

Screening Transnational Turkish Community In Fatih Akin's *Kurz und Schmerzlos* (*Short Sharp Shock*)

Abstract:

Since the mid 1990s, a number of innovative filmmakers of Turkish descent have come to the forefront in German cinema—mainly in Berlin and Hamburg—whose transnational/transcultural films reflect a new attitude in the self-image of the second and third generation Turkish migrants. Contrary to the historical representation of Turks in Germany as objects and/or victims in paternalistic textual and filmic discourses, the young minority filmmakers have found their own voices in this popular culture-forum, allowing their protagonists to speak up about their opinions, their life-expectations, or their criticism of the social and political status quo. Of the minority filmmakers in recent German cinema, Fatih Akin's film *Kurz und Schmerzlos* (Short Sharp Shock 1998), illustrates the multi-ethnic social reality in urban Germany by telling the dramatic story of the friendship between three young men, the Turk Gabriel, the Greek Costa and the Serb Bobby. The film raises questions about the way cross-cultural social contexts mold individual processes of self-definition and determine subject agency, and about how individuals in this liminal state of inbetweenness negotiate and reconfigure their assigned positions. The following analysis of Akin's film *Kurz und Schmerzlos* focuses on the Turkish characters and examines their strategies for making their way within a society that still considers the children and grandchildren of migrants as Ausländer (foreigner, stranger), and in which ethnic minorities keep experiencing exclusion, discrimination and xenophobia.

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Ulaşırız Türk Toplumunun Fatih Akin'in Kısa ve Acısız'ında (Kurz und Schmerzlos) Gösterimi

Özet:

1990'ların ortalarından bu yana Alman sinemasında -özellikle Berlin ve Hamburg'da-, bazı Türk asıllı yeni film yapımcıları ikinci ve üçüncü kuşak Türk göçmenlerin kendilik-imgelerindeki yeni bir tutumu yansıtan uluslararası/kültürel filmleri ile ön plana çıktı. Paternalistik metinsel ve filmel söylemlerde Almanya'daki Türklerin nesnel ve/veya kurbanlar olarak tarihsel temsiline karşın, genç azınlık film yapımcıları bu popüler kültür-forumunda önderlerinin düşüncelerini, yaşam beklentilerini ya da toplumsal ve politik statükooya yönelik eleştirilerini cesurca dile getirmelerine izin vererek kendi sesterini buldular. Son dönem Alman sinemasının azınlık film yapımcılarından Fatih Akin'in filmi Kısa ve Acısız (*Kurz und Schmerzlos*, 1998) kentse Almanya'nın çok-ethnik toplumsal yapısını üç genç adam - Türk Gabriel, Yunan Costa, Sırp Bobby- arasındaki arkadaşlığın dramatik öyküsünü anlatarak resmediyor. Film karşı-kültürel koşulların nasıl kendini tanımlamanın bireysel süreçlerini biçimlendirdiğini ve özne durumunu belirlediğini, ve bireylerin bu aradakalmışlık içinde verili konumları ile nasıl başa çıktıklarını ve bu konumları nasıl yeniden biçimlendirdiklerini sorguluyor. Akin'in Kısa ve Acısız filminin aşağıdaki analizi Türk karakterler üzerine odaklanıyor ve göçmenlerin çocuklarını ve torunlarını hala Ausländer (yabancı) olarak gören, etnik azınlıkların dışlamaya, ayrımcılığa ve yabancı düşmanlığına maruz kaldığı bir toplumda bu karakterlerin varolma yollarını inceliyor.

Screening Transnational Turkish¹ Community In Fatih Akın's *Kurz und Schmerzlos* (Short Sharp Shock)

1 For practical reasons, I use the term "Turkish" in a very general sense throughout this article, but I would like to point out the need to be aware of the poly-ethnic make-up of the Turkish nation-state itself, as well as the wide-ranging diversity (mainly in terms of, but not limited to, ethnicity, class and religion) among the residents in Germany originating from Turkey, which include, among others, Kurds, Albanians, and Armenians.

2 For an overview of the entire series, see the website <http://www.3sat.de/3sat.php?http://www.3sat.de/film/reihen/38239/>

3 *Cinéma du métissage* is the name of a film genre that deals with issues of France's migrant population. "Métissage" refers to a life in two cultures. The term was also used in the 3sat description of its special program series.

4 In the French Caribbean, the concept of *Créolité*, or

"Germany long ago became part of us German Turks. Now a question is being posed that we cannot answer alone. Are we also a part of Germany?" (Şenocak).

"Young, German and Turkish": the title of this German television series (3 sat special) in October 2002² portraying the circumstances of young Turkish-Germans can be seen as programmatic for socio-cultural changes palpable in unified Germany. The second and third generations of Turkish immigrants are increasingly claiming a space in Germany's to date immigration unfriendly, but de facto poly-ethnic contemporary society (Horrocks and Kolinsky, 1996: 71-111). The aforementioned TV-series presented a number of new made-for-television and short films, as well as documentaries and full-length features, that signify the crucial (even if slow and subtle) changes occurring in the self-definition of the migrant populations, as well as in their self-representations in the narrative of Germany.

Since the mid 1990s, a number of innovative filmmakers of Turkish descent have come to the forefront in German cinema—mainly in Berlin and Hamburg—whose transnational/transcultural films reflect the new attitude in the self-image of the second and third generation Turkish migrants. Bearing similarities to the French "cinema of *métissage*"³ and its concept of "creolization"⁴ these films tell stories about personal searches of minority protagonists for a personal and social identity in which "the

strange and the intimate" are touching each other (Şenocak). As a result, they articulate and visualize the nature of Germany's pluralistic society today that has evolved through the continuing influx of migrants from all parts of the world, particularly after WWII. In this essay I argue that these films, made by cross-cultural Turkish-Germans or Turkish nationals living in Germany, enter forcefully into the renewed discourses about so-called 'Germanness' or German national identity in the wake of the reunification of East and West Germany. By doing so, they join other socio-cultural forces that are beginning to destabilize traditionally fixed notions of a homogeneous German national and cultural identity. In other words, these films help expose nationalistic, monocultural and essentialist attitudes as illusionary vis-à-vis the multicultural social reality not only in contemporary Germany, but in the entire European Union.

