A Different Germany

A Different Germany:
Pop and the Negotiation of German Culture

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P U B L I S H I N G

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Introduction

Difference:
Reading Progress and the Contested Spaces of "German" Popular Culture

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This volume has two basic premises. The first is that for all of its traditions, Germany—and Austria and Switzerland, in their own particular ways that often interact with Germany—is a culture of difference, and that as a (or any) country or nation, its culture is constantly shifting and changing. Such a change is in part due to the constructed nature of culture, just as the nation is both constituted by "imagined communities" (Benedict Andersen), and, to refer to Homi K. Bhabha, exists as a narrated entity. But this continual change and shift is also caused by the need to constantly recreate or reconstruct culture and the nation, as well as other manifestations and forms of community. The second premise of this book is that popular culture is the space where the negotiation of difference is often most vibrant and clearly evident. Culture is more consistently engaged in the mediation of space between incorporation into hegemonic structures and strictures, and its resistance to them (Stuart Hall), than are other societal institutions. Popular culture is, furthermore, a particularly useful field and object of inquiry in assessing the metaphorical and literal space available for, and involved in creating new identities in Germany and other German-speaking countries.

Mapping the changes, the contested spaces and identities of culture (and the nation), and examining and analyzing them, means that we often have to see Germany as a place quite different from what we may have imagined; or at least as more differentiated than what has been proposed to us so far by various specific instances of popular culture. Take, for instance, the enduring Cold War reception framework in North America, which at least partially explains the success and interpretation of the film *The Lives of Others* (*Das Leben der Anderen*, 2006, directed by Florian

Henckel). But rather than being an either/or proposition, examining difference in Germany, to use an analogy taken from one of the contributors' papers, is more like remixing a song (or writing different endings to a story, in literary terms). Remixing (as a metaphor for difference) offers a myriad of choices of equally valuable tracks (narratives or narrative threads), although not all will receive the same attention in each remixing. For whether the difference is discussed in terms of German history and tradition—that of city and countryside, and of the various regions (or Länder) and dialects—, or in terms of the contributions to and struggles for recognition and rights within German society of women, ethnic minorities and others, these cultural constructs are in continual flux. As a result, we need to constantly rethink and reimagine Germany, and keep our minds agile and open to the multitude of different manifestations of "things German" (and Austrian, and Swiss).[1]

Within such a conceptual framework, it is clear that no one book can write Germany.[2] In fact, what any report, written or otherwise, can do is take a snapshot of a certain time and place, and thus provide a measuring stick for any future developments, or for past events and phenomena. As a result, this book attempts to give an in-depth examination of some of the variety within German culture (broadly defined as the places where German is spoken), revealing how the aesthetic, cultural and political tones of popular culture point to the shifts, changes and upheavals in German culture and its construction. Moreover, as a way of balancing out the importance ascribed to the actions of the German state and German industry, this volume focuses on the cultural productions and spaces of those groups who often have to assert their agency in the face of being assigned minority status, whether that assessment be based on gender, ethnicity, class, religion or other components of identity. How is German identity in part denied the members of these groups, and how do they nonetheless ascertain their right to shape German identity, to make it a marker of difference among many commonalities? The essays in this volume provide readers with an array of interrogations of a different Germany, in which various minorities (and majorities, depending on the lens used) take center stage and push back against the confines of the German nation, revealing its inter-workings with a little-spoken past that presages the present-day growing interconnectedness with various worlds, with a particular focus on the post-war cultural creation of Turkish-Germans and of women. Difference, long considered to be a critical counter-discourse to the culture of the majority, is that which defines the relationship of all parts to every other one, at the same time as certain commonalities bind them all. The whole, the combination of these parts,

only exists, and then but momentarily and ephemerally—no matter how permanent we believe this wholeness to be—as a constructed entity. This constant interplay is at the heart of identity, which itself is no more than the relation between the differing parts that constitute its manifestations, and the narrative(s) thereby created.

The different Germany presented here aims to upset the notions both of an immovable permanence and of an unchanging and unchangeable wholeness, in the individual as well as in society at large. The contributions assembled here focus on popular fiction and television, theatre, music, garden culture and filmmaking, while addressing issues of gender, minority culture and the different Germany that opens up the country to a multitude of complementary and at times contradictory interpretations. The essays in *A Different Germany* point to the modern admixture of the traditional, the transitory and the new that makes up the ever-changing construct of all things German. This book attempts to fulfill the task of explicating a key part of that different Germany by focusing on three themes in a variety of media: first, German identity as inflected and expanded by Turkish-German identity in film, music, literature and popular fiction; second, architectural, garden and theatre/media space as inflections of identity and the German (and Austrian) nation; and third, gender as the key to unlocking youth and young adult culture, from modern television series through to fairy tales, eighteenth-century popular literature, and 1990s popular literature. Before sketching the individual chapters of this book, two very brief forays into politics and notions of progress will set the stage.

The Culture of Politics and Difference

When, in 1994, Cem Özdemir became the first politician with a Turkish background to be elected to the German national parliament, the Bundestag, it only seemed natural that this would happen in the ranks of the Green party (since 1993 *Bündnis 90/die Grünen*); the party which arose from the calls for large-scale social, political and ecological change amongst those commonly referred to as the "68er Generation" in Germany. Fast-forward to early 2011, and Germany can be said to have reached a number of benchmarks of political maturity as relates to diversity. Take for instance two events that resulted from the German government federal election of 2009: Angela Merkel (CDU) became both the first woman German Chancellor, and the first Chancellor from the new German states; while Philipp Rösler (FDP) became the first German of Asian descent to be appointed minister (of health) in the German cabinet.

At the same time, political participation of minorities (and women) in German politics is still low. Although roughly 15 million people have an immigrant background, which amounts to 18 percent of the Federal Republic's population, this part of the population only makes up 2 percent (11 members) of the Bundestag.[3] Likewise, on the more popular political front, the vast majority of German society and government clearly rejects right-wing extremist groups, and even actively works against them—take, for example, the program *Gesicht zeigen* (Show your face, i.e., true colour)[4]—, but right-wing groups still exist and even seem to find more support in difficult economic times, not just in Germany and Europe, but also in the rest of the world.[5] So on the one hand, much progress has been made, but on the other, not so much. But what is progress?

