* [Physical Exercises: Poetry] in which she explores a number of themes such as movement, relationships, and life experience.²¹¹ Another example from 2000 is Fatih Akin's film *Im Juli*, previously discussed in chapter two. This story ultimately centers on the relationship between two Germans and features Turks as peripheral characters.²¹² Even as those stories directly incorporating the Turkish-German community have depicted an increasingly diverse society, so too does the recent move of pushing past these themes suggest both a desire on the part of the artists to move out of the *Gastarbeiter* niche and an openness of the public to this move.

Along with this broadening of topics is an increased flexibility and creativity with language. Earlier, Turks and Turkish-Germans wrote either in Turkish and then translated, as in the case of Aras Ören's novels and Tevfik Baser's *40 m² Deutschland*, or wrote directly in German, such as with the anthological literature, to legitimize themselves as writers and appeal to a broader audience. Since then, the lines between the languages have blurred. In film, characters speak in German, Turkish, or Kurdish, mostly with subtitles though sometimes not, depending on with whom they are speaking and what they are discussing. In prose and poems, writers have also become increasingly creative with language, using German words with Turkish sentence structure or story-telling strategies—a style employed by Çirak and Özdamar among others. Some artists, though not many, have gone so far as to

²¹⁰ Emine Sevgi Özdamar, *Life is a Caravanserai Has Two Doors I Came in One I Went Out the Other*. Translated by Luise von Flotow (London: Middlesex University Press, 2000).

²¹¹ Zehra Çirak, *Leibesübungen: Gedichte* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2000).

²¹² Fatih Akin, dir., *Im Juli*, prod. Ralph Schwingel and Stefan Schubert, Wüste Filmproduktion (Hamburg), 2000, DVD.

construct their works entirely in “Kanak Sprach,” a slang hybridization of Turkish and German.²¹³ Through language then, as well as theme, we can see the challenge to seemingly clearly defined aspects of culture that signifies the blending of identity.

Finally, directly connected to the changes in themes and use of language, a preliminary examination of these artists’ intended audience and the receptivity of that audience suggest growing cultural hybridization and a degree of resistance to that process. The earlier literary works, and later the films as well, employed a distinctly educational and moralizing tone and sought to promote cross-cultural understanding, specifically for Germans to understand Turks. As such, these works were generally well, if not widely, received and have been used since as pedagogical tools for perspective into the Turkish-German “experience.”²¹⁴ The second generation, caught between the public’s expectations and the desire to be recognized as artists in their own right, have increasingly deemphasized this educational approach in favor of exploring aspects of identity and relationships. In doing so, they have attempted to broaden their audience to include a wider range of Germany’s population and, occasionally, Turkey’s as well. Critically these works have generally been well received, as evidenced by, among other examples, Akin’s Golden Bear and Özdamar’s Bachmann Prize. Yet outside of their Turkish-German niche, these works and their reception are sometimes controversial. Response to Özdamar’s Bachmann Prize—a *German* literary award, not one designed for foreign writers—included an article in the *Frankfurter*

²¹³ See Feridun Zaimoglu, *Kanak Sprach: 24 Misstöne vom Rande der Gesellschaft* (Hamburg: Rotbuch Verlag, 1995) and Lars Becker, dir., *Kanak Attack!*, prod. Thomas Häberle, Christian Becker and Daniel Blum. Becker and Häberle Filmproduktion GmbH (Krefeld), 1999, DVD. Zaimoglu was also one of the writers for *Kanak Attack!*

²¹⁴ Chin, *Rewriting the Guest Worker*, 9-12. Also, see the Appendix for information on the reception and further use of the films *Yasemin* and *40 m² Deutschland*.