While much has been debated in German cultural studies about minority literature within the past twenty or so years, scholarship on Turkish-German film has remained rather scarce, despite the substantial work done by Deniz Göktürk in the past decade (1998, 2002, 2002a). In the context of the debates about minority discourses in Germany, this essay therefore intends to sharpen the focus on film and media representations of the Turkish diaspora. Imagination and imagery in film arguably play a considerable role in corroborating or subverting ideologies and socio-cultural attitudes in any given society. Turkish German

Creoleness, emerged in the late 1980s, in particular through the studies of three Martinican intellectuals, Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphaël Confiant, who published in 1989 the founding text of *Creoleness: Éloge de la Créolité* (translated in 1990 as *In Praise of Creoleness*). With this concept, the scholars tried to summarize and explain the increased and accelerated processes of cultural mixing around the world that have produced new configurations of identity.

5
In his 1990 essay "Germany—Home for the Turks?" Zafer Şenocak insists that "change and contact are key words for a multicultural social perspective." The "fears of contact" must be overcome, "to create the atmosphere that will allow the strange and the intimate to be in constant touch, in order to allow something new to grow—a process that can be pleasurable but equally painful, like rubbing a wound." Leslie Adelson expounds this line of thought in her incisive essay "Touching Tales of Turks, Germans and Jews" (2000).

6
For a brief history of Turkish migration in Germany, see Faruk Şen, "1961 bis 1993: Eine kurze Geschichte der Türken in Deutschland." *Deutsche Türken – Türk Almanlar* 17-37; see also Eva Kolinsky, "Non-German Minorities in German Society." *Turkish Culture in German Society Today*. 71-113.

films therefore need to be explored in regards to how they relate to and connect with the narrative of Germany's history—its past, present and future (Adelson, 2000: 103), and in which way they participate in the process of interrupting and undoing the "historically ingrained notion of an essential German identity rooted in biological heritage and a fixed cultural tradition" (Teraoka, 1997: 71). In the following, a brief outline of thoughts on the way Turkish German films add to emerging notions of the transnational nature of the Federal Republic of Germany will precede a close analysis of Hamburg filmmaker Fatih Akin's *Kurz und Schmerzlos (Short Sharp Shock)*, released in 1998. Akin's film serves as one example to illustrate how filmic productions of the German Turkish community intersect with or—in the words of Zafer Şenocak, probably the most influential Turkish German intellectual and writer today—"touch" German narratives of identity and history.⁵

The Turkish community, one of the largest minority groups now permanently residing in Germany, consists today of roughly two and a half million people. Despite the significant presence of this ethnic minority in the Federal Republic's public space, the personal perspectives and experience of members of this community have remained largely invisible to a majority of German society. Since the nineties, representations of individual Turkish Germans' concerns, desires and aspirations within public forums like television and cinema have finally made the increasingly diversified Turkish community, which has become such an integral part of German society since the 1960s,⁶ visible to a predominantly German and European spectatorship.

It is difficult to categorize these new *auteur* films made in Germany and in the German language under a generic term such as "Turkish German Film," because this designation does not really account for their variation in terms of narrative and cinematic language. What these films have in common, however, and what perhaps has led to this somewhat indiscriminate designation, is that their protagonists are German born

descendants of Turkish migrant workers. In answer to the question what "cultural labor" minority discourses actually perform (Adelson, 2002: 326), I argue that, during the decade following the unification of West and East Germany and into the twenty-first century, these Turkish-German films engage in a critical discourse that reflects the transformation of the (chimerical) German nation-state into a more pluralistic country with transnational structures. By directing the viewers' focus away from Eurocentrist hegemony toward the experience of the marginalized whosubstantially contribute to the shape of socio-cultural life in Germany, these films contest assumptions of "the harmonious totalities" within a nation-state (Bhabha, 1994: 312), a concept which has had a long tradition in Germany with its historically monolithic and homogenous views of (German) culture. Stories and characters in these films highlight the actual constructed and fluctuating nature of cultural and national identities as they unsettle the "ritualized configuration of historical narrative and cultural alterity" (Adelson, 2000: 108). In their efforts to destabilize traditional modes of representing the Other within the popular parameters of binary oppositions, the films have moved away from the established "one-dimensional" ethnocentric roles that Turks as "foreign" and therefore subaltern outsiders have historically been assigned in German film (Göktürk, 2002: 248). The new protagonists represent instead individuals who defy ideas about essential ethnic and cultural identities and who have embraced rather flexible forms of selfhood that enable them to navigate their lives across and beyond national and cultural borders. This does not mean that the socio-cultural contexts depicted in these films are devoid of contradictions or conflicts. The films do raise questions regarding definitions of home or homeland, belonging and loyalty. They articulate generational conflicts, conflicts with sexuality, encounters with the law or the practice of deportation and their effects on the everyday life of Turkish-Germans. Yet by overturning the protagonists' position from being talked about to becoming the subject who is talking, the films can be said to mark

7

In January 2000, Germany added a new regulation to its right of citizenship by decent (*jus sanguinis*). A person born in Germany to non-German parents now automatically is entitled to German citizenship if one of the parents has lived permanently in Germany for at least eight years. Until the age of twenty-three, this person is allowed to have double-citizenship; after that, s/he must decide which citizenship s/he wants to retain and which one to give up. See Gerald L. Neumann's essay, "Nationality Law in the United States and the Federal Republic of Germany: Structure and Current Problems." Another concise description of German citizenship laws and their changes during the last decade can be found in Joyce Marie Mushaben's *From Post-War to Post-Wall Generations*.

8

Within this rather heterogeneous group, one can find, for example, films like Seyhan Derin's *Ben annemin Kızıyım—Ich bin Tochter meiner Mutter* (I am my mother's daughter) (1996); Sinan Çetin's *Berlin in Berlin* (1993); Hussi Kutlucan's *Ich Chef, Du Turmschuh* (Me Boss, You Sneaker) (1997); Yüksel Yavuz' *Aprilkinder* (April Kids) (1998); Kutlug Ataman's *Lola und Bilibidiki* (Lola and Billy the Kid) (1998); Thomas Arslan's trilogy *Geschwister—Kardaseler* (Siblings) (1997), *Dealer* (1999) and *Der schöne Tag* (The beautiful Day) (2000); Fatih Akin's newest film *Gegen die Wand*

a new chapter in the history of representations of the Turkish minority population in Germany. Tired of seeing Turks in Germany represented as objects and/or victims in paternalistic textual and filmic discourses, the young minority filmmakers have found their own voice in this culture-forum, allowing their protagonists to speak up about their opinions, their life-expectations, or their criticism of the social and political status quo. Because they were born in Germany, they are de facto Germans with Turkish heritage, but their legal status within German society is still a controversial issue, as Germany's enduring political dispute about dual-citizenship illustrates.⁷