Deconstructing Progress: Towards Sanity and the Promotion of Culture

The use of the term "progress" in scholarship and society is multi-faceted, and often tied to development issues. The term is also commonly used to denote a movement forward, leaving behind bad or outdated practices, or making improvements. The deconstruction of the term "progress" that follows is not so much meant to take apart and unmask the problematic aspects of modern-day notions of progress (take, for instance, modern capitalism's difficulties in preserving the earth's ecology). Instead this deconstruction is aimed at the use of the term in relation to a particular aspect of the twentieth and early twenty-first century. It should first be noted that the idea of progress on human rights in our era is itself, sadly, a very ironic statement on notions of progress, as many scholars argue that we now live in the period of the earth's history when there is the greatest amount of slavery.[6] Fully aware of this bitter irony, the discussion of progress that follows is linked specifically to the removal of impediments to ethnic minorities and women—to name just the two largest groups that still struggle for full equality—, and the reduction of the effect of prejudicial laws and of prejudice in the workplace, which is viewed as progress by mainstream society in those countries where such changes have taken place.

Just what is wrong with attaching the label of "progress" to such developments? Let us turn to Chris Rock, American comedian and documentary filmmaker of *Good Hair* (2009). On the CBC's *Q* radio show—Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, roughly equivalent to the BBC in Great Britain, and the ARD or ZDF in Germany, and NPR in the United States—, Rock argued that African Americans did not "progress"

to achieve a status of (greater) equality. He instead argued that "white people have gotten less crazy."[7] In other words, if there has been any progress, it has been within the mainstream society, which, in the United States and Canada, is still dominated by (at times stereotypical) Anglo-Saxon cultural attitudes that in many respects mirror, despite all the difference between them, the ethnocentric attitudes that dominate in Germany. For Rock, to call societal change since the end of WWII "progress" is particularly ludicrous, because it suggests that the minorities need to better themselves in order to be worthy of enjoying their full rights as citizens. Instead, Rock argues, minorities have always been worthy of full participation in society, and, moreover, this has always been their right in truly democratic societies. This is the first step in the deconstruction of the notion of progress.

The second step involves not attaching the notion of progress to these changes in mainstream (American) society. For Rock, the values and actions of the majority prior to recent changes were "crazy." With this designation, Rock is not taking aim at those with mental disabilities, but rather pointing to the way in which the majority culture engaged in the complete and utter distortion of moral, ethical and political codes and laws because of its prejudice. That this complete and utter distortion has ended (or at least become much less prevalent) is not progress in his view, so much as it is an end to very disturbing, prejudicial treatment of minorities and of difference. The attainment for all citizens of equal rights in society before the law, therefore, is not so much a movement forward, but rather the place at which society should start to consider how to "progress."

Indeed, in most majority cultures, including Germany, there is wide-scale subscription to a universalist discourse, whereby citizens are seen as sharing equal rights that are guaranteed by equal treatment. While such a universalist position is not a necessarily bad starting point, the overly broad application of such a universalist discourse can lead to discrimination because it ignores difference. Despite the shortcomings of a universalist position applied too broadly, the prevalence of this discourse means that those who have not gotten "less crazy" (that is, those who still openly discriminate against others) stick out more. Yet before the majority cultures of the Western world (or anywhere else for that matter) congratulate themselves on their collective shoulder for attaining a greater sanity in intercultural relations, the relative fragility of the universalist framework should be considered.[8] For the acts of violence perpetrated by majorities against minorities, examples of which are to be found in almost every nation, show the possible outcome when universalist frameworks no longer can make sense of reality. In other words, in societies, democratic

and otherwise, which aspire to truly embrace and make better use, socially, culturally and politically, of their cultural richness, a much more open negotiation of diversity, difference and commonalities is necessary. We need to continue the trend of not just embracing culture, but of embracing cultures, of embracing both our commonalities and differences. The question that remains is how this relates to Germany and the study of "things German" (and Austrian and Swiss).

Difference and Studying "Things German"

In German Studies, as the institutional and academic space where a popular and cultural studies approach generally finds refuge in the North American context, we might be tempted to point to the lack of minority rights in Germany in relation to the American situation, or examine the culture of remembering and memorializing the recent German past (including WWII and the Shoah). The reasons for doing so rest just as much in the nature of (North) American society,[9] and its interactions with Germany, as for reasons tied more strictly to German cultural manifestations. This is an entirely valid approach. However, from whatever standpoint we may critically examine "things German," we should not forget to consider how perhaps our own pre-conceived views of Germany, or of any nation or community (particularly from afar, but even from within), might blind us to the developments within such entities. Personally, I have had enough occasions where my preconceived notion of German culture and society—the sort of generalization I use on a daily basis to negotiate my sense of things German—has been changed, or even upended; as a result, I am at the very least always ready to have my sense of "things German" contested, shifted and deepened.

As German culture continues to renegotiate its place in North American society and beyond, and redefines its place in the post-Wall era, German Studies has benefitted from a wealth of individual studies looking at particular cultural and social phenomena in German-speaking countries. Citing three random titles provides only the slightest suggestion of the breadth and depth of studies available. Nonetheless, the three works briefly mentioned below demonstrate the specificity of many books on Germany, as well as the impossibility of giving a comprehensive, in-depth overview of German culture in one single volume.[10] Carol Poore's *Disability in Twentieth-Century German Culture* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007) asserts the centrality of a critical disability studies perspective in understanding German culture. In writing the history of disability in twentieth-century Germany, Poore removes the study of

disability from the medical discourse to that of the social, cultural and political discourses tied to certain bodies as part of a greater, largely North-American and British scholarly turn. Gail Finney's edited volume *Visual Culture in Twentieth-Century Germany: Text as Spectacle* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006) is the first anthology to focus squarely on visual culture in Germany for the period, with an examination of media such as film, art, dance, and photography, to name but a few of the topics discussed therein. Meanwhile, *Not So Plain as Black and White: Afro-German Culture & History, 1890–2000* (Rochester: Diaspora Books, 2005), edited by Patricia Mazon and Reinhild Steingrover, demonstrates how, despite institutionalized eugenic policies from the early twentieth century up to the end of National-Socialist Germany, as well as continued discriminatory policies and practices post WWII, Afro-Germans to this day continue to actively participate in and contribute to German society, thus challenging society to recognize its multicultural reality.

