REPRESENTATIONS OF GERMANS AND THE USE OF LANGUAGE IN TURKSIH-GERMAN FILMS BY FATIH AKIN AND THOMAS ARSLAN

by

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(Under the Direction of Christine Haase)

ABSTRACT

Over the past twenty-five years Turkish-German films have emerged and achieved prominence among German cinema. Tevfik Baser's 1986 film 40 Quadratmeter Deutschland paved the way and inspired many of today's successful and diverse Turkish-German directors. Recent research on Turkish-German cinema has been primarily concentrated on the representation of Turkish and bi-national identity issues in German society.However, another angle I examinein my thesisis the representation of non-minority Germans and the role of the German and Turkish language. I will focus my analysis on films by Fatih Akin and Thomas Arslan, who have had a significant impact in Turkish-German cinema. While these directorsoffer different perspectives on identity issues facingTurkish-Germans, bothdepict Germans as minorities within the confines of their own cities. One strategyfor this marginalization of the majority revolves around these directors'use of language and subtitles.

INDEX WORDS: Turkish-German, cinema, Fatih Akin, Thomas Arslan, Geschwister-Kardesler, Dealer, Kurz und schmerzlos, Gegen die Wand, Auf der anderen Seite

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this paper to my loving wife Jennifer. There are no words that can express how grateful I am to her for her patience and support. This paper is also dedicated to my two beautiful and adoring daughters Emily and Hannah. I would additionally like to dedicate this paper to my loving and thoughtful parents who have supported and guided me through my academic career. Without all of these people in my life this paper would not have been possible.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Over the past twenty-five years Turkish-German films have emerged and achieved prominence among German cinema. West Germany's *Gastarbeiterkino* initially describes the phase of filmmaking when German directors' examined the status of Turkish-Germans and immigrants in the Federal Republic. Rainer Werner Fassbinder and Helma Sanders-Brahms are two of the more prominent German directors in the 1970s that made films about guest workers. Their films influenced the Turkish-German directors who emerged in the 1980s. Tevfik Baser's 1986 film *40 Quadratmeter Deutschland* paved the way and inspired many of today's successful and diverse Turkish-German directors.

Turkish-German films have dramatically changed since Tevfik Baser's first feature film. More recent films examine a wide range of problems faced by minorities attempting to integrate into German society. Turkish-German films frequently explore transcultural issues in modern Germany and try to move beyond the bi-cultural/national dichotomy surrounding Turkish-Germans status in society. Within the past ten years there has been a vast amount of research on transcultural Turkish-German films. Scholarly inquiry has been primarily concentrated on Turkish and bi-national identity issues in German society. Some studies examine how Turkish-Germans have been portrayed in urban spaces, or how the Turkish-Germans are caught between two cultures. Another important angle that has yet to be explored is the representation of non-minority Germans and the adjacent role of the German and Turkish language.

The Turkish-German directors Fatih Akin and Thomas Arslan have had a significant

impact on Turkish-German "minority cinema." Both have made several successful films since 1997, which will be the focus of this thesis. Akin and Arslan offer different perspectives on identity issues facing people of Turkish origin and/or Turkish heritage in Germany. In Arslan's film *Geschwister-Kardesler* three siblings have a German father and a Turkish mother. The two brothers, Erol and Ahmed, associate differently with their bi-national identity. Arslan's film *Dealer* tries to overcome the Turkish-German dichotomy through the role of a Turkish-German drug dealer. *Geschwister-Kardesler* and *Dealer* portray life for Turkish-Germans only in Berlin, while Akin's films *Gegen die Wand* and *Auf der anderen Seite* examine transcultural issues that play themselves out in both Hamburg and Istanbul. Akin shows that Europe is globalized and that his characters are not restricted by any borders. Akin has tried to eliminate common Turkish stereotypes in the films *Kurz und schmerzlos, Gegen die Wand,* and *Auf der anderen Seite.* For example, in *Auf der anderen Seite* the Turkish-German protagonist Nejat teaches German literature in Hamburg and later purchases a German bookstore in Istanbul.

These two directors primarily depict non-minority Germans on screen as minorities within the confines of their own cities, reconstructing Germany the way Turkish-Germans see and experience German society. Moving beyond the prevalent dichotomy of Turks and Germans, Akin and Arslan show that Turkish-Germans are the "new" Germans, and that non-minority Germans need to realize that Germany has become a multi-cultural and multi-lingual society.

Films by Arslan have portrayed Germans in a range of roles, from racist and xenophobic to friendly and caring. Akin's films generally depict Germans in a more positive light. Film by both directors feature interracial romantic relationships between non-minority Germans and Turkish-Germans are common in *Geschwister-Kardesler, Kurz und schmerzlos, Gegen die Wand,* and *Auf der anderen Seite.* While this appears positive, Akin and Arslan ultimately critique

German society by portraying limited possibilities for relationships between Turkish-Germans and non-minority Germans. Male-female (or, in one case, female-female) love relationships are shown as possible, whereas men interact with each other in hostile, violent, and discriminatory ways, as in Arslan's *Geschwister-Kardesler* and *Dealer* and Akin's *Kurz und schmerzlos, Gegen die Wand,* and *Auf der anderen Seite*. The directors suggest that non-minority Germans and Turkish-Germans have failed to integrate with one another except for when love or sex intervenes. This could be either because they are disinterested in each other, are afraid, or because their paths do not cross. When the two groups of males come into contact, it usually leads to some form of verbal and physical assaults. However, when non-minority German females and Turkish-German males and females lives intersect, romance often follows. The relationship between Alice (non-minority German) and Ceyda (Turkish-German) in *Kurz und schmerzlos* is an exception, however, as the two females are able to coexist as friends.

Sometimes the only difference on screen between the two groups is that Turkish-Germans have the ability to speak Turkish, while non-minority Germans lack this knowledge and ability. Akin and Arslan have made their films multi-lingual to depict the reality of modern Germany. The country is no longer monolingual and many Turkish-Germans are able to comfortably switch between languages. One of Arslan's strategies for marginalizing non-minority Germans on screen revolves around Turkish-Germans use of the Turkish and the absence of subtitles for the scenes in which Turkish is spoken. This leaves the non-Turkish speaking characters and viewers out of the conversation. In *Kurz und schmerzlos* Akin uses this strategy, leaving Alice and the other non-Turkish speaking characters helpless and marginalized.

In this thesis I will briefly explore the history of Turkish immigration to Germany, as well as the history of *Gastarbeiterkino* and Turkish-German cinema. I will then proceed to analyze

Arslan's *Geschwister-Kardesler* and *Dealer* as well as Akin's *Kurz und schmerzlos*, *Gegen die Wand*, and *Auf der anderen Seite*. In all five films the main focus will be on the representations of non-minority Germans and on the use and function of spoken language and subtitles. This thesis will examine diverse aspects of the representations of non-minority Germans: how non-minority Germans and language are portrayed; how Turkish-Germans deal with assimilation, their own identities, and most importantly, with their German environment; the significance of gender relationships between Turkish-Germans and non-minority Germans.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORY OF GUEST WORKERS IN GERMANY

Before analyzing Turkish-German films by Akin and Arslan, it is important to get a better understanding of the history of Turkish and minority immigration. By the end of World War II, Germany and its infrastructure were demolished. The male work force was decimated, the industrial facilities and transportation network destroyed. The bombings by the Allies decimated approximately eighty percent of residential areas in some cities. About eleven million Germans were prisoners of war. The German economy struggled in the postwar years until 1948, which saw the signing of the Marshall plan, the currency reform, and an increased supply of workers.

However, during the 1950s West Germany continued to face problems with low birth rates and a lack of manpower in the work force. The loss and injuries of German men during World War II still affected the ailing country ten years later. This labor shortage became particularly evident during the *Wirtschaftswunder* (Economic miracle) in Germany.

> To maintain the 'Economic Miracle,' the private sector needed a highly mobile workforce that it could deploy to specific sites throughout the country. Most of West Germany's 1 million unemployed workers were unable or unwilling to relocate with their families to these new industrial sites, and the labor shortage was becoming acute (Kaes & Göktürk & Gramling, 9).

By late September 1955, the unemployment rate for German men was approximately 1.8 percent. "This indicated that there was virtually full employment among most German workers in

economically strong and healthy regions; since economic prognoses pointed to continued high levels of economic growth, it was likely that there would be a regionally structured labor shortage in the foreseeable future" (Herbert, 204). Also during the early to mid 1950s there was a "preference for white-collar employment and higher qualifications of the German workforce, which led to a labor shortage at the unskilled and semi-skilled level" (Eken, 6). Because of the need to fill blue collar jobs, West Germany embarked on a mass recruitment of foreign workers from several European countries. The foreign guest workers were intended to work in the Federal Republic for a short period of time and then return home to their native countries. They were also supposed to be later replaced by new foreign workers who would also return to their place of origin. The foreign workers were called *Gastarbeiter* (guest workers). The Federal Republic labor recruitment policy was intended to keep the guest workers "at a distance from established society, neighborhoods, schools and social services" (Horrocks & Kolinsky, xviii).

The Labor Ministry had devised a plan to recruit Italian workers to primarily operate machines, work assembly lines, and perform other hard labor that did not require more than a basic knowledge of the German language. On December 22, 1955 Minister of Economics Ludwig Erhard signed a labor recruitment agreement with Italy in Rome. This agreement between the Federal Republic and Italy

> stipulated that workers in Italy should be selected and recruited by a recruitment commission of the Federal Institute of Labor in Nuremberg in cooperation with the Italian Labor Administration. These administrative bodies, in turn, received orders from German firms for needed manpower and directed suitable Italian workers to various enterprises (Herbert, 205).

Families of the Italian guest workers could only move to Germany after a suitable living space was available.