Among the minority filmmakers in recent German cinema,⁸ director Fatih Akin has gained considerable attention, even of mainstream domestic and international audiences, with his first full-length feature *Kurz und Schmerzlos* (*Short Sharp Shock*) in 1998. Akin, the son of Turkish migrants, was born in Hamburg in 1973 and grew up in Hamburg-Altona, the social milieu he describes in his film *Kurz und Schmerzlos*. He went on to study Visual Communications at Hamburg's College of Fine Arts and in 1995, he wrote and directed his first short feature called *Sensin—Du bist es* (*Sensin—Your're the One*) which was awarded the "Audience Award" at Hamburg's International Short Film Festival. His next short feature with the title *Getürkt* (*Weed*) in 1996 won several national and international awards. In 1998, Akin's *Kurz und Schmerzlos* won the "Bronze Leopard" award at the Locarno film-festival, and the "Bavarian Film Award" for "Best Young Director."⁹ *Kurz und Schmerzlos* illustrates the multicultural social reality in contemporary urban Germany by telling the dramatic story of the friendship between three young men, the Turk Gabriel, the Greek Costa and the Serb Bobby. In portraying a friendship that spurns historical hostilities between members of these three ethnic and national groups (Yağcı-Heckmann, 2002: 309-319), Akin's film affirms the growing significance of multi-ethnic communities and of the increasing solidarity among different minority groups against an often hostile social

environment in Germany. *Kurz und Schmerzlos* therefore merits an examination of the way it interrupts familiar constructions of film-narratives about the Turkish diaspora in Germany, and of the way its characters negotiate their identities across and against fixed national and cultural boundaries, creating a liminal space for themselves that Homi Bhabha has termed the "third space." But rather than interpreting this "third space"¹⁰ as yet another closed entity located in the space between two other neatly delineated national and cultural bodies, it is more useful and more realistic to view "culture" or "nation" as projects in constant development and flux. In this view, then, Bhabha's "third space" becomes something of a shared space where German and Turkish cultures converge, a common space that renders the notion of a homogeneous ethnic community (the German romantic idea of *Volk*) utterly futile. Akin's film *Kurz und Schmerzlos* interrogates this common space, and how subjects configure and re-configure their positions in it. The film forces the viewers to ask themselves what exactly it means to be "a German" or "a Turk" or both as it explores the ways transcultural and transnational contexts affect individual processes of self-definition. In presenting each character's own personal strategies for finding 'their way' within a society where many people still consider the children and grandchildren of migrants as *Ausländer* (foreigner, stranger), and in which ethnic minorities keep experiencing exclusion, discrimination and xenophobia, if not racism¹¹, the film makes a significant contribution to the renewed discussions about German identity since the fall of the Berlin Wall. My analysis of *Kurz und Schmerzlos*, in particular of the main character Gabriel and his family, who are of Turkish descent and whose lives the film depicts in more detail, seeks to highlight prominent aspects of the characters' self-understanding within that shared third space in "German" society as they are trying to resolve tensions between their ethnic origin and their life in post-wall urban Germany.

Kurz und Schmerzlos is a film that Akin himself describes as a mix of "Liebe, Sex, Tod, Gewalt, Action, HipHop, Rausch, Schicksal,

(Head on) (2004), to name only a few.

9

Akin's other films since then include *Im Juli* (In July) (2000), *Wir haben vergessen zurückzukehren* (We forgot to return) (2001), *Solino* (2002), and *Gegen die Wand* (Head on) (2004).

10

The term "third space" was coined by Homi Bhabha in *The Location of Culture*. In his discussion of cultural hybridity, i. e. new transcultural forms, he concludes that identities formed in this 'inter' or 'inbetween' space on the borderline of different cultures are constructed in this "third space," which he defines as a hybrid space. "This interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy" (4).

11

I refer here to the sharp increase in physical and lethal attacks on Turks and other foreigners right after the unification of Germany, ranging from the 1991 attacks in Hoyerswerda and Rostock-Lichtenhagen, to the arson attacks in 1992 in Mölln, leaving one woman and two children dead, and in 1993 in Solingen, where five women and children died in the fires. For more information on the xenophobic and racist attacks, see Joyce Marie Mushaben's *From Post-War to Post-Wall Generations* (329).

12
Multi-kulti is an abbreviation for the German word *multikulturell* (multicultural). It is commonly used in colloquial speech, giving the concept a somewhat ironic or even pejorative meaning. Bobby, Gabriel's Serb friend, uses this term in connection with the local mafia as a joking reference to the multicultural Hamburg crime-scene to which they belong.

Religion und Spass (love, sex, death, violence, action, hip-hop, ecstasy, religion and fun)" (Ehrlacher). While the action of the film starts off in a rather comedic tone introducing the "multi-kulti" friendship¹² of the three protagonists, the story quickly develops into a gripping crime drama featuring the three men's genuine friendship, as they are all caught in a downward spiral of violence that ends in tragedy. Costa, Bobby and Gabriel are part of the youth-gangs in their city district. They are small time criminals stealing and selling stolen goods and engaging in street-fights. Their preferred hangout is the famous nightlife district in Hamburg-Altona, particularly the streets of the crime-ridden red-light district St. Pauli, known as the *Kiez*, where the trio moves on the fringes of the criminal scene. Gabriel, a legendary thug and, according to his friend Bobby, the toughest guy on the *Kiez*, has been in prison for two years and is just being released as the film begins. Gabriel seems a changed man; he wants to come clean, work honestly in his brother Cem's taxi business and make some money so that he can go to Turkey to open a business of his own. At Cem's wedding, Gabriel and his two friends meet again for the first time after Gabriel's imprisonment, trying to pick up their friendship where they left off two years ago. But it immediately becomes evident that Gabriel has outgrown the relationship in the past two years. He has "grown up," as Costa puts it at one point in the film, while Costa and Bobby have remained the 'juvenile' delinquents they were before. Bobby now even dreams of making it big by hooking up with the local Albanian mafia. Bobby and Costa are pushing aside Gabriel's advice not to get involved with the ruthless Albanian "padre" Muhamer, and while they are trying to handle a deal with weapon smugglers, Gabriel and Bobby's girlfriend Alice, one of the only two indigenous German characters in the film, start an affair and fall in love. After the weapons deal with the Latin-American smugglers runs afoul, Bobby, desperate and fearing for his life, runs to Alice for help, only to find her and his best friend in a compromising situation, refusing to let him in and thereby sending him into his death. Just minutes after he leaves Alice's place, Bobby is shot by Muhamer

in a struggle for his gun. Costa, in his grief and rage about Bobby's death, runs amok, gets a gun and tries to shoot Muhamer. Gabriel, already ridden with guilt and remorse about his betrayal, is now overcome by anguish about Bobby's murder. He goes after Costa to prevent him from facing Muhamer and to take revenge himself, but he comes too late. Muhamer has already overwhelmed and stabbed Costa fatally. When Gabriel arrives, he finds his friend Costa dying from his wounds, with Muhamer lying hurt next to his car. Gabriel then calmly walks up to Muhamer and shoots him, killing him on the spot, and returns to Costa to hold him while he is dying. The next morning, he says good-bye to Alice and flees to Turkey into an unsure future.