Understandably, given that such scholarship is most often written in North America, that the post-war influence of American culture—in particular its popular culture—is pervasive, that theoretical approaches either generated in or adopted into the English-speaking world are likewise dominant, and that American culture still plays a dominant role in the world, the state of German Studies does not surprise; it focuses on themes particularly important in North America and relevant to the American context and to theory prominent in North America. What is less common are works that take a cultural studies perspective on a wide range of topics, or which take note of Germany's role as mediator and player between East and West (and North and South), and thus can offer to students and scholars alike one source for a diversity of materials. The chapters in this book provide just such diversity, and thus seek to replicate, albeit in a limited way, the fascinating and sometimes difficult and contested cultural space called Germany.

Inflections of Difference: Outline of the Chapters

Although the chapters of this volume are grouped into three broad categories—Negotiations of Identity and Difference, Spaces of Identity, and the Gender Politics of Writing—the intersections between the various chapters in each grouping are mirrored by commonalities between papers in different groupings. In particular, they all present an image of Germany as a country that negotiates and lives difference and commonality, with all that this entails. Below are brief introductions, facilitating readers' ability

to adjudge if the subject matter deals with any specific research project or area of interest.

In her chapter that touches on the second and third generation Turkish-German filmmakers, Anette Guse interprets the oeuvre of Fatih Akın as that of a cosmopolitan Turkish-German director who posits German culture as a transnational homeland. Guse argues that Akın emphasizes the local in his films, particularly the Hamburg community of Altona. In the place where Turkish (and German) elements of culture are daily negotiated, Turkish-Altonaers utilize a frame of reference connected to travel and the iconographic capital of Turkish identity, Istanbul, thereby fostering and reinforcing transcultural identity in the sense proposed by Homi K. Bhabha. Guse then focuses on the music in Akın's *Crossing the Bridge: The Sound of Istanbul* (2005), a site of identity construction that, by blending western and eastern styles in the mode of global music, practises transcultural identity. For Guse, music in Akın's films points to the dialectical interrelation between global and local, foreign assimilation and rediscovery of the familiar as the lifeblood of intercultural exchange.

Gerd Bayer highlights the literary and theoretical side of debates about Turkish-German identity by demonstrating how linguistic hybridity is used to create a space for a constant contesting of identity politics and a binary ethnicity construct. For Bayer, the writer Zaimoğlu's oeuvre is a literary inflection of debates on Turkish-German identity that uses an array of tropes to mark his place somewhere close to, but removed from, the practical everyday solutions that can lead to stultification. In his analysis of *Kanak Sprak: 24 Mißtöne vom Rande der Gesellschaft* (1995), and its sequel, *Koppstoff: Kanaka Sprak vom Rande der Gesellschaft* (1998), Bayer demonstrates the affinities of Zaimoğlu's work with Deleuze and Guattari's notion of a "minor literature," and shows how Zaimoğlu creates a space in the "sign of the hyphen" which controls the two discourses of Germans and Turks and their interaction, without ever succumbing to one or the other, a particular identity that cannot be properly determined from the outside.

In the final chapter of this first section, Claude Desmarais focuses on Jakob Arjouni's fourth Kayankaya private detective story, *Kismet* (2001), as the Turkish-German detective Kayankaya's habitual, and humorous debunking of stereotypical notions of German identity in the new context of the Yugoslavian Wars. Desmarais follows the lead of Arlene Teraoka's work on earlier Kayankaya novels, where she posits the Turkish-German private investigator as a someone in search of legitimacy in a culture that largely precludes both private investigators and Turkish-German detectives, and he in turn argues that it is the readers, everyday Germans,

who are admonished to take up the empty space left by Kayankaya in *Kismet*. To demonstrate this, Desmarais shows how Kayankaya negotiates the territory between "good" and "bad" Germans, with a contrast strongly favouring readers' identification with "good" Germans, that is, with those who are unencumbered by ethno-centric notions of Germanness or identity. As a result, the readers' focus is drawn to how the smallest acts of civil courage help Kayankaya undo the human rights abuses of the "Army of Reason," and the concurrent abuse, negligence, tacit approval and obliviousness of government officials and citizens who adhere to ethnocentric views.

The second grouping of chapters focuses on how different spaces are used to demarcate the lines, breaks and new formations of German identity.

Ute Lischke examines the way in which film shapes the architecture of Berlin as the new site of post-Wall German identity constructs in the film *Lola rennt* (1998). Lischke examines space, media and marketing to show how, in Tykwer's film, techno-music and the CD tie-in function as vehicles for a new urban model, placing Berlin's architecture in a cinematic, techno frame that speaks to innovation and possibility. Relating the film's reception of Peter Howitt's *Sliding Doors* (1998) and Krzysztof Kieslowski's *Blind Chance* (1982), Lischke argues that an over-emphasis of the narrative, and its twin themes of fate and time, leaves out the city of Berlin, its architecture and its street life, as the missing element in the filmic equation which, while lost on most North American viewers, is an element of the film that is second-nature to German audiences. Taking Tykwer at his word, Lischke examines the city of Berlin and its architecture, and the woman the director first envisaged running through the city streets, Lola. A personification of Germany's possibilities for the future, Lola is the center for the film's flashbacks and flashforwards, and Berlin is the new stage of Germany upon which she plays.