Allegemeine Zeitung that decried the jury's choice, calling her work "naive" and "folkloristic," and the absence of acknowledgment in *Der Spiegel*.²¹⁵

The reaction of the general populace to these creative works proves more elusive and difficult to gauge. From statistical data available regarding attendance at particular films, it is apparent Turkish-German films are drawing gradually increasing audiences, with the recent *Gegen die Wand* being the most popular.²¹⁶ Regarding literature, the growing number of Turkish-German writers able to establish themselves in that career indicates a correspondingly growing base of popular readership. Yet these sources are more suggestive than they are definitive. More interesting to know would be how the popular consumers responded to these creative works, the extent to which Turkish-Germans saw their own reflection in these stories, how they may have shaped readers' own ideas about their identity and culture, and how these works have contributed to mutual understanding or tolerance. These questions, unfortunately, cannot be answered in the scope of this study, nor have they yet been addressed in the broader scholarship. Yet we can see, through the transition from an educational tone to a more exploratory and entertaining approach in order to move out of the "migrant" niche and into a wider audience, still another element of the dynamics of change within the Turkish-German cultural elite.

In the last twenty-five years, Turkish-German creative works have developed from stories of economic hardship and social alienation to reflections on and explorations of the less clearly delineated concepts of identity construction and the relationship between one's ethnic background and cultural and social experience. Much like the rest of Germany's

²¹⁵ Petra Fachinger, *Rewriting Germany from the Margins: "Other" German Literature of the 1980s and 1990s* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), 6.

²¹⁶ See the Appendix for the available attendance information on several of the films discussed in Chapter Two.

Turkish minority, these artists and their work have struggled with being identified by and identifying with the earlier phase of the community's development even as they insist on creating and being recognized by a blended identity that incorporates the multiple influences in their lives. For the perspective they offer, for what they reveal about their creators, and for what they suggest about the development of the Turkish-German community, these fictional documents hold considerable value for the scholar of modern Germany, whether the focus be on society, politics, culture or economics. And, as artists of a sort ourselves, they serve to remind us of the power and value of a good story well-told.

APPENDIX OF FILMS IN ORDER OF RELEASE DATE

- **Metin.** Written and directed by Thomas Draeger. 1979. This television movie was made as a pedagogical tool for teaching young children about the importance and benefit of cross-cultural, specifically German-Turkish, friendships. As such it tells the story of a young Turkish boy, Metin, and his friendship with his new neighbor, a young German girl named Anne. The primary language of the film is German, with Turkish being spoken by Metin's family and Turkish children without subtitles. By making language and culture learning into games and by showing the friendship as essential to overcoming prejudice, Draeger encourages children to enter into such friendships. Little information is available about the film and director, nor does it seem the film enjoyed continued showings much after its original showing.
- **40 m² Deutschland.** [Title refers to the size of the apartment.] Written and directed by Tevfik Baser. 1986. Baser's drama tells the story of a young Anatolian bride brought to West Germany by her guestworker husband and then confined to their apartment by him as "protection" against the dangers of German society and culture. After nearly a year of imprisonment, Turna finally breaks out of her prison after her husband suffers from a seizure and dies. Almost the entirety of the film takes place in Turkish with German subtitles. Critics largely applauded this film, both for its compelling story and aesthetic features, and referred to Baser's own background and his efforts to research the film.²¹⁷ Since its release, *40 m² Deutschland* has been shown on television, where it has been described as "a film of the oppressive and authentic problems of a guestworker marriage"²¹⁸ and "the clash of two cultures,"²¹⁹ as well as a part of museum exhibitions, including one called "At Home with Us: Dream or Trauma?" and another that discussed the place of migrants in Germany. In the second exhibition, the screening of the film was followed by a talk from Amnesty for Women about female genital mutilation.²²⁰
- **Yasemin.** Written and directed by Hark Bohm. 1988. *Yasemin* is the story of a young Turkish-German woman who struggles between the love and respect she has for her father and her own desires to pursue a life that conflicts with his traditional values. In the end she is forced to choose between being sent to Turkey or escaping with her German boyfriend. She chooses the latter, riding away with him on the back of his motorcycle. Since its release, *Yasemin* has continued to be screened at museum film exhibitions, Goethe Institutes, and Turkish-German film festivals. Two specific examples include a screening at an exhibition entitled "Living with Each Other" and

²¹⁷ See Hans-Dieter Siedel, review of *40 m² Deutschland* by Tevfik Baser. *Frankfurter Allegemeine Zeitung*, 13 August 1986; and Heike Mundzech, review of *40 m² Deutschland* by Tevfik Baser. *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 18 January 1986.