This contract enabled the employment of Italian guest workers in German industry, primarily in the building and agricultural sectors. The agreement proved to be so successful that foreign workers were implemented in other areas. By 1959, about ten percent of the Italian foreign laborers worked in the agricultural areas. Nearly half of them worked in the industrial plants that were expanding all throughout the country (see Rist, 61). Despite the large number of Italian guest workers, there remained a tremendous urgency for more foreign workers in the Federal Republic. An added and significant problem for Germans in the Federal republic was the erection of the Berlin Wall in August of 1961. The Berlin Wall considerably lowered the numbers of workers coming from the East, limiting the stream of refugees by more than ninety percent (Chin, 36). Another major issue was the decline in the number of employed Germans starting in 1962. This was due to a variety of factors. Germans started to retire earlier because of improved pensions and retirement conditions. Also contributing to the labor shortage were the extended length of required education, the prolongation of required military service from twelve to eighteen months, and the decline in the average number of working hours from 44.4 in 1960 to 41.4 in 1968 (Chin, 36-37).

All of these changes from the late 1950s to the early 1960s created a predicament for the Federal Republic. The Italian guest workers had helped their economic situation before and the search for more guest workers would help again. The government primarily wanted foreign workers from anticommunist countries; however, the future agreement with communist Yugoslavia was an exception. The Federal Republic needed to find a substantial amount of foreign workers for the iron and metal industry, processing trades and construction.

In March 1960, Minister of Labor Blank signed recruitment agreements with Spain and Greece similar to the agreement with Rome. This was followed by a series of additional agreements: with Turkey on October 30, 1961, Portugal on March 17, 1964, and Yugoslavia on October 12, 1968 (Herbert, 210). The Minister of Labor Blank argued that these agreements were an absolute necessity in the Federal Republic.

In the first few years of the guest worker program the imported workers were primarily men between the ages of twenty and forty, who either were single or left their families at home. By the autumn of 1964, the one millionth *Gastarbeiter* made it to West Germany (Herbert, 212). The guest workers swiftly changed labor relations throughout West Germany. Between 1960 and 1970, roughly 2.3 million West Germans (non-guest workers) left industrial and agricultural jobs to become managers and clerks, while the guest workers took the vacated positions. Through the 1960s and early 1970s, more than 90 percent of all guest workers were concentrated in manufacturing, construction, and services in the Federal Republic (Rist, 71).

The agreement with Turkey in 1961 is one that changed the future of German society.

> For Turks in particular the principle of rotation was actually stipulated in the recruitment treaty signed between their home government and the Bonn Republic. The original agreement plainly stated that residence permits lasting longer than two years would not be granted. Turkish workers, accordingly, would have no choice but to return home after a relatively short period (Chin, 48-49).

However, the rotational design of the guest worker program became too expensive for West German industry. After a year of recruiting Turkish guest workers, the industry leaders and government discovered that it cost more money to import new workers every two years than to

keep the trained ones. The government did not try to force the rule of returning after two years, and they almost always granted guest workers extensions to stay in the Federal Republic. The rule was quietly abandoned in 1964, when Germany renewed its contract with Turkey. The government also granted increasingly longer stays for the guest workers. The Federal Republic passed the *Ausländergesetz* (Foreigner Law) in 1965, "which had a destabilizing effect on migrant workers and families" (Kaes & Göktürk & Gramling, 10). According to this law, foreign workers could reside in Germany as long as they had a valid visa and continued to better serve 'the needs of the Federal Republic'. This law ultimately created confusion about the legal status of labor immigrants.

The 1970s were the most significant for Turkish immigration in the Federal Republic. During that decade, the Turkish-Germans became the largest minority rather quickly. Within ten years of signing the agreement in 1961, Turks became the largest minority in the West. In 1970, there were 469,200 Turks living in West Germany, compared to 573,600 Italians and 514,000 Yugoslavians. By 1971, the Turkish population had increased to 652,800, while the number of Italians and Yugoslavians remained constant. The West German Turkish population almost doubled between 1970 and 1973 (Chin, 62). The influx of Turkish presence and the confusion around the legal status of guest workers in the Federal Republic filtered into German culture, particularly television and film. "The plight of the guest workers and their status as outsiders attracted the attention of the New German Cinema, which perceived itself at the margin of the commercial film industry" (Kaes & Göktürk & Gramling, 10).

In 1973 West Germany faced an economic crisis, an oil shortage, unemployment, and a recession. By 1973 there were an estimated 2.595 million employed guest workers. On November 23, 1973 the Federal Republic government under Willy Brandt decided to end the

recruitment of foreign guest workers in what was called the *Anwerbestopp* (Chin, 64). This was intended to provide Germans with more jobs and encourage foreign workers to return to their home countries. Here after, the number of foreign workers decreased by approximately half a million within the span of two years (Herbert, 235). By 1976 there were an estimated 1,933,000 employed foreign workers in West Germany (Müller). In three years roughly 600,000 foreign workers either lost their jobs or left their positions to return to their home countries. Many of the guest workers did not return to their countries of origin; rather they stayed in the Federal Republic. Many immigrants, especially women, just withdrew from the workplace.

While almost one-third of all Italian and Spanish workers left the Federal Republic, the number of Turkish workers remained nearly unchanged. The Turks wanted to remain in West Germany for either a longer period to make more money or to stay permanently. The Turkish population in 1973 in West Germany was roughly 893,600 and by 1979 it had reached 1,268,300 (Chin, 94). As of January 1976, there were roughly 280,000 adult Turkish females, 195,000 children, and 595,000 adult Turkish males living in West Germany (Rist, 95). While other foreign workers were leaving the Federal Republic, Turks continued to arrive. One of the reasons for the steady flow of Turks is because in 1974 the German government passed a law that allowed guest workers' families to join them. Many of the guest workers and their re-united families moved from hostels to low-rent apartments. This particular law also resulted in a population boom, which was contrary to the government's intentions. By 1980, the noncitizen population climbed to 4.4 million, as workers' spouses, children, and parents entered Germany under "family unification" statutes.

The 1980s in West Germany were additional years of increased influx of foreigners, which was primarily due to families reuniting and higher birthrates among the immigrants. In

1980, 4,566,200 immigrants resided in West Germany, and by the end of the decade the number had climbed to 5,007,200. The Turkish population increased as well, going from 1,268,300 in 1979 to 1,523,700 in 1988. By 31 December 1988, Turkish-Germans made up 33.9 percent of the entire minority population (Chin, 194).

The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 brought about a major transition for the East and West. The German public debated topics such as national identity, citizenship, and multiculturalism. Debates on asylum were another critical issue during German reunification. The liberal asylum policies in the Federal Republic constitution created a xenophobic backlash. Between the fall of the Wall and the early 1990s Turkish immigrants' experienced rising racism and xenophobia directed towards them, which included ethnic violence. They faced racism, arson attacks, and physical assaults primarily in the former German Democratic Republic. In December 1992, approximately half a million Germans gathered in Munich for nighttime *Lichterketten* (candlelight vigils) to take a stance against neo-Nazism and racist violence. Many other major cities throughout Germany also came together and followed this example of public support for the immigrants.

According to the Berlin-Institut report in 2009, there were approximately 2,812,000 people of Turkish heritage in Germany (Berlin-Institut, 2009), making this the largest minority group. This number includes German citizens of Turkish heritage, and Turkish-Germans with dual Turkish-German citizenship. While first-generation Turkish immigrants worked primarily blue collar jobs, second and third generation Turkish-Germans have gone on to become politicians, film directors, actors, educators, and all other types of white collar professions.

CHAPTER 3

MINORITY GERMAN CINEMA

The presence of such a great number of immigrants in West Germany created feelings of xenophobia, which caught the attention of prominent German directors. If one assumes film to be a reflection of the society in which it is produced, it was inevitable that the guest worker issues and Germans' attitudes would make their way into German cinema. Guest workers brought aspects of their homeland and culture with them. They continued to practice their Muslim faith and faced difficulties assimilating and adapting to the new way of life in West Germany. The cultural differences between Germans and the guest workers were intriguing for people in the arts, ever interested in social and cultural diversity.

Since 1969 Turkish-Germans, immigrants, and *Gastarbeiter* have been the subject matter of many films. During the *Neues Deutsches Kino* (New German cinema) German and minority directors focused on the first generation of immigrants. These were the guest workers who left their home countries for the Federal Republic as recruited laborers (mainly from the early 1960s until the *Anwerbestopp* in 1973) and their spouses who joined them sometime in the 1970s. Rob Burns argues that first generation Turks in West Germany had

> three particular obstacles to their social integration that tended to be emphasized: the inhospitableness of the host country, the cultural dislocation suffered in the process of migration, and the resulting tendency on the part of the migrants to try to combat both these pressures through a strategy of cultural segregation (Burns, 744).

The *Neues Deutsches Kino* began the establishment of "a multicultural awareness in Germany" (Burns & Will, 303) and inspired future immigrant directors. The successful directors in the 1970s who explored guest worker issues were mostly non-minority Germans. Rainer Werner Fassbinder and Helma Sanders-Brahms were two of the better known German directors who produced films about Turkish-Germans and other guest workers. "These films tackle the *Gastarbeiter* issue in different ways, but they all draw attention to their presence in the Federal Republic and contextualize their specific situation within wider issues" (Knight, 47). Between 1969 and 1973 Fassbinder produced three films about guest workers, *Katzelmacher* in 1969, *Wildwechsel* in 1972, and *Angst essen Seele auf* in 1973, while Helma Sanders-Brahms directed *Die industrielle Reservearmee* in 1971 and *Shirins Hochzeit* in 1975.