Looking at a very different space, Enno Lohmeyer traces the transmutations of gardens as markers of the landscape of German identity; he provides a map of German gardening through the ages, and of the various ways in which German, European and world cultures have interacted on the plots of "German" soil. While discussing early Germanic and medieval garden culture, Lohmeyer focuses particularly on gardens as sites for negotiating aesthetics and art; they represented wealth and power at a time when the German lands and peoples struggled to achieve a unity beyond that of language and culture. Moreover, by examining such phenomena as the *Schrebergärten* of the early 1800s, as an expression of the budding *Körperkultur*, and the National Socialists' garden politics,

Lohmeyer shows how this symbol of culture is not so enclosed as to provide refuge from the effects of modernity. A model for the multifarious modes of interaction with our environment, Lohmeyer's article uncovers gardens as the crossroads of nature and culture in Germany.

To escape the gravitas of earth and architecture in the two preceding chapters, Morgan Koerner reads humour as the marker of German language theatre's turn to global entertainment media and away from notions of media critique/resistance. He traces this phenomenon in Austrian playwright and writer Elfriede Jelinek's use of the iconic popular and car culture space, the rest-stop, in her play *Raststätte oder sie machens alle* (1994). In providing an in-depth analysis in terms of the humour of both Jelinek's script and director Frank Castorf's 1995 staging of the text at the Deutsches Schauspielhaus Hamburg, Koerner locates a high point of German language theatre and culture colliding at the intersection of local tradition and global entertainment in the media-saturated German landscape of the 1990s. Koerner shows that Castorf radicalizes the comic elements of Jelinek's play and minimalizes her satirical tones by introducing humour, gags and random silliness. Castorf thus both thematizes the critique of media and Jelinek's status within that tradition, and maintains his own status as "cult director" by creating a theatre of media spectacle, an event that plays upon and stages its own take on German and global popular culture.

The third group of papers traces the gender troubles that shape modern and historical representations of German identity constructs.

Alicia Carter looks at television's rewriting of German fairy tales in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, and reads it as a conscious act of bringing confident women role models to play upon modern debates on gender, power and the perils of love and marriage. Carter alludes to the Grimm-inspired episodes of Joss Whedon's cult series in order to re-examine whether the French "Bluebeard" (1697) fairy tale functions as the intertext for the "Ted" episodes of *Buffy*. Focusing on the role of Bluebeard's passive wife, Carter suggests instead as intertext the Grimm fairy tale "Fitchers Vogel" (Fowler's Fowl), an older Germanic variant of the more popular "Bluebeard" story. Carter applies Max Lüthi's theory that fairy tales divide different modes of behaviour inherent to a single person into separate, distinct individuals in order to show how the single character of the Grimm fairy tale is recast as Buffy and her mother, Joyce. As a result of her analysis, Carter is able to reassess Maria Tartar's view that the Grimm *Märchen* cautions against female curiosity, and, in the case of female sexuality as a precursor to infidelity, seems to justify the gruesome murder of the Bluebeard character. By recovering fairy tales' archetypal

nature, Carter arrives at striking conclusions about how television mediates the discourses of power, relationships and gender.

A look at a more problematic mediation of gender is provided by a discussion of Cornelia Funke's bestseller *Inkheart* (2003), which Britta Kallin critiques within the context of popular literature for youth. For Kallin, *Inkheart* is a modernized twenty-first century fairy tale that has ties to the Harry Potter rage and the international market, as well as to cultural trends more specifically linked to Germany and its youth culture. Kallin's particular focus is how the twelve-year-old Meggie's coming-of-age story is connected to the magical world of fairy tales in a way that presents gendered messages that impact the socialization of children and teenagers. Kallin takes special note of how, after her mother disappears into a book her father Mo reads to her when she is three, Meggie's life becomes the attempt to reunite the real world and that of the fairy tale. This, however, is impossible because Meggie's heroic deeds take place in a domain reserved for male heroes. For Kallin, *Inkheart* is not a feminist re-visioning of classic fairy tales, but rather a work that highlights the absence of young heroines in popular literature as a troubling instance of gender politics.

Margaretmary Daley's chapter shifts the focus from fairy tales to popular fiction, and shows how gender and other issues blur the literary genre borders in Friederike Unger's *Julchen Grünthal* (1784). Daley demonstrates how women's reading is depicted as an illness, and as one of the pernicious results of sending one's daughter to a French-style school in Berlin. By comparing the original text and a revised edition, Daley opens our view to two texts in one: *Julchen Grünthal* as a didactic piece of sarcasm that aims to correct bourgeois excesses in emulating the aristocracy and over-intellectualizing Rousseau's critique of education, and the revised text which introduces elements of anti-semitism, anti-feminism and literary coercion. What results is a view of these two books as a compendium of reading assignments, or as an annotated bibliography for middle-class women. By pointing to the work's underappreciated literary merit, and its status as pop fiction bestseller, Daley re-establishes the text's ability to provide insight into the pleasure and pain of reading, learning, growing up and having children.

Florence Feiereisen examines how gender troubles modern German male identity and its writing of feminism in Thomas Meinecke's *Tomboy* (1998). Feiereisen positions Meinecke as a "DJ-author" and musician whose literary work utilizes techniques of sampling, mixing and remixing to create a sound for German pop literature. Much like a song, Feiereisen sees the author's various characters as transport vehicles for gender

discourses as varied as Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*, androgyny, Otto Weininger and others. While taking into consideration Meinecke's own troubles with *Gender Trouble* in an essay from 2001, Feiereisen also deconstructs Meinecke's fandom from the perspective of feminism, showing how the narrative strategies employed in the text lead to a semi-scientific flow as "proofs,' and thus release the author into a gray zone where he seeks to escape gendered notions of responsibility.

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Notes

[1] I take this term from the lectures of Mark Webber, a professor and former colleague in Toronto, Canada, and founding director of the Centre for German and European Studies at York University. Webber's use of the term, as I understand it, suggests the irony present in any such designation which attempts to be all-encompassing or to give a definitive description of German culture. Liechtenstein can also be added here, as yet another country where the German language, and Germanic culture, play an important role in the national culture.

