A Country of Immigration? Situating German Multiculturalism in the New Europe

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A COUNTRY OF IMMIGRATION? SITUATING GERMAN MULTICULTURALISM

IN THE NEW EUROPE

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A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of Social Sciences

University of Denver

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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by

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June 2011

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Title: A COUNTRY OF IMMIGRATION? SITUATING GERMAN
MULTICULTURALISM IN THE NEW EUROPE
Advisor: Dr. Kate Willink
Degree Date: June 2011

Abstract

This dissertation addresses a complex cultural and social phenomenon: German multiculturalism in the framework of the European Union in the century of globalization and global migration. I use selected cinematographic works by Fatih Akin, currently the most celebrated German and European filmmaker, as cultural texts. This project illuminates cultural controversies, political complexities, and the discriminatory nature of German multiculturalism. Specifically, I show how and why the German society eagerly accepts and successfully integrates Italian immigrants, yet, culturally marginalizes and socially excludes the Turks. My work illuminates how complex historical and political processes of the past, guided by the principle of Euro-centricity, affect the multicultural dynamics in the German society. I also analyze Akin's positionality as filmmaker, political figure, and a poster-child of contemporary German and European cinema.

This project invites critical re-consideration of the question of cultural diversity in Germany and in Europe and suggests transformative approaches towards multiculturalism. I use de-colonizing, critical cultural and critical feminist theories as well as art narrative with elements of performance ethnography for theoretical and methodological framework of my work. The aim of this dissertation is to contribute to the on-going scholarly, political and cultural research in the fields of multiculturalism, identity, and politics of inclusion.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr. Kate Willink for her dedication to this project and the insights she has provided throughout its various stages. She has been an inspiration in her teaching, writing, and scholarship; and I am very fortunate to have her as my academic adviser. I would also like to extend my gratitude to my committee: Dr. Bernadette Marie Calafell, Dr. Darrin Hicks, and Dr. Frédérique Chevillot. I greatly appreciate their willingness to participate and their guidance. I would also like to thank my family: my parents, who serve as extraordinary role models; my brother Oleg, whose love and care always give me strength; my sons, Leon and Lars, who show me how rewarding it is to combine motherhood and academic work; and finally my husband Philip Hörhager. Philip, you are a friend and a partner in every sense. I can never thank you enough for your support, love, and consistency throughout our lives, lives of our children, and my professional development.

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to the memory of a beautiful mind, Pavel Fedorovitch Subbotenko.

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Chapter One: Introduction & Research Motivation: Challenging German Multiculturalism, Revisiting Cultural Memory & Introducing Fatih Akin

Salience of Research on Multiculturalism in the Global/ized World

> *German multiculturalism is dead.*
>
> (German Chancellor Angela Merkel, 2010)

> *Germany is a country of immigration, and also therefore multicultural. We do not celebrate this, we simply emphasize the fact. Where there is multiculturalism, there is also confusion. Multicultural society: that is, in a sense, another word for the diversity and lack of uniformity of all modern societies that want to be open societies. This tendency is irreversible.*
>
> (Cohn-Bendit & Schmid, 1993, p. 11)

> *There is hardly any dispute among those who deal seriously with these questions that we will also need immigration in the future – indeed it is in our own interest. This holds true not only for Germany, but also for the other western countries.*
>
> (German President Johannes Rau, 1993)

> *Movies do not merely offer us the opportunity to reimagine the culture we most intimately know on the screen, they make culture.*
>
> (bell hooks, 1996, p. 12)

In the current century of globalization and ongoing migration, issues of national and cultural belonging, identification of self, the other, and the self with relation to other matter enormously. Globalization processes are not just economic, but also involve social, political, and cultural forces. Bit by bit, these forces provide us with another perspective, from which we see more clearly: 1) the growing interdependence of social, political and economic arenas; 2) communities at risks of social marginalization and exclusion; 3) the networks of shared fate among those marginalized communities, which

can be otherwise understood as commonality and often solidarity among the "others." (Habermas, 2001, p. 55) Many western countries are considered to be the most developed worldwide economically and politically. They naturally attract various immigrant communities and are often perceived as social arenas of opportunities by many immigrants, often turning into their final destinations and homeplaces.