While films made about the guest workers during this period primarily addressed and thematized the Turkish experience, Fassbinder concentrated on non-Turkish guest workers. His 1969 film *Katzelmacher* portrays a group of German working-class friends in Munich whose lives are changed by the arrival of a guest worker from Greece, who experiences xenophobia and racism from this group of West Germans. In 1973 Fassbinder confronted guest workers' problems in the Federal Republic with the film *Angst essen Seele auf.* John Sandford argues that *Angst essen Seele auf* "is still without doubt the best known film portrait of German attitudes toward the *Gastarbeiter*" (Sandford, 136). Sabine Hake remarks that the film is "a melodramatic study on the destructive effect of racism and ageism" (Hake, 166). The film depicts a Moroccan guest worker named Ali who falls in love with and marries a sixty year old German woman named Emmi. Emmi is unprepared for the prejudice against guest workers that even surfaces among her children, neighbors, and co-workers. Ostracized by everyone close to her, Emmi experiences and faces similar discrimination that Ali deals with everyday. The way Emmi is

treated and harassed by Germans shows that one can be guilty by association. She is frequently called a whore, simply because she is having a relationship with a non-German. Ali's entire being is "governed by his visible otherness, his exclusion from the German culture while an integral part of the German economy" (Mayne, 71). In the film, Fassbinder confronts discrimination and racism that the guest workers and immigrants faced in the Federal Republic. In one scene, Emmi's son-in-law refers to the guest workers as "Schweine" and cannot accept the fact that his boss is Turkish. Towards the end of the film Ali collapses. He later wakes up in the hospital, and the doctor diagnoses Ali with having a "guest worker stomach," "an eventually fatal disease endemic to guest workers as a result of the particular pressures to which they are exposed" (Halle, 141), and ending that offers a bleak outlook to the future of immigrants in the Federal Republic.

Fassbinder was concerned with the xenophobia, racism, and discrimination that guest workers experienced in West Germany. His *Gastarbeiter* films exposed the roots of some of the attitudes and prejudices towards guest workers by showing how two completely different cultures interacted, largely unsuccessfully, within West German society. According to Julia Knight:

> Fassbinder's films are [...] less concerned with exploring the experiences of the *Gastarbeiter* themselves, than with exploring and critiquing some of the attitudes towards them. *Katzelmacher* – a Bavarian term of abuse for immigrant workers – for instance, revolves around a group of directionless young couples who live in a suburban block of flats (Knight, 49).

Fassbinder's *Gastarbeiter* films influenced future German and Turkish-German directors. Two years after *Angst essen Seele auf,* in 1975, Sohrab Shahid Saless directed *In der Fremde.* Saless was born in Iran where he started his film career. He then moved to West Germany in 1975 and directed several films until the late 1980s. Saless was one of the first minority directors in West Germany during this time period. *In der Fremde*, a film predominantly in Turkish with German subtitles, is a subtle portrait of the life of a small group of guest workers in West Berlin.

Helma Sanders-Brahms directed *Shirins Hochzeit* in 1975, a film that deals mainly with Turkish problems in German society. Sabine Hake commented that the film is a "tragic portrait of an unmarried Turkish woman in Germany" (Hake, 177). A young Turkish woman named Shirin goes in search for a man named Mahmud, to whom she was engaged as a child. Mahmud is a guest worker in West Germany and returns to Shirin's home village but appears to have forgotten about Shirin. She decides to leave Turkey and become a guest worker in the Federal Republic herself. In West Germany she experiences racism and rape. She starts off as a factory worker and then becomes an office cleaner. She is ultimately forced into a life of prostitution. After seeing the ugly side of West Germany, Shirin tries to escape, but is murdered by her pimp. The film addresses the Federal Republic's harsh and discriminatory treatment of guest workers and of Turkish people in particular. "This is evident in the way that Shirin is represented very much as a victim and her 'decent' into the seedy world of prostitution, together with her death, as virtually inevitable" (Knight, 49), offering an outlook for immigrants that is reminiscent of Fassbinder's works in its bleakness.

Fassbinder and Sanders-Brahms directed several films that later became models for both Turkish-German and non-minority German filmmakers in the late 1980s. Tevfik Baser became one of the first Turkish directors to assert himself as a filmmaker and minority director. Baser

along with other Turkish-German and non-minority German directors in the 1980s began to explore the experiences of immigrants in the Federal Republic from a first-person narrator's perspective.

Turkish-German Cinema History

One of the most recent developments in modern German cinema is what is most often referred to as Turkish-German cinema or "European minority cinema." Barbara Mennel argues that Turkish-German cinema is "framed as transnational and hybrid" (Mennel, 135). Although there is a lack of consensus among scholars as to how to label this new type of cinema, Turkish-German cinema is the "label" that most scholars agree upon. Randal Halle and Rob Burns, for example, are two scholars who consistently refer to films by Fatih Akin, Thomas Arslan, and other Turkish-German directors as "Turkish-German cinema."

Turkish-German films typically deal with cultures in both Germany and Turkey, representing the reality of the transcultural existence of people living and working in Germany. Turkish-German films typically portray Turkish individuals struggling with their identity and place in Germany society. Rob Burns argues that "the development of Turkish-German cinema must also be seen against the background of various initiatives to promote migrant culture in Germany" (Burns, 128). Films by Turkish-German directors often confront both German and Turkish identity issues. These particular films depict the lives of many second and third generation Turkish-Germans in Germany. Sabine Hake comments that "Turkish-German film-makers started out by drawing attention to the realities of immigration, from the experiences of economic hardship in Anatolia to the difficulties of social integration in the Berlin Republic. Yet,

unlike the Turkish men and women in New German cinema, characters were no longer presented as exotic foreigners or threatening others" (Hake, 217), marking a clear departure from the films by Fassbinder or Sanders-Brahms.

Turkish-German cinema initially began in the mid 1980s with Tevfik Baser's first feature film entitled *40 Quadratmeter Deutschland.* This was the period that saw the first generation immigrant filmmakers. Throughout West Germany in the early 1980s, various organizations were founded to "co-ordinate the creative efforts of Germany's migrant population, and to facilitate what was expressly and affirmatively designated as 'guest-worker literature'" (Burns, 128). Following the German and immigrant directors of the New German cinema era, Turkish directors continued in the 1980s to articulate "social problems of marginalized groups of society in a documentary-realist fashion" (Berghahn, 141). Turkish women were the primary focus of filmmakers in the late 1980s, dealing particularly with social problems and claustrophobic living spaces.

Baser was the first Turkish director in West Germany who confronted Turkish and guest worker issues. Born in 1951 in Cankiri, Turkey, Baser spent his youth in Turkey and finished school in 1970. He served in the Turkish military and then moved to London for five years. He started off as a dishwasher until he landed a managerial position. While in London, Baser studied cinematography, photography and graphic design. He returned to Turkey and was trained as a cameraman, photographer, stage designer, and graphic artist (for further biographical information see Helt, esp.188). While in Turkey, Baser got involved in a West German subsidized training project for graphic designers and photographers. He then moved to Hamburg in 1980, where he studied at the College of Fine Art. Baser began making documentary and award-winning feature films in Germany. He eventually became a German citizen in 1989. Baser produced a few

documentaries in West Germany and a well-known documentary in 1983 called *Zwischen Gott und Erde.*

Baser's first feature film *40 Quadratmeter Deutschland* of 1986 became the paragon for later Turkish-German directors and received national and international recognition. It received five awards and an additional nomination at the German Film Awards for the category of outstanding feature film. At the Locarno International Film Festival in 1986 the film won two awards. Baser won the Silver Leopard and the Prize of the Ecumenical Jury - Special Mention. In 1987, *40 Quadratmeter Deutschland* won two awards at the German Film Awards: Outstanding Individual Achievement for an Actress (Özay Fecht) and Outstanding Individual Achievement for Composing (Claus Bantzer). At the Rotterdam International Film Festival in 1987, Baser also won the Rotterdam Award for Best Debut-Film.

40 Quadratmeter Deutschland depicts the claustrophobic and restricted world of a Turkish woman, Turna, in her tiny apartment in West Germany. Baser critiques the Turkish patriarchal system, the living conditions for guest workers, and the failure of integration by Turks. Turna has no freedoms and is forced into a marriage by her father. She is brought to West Germany by Dursun, who has been a guest worker in the Federal Republic for an unspecified amount of time. It is Turna's task to transform their apartment "into a little pocket of Turkish culture which will offer Dursun refuge after his work at the factory" (Burns, 129). This culture is reflected throughout the tiny apartment and also signifies Turna and Dursun's failure to assimilate and integrate into German society.

Dursun's confinement of Turna suggests that Turks cannot live in German society without fear of racism and discrimination. One day Turna discovers while her husband is away at work that the apartment is locked. When her husband returns home, Turna confronts him. Dursun

responds: “this is not like home, we are in Germany. You don’t know how sly the German men are.” Dursun’s response clearly tries to show Turna that he has locked her up for her own protection from the hostile Germans. Turna is literally imprisoned as she performs domestic duties. Dursun attempts to “safeguard his wife from the moral depravity he sees pervading German society” (Burns, 129). Asserting his patriarchal authority over Turna, Dursun implies that Turkish women are too vulnerable and defenseless against the German men and their own Turkish countrymen. He instills fear in Turna so she will not leave the apartment. Baser never shows whether Dursun’s claim is credible, yet Dursun’s arrogant and misogynist attitude conveys to the viewer that Turna would be safer within the German society that lies beyond the confines of her small living space than locked up by her controlling husband.

Due to the restrictions imposed by her husband, Turna is only able to see the outside world through her window. She attempts to interact with a little German girl across the street also looking out the window. The two play with their dolls and wave back and forth until the girl’s mother shows up. Burns argues that the girl is “the only person in Germany with whom Turna develops any real rapport as the two of them delight in an improvised system of communication based on gestures and mimicry” (Burns, 748). But the girl’s mother pulls the shades shut when she realizes with whom her daughter is playing. The German mother disapproves of her child’s playmate, and through Turna’s reaction of disappointment it can be implied that this is her first experience of racial prejudice. Yet it also signifies the level of desperation and loneliness she suffers due to her isolation. In another scene illustrating hostility, Turna leans out the window while listening to Turkish music. A smile is brought to her lips until a German man starts yelling to have the music turned off. The German man also gives the finger to the person blasting their

foreign music. Even through her small windows and confined apartment, Turna is exposed to racism and discrimination.

The main problem facing Turna, however, is her lack of freedom with her husband and her inability to communicate with Germans. Burns argues that "Turna has been incarcerated twice over: first, in her role as a Turkish woman and secondly, as an immigrant in an alien society" (Burns, 749). Dursun simply wants Turna to be a good housewife for him; to cook, clean, and have sex with him. As much as Dursun relies on his wife to perform these duties, Turna is dependent upon Dursun in this completely foreign world. Dursun wants to control her in the confined apartment and he believes this society is unsafe for Turkish women, if arguably only because it offers a degree of freedom and independence to women that would jeopardize his complete control over his wife. One evening, Turna begs Dursun to let her go somewhere since the claustrophobic confinement is slowly driving her insane. Although he promises to take Turna to a festival, he breaks his promise and leaves Turna feeling even more depressed. This scene reiterates that Dursun is less concerned with his wife's safety among the 'immoral Germans' than about his losing her to a more liberal society.