[2] This volume is conceived as being in discussion with *Mediating Germany: Pop Culture between Tradition and Innovation*, edited by Gerd Bayer (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2006), where a lengthy discussion of attempts to define "German culture" can be found.

[3] See Anna Reimann, "No Obama for Deutschland: Ethnic Minorities Still Overlooked in German Politics," *Spiegel On-line*,
<http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/0,1518,646733,00.html>.

[4] See the website: <http://www.gesichtzeigen.de/>

[5] For an assessment of the threat of radical right-wing politics in Europe, see Hans-Georg Betz and Carole Johnson, "Against the Current–Stemming the Tide: The Nostalgic Ideology of the Contemporary Radical Populist Right," *Journal of Political Ideologies* 9.3 (October 2004): 311–27.

[6] See Howard Dodson, "Slavery in the Twenty-First Century," *UN Chronicle Edition*: <http://www.un.org/Pubs/chronicle/2005/issue3/0305p28.html>. Also see Kevin Bales, Zoe Trodd, and Alex Kent Williamson, *Modern Slavery: The Secret World of 27 Million People* (Oxford: One World, 2009).

[7] See *Q*, podcast 15 October 2009:
<http://www.cbc.ca/video/#/Shows/Q_on_bold/Film _and_TV/ID=1296200158>. The deconstruction of the notion of progress, ironically enough, happens once the interview is almost finished.

[8] The basic framework for my consideration of intercultural relations is based on the research done through the IDI (Intercultural Development Inventory). See, for instance, M. R. Hammer, M. J. Bennet, and R. Wiseman, "Measuring Intercultural Sensitivity: The Intercultural Development Inventory," Special Issue on Intercultural Development, edited by R. M. Paige, *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 27.4: 421–43.

[9] See, for instance, Miriam Hansen, "*Schindler's List* is not Shoah: Second Commandment, Popular Modernism, and Public Memory," *Visual Culture and the Holocaust*, edited by Barbie Zelizer (Piscataway: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 127–51.

[10] These three studies point to just three of the numerous areas in German popular and cultural studies that could not be included in this study. However, some of these areas, such as Afro-German Studies, are represented in Bayer's *Mediating Germany*.

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CHAPTER ONE

FATIH AKIN'S TAKE
ON GERMAN-TURKISH FILM:
ALTONA IS IN HAMBURG AND EAST
MEETS WEST IN ISTANBUL

ANETTE GUSE

Celebrated by the Turkish press as the "Turkish Tarantino"[1] after the success of his film *Gegen die Wand* (Head-On, 2004), and compared to Fassbinder by some German critics,[2] the German-Turkish filmmaker Fatih Akın continues to leave a mark on German Cinema with *Auf der anderen Seite* (The Edge of Heaven, 2007), the second film in his proposed trilogy *Liebe, Tod und Teufel* (Love, Death and the Devil).[3] This chapter deals with Akın's take on the construction and transformation of national, cultural, and personal identity. Focusing on *Gegen die Wand* and *Auf der anderen Seite*, this chapter argues that Akın makes the case for a concept of cultural identity that allows individuals to have more than one culture at their disposal. I argue that the Turkish-German experience becomes, on the one hand, a framework for Akın to explore issues such as the social, political, and individual conditions of assimilation, the universal issue of human relations, and the tension between tradition and modernization in this age of globalization and urbanization. Clearly, his feature films *Kurz und schmerzlos* (Short Sharp Shock, 1998), *Im Juli* (In July, 2000), *Gegen die Wand* (2004), and *Auf der anderen Seite* (2007) all depict individuals who are in a transition triggered by crisis, and are challenged to change their lives. On the other hand, Akın mediates and negotiates German, German-Turkish, and Turkish culture through the portrayal of people and locations in his films, from the predominantly positive to the neutral, critical, and subversively ironical. In addition, in his documentaries Akın explores the issue of identity, and the significance of the local in relation to the global. *Wir haben vergessen zurückzukehren* (We Forgot to Go Back,

2001) traces his family's experience of migration, and *Crossing the Bridge: The Sound of Istanbul* (2005) presents a portrait of the music scene in Istanbul. The city of Hamburg, in particular the Turkish-multicultural neighbourhood of Altona, represents the cosmopolitan/multicultural haven that has become home to the second generation of migrants. At the same time, home is also embodied in the metropolitan city of Istanbul, strikingly epitomized with its music symbolizing the fusion of East and West, or the space between tradition and modernity. This chapter further demonstrates that the identity-constructing function of music in Akın's film plays into an overall neo-romantic aesthetic approach, as indicated by my analysis of a conspicuous image in *Auf der anderen Seite* which is reminiscent of the German Romantic painter Caspar David Friedrich.

Self-perception, the Identity Crisis Myth, and Hybrid Identities

Born, raised, and educated in Germany, Fatih Akın belongs to the second generation of migrants who regard Germany as their home and disassociate themselves from the stereotypes about the Turks in Germany and the mentality of *Gastarbeiter*.[4] In contrast to their parents, whose migration experience was taken up by New German Cinema filmmakers such as Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Helma Sanders, and Hark Bohm,[5] the second and third generation of Turkish migrants stand behind the camera themselves[6] and, as Gemünden states about Akın, "assert[s] a position within a German national cinema that encompasses, rather than marginalizes, Turkish-German directors."[7] As opposed to what can be described as the somewhat paternalistic view of New German Cinema (Gökturk), which tended to assign the role of the victim to the foreigner, today's narratives by German-Turkish directors explore culture clash from a perspective that has been described as "between cultures" or as a "third space."[8] This new generation of German filmmakers from a migrant background, for whom Akın has become a sort of spokesperson, is self-confident and articulate, and perceives its double cultural identity, or hybrid identity, as an advantage. The young German-Turkish director Buket Alakuş, for example, stresses that she cannot separate her Turkish from her German identity, and that she tries to take the best of both cultures.[9]

    As a result of this pragmatic view, humour and self-irony have entered the discourse on national and cultural identity in current German-Turkish film and entertainment, thus lending the self-representation a remarkably different and lighter note than the portrayal of the Turkish *Gastarbeiter*

(literally, guest worker) in the New German Cinema. This is perhaps a sign, or the effect, of a new, more inclusive approach in the questioning of nationality and identity that speaks to notions of transnationality and transculturality. For example, the German-Turkish stand-up comedian Senay Duzcu maintains that "when you're laughing, you don't need an interpreter,"[10] and Kaya Yanar, the popular host of the TV-show *Was guckst du?* (What are you lookin' at?),[11] undermines German clichés about Turks by joking about them and playfully questioning stereotypes. In both cases, the artists are able to establish a connection to the audience through comedy based on self-irony and self-deprecating humour.