In contrast to earlier films about migrants in Germany, it is not a central concern of Akin's *Kurz und Schmerzlos* to raise social consciousness about the plight of minorities in Germany. The film's main intention is to attract not just the minority community or a cult-movie audience, but also appeal to and entertain a broader, more mainstream audience. In addition to the self-conscious mix of such popular genres as gangster-movie, love-story, melodrama and comedy, the film even shows a strong influence of the violent realism seen in Martin Scorsese's *Mean Streets* (1973) (Göktürk, 2002: 254), evident in the film's representation of the rough and gritty every-day life of the city streets in which the threesome tries to make a living. Underneath the surface of a melodramatic Scorsese gangster flick, however, Akin's film offers a more profound reading in that it frequently plays on, and thus challenges, the viewer's expectations and assumptions concerning the representation of minority characters and their stories. Akin does not shy away from employing some of the long established clichés about ethnic minorities by positioning his protagonists within the crime milieu. But even as he employs stereotypes and conventional cinematic tropes, Akin's film differs significantly from German films produced in the nineteen seventies and eighties featuring the Turkish *Gastarbeiter* (guestworker). These films, called films of *Betroffenheit* (personal

experience of social victimization), were ethnocentric films, often directed by indigenous Germans, that depicted the Turkish protagonists as subalterns who "never really achieve[d] the status of agent or truly serve[d] as an object of identification," as Angelica Fenner points out (116). She goes on to say that

the abject figures in such a diverse historical cross section of contemporary West German films as Rainer Werner Fassbinder's Angst essen Seelen [sic] auf [Ali: Fear eats the soul] (1974), Helma Sanders-Brahms' Shirins Hochzeit (Shirin's Wedding) (1976), Jan Schütte's Drachenfutter (Dragon's food) (1987), and Hark Bohm's Yasmin (1987), to name just a few, address a hegemonic viewership by evoking the viewer's pity and sympathy, emotions which essentially affirm and perpetuate the static Manichean configuration of oppressor and oppressed (116-7).

Akın's film could not be more different. Despite their representation as petty criminals, the characters in *Kurz und Schmerzlos* have come a long way from the subaltern Turkish migrants in the earlier paternalistic films that have always enabled German viewers to feel superior (Kuhn, 1989: 192). For Gabriel and his sister Ceyda, the imagined mentality of the *Gastarbeiter* generation is a thing of the past. Unlike the first migrant generation who, because of their lacking language skills, mostly figured as the "mute Turk" in the earlier films (Bhabha, 1994: 315-17; Göktürk, 2002a), the second generation as portrayed in Gabriel and Ceyda in Akın's film are completely bilingual, able to communicate in perfect German as well as in Turkish. As the children of migrants, they are fully aware of their inter- or transnational status in Germany, but they do not perceive that as problematic for their self-definition. They live their lives at the interface of different cultures simply as a matter of course. With their mutable self-image, shaped by both German and Turkish cultures, they exemplify what Akın himself has described as a new kind of Germans: "We are brought up in two cultures, we are the new Germans" (Yalçın-Heckmann, 2002: 308). Thus, in contrast to the 'pathetic' Turkish characters in most older films dealing with ethnic minorities, Gabriel and his friends in *Kurz und Schmerzlos*

are no longer "stigmatized as forever strange" (Şenocak), but instead come across as funny and likeable characters, inviting the spectator's identification -despite their all too human weaknesses, and despite the escalating violence in the film. In many scenes they appear goofy and playful, and like all young people they are filled with grand dreams about their future; in other scenes, they move the viewer by their genuine loyalty in friendship and deep passion in love.

Gabriel in particular appears as a point of identification for the spectator. His tall and ruggedly handsome looks and cool dressing style are attractive to the viewer's gaze and thus constitute an inversion of the former stereotypical representation of the physically dark, small and poorly dressed Turkish migrant. More importantly, it is Gabriel's congenial and caring interaction with his family and friends that contribute to his positive reception by the audience and creates a strong contrast to the earlier minority films of *Betroffenheit*. Films like Tevfik Başer's *Vierzig Quadratmeter Deutschland (40 Square Meters of Germany)* (1986) for instance, were -despite their good intentions-instrumental in perpetuating the indiscriminate image of Turks in the minds of the Germans "as rural, backward people with archaic manners and an inferior culture" (Göktürk, 2002: 250). One of the predominant clichés about Turkish migrants has been that they belong to a rigidly repressive patriarchal society and culture, where the father often brutally rules over the family, and where women are oppressed by both the males in the family as well as by the strict behavior- and dress-codes of the wider Muslim society. Defying such fixed and undifferentiated images, Akın's film represents Gabriel's family as typically middle-class with two children, like other families in Germany. The wedding ceremony at the beginning of the film functions to introduce Gabriel's family background and to position the family within the German social class structure. Considering the size of the rented ballroom with its decorations and live entertainment, as well as the large number of invited guests, viewers can assume that the family belongs to

the middle, or lower middle class. Their social status is also evident in the family's and the guests' fashionable and festive attire, which is remarkably devoid of any obvious ethnic insignia. At the same time, though, Turkish culture is celebrated in food, music and dance, as well as in customs linked to the wedding ritual, such as attaching money bills to the front of the bride's and bridegroom's dress, or the wedding couple's traditional hand kiss for the parents to show respect. Except for the parents, who only communicate in Turkish with their children, the younger generation comfortably and easily switches back and forth between German and Turkish. Thus, the family generally appears to be well adjusted in Germany while also preserving Turkish cultural heritage. But the film is nevertheless adamant in foregrounding the characters' individual struggles to establish themselves in the Federal Republic. The following analyses of the film's representations of Gabriel's sister Ceyda, Gabriel's father and of Gabriel himself will demonstrate their different approaches.