In a significant scene, Turna finds the door unlocked and leaves the apartment. After venturing down the stairs she realizes someone is coming. In fear, she runs back up the stairs and tries to speak to an old German woman who clearly cannot comprehend a word. "Her only actual physical encounter with native Germans leaves her in a state of extreme distress" (Burns, 748). This particular scene is critical for several reasons. Of all the German tenants staring at Turna, it never appears as though they are racist, xenophobic, hostile or discriminatory. The Germans are more amazed and intrigued by this exotic looking non-German, "decked out in all her finery" (Burns, 749) who has entered the stairwell. It appears that the older German woman wants to

help Turna, but cannot due to a linguistic barrier. Also in this scene, Baser purposely "eschews the use of German subtitles, thus placing the viewer bedazzled and in the uncomprehending position of Turna's neighbors" (Burns, 749). The audience is put in the shoes of Turna and the German residents. The majority of *40 Quadratmeter Deutschland* is in Turkish with German subtitles, however, in this particular scene, Turkish subtitles are omitted.

Later in *40 Quadratmeter Deutschland* an argument erupts between Dursun and Turna over having a child. Dursun begs her for a son and shortly after this scene, Turna discovers she is pregnant. This is a rare moment in which Dursun is genuinely happy. Turna however, does not share his excitement. Perhaps she thinks the child will also be confined to the forty square meters. In this scene Dursun yells out his window, "Ich werde Papa." These three words are the only ones spoken in German by either Turna or Dursun during the duration of the film. Dursun merrily yells these words as if to reaffirm his masculinity, prowess, and agency in the face of a society that has pushed him to the margins to an emasculating degree, leaving him helpless and out of control as soon as he leaves his apartment.

As the film progresses, the confined spaces drive Turna mad and make her increasingly desperate until she asks Dursun to let her go back to their home village in Turkey. He refuses, but in the following scene he suffers a fatal heart attack and collapses against the door. Turna is able to move her dead husband's body aside and tentatively walks down the stairs. She tries to seek help from her non-Turkish speaking neighbors. Her neighbors' inability to speak Turkish leaves them helpless. She ventures down the stairs and through the hallway. Turna walks hesitantly outside for the first time since her arrival in the Federal Republic into the foreign world that Dursun leaves her to, offering an ambiguous but not entirely bleak ending, a sliver of hope that she might find a way to exist in this country on her own.

Baser suggests that guest workers and first generation Turks had trouble communicating with Germans, while Germans found it equally difficult. These are some of the earlier transcultural issues that immigrants had in the Federal Republic. Baser directed a few more feature films in the late 1980s and early 1990s that explored transcultural issues: *Abschied vom falschen Paradies* in 1989 and his third feature film entitled *Lebewohl, Fremde* in 1991. *Lebewohl, Fremde* shifted from a purely ethnic Turkish film to a more "multiethnic configuration" (Naficy, 196). This shift by Baser in 1991 shares the same direction that future Turkish-German filmmakers would follow throughout the 1990s to modern day. By the early 1990s some Turkish-Germans had lived in Germany over thirty years. By this time the second and in some instances the third generation Turkish-Germans inhabited Germany.

Since Baser's film in 1986, minority cinema has gone through significant changes. In the last two decades, Turkish-German directors and actors have slowly established themselves into mainstream German cinema and society. Since the mid 1990s filmmakers have set out to break down Turkish clichés, misperceptions and stereotypes. The directors have made an effort to say that Turkish-Germans represent the modern reality of multiculturalism in Germany. They are often the second or third generations and consider themselves equally "German." The question of "what is German" has plagued Germans for decades. This is a complex question that is difficult for most to answer. Turkish-Germans go to German schools and universities, vote in elections, are professionals in a variety of fields, and are also filmmakers. They speak the same language as non-minority Germans and have frequently been born in Germany. Some Turkish-German families have lived in Germany for half a century and many Turkish-Germans have German citizenship. Turkish-German films allude to the fact that German cities have become multicultural and multilingual. Turkish-German cinema includes directors and actors born in

either Turkey or Germany, who have Turkish heritage. Turkish-German films generally incorporate the usage of both the German and Turkish language. Many of the directors grew up bilingually, speaking both German and Turkish. Arslan and Akin were both born in Germany and are native speakers of German, though their families are originally from Turkey. The majority of their films take place in German cities, but also frequently in Istanbul or other parts of Turkey. This represents the transculturalism existing in most parts of the modern world, which both Akin and Arslan consider an asset rather than an impediment.

Films made by Turkish-German directors have progressed over the last two decades, as mentioned earlier. Originally Turkish-German films dealt with the realities of immigration and common stereotypes of minorities. The films were also primarily in Turkish, while films made during the 1990s and 2000s have been bi-lingual and multi-lingual. Turkish-German directors in the 1990s have concentrated more on second and third generation Turkish-German problems, such as assimilation, transculturalism, interracial relationships, and a lack of integration between male Turkish-Germans and non-minority Germans. Akin and Arslan are two directors that have set out to solve some of these issues, while also trying to overcome the problematic dichotomous implications of the term Turkish-German.

CHAPTER 4

THOMAS ARSLAN AND HIS FILMS

Thomas Arslan was born on July 16, 1962 in Braunschweig, Germany to a German-Turkish household, a fact that has been reflected in some of his films. From 1963 to 1967 Arslan lived in Essen, Germany. He then moved to Turkey and attended primary school from 1967 to 1971 in Ankara. Arslan returned to Essen in 1971, where he completed high school in 1982. He did his community service in Hamburg in 1984. From 1985 to 1986 he studied Germanic studies and History in Munich. From 1986 to 1992 Arslan studied at the film school DFFB in Berlin. He arrived at film school during the German Comedy Wave, "a time when the media was praising the turn away from *Autorenfilm,* the cinema of the director as *auteur"* (Halle, 147). Arslan belonged to a group of film students who rejected the direction of the German comedy influx and he understood himself as an *Autor.* Arslan has been a screenwriter and filmmaker ever since attending the film school. He has also been working as a cinematographer and producer for a number of feature films since the early 1990s in Germany. Between 1984 and 1992 Arslan made several short films and documentaries.

Arslan took part in the Panorama section of the Berlinale in 1994 with his first feature film entitled *Mach die Musik leiser.* This film portrays a group of young German men in the city of Essen. *Mach die Musik leiser* avoids issues related to minority status, and it was not until his next feature film that Arslan explored transcultural identity issues. His next three films between 1996 and 2001 examined Turkish-German problems in Germany. The three films, *Geschwister-Kardesler* (1997), *Dealer* (1999), and *Der schöne Tag* (2001) are frequently referred to as a

„trilogy", all examining the lives of young Turkish-Germans in the context of Berlin Kreuzberg. These three films represent Germany as a multi-lingual and multi-cultural society. *Geschwister-Kardesler* and *Dealer* assert that Turkish-Germans are as much German as they are Turkish and depict the lives of young Turkish-Germans struggling in their search for a life and an identity. Arslan in these films references the fact that transcultural issues are pervading the world today and that this is a "new" Germany marked by multiculturalism and globalization.

Arslan has directed and written screenplays for two other feature films since the production of *Dealer.* His last two films *Ferien* (2007) and *Im Schatten* (2009) have veered away from the subject of Turkish identity in Germany. Thomas Arslan has additionally produced two documentaries entitled *Aus der Ferne* in 2005 and *Spaziergang am Rand der Demokratie* in 2007. I will be focusing on Arslan's *Geschwister-Kardesler* and *Dealer* in the next sections.

Geschwister–Kardesler

Turkish-German cinema gathered momentum with the emergence of Thomas Arslan and Fatih Akin. Arslan's second feature film, produced between 1996 and 1997, was called *Geschwister-Kardesler.* Arslan wrote the screenplay and directed the film, which examines the search for identity of three Turkish-German siblings. The film marked the start of the new wave of Turkish-German films in the late 1990s.

Geschwister-Kardesler follows three siblings, Erol, Ahmed, and Leila and focuses on the differing ways in which each character tackles the subject of his or her cultural identity: their mother is German, while their father is Turkish born and immigrated to Germany. Each of the

siblings relates to their Turkish and German heritage differently. This interracial marriage is one that reflects Arslan's personal context.

In *Geschwister-Kardesler,* the eldest brother Erol gains Turkish citizenship and joins the Turkish military. Erol's father is extremely proud of his son, while his mother is confrontational and distraught about her son's decision. Erol is faced with several problems on the streets of Berlin. He is a school drop-out with no hope of employment. Erol is involved in petty crime and a few devious deals leave him with substantial debts. Erol spends the majority of his time wandering through the streets of the suburb with no sense of belonging in German society. Erol feels he would be better off in Turkey and has more of a connection and sense of pride with his Turkish heritage, even though he has never lived in Turkey and in many ways the country represents not a real existing social-cultural alternative but rather an imaginary utopia promising redemption from his current problems. As Rob Burns argues, Erol's "resolve to join the Turkish military is not simply born out of a sense of national identification; rather, it also reflects Erol's profound disaffection with his German environment" (Burns, 12). All of Erol's friends are Turkish-Germans and speak Turkish with him. Erol expresses feelings of isolation and displacement in several conversations with his brother. Ahmed questions Erol's reasons for going to Turkey, wondering: "Was willst du denn da?" Erol asks Ahmed three times: "Was soll ich denn hier?" Erol faces racism and discrimination more than his other two siblings. He often believes people are discriminating against him more than is represented within the reality of the film. For example, in one scene a German man bumps into Erol on the street. Erol immediately starts beating the man up simply because he felt he was being discriminated against, displaying a degree of paranoia based on his sense of non-belonging.