The complexities of cultural identity are readily apparent in the interdependence of factors such as class, gender, age, access to education, and bilingualism. However, statements from artists, despite their socially privileged status, in addition to statements from Turkish youth in Germany, suggest that the much-discussed identity crisis of migrants does not exist, or at least not as it is discussed in the mainstream media. The problem may lie, rather than in the thinking of those citizens with hybrid identities, in an unchanged notion of culture, a rigid understanding of national identity, and the misperception of the dominant culture which takes ethnicity as a cue for categorization. Asked about his cultural sense of belonging, the author Şinasi Dikmen states:

> [I]ch bin sowohl Deutscher als auch Türke. Ich bin also weder Deutscher noch Türke. Ich bin ein Individuum und ich habe langsam an meinem Individuum Geschmack gefunden […] Identitätsprobleme habe ich nicht.[12]

> (I am German as well as Turkish, that is, I am neither a German nor a Turk. I am an individual and I have slowly started to discover a taste for my individuality. […] I do not have issues with my identity.)

According to Gunnar Lützow, for the young German-Turkish rap-musician Özgür Bozkurt the question of dual identities does not even exist: "Whether I'm a German, a Turk, or a Chinese is of no importance to me whatsoever. We are entering the twenty-first century, and this question is truly medieval."[13] Even taken with a grain of salt, Bozkurt's and Dikmen's statements illustrate the inadequacy of national labels which equate cultural identity with national or ethnic identity. It follows that culture cannot unambiguously be tied to nationality or ethnicity, a point made by Wolfgang Welsch:

> The description of today's cultures as islands or spheres is factually incorrect and normatively deceptive. Cultures de facto no longer have the insinuated form of homogeneity and separateness. They have instead

assumed a new form, which is to be called transcultural insofar that it passes through classical cultural boundaries.[14]

As a result of the increasing global mobility of people and media, culture is no longer a locally rooted, closed system, defined by nation. Referring to Homi Bhabha and other critics of postcolonialism, Welsch describes contemporary individuals as "cultural hybrids" and he notes that "[w]ork on one's identity is becoming more and more work on the integration of components of differing cultural origin."[15] Regina Römhild, a cultural anthropologist, emphasizes the impact of globalization on people's lifestyle and everyday culture, particularly in cities:

> In the future, fewer and fewer people will live their entire lives where they were born, and even the most settled people will recognize that the world around them changes unceasingly, that the world comes to them at home even if they themselves do not move. The salsa scene or the esoteric networks in the cities are examples of the development of new cultural marketplaces, in which Germans, together with non- or semi-Germans, actively participate in the globalization of their lives.[16]

Thus, we can observe a cross-cultural exchange ultimately impacting minorities and the host-nation.[17] According to John Tomlinson, the common assumption that migration and globalization have led to a general process of loss of cultural diversity requires re-evaluation:

> Globalization, so the story goes, has swept like a flood tide through the world's diverse cultures, destroying stable localities, displacing peoples, bringing a market-driven "branded" homogenization of cultural experience, thus obliterating the differences between locality-defined cultures which had constituted our identities.[18]

Tomlinson argues that, on the contrary, far from destroying cultural identity, globalization has been perhaps the most significant force in creating and proliferating cultural identity.[19] As a response to the dissemination of cultural modernity through institutions, media, and communications technologies, and increasingly through international food cultures, an enhanced awareness of the value of cultural practice can follow, prompted by a desire to differ and to reconnect with cultural roots.[20]

The Narrative: *Gegen die Wand* (2004)

In discussing the impact of globalization processes as a cross-cultural exchange, I have attempted to sketch a framework for discussing culture clash and the quest for identity as portrayed in Akın's films. *Gegen die Wand* (Head-On) tells the story of Sibel, a young, attractive, and sex-crazed woman of Turkish descent who tries to escape the restrictions of her traditional family through a marriage of convenience with the German-Turk Cahit, an aging punk-rocker. In this film Akın not only portrays Turkish-German subculture, but calls attention to conflicting moral codes and the oppression of women through Turkish religious patriarchism, while also highlighting the loss of cultural and personal identity. Both Sibel and Cahit are rebellious and desperate characters who attempt suicide; but while Sibel's suicide attempt is a cry for help, Cahit's motives appear to be more amorphous and psychologically complex, and he is, in fact, the central character of the drama. The narrative implies that it is the unprocessed mourning of his wife's death that causes him to spiral downward into self-destruction, as manifested in depression, alcoholism, domestic disintegration, and outbursts of violence. As Matthias Knopp has noted, Sibel's and Cahit's extreme behaviour, such as the simultaneous excessive zeal for life and suicidal tendencies, also points to the possibility of a borderline personality disorder syndrome.[21] While the reasons for the ambivalent and impulsive actions of Cahit and Sibel ultimately remain ambiguous, the struggle for positive change in both characters is clear, consequently prompting questions about the nature and depth of personal and cultural awakening.