²¹⁸ "40 m² Deutschland: Die Einsamkeit und Unfreiheit," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 2 October 1993.

²¹⁹ "TV-Tips der Woche," *HorizonT*, 18 March 1994.

²²⁰ Thomas Münster, "Ausstellung rund ums Thema Wohnen," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 22 November 1993 and Elke Spanner, "Kein Mensch ist illegal," *die tageszeitung*, 22 April 1998.

at another a Munich exhibit about *Gastarbeiter* in film. Interestingly, all the films mentioned in this particular exhibition were directed by Germans.²²¹

- **Geschwister—Kardesler.** [“Sibling” in German and Turkish.] Written and directed by Thomas Arslan. 1996. *Geschwister* follows three teenage siblings in their daily lives in Kreuzberg. As children of a bi-national marriage, each of the characters deals with their ethnic backgrounds in different ways. One critic of the film calls it the first of its kind to tell the story of “Turkish youth” from their own perspective, emphasizing the polar opposite reactions of the two sons to their ethnic heritage and pointing out that the daughter is not a head-scarfed victim.²²² Despite its positive reception by critics, this film is generally not as popular as Arslan’s later films.
- **Kurz und Schmerzlos.** [English-Language Release Title: Short Sharp Shock.] Written and directed by Fatih Akin. 1998. In this film, Akin tells the story of the friendship of three young men in Altona: a Turk, a Serb, and a Greek. While Gabriel, the Turk, wants to leave his youthful criminal activities behind him, his two friends do not. In the end, Gabriel avenges his friends’ deaths by killing their murderer, then fleeing to Turkey. Akin creates a Scorsese-style thriller, an approach that did not escape his reviewers, who had mixed reactions to the film. While one appreciated the good acting and noted the more subtle presentation of cultural influences and traditions,²²³ another called the story worn-out.²²⁴ *Kurz und Schmerzlos* enjoyed comparatively wide reception; the film ranked twenty-seventh out of the hundred most popular films in Germany for the month it was released and was still in the top one hundred the following year.²²⁵
- **Dealer.** Written and directed by Thomas Arslan. 1998. In this film, Arslan tells the story of Can, a Turkish-German drug dealer in his twenties, as he loses interest in his job and decides to find new work, a decision influenced by an ultimatum laid down by his girlfriend. Can finds his new job (dishwashing) humiliating and soon returns to dealing, only to be arrested and imprisoned shortly after. While the film seemingly has not gained a broad popular audience, reviewers responded to *Dealer* with praise, calling it a “form of new social realism”²²⁶ and saying that Arslan “makes films about

²²¹ “Terminkalender Ausstellungen—Museen,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 24 April 1993; and Susan Vahabzadeh, “Eine Reihe über Gastarbeiter in Filmuseum,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 14 April 2000.

²²² Katja Nicodemus, review of *Geschwister—Kardesler* by Thomas Arslan. *TIP Magazin*, Nr. 25, 1997.

²²³ Hans-Jörg Rother, review of *Kurz und Schmerzlos* by Fatih Akin. *Frankfurter Allegemeine Zeitung*, 17 October 1998.

²²⁴ Tom Beyer, review of *Kurz und Schmerzlos* by Fatih Akin. *Das Filmmagazin*, Nr. 12, April 1998.

²²⁵ Filmförderungsanstalt, “Filmhistliste 10/1998” and “Filmhitliste 1999 (deutsch),” www.ffa.de. (Accessed 2 December 2005).

²²⁶ Andreas Becker, “Knast oder Spülmachine,” *die tageszeitung*. 12 February 1999.

Germany that show what we are.”²²⁷ In addition, the film was awarded the International Film Critics Organization Fipresci prize.