The middle child named Ahmed identifies more with his German heritage than his two siblings. Ahmed never speaks a word of Turkish with his friends or family members. He seems not to identify with his Turkish heritage very strongly, even though he has the same background as Erol. It is interesting that Ahmed is also closer with his German mother, while Erol is quite the opposite. Ahmed does not surround himself as much with Turkish-German friends as Erol does. Ahmed has constant fights with his brother about Erol's decision to join the Turkish military. Ahmed harasses Erol over not knowing Turkish well enough and wonders how he will survive in Turkey. Ahmed has a non--confrontational and pacifist attitude and would prefer to spend his time at his girlfriend's or reading a book. The two brothers seem to have nothing in common other than blood. In contrast to Erol, Ahmed has German citizenship. Ahmed additionally studies hard towards his upcoming *Abitur.* He distances himself somewhat from his Turkish background and shows a preference for German culture and language.

Ahmed's quest for education through the process of studying for the *Abitur* shows his desire to make something of himself in German society. Undoubtedly he will go on to college and have more opportunities than his two siblings. Arslan is suggesting if one assimilates more into German society one will have more opportunities in life. In contrast to Ahmed, Leila works in a fabric factory and Erol cannot avoid trouble or problems with the police. Jessica Gallagher argues that Ahmed's "interest in studies may indicate a desire to find a way out of his marginalized suburb and an understanding that education could well be the best way" (Gallagher, 342). Ahmed thus represents many of the desires and dreams of second and third generation Turkish-Germans that wish to make more of themselves.

The younger sister Leila also faces identity issues, but in a different way. Her quest is not through education or identification with a certain culture. Rather, she is on a search for a

relationship. Like Turna in *40 Quadratmeter Deutschland,* Leila has problems with her father's controlling attitude and behavior. Leila faces challenges with her father over her new Turkish boyfriend when she wants to go with him on a trip to Hamburg and is hit by him when she tries to explain to him that she is no longer a child. Her father continually tries to impose the patriarchal traditions and his outlook on Leila. The mother, however, steps in immediately and castigates the father for his action. Arslan arguably thus critiques the Turkish patriarchal traditions through the topic of domestic abuse.

Racism and discrimination play an important role in *Geschwister-Kardesler.* The German men in the film are portrayed primarily as racist and prejudiced. In one scene, two police officers enter a pool hall where Erol and his Turkish-German friends are socializing. For no apparent reason apart from the characters' ethnicity, they demand identification and search the young men. The police officers are never violent, but clearly try to show their dominance and control over the Turkish-Germans or "non-Germans". The policemen do not search the other men playing in the pool hall, undoubtedly because they did not look Turkish. After the Turkish-Germans return to the street, they get into another altercation with two German men in camouflage pants. Gallagher presumes they are "members of a neo-Nazi style gang" (Gallagher, 341). These two encounters with non-minority Germans depict the non-minority Germans in a negative light through their racist and prejudiced attitudes. Though the policemen are unable to find anything warranting an arrest among the young Turkish men, Arslan shows how the Germans' discrimination, xenophobia, and racism towards Turkish-Germans is misguided and based on a false dichotomy that distinguishes between Turkish-Germans and "real" Germans. Yet, the Turkish-Germans appear to be the victors when the police cannot find anything. The other encounter with the two German men on the street depicts the Turkish-Germans as equally hostile. They end up

physically assaulting the non-minority Germans because of the racist words they direct at them. The Turkish-Germans snap at the neo-Nazis because they have built up rage and aggression from the constant discrimination against them. This indicates that non-minority German and Turkish-German men have great difficulties coexisting peacefully. In *Geschwister-Kardesler* non-minority Germans and Turkish-Germans appear only to be able to interact violently or through a romantic relationship. Meanwhile the non-minority German women are depicted as caring and loving and both women are in relationships with Turkish-Germans, arguably commenting about the profound impact a patriarchal Turkish background has on men in comparison to women, especially in regard to tolerant coexistence within a multicultural society.

The other two Germans in *Geschwister-Kardesler* are both women. The mother of the three siblings appears to have a strong character, is not racist, will not tolerate domestic violence, and is not afraid to express her opinion. She firmly asserts herself when her husband hits Leila. She also tries to convince Erol not to join the Turkish army. The mother appears to be Ahmed's role model and his parents represent the strong bond as well as some of the problems between the two cultures in Germany. Regardless of their race or background, they both saw themselves together, had three children, and are in a loving relationship despite certain disagreements and arguments. Non-minority Germans and Turkish-Germans not only coexist, but also have relationships and families, illustrating that it is possible to go beyond ethnicity and otherness.

The other German is a teenage girl who is good friends with Leila. Ahmed cheats on his Turkish girlfriend to be with this German girl. He finds her more attractive and can associate with her more, because she is German. Ahmed smiles at her in one scene as he hugs his Turkish girlfriend. Ahmed appears to be happier and more comfortable with the German than with the

Turkish girl, with whom he habitually fought. Ahmed identifies more with his German heritage, which is reflected in his greater ease with a German girl.

The two interracial relationships in *Geschwister-Kardesler* suggest that it is relatively common to have interracial relationships in German society. The film suggests that Turkish-Germans are capable of having meaningful romantic relationships with non-minority Germans as long as they are willing to deal with conflict in a constructive manner, thus reflecting on multicultural relations in general.

The use of language is critical for Arslan. Unlike in previous Turkish-German films, Turkish is rarely spoken in *Geschwister-Kardesler*. Language is so significant that both Turkish and German are used in the film's title. The word meaning "siblings" is hyphenated in German (*Geschwister),* and in Turkish (*Kardesler)*. This bi-lingual title represents Arslan's own background, the situation of modern Germany as a multi-lingual and multi-cultural society, and the plot of the film. While the film follows three siblings, it looks at each Turkish-German sibling's distinct attitude and outlook toward their background and their differing relationship with the German and Turkish culture and language into which they were born.

Turkish is used frequently as imagery, aesthetics, and as a background for the young Turkish-Germans in Kreuzberg. In the beginning of the film Ahmed passes a newsstand, which appears to have a large selection of only Turkish newspapers and magazines. The use of camera angles shows no visible German titles in this scene. On Berlin's streets Erol and Ahmed pass by several Turkish fast-food stands and bars playing Turkish music.

German is the primary language in the film, used at home between the siblings and their parents and the majority of the time elsewhere. Leila, Ahmed, and their parents always speak German, even though Leila has several Turkish friends. This exclusive usage of German

represents a dramatic change from films made in the 1970s and 1980s. This marks a transition in Turkish-German films and also tries to establish that Turkish-Germans increasingly transcend their hyphenated cultural status by becoming "just" Germans.

Erol is the only sibling and main character who uses Turkish. He is also surrounded by only Turkish-German friends. In one scene, Erol and three friends leave a Turkish fast-food stand, and begin speaking Turkish to each other. This scene is critical because Arslan chose not to use subtitles as the youths switch to Turkish. This is the only scene in which Turkish is spoken. This leaves the German speaking and non-Turkish speaking audience marginalized and feeling like the "other". It is a complete role reversal for the Turkish-Germans: occasionally Turkish-Germans are left marginalized due to their ethnicity and lack of German language, but rarely does this happen the other way around. Here, the Turkish-Germans can hold their heads up high as they control the spotlight and make outsiders look at them. Arslan does this to put the audience in the shoes of the Turkish-Germans in Germany, especially the guest workers and first generation Turkish-Germans who had limited German language knowledge. The audience cannot help the fact that they want to understand what is being said in this particular scene. The non-Turkish speaking viewers are left helpless and feeling marginalized.

Dealer

Arslan wrote the screenplay for and directed *Dealer* in 1999. The film is one of Arslan's most successful films. At the Berlin International Film Festival in 1999, he won the FIPRESCI Prize and the Prize of the Ecumenical Jury. The film does not thematize issues related to ethnicity and is vastly different from *Geschwister-Kardesler*, previous Turkish-German films,

and the *Gastarbeiterkino* films for a variety of reasons. For one, "there is none of the signposting seen in the previous film, such as the Turkish newspapers, signs, music, and voices that emphasize the presence of residents of Turkish origin in the city" (Gallagher, 348). A Turkish-German drug dealer named Can sells drugs to support his three-year old daughter and girlfriend Jale. Yet Arslan wants to portray Can not just as Turkish-German, but just as an individual and a common drug dealer causing problems for the police on the streets of Berlin. Sophia Matenaar suggests that the audience can be grateful for the fact that *Dealer* broke down common clichés and misperceptions.

> Vor allem für all das […], was nicht vorkommt. Kein Ghettotourismus. Keine Kulturkonfliktfolklore. Keine Taxifahrer, keine Popmüzik, keine Hochzeitsschalmeien, kein Bildergewackel, keine falsch untertitelten türkischen Flüche.

In *Dealer,* Can devotes himself almost solely to drug dealing. He does make some time for his daughter, but his time spent with his girlfriend always ends up in an argument. As a small-time dealer for the Turkish drug boss Hakan, Can works on the streets of Berlin Kreuzberg with other Turkish-German drug dealers. He frequently seems imprisoned by his life and decisions. Can's girlfriend Jale works in a warehouse of a department store and fights with Can to give up his life of crime. Can's former friend Erdal, who has now become a detective, also puts pressure on Can to get out of the drug business. Can speaks to Hakan about getting out of the drug game, and with some hesitation Hakan offers him the chance to run a bar that he owns. Can is arrested for possession shortly afterward, and Jale decides to leave him. Can runs into another Turkish friend who is studying law and he offers Can the opportunity to work at his uncle's restaurant. Can accepts the job shortly after he watches Hakan being murdered in a drive-by shooting. Finding

his work as a dishwasher meaningless, he decides to make one last drug deal. In the process, he gets arrested and is sentenced to four years in prison. As Can does not have German citizenship, the jail sentence will undoubtedly get him deported back to Turkey.