Since Cahit undergoes the most profound transformation in the film—he goes from being a "dead," "lost" person to one with "love" and "power"—, I focus on him in order to examine the manifestations of his lost identity. Identity is to be understood as a construct, multi-sided and dynamic, which is negotiated through interaction[22] between the self and society.[23] Social theory distinguishes between a social identity and a personal identity, whereby social identity is the part of an individual's self-concept that is derived from her/his knowledge of her/his membership in social groups, as well as from the emotional significance attributed to this membership.[24] Personal identity, by contrast, refers to the uniqueness of the individual in connection with his or her unmistakable life history.[25] Since many areas of societal life today have lost their stability as core stocks of our identity constructs—for example, family, national and ethnic identity, gender and body identity—the term "modern patchwork-

identities" has been introduced to describe the inconsistency of the identity construct.[26]

Gegen die Wand includes numerous scenes which suggest that for Cahit the loss of personal identity and cultural identity are interwoven. Evidence that he has been stripped of his cultural and ethnic identity includes: his inability to speak Turkish, his inability to remember certain Turkish traditions (for instance, at his wedding), and the way in which representatives of the Turkish community state that he does not look Turkish. This final point suggests that because he is an outsider figure, his acceptance into the Turkish-German community is conditional. Moreover, Cahit disassociates from the German-Turkish community, or at least from its traditional representatives, by complaining about the "Kanaks." In using this term, he both distances himself from the community representatives, and uses this label in the derogatory sense as used by many Germans as a term for Turks, rather than as a term taken back by young German-Turks to describe their alternative identity construct. Cahit openly disapproves of the patriarchal double-standard during the card game with his Turkish male relatives who boast about their visits to a brothel. Although he himself has a violent streak, he angrily swears about the Turks, irritated by the aggressiveness and brutality of the Turkish men in the club who beat him up.

Since language is central to the discussion of identity,[27] Cahit's rejection of being labelled as Turkish because of his language is significant. During his appointment with the therapist in the hospital, Cahit is asked about the meaning of his name, but he exhibits, or feigns ignorance about the meaning traditionally associated with Turkish first names. He acts annoyed, and subsequently refuses any help. Another example can be taken from the scene of the marriage proposal at the home of Sibel's family. Cahit responds rather flippantly to the probing question of his future brother-in-law, about what happened to his Turkish: "I threw it out!" This offensive reply clearly directs a challenge to Sibel's skeptical brother, and Serif, Cahit's colleague and friend who acts as uncle in the wedding proposal, quickly rescues the situation by declaring the statement as a joke. Cahit does not even try to hide his disinterest in his Turkish heritage and his negative comment can be seen as representing the tradition of punk rock, which centers on delivering messages that challenge middle-class bourgeois values. The marriage proposal becomes a farce-turned-comedy, as Cahit's and Serif's disguise delivers a playful treatment of Turkish customs and clichés focusing on the patriarchal rituals of the traditional Turkish family.

Cahit's process of re-identification with his culture of origin is triggered by his falling in love with Sibel. When Cahit realizes his love for Sibel, he is overjoyed. Almost as if to heighten the intensity of this emotion, he smashes schnapps glasses on the bar counter, presses his palms into them and, with his hands bleeding, runs off first to the dance floor, and later onto the stage where a Roma band (Fanfare Ciocarla) is playing. Domestic bliss lasts only briefly at the Turkish dinner which Sibel has lovingly prepared, as it ends in hurt and anger caused by a strange exchange, ultimately revolving around their not having sex together. Cahit is offended, or his male ego is threatened, and because of his sense of rejection, he storms out of the apartment. His impulsive reactions and self-sabotage illustrate that cultural identity is only one of many factors that determine an individual's identity and behaviour. Cahit is therefore not a Turk or German-Turk, but an individual with a unique personal history and personal problems. Just as Cahit and Sibel recognize their love, events take a tragic turn through Cahit's murder of Sibel's former lover. Their relationship comes to an abrupt halt: Cahit is imprisoned and Sibel moves in with her cousin in Istanbul to escape family conflict and the possibility of an honour killing by her brother Yılmaz, who is angry because she has slept with a man other than her husband.

A noticeable change of behaviour and perspective is apparent after Cahit's release from prison, at which point he travels to Istanbul in search of Sibel. He meets with Sibel's cousin Selma in the Hotel Marmara, brings chocolates, and acts politely. His refusal to drink alcohol is indicative of his new-found maturity, part of which is apparently fuelled by his desire to reunite with Sibel. This scene with Selma is significant in that Cahit offers a self-analysis: "When I met Sibel the first time, I was dead," he says, "I was dead even long time before I met her." And later, "I lost myself, then she came and dropped into my life, she gives me love and she gives me power." His code-switching to English from Turkish in this conversation with Selma, who does not speak German, is motivated by his concern that he will not be able to express himself and his feelings in Turkish. Although Sibel and Cahit finally meet and consummate their love, their paths separate again, as Sibel, despite her initial determination, cannot bring herself to leave her new life and family in order to join Cahit in his search for a new beginning. In a sense, Sibel is ultimately unwilling to once again tie her life to his fate.

Does Akın convey a sense of resignation or fatalism by way of the film's ending? Not necessarily: he does, after all, portray two modern survivors of a world where the rigidity of socially acceptable (national) identity constructs leads to much suffering and self-questioning. Akın's

resistance to a Hollywood type of happy end, which would have staged the triumph of an impossible romance, can be read as both a preference for the neo-romantic gesture of doomed love and/or for emphasizing the human ability to adjust to new circumstances. Rather than being tragic, the end shows signs of progress and new beginnings: after being raped by a barkeeper and brutally beaten by a group of Turkish men whose masculinity she had challenged out of drunkenness and desperation, Sibel is rescued by a young taxi driver with whom she ends up staying. Her motherhood, and its responsibilities, is essentially what gives her life new meaning. Cahit, although he does not have the family bonds Sibel has made for herself in Turkey, transforms himself from a metaphorically dead person to an individual capable of self-acceptance through the power of hope, and the experience and acceptance of loss. It is significant, then, that he makes the trip to his hometown—which he had originally envisioned making together with Sibel and her daughter—by himself, thus concluding an important step in his search of identity and entering upon a new road to travel.