While Gabriel's mother disappears from the screen after the wedding ceremony, his sister Ceyda plays a small but important role in the film regarding the question of female self-understanding and self-determination in relation with the social context. Ceyda's portrayal as a woman belonging to the second generation of Turkish migrants is crucial here because it is used to deconstruct the common notion of Turkish women as subordinate or oppressed. The film presents her as a typical modern, western and emancipated young city-woman who apparently is able to express herself freely in her personal style as well as her sexuality. At some point in the film we learn that Ceyda's older brother Gabriel, as her friend, has always supported and defended her freedom and independence in front of their traditional parents. In tune with the film's general interruption of stereotypes, Ceyda's and Gabriel's relationship thus also contradicts common notions of the traditional Turkish sibling relationship, according to which the brother always subjugates his female siblings. From the

beginning of the film, Ceyda is intentionally portrayed as quite different from the stereotyped—and in this film absent—image of a Turkish (Muslim) woman wearing the traditional headscarf. Pierced and tattooed, with her long hair dyed a provocative purple-red, and dressed in a very sexy and revealing dress at the wedding, Ceyda's body is modeled upon the clichéd and racialized image of the "white" western woman. Yet, while seemingly feeding into the viewers' stereotyped assumptions about cultural Others, the film at the same time questions and corrodes the logic of such assumptions. Instead of supporting the conceit of fixed and essential characteristics diametrically opposed to each other, the film promotes ethnic and cultural multiplicity as one possible strategy for social interconnection. An example for this can be seen in a scene in which Ceyda and Alice, her German friend, are talking to each other in the bathroom during the wedding celebration. Alice looks much more conservative in comparison to Ceyda, who is smoking a cigarette and checking herself out in the mirror while talking about breaking up with her boyfriend. This scene is indicative of the film's ironic play with imagery that results in subverting and deconstructing prevalent notions of essential ethnic and cultural markers. Part of this play with imagery is revealed in the choice of actors and the choice of names: Alice's dark-haired beauty, for instance, could easily be taken for "Turkish" in the stereotypical sense, indicating that such essential ethnic or racial delineations are as pervious and deceptive as cultural or national blueprints. Further proof of the film's attempt at blurring and disrupting established boundaries is the pun implied in the German woman's name "Alice": The first part of the name, "Ali," is also a very common name for Muslims, denoting the prophet Ali, and the Turkish phrase "Ali-ce" can be translated as "in the manner of (the prophet) Ali," or "rather / somewhat Ali."¹³ As part of the ironic play with names and imagery, the mirror trope employed in this scene warrants special attention because it serves to underscore the constructedness of Ceyda's persona. Framed in the mirror like a picture, Ceyda is exposed to both the viewer's as well as her own probing gaze as

13

I owe the idea of the pun implied in the name "Alice" to Leslie A. Adelson, a leading scholar in the field of Migrant Discourses in Germany, who explained the pun (in reference to the book *Alice in Wonderland* read by the protagonist in Emine Sevgi Özdamar's short-story *Der Hof im Spiegel*) during a talk she gave at a recent conference "Good Bye Germany? Migration, Culture and the Nation State" at the University of Berkeley (October 2004). Adelson's talk was entitled "Hello Germany! Towards a New Critical Grammar of Migration." The addition of "rather / somewhat Ali" is my own. For explanations of the suffix –see also <http://www2.egenet.com.tr/mastersj/adverbs-ad-nauseam.html#toomanyuseso-ce>.

an *image*, that is, as a mere *reflection* of what is in the western mind commonly conceived as a (post-) modern urban woman. The refracted gaze at Ceyda raises questions about the integrity of this image, as it also subtly implicates the German legal system that requires of the *Ausländer* assimilation and ethnic denial in order to become a German citizen. Ceyda's identity as second generation Turkish migrant living in the Federal Republic cannot, however, be reduced to a simple copy of so-called 'Germanness.' Values and beliefs inherited through her parents' cultural up-bringing in Turkey are guiding her actions in the scene where she, calmly but firmly, prevents a crying and desperate Alice from holding Gabriel back as he is leaving her apartment with the gun to seek revenge. Ceyda fully understands and condones Gabriel's need to avenge the murder of his friend Bobby, even if that means killing a person. In this crucial situation, both she and Gabriel think, feel and act according the Turkish concept of *namus*, i. e. honor (Schiffauer), which demands the defense and preservation of the family honor if it becomes violated by, for instance, the murder of a close friend. Through Ceyda's multifaceted character the film thus illuminates the ambivalence inherent in the identities of migrants and their descendants whose hybridity or liminality can be defined, in Hamid Naficy's words, as a " 'slipzone' of denial, ambivalence, inbetweenness, doubling, splitting, fetishization, hybridization, and syncretism. Located in the slipzone, [...] the liminar exiles are inbetween the structural force fields of both social systems, and as a result they are able to question, subvert, modify, or even adopt attributes of either or both cultural systems" (86).

Ceyda's fluid identity enables her agency within the framework of the German society. Earning her own living as an artist and a businesswoman, she runs—together with her friend Alice—a folksy jewelry store called "Kismet," the name symbolizing that she likes to be in charge of her fate. Ceyda's self-determination and independence become further apparent when she resolutely breaks up with her irresponsible boyfriend Costa,

Gabriel's friend, and then immediately moves in with her new boyfriend Sven (who has a telling name, too, that in his case ironically alludes to his Germanic origin.) Ceyda comfortably inhabits the "third space" of shared German Turkish experience in that she represents a Turkish German identity that is relatively successfully engaged with the dominant society while choosing in appropriate situations to act according to cultural values that are rooted in her Turkish background. As a German resident of Turkish background, her body is inscribed with both the familiar and the strange, thus representing what Zafer Şenocak has called "a new concept of identity." It is the kind of identity that allows us "to live together without having to sacrifice difference and personality on the altar of identity" and that needs "to have gaps through which what is different and foreign could come and go. Identity would then not manifest itself as hegemony".

While Ceyda's character in *Kurz und Schmerzlos* signals a new orientation within the second generation Turkish community in Germany, one that links the lives and experiences of the Turkish minority with those of the German majority, her father, who is a first generation migrant, is still caught in a "one-sided orientation to Turkey" and to Islam (Şenocak). That notwithstanding, the film's representation of Gabriel's father is another example of how the film interferes with traditional narratives and defies common stereotypes about 'the' Turkish family. Unlike the stereotypical patriarchal tyrant, Gabriel's father seems more concerned with Islam and life in the hereafter than with controlling his family in everyday life. In most of the scenes in which he occurs on screen, he is either shown praying or getting ready to pray. For him, religion has obviously become the pillar of internal support and security that has helped him deal with the existential upheaval resulting from his displacement through migration. As for many migrants of the first generation (Şen and Goldberg, 1994: 86), his cultural identity is founded on being a Muslim. In prayer he feels at home, and he tries to get his son to pray with him, wanting him to feel that same comfort and security he sees missing in Gabriel's

life. When Gabriel at one point in the film comes home after a violent fight in the city streets, his face bloody and bruised, the father curiously never mentions a word about his son's condition, or his apparently unsound activities outside the house. All he quietly says in Turkish is: "Willst du mit mir beten, Sohn? (Do you want to pray with me, son?)," as if this could lead the way out of trouble and 'home' for Gabriel as well. The two scenes with the father's invitation to prayer are not without a subtle sense of humor that is both touching and effective in tempering the violence of the previous scenes. At the end of the film, when Gabriel returns home from his 'revenge' killing and secretly tries to put the gun back into the drawer behind his praying father's back, his father interrupts his prayer, turns around to him and, in a tongue-in-cheek self-reference to the film, invites him to prayer by reminding him of life's end: "Wie ein Film geht auch das Leben irgendwann zu Ende. (Like a film, life will come to an end at some point.)" With this ironic allusion to the prior killing scenes as well as to "kitsch romantic language and parlance in Turkish popular culture" (Yalçın-Heckmann, 2002: 309), the film ends on an almost tragic-comic note, with Gabriel finally joining his father in prayer.