Jessica Gallagher argues that "the film continues to position Turkish-German characters on the margins of society, where they have limited freedom of movement and are under continual surveillance" (Gallagher, 345). One can argue that Arslan replaces one stereotype with another. The previous stereotypical role would have had a Turk as a taxi driver or factory worker, and in *Dealer* a Turkish-German is just another criminal. Is a Turkish taxi driver better or worse than a Turkish drug dealer? Halle argues that the film and Arslan's camera work "against the cliché criminal image of the mustached, slick Turk hiding in the background with his gun aimed at the innocent German" (Halle, 152). Arslan himself also commented that, "the task was, not to avoid the clichés absolutely--because one can't narrate anything then--rather to dissolve them in the course of the film, in order to make visible another reality" (as quoted in Halle, 152).

Dealer has two small scenes in which the Turkish language is used. In one scene Can deals drugs in front of an apartment building and is pushed by a Turkish-German female resident, who first curses at him in Turkish and then threatens him: "Wenn ich dich nochmals hier sehe, rufe ich die Polizei." The Turkish-German woman refrains from swearing in German; rather she does it in Turkish to make it more personal for Can. It is possible that she swears in her primary language rather than her second language (German). However, she curses Can out in Turkish so he can understand that he has disturbed another Turkish-German and should be ashamed of his behavior. For the woman, her Turkish identity may be stronger than her German one, yet the scene also reiterates the fluidity of hyphenated immigrant existences in modern societies, oscillating between two cultures with speed and ease depending on the context.

The other scene where Turkish is spoken is when Can speaks to his Turkish friend's uncle about working at his restaurant. The scene features just the two, casually speaking in Turkish without subtitles. As in *Geschwister-Kardesler,* Arslan also chose not to use subtitles in this particular scene in *Dealer.* The non-Turkish speaking audience can infer that they are probably talking about the work which Can will be doing, yet it remains unclear. This one scene leaves non-Turkish speaking viewers marginalized and left out of the conversation. It is possible that the only way the old man can speak with Can is in Turkish. The old man can clearly not communicate efficiently in German and must resort to the language with which he is comfortable, which turns Germans into the outsiders, reproducing for them the old man's position in society.

In *Dealer* non-minority German characters are represented as the minority on screen. Arslan clearly establishes certain expectations through the use of opening credits that display all of the actor's names in Turkish. There are only a few non-minority Germans in *Dealer* and they have minor roles in the film. Some non-minority Germans are used as extras, while others are drug users looking for a connection with the dealer. The few Germans are portrayed as insignificant to the Turkish-Germans and are rather unimportant to the plot. The Germans are not portrayed as racist, xenophobic or discriminatory as earlier films have often depicted them. Turkish-Germans are the overwhelming majority on screen as they rule the streets of this part of Berlin. Every main character in *Dealer* is a Turkish-German and speaks German as a matter of course.

In one scene two German youths approach Can and another drug dealer in a park. Nonchalantly they ask Can to score some cocaine. They claim they are from a small town around Stuttgart and are merely looking for drugs. Can is hesitant to sell them drugs because they have

never bought from him and because one of the Germans has never tried cocaine. Can's moral convictions shine through as he almost refuses to sell them drugs. In this one scene Can appears to have control and authority over these two desperate German youths, as he will ultimately decide whether or not to sell them drugs. The Germans are marginalized by Can's power. This is also the only time in the film where Can does not appear as a low-level drug runner, but rather as someone with agency, able to make decisions.

The only other Germans who have speaking lines are police officers. One German police officer is a Turkish officer's partner. The Turkish officer named Erdal has complete control over the streets and their partnership. Erdal is represented as the smarter, more powerful, and more manipulative police officer who also happens to be friends with Can. The German police officer's name is not given, which shows his insignificance and lack of power. The German is portrayed as impatient and arrogant, as he tries to tell Erdal not to bother with Can because he is a useless lowlife. He demeans Can and the other drug dealers as if they are not worth their time. Erdal brushes off the German officer's comments to show that he has the power and final say. However, in no way is the German police officer portrayed as racist or discriminatory, which is the opposite of the two police officers in *Geschwister-Kardesler.*

The German police officer's lack of power and control in the partnership with Erdal is very similar to the two German youths trying to buy drugs. The Turkish drug dealer controls the situation with the drugs while the Turkish cop has the final say over the German. The other indication of the insignificance of Germans is that they remain nameless and hardly any personal information is given about them. Arslan makes the Germans' role in *Dealer* as unimportant and insignificant as possible, in turn making them the minority on screen. Turkish-Germans are the largest minority in Germany and in parts of some cities they are a significant part of the

population. The reversal of minority and majority roles by Arslan is a method to show Germany's development into a multi-cultural society and of thematizing the complex issues surrounding questions of national identity and culture in the world today.

CHAPTER 5

FATIH AKIN AND HIS FILMS

Fatih Akin was born August 25, 1973 in Hamburg, Germany to Turkish immigrants, making him a second generation Turkish-German. In 1965, Akin's father Mustafa Enver Akin emigrated from Turkey to work as a factory worker in West Germany. His mother Hadiye immigrated in 1968 to become a primary school teacher in the Federal Republic. Akin's older brother Cem works in the Turkish consulate and has played various roles in Akin's films.

Akin began his career as an actor playing small roles in films and television productions in the early 1990s. One of the main reasons he started to make his own films was because he no longer wanted to play the 'stereotype Turk' "where migrants could only appear in one guise: as a problem" (Burns, 142). In 1994, Akin studied visual communication at Hamburg's College of Visual Arts. While attending college, Akin directed a short film entitled *Getürkt* and continued to write a screenplay called *Kurz und schmerzlos.* The latter was made into a feature film, which marked the beginning of Akin's career. *Kurz und schmerzlos,* "attempts to mix ethnicities and focuses on social positions at the margins of the urban underworld" (Göktürk, 72). Akin has won various German, European, and International film awards. His films *Gegen die Wand* and *Auf der anderen Seite* have been the most successful in Germany and internationally.

Akin currently resides in Hamburg, which is the setting and film location for at least a portion of *Kurz und Schmerzlos, Im Juli, Gegen die Wand,* and *Auf der anderen Seite*. Turkish-Germans are currently the largest minority living in Hamburg, with roughly 58,154 Turkish residents (see *Statistisches Jahrbuch*). The city streets of Hamburg Altona are depicted as being

dominated and controlled by Turkish-Germans in Akin's films. However, Akin does not represent the Turkish-Germans as clichéd guest workers. Akin is very successful because he

> playfully undermines persisting stereotypes of Turks as wells as what 'ethnic' filmmaking is supposed to be about, by reversing character roles, using space subversively, and undercutting audience expectations and genre conventions (Fachinger, 254).

The Turkish-Germans in the films speak German the majority of the time and often refrain from using the Turkish language. Akin approaches his films with the attitude to no longer portray Turkish-Germans as primarily immigrants. However, during the 2004 Berlinale, Akin still had to repudiate people labeling *Gegen die Wand* as a 'guest-worker film.' Most critics and scholars at this point in time were unsure of how to label this newer type of film. Since *Gegen die Wand's* success, films by Akin and other minority directors have often been termed either Turkish-German or ethnic/minority cinema. As mentioned earlier, the label Turkish-German appears to be used more prevalently, as can be seen in Halle, Gallagher, and Burns.

One of the reasons for much of the scholarly research and international acclaim of Fatih Akin is the fact that he addresses at least three major audiences: German, Turkish, and Turkish German.

Kurz und Schmerzlos

Kurz und schmerzlos was written and directed by Fatih Akin in 1998. The film launched his directing career and won several awards. At the Thessaloniki Film Festival in 1998 Mehmet Kurtulus won best actor while Akin was nominated for the Golden Alexander. At the German

Film Awards in 1999, *Kurz und schmerzlos* was nominated for Outstanding Feature Film and for Outstanding Individual Achievement: Direction. At the Bavarian Film Awards in 1999 Akin won Bavarian Film Award for Best Direction—Young Film (*Regienachwuchspreis*). The film was nominated for the Bronze Leopard at Locarno and the three main male actors won the "Special Prize."

In *Kurz und schmerzlos* three men with diverse ethnic backgrounds deal with life in Hamburg, Germany while succumbing to a life of crime and violence. Gabriel is a Turk who has just gotten out of prison and who wishes to change the way he lives his life. Gabriel's dream is to return to the southern Turkish coast where his parents are from and own a boat rental shop, a utopia that, similarly to the one in Arslan's film, is imaginary rather than experiential. Bobby is a Serb whose dream is the opposite of Gabriel's. He wants to become a glamorized mobster in organized crime reminiscent of Al Pacino in *Scarface*. Despite opposition from his family and friends, Bobby joins the Albanian mafia in Hamburg. Costa is a crazy and humorous Greek who has trouble deciding between a life of crime or to change his life like his good friend Gabriel. Akin takes "elements from the gangster film, the noir aesthetics, and a hip-hop inspired ghetto sensibility to show how three good friends, a Turk, a Serb, and a Greek" (Hake, 218) search for their own identities and question their morality. All three men are criminals and live a "gangster" lifestyle at some point.

The opening scene of the film is of two gangs fighting and assaulting one another as the opening credits role. Presumably these men fighting one another are a group of Turks (or men of another minority) and a group of non-minority Germans, likely skin heads judging from their bomber jackets, camouflage patterns, and heavy army boots. This is another portrayal in film underlining the fact that Turkish-German and non-minority German men seemingly cannot be

tolerant of one another. This again is similar to Arslan's *Geschwister-Kardesler* where Erol and his friends are confronted by racist cops and then the neo-Nazis on the street. *Kurz und schmerzlos* depicts in the opening scene this hatred and bad blood between Turkish-Germans and racist and violent non-minority Germans.

Kurz und Schmerzlos is Akin's first feature film in which he decided to confront minority stereotypes. The film plays with common stereotypes, represented by three best friends with different European heritages. The three men speak a common language (German) and have common friendships. It is often believed that a Turkish person could never be friends with a Greek for historical and political reasons. This is just one of the common stereotypes abandoned in this film by Fatih Akin, in this case through the friendship of Costa and Gabriel.