The Local, Localities, People

Throughout *Gegen die Wand*, the regional character of Hamburg shines through in certain idiomatic expressions that Cahit uses; for example "Digger," which can be translated as "pal" or "dude." A rather funny situation arises after Cahit's arrival in Istanbul, where he unexpectedly meets another German-Turk: a Bavarian-Turkish taxi-driver. This scene also plays with a Turkish stereotype: the taxi-driver states that he was deported because he dealt drugs. Further, this scene illustrates how within German and German-Turkish identity, there are very narrow identity marker distinctions, tied to regional origin and dialect or dialectical influence. Localism, even encountered in an international city such as Istanbul, is clearly set in opposition to the global, and plays a considerable role in identity construction. Featherstone comments that "locality and localism, have generally been associated with the notion of a particular bounded space with its set of close-knit social relationships based upon strong kinship ties and length of residence."[28]

In all of Akın's films the neighbourhood provides the social context with which the characters identify. In *Kurz und schmerzlos* (Short Sharp Shock 1998), a movie recreating the atmosphere of 1980s US crime films, Akın depicts life in the "mean streets" and the "hoods of Hamburg Altona,"[29] where three male protagonists―a Greek, a Turk, and a Serb―bond through their ties to the local neighbourhood. In Akın's

follow-up film, *Im Juli* (2000), a romantic comedy and road-movie, Hamburg is the setting at the outset of the movie, before the action moves across the Balkans towards its final destination, Istanbul. As in *Kurz und schmerzlos*, public spaces such as streets, an outdoor flea-market, an alternative outdoor bar and concert space, and the shores of the Elbe River are featured, but in accordance with the storyline about the good-natured, slightly uptight teacher Daniel they appear in predominantly bright and clear colours. His character is expressed in his tidy high-school classroom, and his clean and neat apartment is highlighted with inviting, bright sunlight. Likewise, the characters in the expository first part of the film are so friendly, generous, and accommodating that they appear comical. This film also employs exaggeration, but unlike the realism of *Kurz und schmerzlos* and *Gegen die Wand*, *Im Juli* plays with stereotypes in an explicitly humorous and ironic way. Because of how the camera foregrounds such a wealth of cultural information, and because of the feel-good narrative―Daniel's introduction to other cultures and the comedy of errors that results from an initial mix-up―, this film has been used as intercultural learning tool in German classes in the North-American context.[30]

The documentary *Wir haben vergessen zurückzukehren* (We Forgot to Go Back, 2001) also presents Hamburg to viewers. This time the neighbourhood of Altona is viewed in light of its multicultural nature, or at least as it is found within Akın's own circle of friends. Here, individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds socialize in their leisure time, and nationality does not play a role. As the actor and musician Adam Bousdouskos states: "Wenn man mich fragt, wo bist du her, dann sag ich, ich komm aus Hamburg" (If somebody asks where I am from, I answer that I am from Hamburg).[31] The apparent connection between the local neighborhood and the multicultural context seems to confirm Römhild's findings:

> Is the city the smallest common denominator that enables integration into German life―if not on a national level, then at least on the local one? The Frankfurt Turks contradict this notion: it is not the German Frankfurt to which they are referring, not the city as a part of the national republic, but rather the potentially cosmopolitan metropolis, which offers the social and cultural framework for their particular life plans.[32]

The Hamburg neighbourhood in *Gegen die Wand* also constitutes a home for Cahit and the city's subculture: for example the event space "Fabrik" and the Turkish disco are close to/right beside the local bar and hairdresser. Yet in this film there is an odd sense of disconnectedness,

resulting from Cahit's own detachment from society, with the sole exception of his German-Turkish friend Serif, who unselfishly gives him money to fly to Istanbul after his release from prison. In yet another movie, *Auf der anderen Seite* (The Edge of Heaven), the specificity of its location is highlighted. The film is set both in Bremen and Istanbul, and as *New York Times* film critic A. O. Scott notes, Akın's "camera absorbs the authentic beauty of both countries […] manifesting local knowledge."[33] Here too the street is a locale of symbolic significance, this time functioning as the site of a political rally and community gathering. The spectator is presented with scenes from May Day demonstrations, the first of May being an important day for the labour movement in both countries. Apparently the documentary shots of the Turkish street rally were taken at a demonstration by the separatist Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), and Akın explains the inclusion of this scene as a reminder of the fact that many mothers on this day mourn their murdered sons.[34]

As the narrative switches back and forth between Bremen and Istanbul, the motif of return to the homeland reoccurs when Nejat, the male protagonist, travels to Istanbul to look for the daughter of his father's girlfriend, but ends up staying in Istanbul running a bookstore. In terms of location, however, Akın's comments about the role of cultural identity and the search for origin in his films are telling: "Ich glaube nicht so recht an Wurzeln. Es geht um Menschen, nicht um Bäume. Ich glaube eher, es ist nicht wichtig, wo du bist. Sondern es ist wichtig, was du machst." (I don't quite believe in roots. It is about human beings, not about trees. I rather believe it is not so important where you are, but it is important what you do.)[35] Just as Sibel assumes the responsibility of staying in Istanbul for the sake of her daughter and her new life, Cahit also is ready for a new beginning, acknowledging his origin through his journey to his birthplace Mersin. Petra Fachinger sees the motif of the "homecoming" in *Gegen die Wand*, as well as in *Kurz und schmerzlos*, as highly ambiguous,[36] and one may add that Sibel's decision to remain in Istanbul is caused by the turn her life has taken. It appears as though the determining factor is not location, but rather the responsibilities of life and the emotional ties to other people. Similarly, the characters in *Auf der anderen Seite* travel to and stay in Istanbul because they feel needed and have a sense of purpose in the city. Thus, paradoxically, identity is not so much determined by the locale or location, but more by a sense of belonging to a social group, and subsequently "constitutes itself in relationships rather than being merely a characteristic of individuals."[37]

Aside from the portrayal of locations, viewers are of course also manipulated through the portrayal of characters. The use of exaggeration