As Akin's film counters the common stereotype of the strictly controlling Turkish parents, a new attitude emerges: that of a conflicted closeness of the second generation with their migrant parents. The film's perspective from the view-point of the younger generation is significant for the change that has occurred within the artistic representations of migrant history. Lale Yalçın-Heckmann explains this new view-point in "Negotiating Identities: Media Representations of Different Generations of Turkish Migrants in Germany:"

Until recently, the parental generation was commonly represented as ignorant of the needs and concerns of coming generations; now it is the second generation's turn to look back at the parental one and be equally perplexed and ignorant, albeit with a sensitivity to difference and towards the depictions and representations of the 'other.' 'German society.' The parental generation is the 'intimate other,' hence a point of departure for them, different to the point(s)

available to mainstream German youth and a social category which could now be re-created from their own eyes, with their own narratives and reclaimed with new subjectivities and meanings. (309-10)

In *Kurz und Schmerzlos*, Gabriel and his sister Ceyda illustrate this new attitude of the second Turkish migrant generation toward the parental one. Growing up in Germany, their socialization outside the home has taught them ideas and values that make following or even comprehending many of their parents' imported traditional views difficult, if not impossible. Yet, through their life at home they have also internalized enough of the Turkish culture to understand and respect where their parents are coming from. They are German Turks whose wish for conformance with the predominant culture in Germany is counterbalanced by their desire to maintain an identity of their own that also reflects their ethnic heritage.

In contrast to Ceyda, however, Gabriel's orientation toward his Turkish cultural heritage becomes increasingly important in the course of the film. This explains why Gabriel at first politely, but firmly refuses his father's attempts to bring him 'home' to Islam, only to reconsider later when he becomes hopelessly trapped in the circle of crime and violence he had wanted to get out of after his time in prison. The film's reference to religion as a potential bridge leading to the "third space" of connectedness across social and cultural echelons is underlined by the suggestive use of the name "Gabriel" for the protagonist. "Gabriel" is the name of an archangel revered in Christian, Jewish as well as the Muslim traditions. While Judaism calls the archangel Gabriel the angel of Judgement, the Christian tradition considers him the bearer of good news (i. e. the arrival of the messiah) and "the comforter and helper of man." In Islam, Gabriel is "the angel who served as the mouthpiece of God in dictating the Koran to Mohammed" ("Archangel Gabriel"). Thus, the figure of Gabriel serves as a site where the three religious traditions converge and touch, reminding the viewer that the shared "third space" of

understanding and coexistence is already anticipated in the shared roots of Christians, Muslims and Jews.

In order to find himself, Gabriel turns to the religion of his forefathers, but his display of ignorance of the required rituals for prayer, and his awkwardness while trying to copy them, show the film's subtle humor in treating the issue of Islam and the different meaning religion has for the two generations. While the humor is perhaps intended to assuage typical western fears about Islamic fervor within the Turkish community, the role of religion in the film is nonetheless a crucial one in Gabriel's search for alternative ways to find meaning in his life, which is increasingly unraveling. Although the events force him to leave Germany in order to escape imprisonment for shooting a man, Gabriel has been contemplating moving to Turkey for quite some time. His attempts to pray are part of this transition in identity and constitute an important leitmotif in the film. Its recurring variations throughout the film parallel Gabriel's increasing desire to identify with his Turkish origins, supported atmospherically by the frequent infusion of wistful Turkish music in the otherwise hip-hop and rapping sound track. As the music mix suggests, Gabriel's self-image, a result from having grown up in the city of Hamburg, considerably complicates the transition to a more Muslemic identity. During a scene in a mosque—after having been badly beaten up by mafia-boss Muhamer and his thugs—Gabriel looks extremely uncomfortable and misplaced. It seems as though he wanted to give religion a try, but neither his appearance nor his demeanor really fit in with the sanctified place and with the other prayer's devoutness. Suddenly unsure about what he is doing there, he abandons his place in line and walks out behind the backs of the other prayers. This frame acutely brings into focus the difference between Gabriel, who grew up in Germany, and the older men, who had migrated here from Turkey as young adults. Yet, when Gabriel he is kneeling alongside his father for prayer at the end of the film, he seems at that point ready to embrace Islam. He has taken off his leather jacket, which throughout the film is a

symbol for his macho ruffian identity on the Hamburg Kiez. Framed by the camera kneeling side by side and both wearing the white *kufi* for prayer, the film clearly wants to emphasize the renewed kinship between father and son. By showing that Gabriel is still not able to coordinate his prayer movements with those of his father's, however, the film simultaneously indicates skepticism about Gabriel's new self-definition as a practicing Muslim.

Akın's film illustrates a new self-understanding and self-definition among the second generation Turkish migrant population. It shows that they are claiming their right to agency, even though, for Gabriel's and his friends, agency is often still defined by criminal gang-activities. By using the gang subculture as part of plot, Akın's film highlights another site of shared German Turkish history. During the mid 1980s, many Turkish youth-gangs developed in cities as a result of a sharp increase in racist and xenophobic neo-nazi and skinhead activities within the German society, and as a result of the spectacular successes of the right-wing parties in several big cities in Germany. Eberhard Seidel-Pielen notes that the Turkish youth-gangs were a response to the re-nationalization of German social discourses and a reflection of the *Ausländerpolitik* (policies for foreigners) of then Interior Minister Zimmermann, who in 1983 publicly stated that the number of foreigners in Germany, especially those of the Turks, needed to be restricted in order to avoid social conflict (43). In this hostile socio-political environment, forming gangs became a relevant activity for young Turks who wanted to stand up for themselves and to "defy victimisation and confront neo-Nazi or skinhead gangs in defense of their Turkish identity and their neighbourhoods," as David Horrocks and Eva Kolinsky explain (XX). Although the opening credits of *Kurz und Schmerzlos* show a Turkish gang fight against (presumably) neo-nazis, during the rest of the film conflict between Turks and Germans seems to be of little concern, since there are almost no indigenous Germans represented in the film. Thus, on the surface, the film appears to present the story of individuals who happen to be part of a