In *Kurz und Schmerzlos* Germans are again represented as the minority on screen, while Turkish-Germans and other ethnic minorities constitute the majority in the film. The two significant German characters are Alice and Sven. Sven plays more of a "symbolic role" (Fachinger, 255), while Alice has a main part in the film. Alice is a beautiful German woman. She is Ceyda's best friend and falls in love with Gabriel. Alice is portrayed as a strong, modern and independent woman who does not want to be around violence. She refuses to have anything to do with the Albanian mobster and in one scene convinces Gabriel temporarily to give her his gun. One could read the romantic relationship between Alice and Gabriel, in which Alice becomes Gabriel's savior, as inverting the common model of the German man rescuing the Turkish woman.

It is interesting that two of the main Turkish characters have relationships with Germans and not with other Turkish-Germans, or on the flip side, that both Germans are in relationships with non-Germans. Fachinger argues that "by focusing on the conflicts within the Turkish

community and between Turkish Germans and other ethnic minority groups in Germany, Akin avoids casting his Turkish protagonists as cultural outsiders and perpetual victims" (Fachinger 255).

Ceyda enters into a relationship with a non-minority German, which is no more acceptable from a traditional Turkish point of view than dating a Greek. Ceyda could care less that he is German, because all that matters is that Sven treats her with respect, has a good job, and is not into drugs. Her German boyfriend Sven shows his strength and fighting ability by beating up both Bobby and Costa. However, after he punches Gabriel, Sven is not able to defend himself. Gabriel is the victor over Sven. This is another instance in which non-minority Germans and minorities only have a relationship based upon hatred or love. Within the narrative, it is likely that Sven's defeat is more of a comment about Gabriel's power and masculinity, rather than about his ethnicity. The fact that a Turkish-German woman is able to have a loving relationship with Sven, yet the three minority men cannot be peaceful with a German man, suggests that Akin is critiquing society here in a manner similar to Arslan, inferring that these two groups should be capable of getting along and maintaining friendships, yet that the immigrants' patriarchal upbringings seem to create problems. This issue between Turkish-German and non-minority men is the same problem Arslan confronted in *Geschwister-Kardesler.*

Language use is also crucial in *Kurz und Schmerzlos.* Akin's films are primarily multi-lingual using Turkish, German, and sometimes also English. Five different languages are used throughout *Kurz und Schmerzlos*. The primary language spoken is German, while Turkish is used on a number of occasions. English is spoken a couple times by Bobby as he pretends to be an American mobster. Greek is used by Costa and Serbian is used by Bobby's family.

Turkish is used several times between Gabriel and his father as well as between Gabriel and Ceyda. Compared to Arslan's films, Turkish is used considerably more by Akin. The purpose of using Turkish by Gabriel and Ceyda is to leave the non-Turkish speaking characters out of the conversation. Turkish marginalizes the non-Turkish speaking characters on screen. However, the audience is not left in the dark, because these scenes have subtitles. Akin represents the city of Hamburg as being multi-lingual and multi-cultural, showing that German society and culture has changed and that monlingualism is no longer the norm. This generation of Turkish-Germans additionally has the capability to speak both German and Turkish fluently. Turkish is spoken a few times between Gabriel and his sister Ceyda to avoid conflict with their non-Turkish speaking friends. It is almost as if it is a secret language between siblings, a way to avoid their friends' judgment and keep things personal between them. In the scene after Ceyda breaks up with Costa, Gabriel speaks to her in front of Bobby only in Turkish. Bobby does not know what is said or care to ask. Towards the end of the film Ceyda speaks to Gabriel in Turkish in front of Alice about Costa. Alice is left in the dark in this scene. She asks Gabriel and Ceyda what they were talking about, as she watches Gabriel reach for his gun. Ceyda replies "nichts." Clearly, Alice desperately wants to know what they are talking about because she senses the importance and urgency. She is left helpless, even though she genuinely wants to help.

The Turkish language is also the means of communication for Gabriel and his father. Gabriel's father never utters a word of German or appears to have assimilated within German society. This depiction of the father shows the generation gap between first and second generation Turkish-Germans in Germany. Gabriel's father is very similar to the depiction of Turkish-Germans in the New German Cinema. Gabriel can only communicate with his father in Turkish. In two scenes his father asks Gabriel to pray with him. In another scene he confronts

Gabriel for being outside for over an hour during his brother's wedding reception. His father appears family oriented, extremely devout to the Muslim religion, and avoids confrontation with Gabriel. It is interesting to note, that the father never speaks to Ceyda, perhaps alluding to the shift in influence regarding Turkish-German women from the first to the second generation as seen in the absence of interaction between Ceyda and her father and her relationship with Gabriel.

In *Kurz und schmerzlos* Akin plays with Turkish-German stereotypes. He depicts the main characters as having transcultural identity issues. Alice and Sven are portrayed as the minorities on screen, and both are involved in romantic relationships with Turkish-Germans. Akin represents Hamburg as a multi-cultural and multi-lingual city catering to a diverse group of residents and representing a changing social and cultural national German landscape.

Gegen die Wand

Gegen die Wand is widely considered to be the most successful Turkish-German film ever made. The film was a landmark for Akin and Turkish-German cinema. In addition to winning twenty-three different awards, it was nominated for eleven others in various film festivals throughout Europe. At the Berlin International Film Festival in 2004 Fatih Akin won the Golden Berlin Bear and the FIPRESCI Prize.

In *Gegen die Wand* a Turkish-German named Cahit has completely given up on his life. After the death of his German wife Katharina he attempts to cope by drinking heavily and abusing cocaine. Depression overwhelms him until one night he crashes his car into a wall and

barely survives. At the hospital he meets a Turkish-German woman named Sibel who changes his life. Sibel is also a Turkish-German who had attempted suicide. Sibel is tired of her family's pressure to marry a Turkish man and of their traditional values constantly being imposed on her. She wants to live life to the fullest and enjoy sexual liberation with as many partners as she pleases. When Sibel meets Cahit she sees him as a perfect solution to her problem. While in the hospital, she immediately asks Cahit to marry her based on the fact that he is Turkish. Sibel realizes that she and Cahit can live together as a "married couple" and still live their separate lives. This will alleviate the pressure from her parents to marry. After much persuasion Cahit agrees to the marriage and after the wedding they become merely roommates. Sibel continues her pursuit of individual and sexual freedom with multiple partners.

As Cahit and Sibel's friendship develops, Cahit falls in love with Sibel. Sibel rejects Cahit when he wants to have sex with her because she believes if they succumb to their desires they will each have to be faithful to each other in a "normal marriage". However, after this encounter Sibel realizes that she too loves Cahit, and wishes to live as part of a monogamous couple. After leaving the apartment, Cahit ends up in his regular local bar. While drinking beer, a German man who slept with Sibel begins to harass and provoke Cahit. The German uses derogatory terms and demeans Sibel. With one punch Cahit knocks out and kills the German man, which earns him a prison sentence of a few years.

The news of the murder ends up in the paper and Sibel's brother takes it to their parent's house. Her brother wants to kill Sibel, but cannot catch up with her on the streets. The family tries to save their honor by burning Sibel's pictures and disowning her. Sibel attempts suicide once more, before she decides that she must leave for Istanbul. She becomes a housekeeper in a hotel in Istanbul and continues her life of self destruction. One night she passes out drunk in a

bar and is raped by a Turkish bartender. On her way back home in a bout of self-destructivity she provokes three Turkish men and they attack and beat her severely until she is finally stabbed by one of the men. A taxi driver arrives shortly afterwards and saves her life. Years later Cahit is released from prison and departs for Istanbul. He finds Sibel living a happier life with a new husband and a daughter. After a few days of sexual encounters, Cahit asks Sibel to leave with him. She originally accepts, however, she then realizes how happy her daughter is with her husband and that she does not want to go back to this former life. In an ambiguous ending, Cahit sits on a bus alone headed to the city he grew up in (Mersin) in the final scene.

Gegen die Wand is another example of a Turkish-German film where Germans play the minority role. The film has only one major German character. There are additional Germans that play minor roles. Maren is a German woman who has an emotional and sexual relationship with Cahit. Maren appears to have no self esteem, which is why she takes physical, emotional, and mental abuse from Cahit. She clearly loves Cahit, yet understands that he only wants one thing from her. Cahit treats her terribly throughout most of the film, but when he wants to have sex, Maren is always there waiting and willing. In the beginning of the film Maren walks over to Cahit in a bar and he yells at her to "piss off." Maren succumbs to snorting cocaine, drinking alcohol, appears trashy, and does not have enough self respect to stay away from Cahit. The jealousy toward Sibel is extremely apparent in Maren's behavior and attitude towards Sibel.

Gegen die Wand also incorporates interracial Turkish-German relationships into the film. Maren is the second non-minority German woman with whom Cahit has a relationship. Cahit was previously married to a German and apparently lost his wife in tragic circumstances. Cahit eventually loses interest and any desires he might have for Maren, when he falls in love with

Sibel. Ultimately, the beautiful Turkish woman wins over his heart, which leaves Maren devastated.

The Turkish, German, and English languages are prevalent throughout *Gegen die Wand.* Conversations will casually switch between Turkish and German, and then English and Turkish depending on the speakers. "The characters have a strong foundation of existence in both places. They have linguistic familiarity: communicative competence in more than one language, more than one register, more than one cultural setting" (Halle, 168). Although Sibel was born in Germany and Cahit in Turkey, his perfect German proves that he came to Germany as a very young child. Sibel has close contacts with relatives in Turkey, while Cahit has no family in Turkey. Sibel is fluent in Turkish whereas Cahit's is only rudimentary. Cahit is a Turkish-German who was born in Turkey, however, his Turkish is considered weak by his in-laws, and they often question his true Turkish identity. In one particular scene Turkish and German are both used by the characters sitting around the table. Sibel's brother Cem communicates with Cahit primarily in German. This marginalizes Sibel's parents, who do not appear to understand German. Cem remarks to Cahit that his Turkish is bad. Cem says this in Turkish so his parents can hear him, and then switches to German and asks "was hast du mit dem Tuerkisch gemacht?" Cahit replies "weg geworfen." Cem insults Cahit in German and Cahit replies back just as crudely in German. This short little scuffle between Cem and Cahit encapsulates the difficult push-and-pull experienced by people living transcultural lives, and it also marginalizes the Turkish parents since they have no knowledge of German. Sibel and Cem's parents are similar to Gabriel's father in *Kurz und schmerzlos.* These Turks represent the first generation Turks in Germany, while Gabriel, Cahit, and Sibel represent the second generation. Sibel and Cem take advantage of the

parent's German linguistic inability, even though Cem also does this as a means to protect his parents from understanding everything.