- **Aprilkinder.** [April Children.] Directed by Yüksel Yavuz. Written by Yavuz, Britta Ohm, and Henner Winckler. 1999. The focus of *Aprilkinder* is on the children of Kurdish immigrants from Turkey and the tensions between the expectations of family and youthful rebellion against those expectations. Critics of the film were largely positive in their reviews of the film, focusing their attention on the divergent roles of the sons which one calls “two prototypes: integration in a miserable German reality versus criminal rebellion.”²²⁸ The same reviewer celebrates how the genre of *Migrantenkino* “frees itself from the ghetto of social criticism.”²²⁹ Popular reception of the film has been limited; in 1999 *Aprilkinder* ranked eighty-sixth out of the one hundred most-viewed movies in Germany, despite having been released in January of that year.²³⁰
- **Lola und Biliqidikid.** [Lola and Billy the Kid.] Written and directed by Kutlug Ataman. 1999. In his film, Ataman draws together two widely separated social spheres, the seemingly traditional Turkish family and the homosexual, transvestite subculture, to examine issues of gender roles, family, violence, and self discovery. One critic notes that the film “illuminates a doubly-foreign nature of this subculture,” meaning the Turkish transvestites, and points out that it is banned from being shown on Turkish television, “allegedly because of its ‘vulgar’ language.”²³¹ The film was pre-released in Berlin, with over 4,600 people attending in the first month.²³² It did less well when released country-wide, but still ranked as the fifty-seventh most popular movie of the year.²³³
- **Im Juli.** [In July.] Written and directed by Fatih Akin. 2000. *Im Juli* is a story about a German man and woman who take a roadtrip to Istanbul with the goal of meeting up with a Turkish woman he believes he’s fated to be with. The Turkish characters in the film are minor ones, but still of interest for this paper, particularly in Akin’s depiction of the woman, Melek. Akin’s film, geared for a broader audience than some of the others analyzed here, came in twentieth in its first month of release.²³⁴

²²⁷ Olaf Möller, “Der Traum vom anständigen Leben,” *Die Welt*. 18 March 1999.

²²⁸ Stefan Reinecke, review of *Aprilkinder* by Yüksel Yavuz. *epd Film*, Nr. 2, February 1999.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Filmförderungsanstalt, “Filmhitliste 1999 (deutsch),” www.ffa.de. (Accessed 2 December 2005).

²³¹ Jörg Thomann, review of *Lola und Biliqidikid* by Kutlug Ataman. *Frankfurter Allegemeine Zeitung*, 15 March 2001.

²³² Filmförderungsanstalt, “Filmhitliste 2/1999,” www.ffa.de. (Accessed 2 December 2005.)

²³³ Filmförderungsanstalt, “Filmhitliste 1999 (deutsch),” www.ffa.de. (Accessed 2 December 2005.)

- **Gegen die Wand.** [English-Language Release Title: Head-On.] Written and directed by Fatih Akin. 2004. *Gegen die Wand* follows a young woman (Sibel) who, in order to get out from under the abusive authority of her father and brother, convinces a man (Cahit) she barely knows to enter into a marriage of convenience. When the two end up falling in love and the husband kills a man with whom she had an affair, Sibel flees to Istanbul and Cahit is sent to prison. Years later upon his release, he goes to Istanbul to see Sibel. Akin's film was received enthusiastically by critics, film festivals, and the popular audience alike. In addition to their praise of the films, critics generally discussed any "Turkish" aspect of the film in connection with the oppressive nature of Sibel's family.²³⁵ *Gegen die Wand* won the prestigious Golden Bear Award at the 2004 Berlinale, was the tenth most popular film during the month of its release, and hovered around twentieth position for four months thereafter.²³⁶

²³⁴ Filmförderungsanstalt, "Filmhitliste 8/2000," www.ffa.de. (Accessed 2 December 2005.)

²³⁵ Fritz Göttler, review of *Gegen die Wand* by Fatih Akin. *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 10 March 2004; and Michael Althen, review of *Gegen die Wand* by Fatih Akin. *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 10 March 2004.

²³⁶ Filmförderungsanstalt, "Filmhitliste 3/2004," www.ffa.de. (Accessed 2 December 2005.) See also Filmhitliste 4/2004, 5/2004, 6/2004, and 7/2004.

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