German minority, but whose ethnicity is of minor importance. This impression is deceiving, however. One has to ask why the three friends do not have more interaction with indigenous Germans, aside from Alice and Ceyda's boyfriend Sven. Is it not precisely through absence and exclusion that the film ultimately raises questions about the main characters' opportunities for agency and self-determination in this society? The absence of daily interaction with indigenous Germans indicates an exclusion from the dominant part of society and its privileges. It is noteworthy that throughout the film, the scope of the main characters' daily activities never really exceeds the 'boundaries' of their multi-ethnic neighborhood in Hamburg-Altona, thus confirming common perceptions of the ghettoization of minorities. By implying exclusion and restriction through absent representation, the film indicates the socio-political reality in Germany today that is marked by inadequate laws and practices concerning immigration as well as minority protection, integration and significant representation within the body politic.

The physical absence of dominant German society notwithstanding, the film evokes from the beginning a sense of the sanctioning nation-state looming over the characters' existence. This notion is visualized at the beginning of the film as Gabriel is leaving the prison. The eye of the camera captures him in a tightly framed close-up shot from a slightly low angle, picturing his head and body literally confined within the surrounding brick-walls of the prison. Although seeing a young Turk leave prison as a starting point of the narration instead of him entering it is a positive aspect, the way Gabriel is framed in this scene has quite an oppressive effect. Gabriel's body and movements appear overpowered and entrapped by these sinister walls on the left and right, running in converging lines into a solid back wall located behind Gabriel. His body is blocked in from all sides so that he can only move forward. With this spatial metaphor, the film articulates an underlying premise: Gabriel's life and identity are not solely determined by him, but also by powers over which he

has little control, leaving him with limited choices concerning his life.

One could be tempted to conclude that these powers simply mean 'fate,' since the concept of *Kismet* seems to play some role in Akin's film. The fact that Alice's and Ceyda's little jewelry store is called "*Kismet*" and appears twice as the focal point of the *mise en scène* at the end of the film, points to the importance the film attributes to the role of fate regarding the characters' lives. However, the prison trope and its association with confinement and restriction can also be seen as an allusion to adverse powers opposed to the idea of a common social, political and cultural space for ethnic minorities in Germany. Akin's film indirectly points to the problems with the German government's as yet non-existent immigration law and its unsuccessful integration policies, which still reflect the classical nation-state's goal "to align social habits, culture attachment and political participation" (Ong 2). To become citizens, ethnic minorities are required to assimilate, in other words, to become like Germans in manners, attitudes, beliefs, behavior and appearance. For many Turkish Germans that is a high price to pay and they reject this path to social integration. They prefer and are comfortable with an identity that transcends the two nations and cultures, but this kind of positioning is not yet viable in the traditional conception of the German nation-state.

To follow their own rules and laws is what Gabriel, Bobby and Costa in *Kurz und Schmerzlos* have opted for and what guides their actions. That they first try their chances at the margins of the dominant society, that is, in the criminal milieu, is a reflection of the still prevailing inequality regarding employment opportunities for members of the Turkish minority in Germany (Şen, XXXX: 28-31). After his release from jail, Gabriel is determined to earn an honest living in his brother Cem's taxi business. With the savings from this work, he intends to move to Turkey and become self-sufficient as an entrepreneur there. Unfortunately, his friends, and with them his past association with the city's underworld, will not let go of him and drag him

14
In an interview Akin states "Meine Filme sind biografische oder zumindest sehr persönliche Arbeiten. Bei *Kurz und Schmerzlos* war das Motifo sehr autobiografisch, weil der Film viel mit meiner Jugend zu tun hatte." (My films are biographic or at least very personal works. In *Short Sharp Shock*, the motive was very autobiographic, because the film has much to do with my youth.) (Buhre).

back down. A repetition of the visual prison trope in the middle of the film emphasizes Gabriel's entrapment in this milieu. When the trio runs into Ceyda and her new German boyfriend Sven after she just broke up with Costa, Costa's hurt ego sets off a fight in which the viewer sees Gabriel suddenly transformed into a violent thug, uncontrollably beating and kicking Sven. This unexpected and misplaced fit of rage reveals how much frustration and anger must be bottled up inside of him. After the fight he runs away in despair and ends up in a narrow back alley, the eye of the camera again capturing him in a medium close-up shot, his head and body surrounded by brick walls, in a visual parallel to the prison scene in the beginning. The darkness and the frog-eyed perspective render this frame especially claustrophobic, symbolizing Gabriel's ensnarement in this kind of life. His anger and despair, visible in his distorted face, are now directed towards his friends who dragged him into this situation and into his old habits. Interestingly, however, in this frame the claustrophobic walls do not run into a back wall like in the scene when Gabriel is leaving prison. Behind him, the end of the brick wall opens up into another lit up alley, as if offering him an exit out. However, in his anger and remorse about his violent relapse Gabriel does not pay attention to the exit possibility; instead, he chooses to storm out the same way he came in. The implication here is that at this juncture of the film's plot, he fails to turn around the chain of events in his favor. Instead of taking the "exit," he remains stuck in his old tracks and is therefore doomed to continue the downward spiral into tragedy.

The film's *mise-en-scène* parallels the action spiraling into more violence. With the developing plot, more action takes place at night in the dark and gritty streets of the Kiez. Since the filmmaker himself grew up in this environment, his film has strong autobiographical traits.¹⁴ But although Akin recreates familiar surroundings in his film, he does not intend to identify the city of Hamburg in particular. None of the attractive sites usually associated with the city of Hamburg are featured in the

film, because Akin is more concerned with representing another vision of urban space. The film's *mise-en-scène* increasingly positions the protagonists in dark and wet back-alleys where they are prone to have violent encounters, or next to dreary greyish-white walls covered with undecipherable graffiti typifying the impoverished or run-down districts of the city. Thus, the urban landscape in *Kurz und Schmerzlos* is represented not as a civic space that the characters "own" and identify with, a place they associate with home, but rather as a site that has a cold, menacing and alienating effect. As a foil for the characters' identity, the city is represented as an anonymous, dispassionate space that becomes more hostile with progressing action. In addition, much of this disaffected city-space is seen through the windows of moving or standing cars. Driving in cars, sitting in cars or standing around cars is an ever present leitmotif in the film, beginning with the hip-hop music-video "*Dein Herz schlägt schneller*" by the Fünf Sterne Delux that serves as leader into the opening credits of Akin's two films *Getürkt* (*Weed*) and *Kurz und Schmerzlos*. As an appropriate metaphor for migration and the processes of identity formation in constant motion and transition, the car motif also inscribes onto the film a sense of the volatile and mutable resident status of minorities in Germany.