Turkish and English are also used in *Gegen die Wand*. When Cahit visits Selma in Istanbul, he never speaks a word of German. Their conversation is mainly in Turkish until Cahit switches to English. Cahit tries to find out where Sibel is in the city. However, Selma does not want to inform him in order to protect her cousin. Burns argues that:

> Cahit fights back the tears before confessing to Selma how Sibel has changed his life and empowered him. Significantly, however, Cahit cannot bring himself to deliver this poignant little speech in Turkish and, since Selma does not speak German, he switches to English (Burns, 17).

Cahit is linguistically challenged with aspects of Turkish, which is why he resorts to English. English is also used by another German, Dr. Schiller, who recites the lyrics from the band "The The." Dr. Schiller says to Cahit, "If you can't change the world, change your world." Dr. Schiller quotes the song in English, because the lyrics are from a British band. Yet this scene is interesting because Dr. Schiller is a non-minority German speaking to a Turkish-German in English, the modern-day lingua franca around the globe, thus alluding once again to the globalized world in which Dr. Schiller and Cahit live. The switching between three languages in both countries Germany and Turkey represents the multi-lingual capability of non-minority Germans, Turkish-Germans, and Turks and hence an aspect of the developing transculturalism in Europe.

Auf der anderen Seite

Fatih Akin's *Auf der anderen Seite* is considered to be his second most successful film in Germany and internationally. Akin both wrote and directed the film, which won twenty-two awards in 2007. At the Cannes Film Festival in 2007 Akin won the award for Best Screenplay. The film and its actors won awards across Europe and North America.

Auf der anderen Seite takes place in Bremen and Hamburg, as well as in Istanbul. Nejat is a Germanic studies professor in Hamburg who lives with his father in Bremen. Father and son do not rely on Turkish as their means of communication or on their Turkish friends and family. As a professor who specializes in the works of Goethe, Nejat represents the new generation of Turkish-Germans in Germany who have become more integrated and assimilated into German society and are able to do anything, including teaching the author who epitomizes "Germanness" and German national culture.

Nejat's father Ali meets a Turkish prostitute named Yeter. Ali requests that she move in with him, which he would pay for. Yeter agrees after she is confronted by two Turkish men who ask her to repent for her sins as a prostitute. Yeter is accidentally killed by Ali, who slapped her in a drunken rage. This homicide distances Ali and Nejat's already strained relationship even further. Nejat tells his cousin that "a murderer is not my father." After Yeter's death Nejat travels to Istanbul to search for Yeter's daughter Ayten, feeling guilty for his father's fatal mistake. Nejat posts flyers all over Istanbul searching for Ayten. The flyers, written first in German and then in Turkish, represent the globalized world, their dual language addressing both Turkish and German speakers in Istanbul, of whom there are obviously plenty. Nejat ultimately decides to stay in Istanbul to search for Ayten and stumbles upon a German bookstore that is for sale. Ironically, he

purchases the bookstore from a Turkish-German who is homesick for Germany and wishes to return there.

Auf der anderen Seite is a multi-lingual film with German, Turkish, and English as the primary languages spoken. The characters switch between languages with ease in a few different scenes. Nejat switches between German and Turkish with his father, yet primarily speaks German with Yeter. It is as though Nejat does not want to associate with the language spoken by a prostitute, namely Turkish. Turkish, however, is one of the few things Nejat seems to share with his father. Nejat is completely ashamed that Ali brought Yeter to their home. It is also possible that Nejat is testing Yeter's German language ability as a means to see how well she is assimilated. Yeter switches between Turkish and German with Nejat initially until she realizes that he will only speak German with her.

Turkish is also obviously used in Istanbul by Ayten and the other Turkish-Germans living in the city. When Nejat moves to Istanbul, he primarily speaks Turkish. He does speak German with the German bookstore owner, Lotte, and then Susanne. The English language is spoken by Ayten, Lotte, and Susanne. Ayten does not have knowledge of the German language, so she is forced to speak English with Lotte and Susanne.

Revolutionary activist Ayten leaves Istanbul to flee the police's search for her in order to search for her mother in Germany. Ayten is befriended by a young woman name Lotte. For once in her life Lotte feels she has a purpose, which is to help Ayten. Lotte invites Ayten to live with her at her mother's house. Lotte's mother Susanne is taken aback by her daughter's naivety inviting a stranger to come live with them. Ayten and Lotte quickly fall in love with each other. They quarrel over Ayten's beliefs and Turkey's existence in Europe. Ayten asks Lotte to help her find her mother. When Ayten is arrested and her asylum plea is denied, she is deported and

imprisoned in Turkey. Lotte travels to Turkey, in hope of freeing Ayten. Lotte's mother is completely against her daughter trying to help Ayten. Susanne cuts her daughter off financially, and Lotte is forced to find somewhere to live. Lotte attempts to bring a gun to the radical group, but has her purse stolen from her by three Turkish children. Lotte is fatally shot by the boy. Susanne moves to Istanbul and finds herself helping Ayten. She is able to free Ayten from prison, and the two become civil with each other as they live in Nejat's apartment.

Auf der anderen Seite is a film about characters caught between two cultures, their German identity, and their Turkish heritage. All of the characters are searching for their identities and deal with their Turkish heritage in more or less constructive ways. Germans are portrayed as the minority on screen, while Turkish-Germans are depicted as the majority. The two main non-minority German characters are Lotte and Susanne. They are depicted in a more positive light than was the case in earlier Turkish-German films, suggesting the progression in overcoming the dichotomous state of German and German-Turkish existence. Here, there is no racism, discrimination, or xenophobia. Lotte is portrayed as a generous, trusting, and friendly German who sincerely wants to help out Ayten. In the end Lotte appears to be too trusting and naive, which leads to her death. The love relationship between Lotte and Ayten is another example of a successful interracial relationship between a Turk and a non-minority German.

Susanne is the only other main German character. She is originally portrayed as a more traditional German woman. She says to Susanne that "it is nice that you allowed a stranger to come live with us." There is no statement of racism or discrimination, rather a statement that shows how uncomfortable Susanne is with an unknown person invading her living space. She is unwilling to change until she loses her daughter, and she also belongs to an older generation that

still seems to have greater problems with the multicultural and increasingly globalized state of life in Germany and the world at large.

Auf der anderen Seite is another film by Fatih Akin that thematizes transcultural issues between Turkey and Germany. The film is multi-cultural and multi-lingual, incorporating German, Turkish, and English. The romance between Ayten and Lotte represents a modern view of an interracial and homosexual relationship. Nejat represents the progress that Turkish-Germans have made professionally in society by teaching the works of Goethe. *Auf der anderen Seite* is yet another film that explores Turkish-German hybrid identities, multi-culturalism, and multi-lingualism in a transcultural context that is constantly in flux, thus calling into question traditional notions of identity and nationhood today.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Turks have been the largest minority in Germany since 1971. Within ten years of the guest worker agreement between Turkey and the Federal Republic, Turkey became the largest minority in West Germany. Turkish-German directors have made this apparent in their films. Thomas Arslan and Fatih Akin turn the minority role that Turkish-Germans experience in empirical reality around by making non-minority Germans appear as the minority on screen. This role reversal represents the modern multi-culturalism in Germany. Akin and Arslan have reconstructed Germany the way in which Turkish-Germans experience it, where Germans may often be the minority at their workplace or their living space, while simultaneously calling into question traditional notions of what it means to be German. Turkish-Germans are portrayed as the majority in *Geschwister-Kardesler, Dealer, Kurz und schmerzlos, Gegen die Wand,* and *Auf der anderen Seite,* while non-minority Germans are seen as the minority. Each of these five films features relatively small numbers of Germans and they typically have smaller roles. The Germans' inability to speak Turkish leaves them marginalized in conversations and, by extension, in the culture surrounding them on screen, thereby reproducing the traditional position of immigrants for non-immigrants.

Interracial relationships are prevalent in both Thomas Arslan and Fatih Akin's films. Turkish-Germans are able to have meaningful loving relationships with non-minority Germans. In *Kurz und schmerzlos* there are only two Germans. Both Germans have relationships with main Turkish characters. In *Gegen die Wand*, Sibel dates a German man while Cahit mentions that he

was married to a German woman and has a sexual relationship with Maren. In *Auf der anderen Seite*, Lotte (German) has a lesbian relationship with a Turkish girl. In *Geschwister-Kardesler*, the mother is German and her son Ahmed leaves his Turkish girlfriend for a German girl. Akin and Arslan have clearly established that non-minority Germans and Turkish-Germans can have romantic relationships, but it is difficult for the male members of these two groups to coexist and be peaceful, which could be read as commentary on the patriarchal structures and their adjacent difficulties still particularly prevalent in Turkey and Turkish communities. *Dealer* and *Auf der anderen Seite* are the only films that do not depict physical or emotional violence between Turkish-German and non-minority German males. Turkish-Germans and non-minority Germans physically assault one another in *Kurz und schmerzlos, Gegen die Wand,* and *Geschwister-Kardesler* while there are overall racial tensions in *Geschwister-Kardesler* and *Dealer*, reiterating the long and slow process of integration and the difficulties of learning how to tolerate difference on a personal and societal level.

Many of the films by Akin and Arslan portray not just Germany but also Turkey and often Europe as a whole as increasingly multi-lingual and multi-cultural societies that are becoming ever more globalized and transcultural. They both have asserted that Germany is no longer a monolingual society, and that Turkish-Germans today must be considered "German" by non-minority Germans as a matter of course. In doing so, Thomas Arslan tries to overcome the dichotomous (and often seen as mutually exclusive) category of Turkish-German, while Fatih Akin celebrates the diverse aspects that constitute it.

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