Considering his social environment and his situation in it, it is not surprising that Gabriel has grown increasingly uncomfortable with his life in Germany and is yearning to start a new one in Turkey. However, the viewer is well aware of the fact that Gabriel does not want to go to the country of his parents because he identifies with the Turkish body politic. His transnational identity disregards loyalty to either the German or the Turkish nation-state. What Gabriel associates with Turkey has nothing to do with national loyalty. In a conversation with Alice he says that the loneliness in prison made him dream about a life in Turkey, because "*in der Türkei bist du nie allein. Jeder kennt jeden, wie bei Verwandten, weißt du, das ist so warm und so lebendig.* (In Turkey, you are never alone. Everybody knows everybody, as if

they were relatives, you know, that is so warm and so lively.)" Life in Turkey has assumed for Gabriel the function of a positive contrast to life in Germany. He imagines it as a sunny and warm place at the southern coast, close to the sea and the beach, where he sees himself owning a "Strandcafé (beach café)," renting boats and hanging out all day long, surrounded by friendly people. Being the son of Turkish parents and in command of the Turkish language, Gabriel cannot see any problems with his finding a new life in Turkey. He is not aware that there might be difficulties in that place, too, considering for instance the common reluctance in Turkish society to fully acknowledge German Turks, who in popular Turkish parlance are often called somewhat derogatorily "Almancis" (Yalçın-Heckmann, 2002: 317). The film leaves no doubt that his desire to go to the country of his ancestors is rooted in an unrealistic vision of an all too cozy existence there. Gabriel's vision of Turkey is an idealized construct, mirroring clichéd tourist posters like the one he has in his room. The poster pinned to the wall above the top of his bed not only suggests the dreamlike quality, but also indicates the consumerist and neo-colonialist nature of such images, thereby raising doubts about the reality of Gabriel's vision of an idyllic life in Turkey.

Fatih Akin's film *Kurz und Schmerzlos* demonstrates that a substantial change in consciousness among Germany's Turkish community has taken place. In the past decade, Turks have spoken up in literature and in film to define and posit themselves anew in contemporary German society. The second generation of Turkish migrants, like Ceyda and Gabriel, no longer see themselves as lost in an "inbetween" of cultures and nations, but they are living "right in the middle of a European context" (Şenocak). The same change of consciousness is also required of the dominant German society, and films like Fatih Akin's contribute to make that change happen. The new law in 2000 regarding the entitlement to German citizenship of Turks born in Germany is a first step in the right direction that will eventually allow the familiar and the strange to coexist in creatively new

ways within a shared social, political and cultural space. Maybe Turkish German films speak that "third language" that Zafer Şenocak imagines in his essay "Dialogue about the Third Language":

A language that would inject us into each other so that we can be together without hurting each other. A third language, in which our children can tell each other about the beauties of their common father- and motherland, can complain to each other about the love and affection that each side withholds, can come together in cold and warmth without neutralizing each other. A third language crafted from the alphabet of the deaf and the dumb, from the broken sounds, a bastard language that transforms misunderstandings into comedy and fear into understanding.

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Anlatı Bizi Nasıl Kurar?:

Ararat'ta Anlatı, Anımsama ve Kimlik

Özet

Bu makale, yönetmenliğini Atom Egoyan'ın yaptığı *Ararat* filmi, anlatı, bellek, anımsama ve unutmama kavramları ışığında incelemeyi amaçlıyor. Makale, film-içindeki filme konu olan 1915 olaylarının, Türkler ve Ermeniler tarafından farklı biçimlerde 'hikâye edildiğini' vurgulayarak, *Ararat*'ın, bu olayları 'soykırım' olarak tanımlamasının, bir kimlik tanımlama kaygısıyla ilişkili olduğuna işaret eder. Bireysel ve toplumsal kimliklerimizi, anlattığımız hikâyeler üzerinden kurduğumuzu söyleyen Randal'ın görüşüne dayanarak makale, *Ararat*'ta iç içe geçmiş ve 'soykırım' anlatısı çerçevesinde dolanan tarihsel, toplumsal ve bireysel anlatıların, filmi 'biz' kimliğinin kuruluşu çerçevesinde okumayı önerdiğini savunur. *Ararat*, geçmişin ve tarihin, 'bizim' tarafımızdan nasıl algılandığı ve anlamlandırıldığını sorarak, bireysel ve toplumsal kimliklerin, bu sorgulama üzerinden kurulduğunu dile getirir. Egoyan'ın *Ararat*'ta film-içinde filme yer vermesi ise, geçmişin anlatılırken/yeniden anlatılırken, gerçeklerin yeniden kurulduğunu, bu nedenle bu gerçeğin kavranışının bir kurmaca olduğunun altını çizer. *Ararat*, bu nedenle geçmişe ilişkin anlatıların, gerçekte kurmaca/hikâye olarak anlatıldığını açık eden bir yapıya sahiptir. Makale, film kişilerinin bireysel kimliklerinin, 1915 olaylarına dayanan 'büyük'/tarihsel anlatıya bağlı olarak tanımlandığını dile getirir.

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How Do Narratives Construct Us?:

Narrative, Recalling and Identity in Ararat

Abstract

The object of this article is to investigate the film *Ararat* directed by Atom Egoyan in the light of the concepts of narrative, memory, recalling and forgetting. This article stresses that the events of 1915 which are the subject matter of the film-within the film have been recounted in different ways by Turks and Armenians and it points out that the definition of events of 1915 as 'genocide', within *Ararat*, is strictly related to the anxiety caused by the definition of identity. Following Randal's view asserting that we construct our individual and social identities by means of stories we tell, it is claimed that the film suggests us to read the historical, social and individual narratives connected and intertwined with the narrative of 'genocide' within the framework of the construction of the identity of 'us'. Asking how the past and history are perceived and interpreted by 'us', *Ararat* expresses that both individual and social identities are constructed through this interrogation. Egoyan's use of film-within the film in *Ararat* puts forth that while telling and re-telling the past, the reality is continuously being reconstructed, and in this way it is underlined that the conceptualisation of the reality is a fiction. For this reason, *Ararat* has a structure bringing out that the narratives about past are in fact fiction/story. It is stated that the individual identities of the characters within the film are defined depending on the 'grand'/historical narrative related to 1915 events.