Among various western societies, Germany represents a very interesting and fertile research field with regard to immigration as a host country with a unique cultural past and an even more challenging present and future with regard to cultural diversity. Current extension of the European Union as well as the ongoing discussions of potential Turkey membership in the upcoming years make the study on immigration in Germany absolutely necessary, due to the fact that Germany is a homeplace of the largest Turkish immigrant population (around three million Turks reside in Germany). Furthermore, currently Germany (and Europe in general) is undergoing complex processes of re-shifting not only geographical but also political and rhetorical borders (e.g., Flores, 2003; Anzaldúa, 2002; Inda, 2000; Ayim, 1998; Braidotti, 1994). These processes greatly affect what Bohrer (1991) and Habermas (2001) define as "German national sentiments" (i.e., emotional disposition of the native Germans) with regard to cultural diversity whose numbers and varieties in the respective country are constantly increasing. Demographically, Germany is indeed a multicultural society, resisting however the idea of inclusive multiculturalism, not being able to either properly integrate or communicate with cultural "others" without "othering" them (Harnisch, Stokes, & Weidauer, 1998; Wagner, 1998).

Germany certainly has very complicated and controversial past relations with cultural diversity. Although the country does not have the typical Eurocentric records of slavery and colonialism like, for example, the United States or France, its cultural memory is inevitably marked by initiation of two World Wars, the nesting of Nazism, the Holocaust, and exercising a horrible genocide. In the 1930s and 1940s, radical ideas about their own Arian-based superiority deprived Germans of any tolerance and acceptance of any non-Germans of non-Arian origin. Yet, after the Second World War, Germany was forced to open up its borders to cultural "others." In the history of Germany, the 1950s and the 1960s marked the breakthrough of multiculturalism – and this in the country that for centuries has been taking pride in the purity of its race. The post-war economy and the fast growing demand in cheap and numerous labor force made Germany (its western part at that time) open up its borders for what became a cultural phenomenon in itself – the first generations of *Gastarbeiter* (guest workers).

Critically re-visiting *Gastarbeiter* pages of German history is vital not only for understanding the very essence of German multiculturalism *per se* but also for understanding the reasons of its malfunctioning as well as suggesting practical strategies for changing its nature into inclusive and transformative. In other words, the processes of establishing and promoting multiculturalism, creating non-marginalizing discourses with cultural diversity, as well as inclusive communities of cross-cultural dialogues are long overdue in Germany.

This dissertation will critically explore the specificities and the politics of representation of cultural "others" in the contemporary German multicultural cinematography. I have chosen cinematography because, whether we like it or not,

cinema assumes a pedagogical role in the lives of many people, and serves as a perfect

means of teaching culture. As suggested by hooks (1996),

> Movies remain the perfect vehicle for the introduction of certain ritual rites of
> passage that come to stand for the quintessential experience of cultural border
> crossing for everyone who wants to take a look at difference and the different
> without having to experientially engage with "the other." (p. 12)

In other words, movies are cultural journeys with limited risks for those who expose

themselves to the challenges of world travel to the unknown side of the "other," whose

cinematographic identities are both political but also representative of the society. With

regard to the cinematography, I consider representations cultural processes that constitute

individual and collective identities. Representations also serve as signifying practices and

symbolic systems that discursively constitute and reproduce meanings and subject

positions, with which we identify (Hall, 1996; Woodward, 1997). The question of

identifying with art goes beyond the issue of representation *per se* (hooks, 1995); it is

representative of the entire society and its politics of inclusion or exclusion – one of the

foci of my dissertation.

Another reason why I have chosen cinematography is because I consider myself a

critical feminist. Critical feminists who informed and inspired my research (e.g., hooks

1984, 1996, 1996; Foss, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2004; Woodward, 1997), did a tremendous

amount of work in the field of visual politics. Their conceptualization of politics of

representation of cultural diversity contributes to both the theoretical and methodological

paradigms of my dissertation. For example, in her essays on intercultural films in *Reel to

Real,* hooks (1996) explores the ways transgressive imagery of a non-white "other" is

used in the work of multicultural filmmakers without challenging stereotypes of the

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existing structures of domination. In her work with visual rhetoric, Sonja Foss (1988) argues that for members of marginalized groups, artwork creates a new forum for participation in public dialogue. Even more importantly, Foss explains that the display of identity in a public, aesthetic way creates a place for that group's discourse in the web of social relations. Similarly, Woodward (1997) and Minh-ha (1999) also emphasize salience of representation in the process of formation and reformation of cultural identity – a further focal point of my dissertation.

In addition, I chose cinematography because it is a very powerful social and communicative means that bridges "high" and "low" cultures. As suggested by Hall (1996, p. 349) "high" culture refers to art forms requiring specific education to create and appreciate (thus often the exclusive realm of the elite only), while "low" or popular culture may be produced and appreciated without any formal training in the arts (1996, p. 349). Marshall (2000) suggests another distinction between cultures, defining the latter as "fine art" and "community art." Modern cinematography often serves as a bridge between the two, simultaneously referring to fine/high art and yet appealing to community/low art. In particular, this dissertation examines the role of contemporary German multicultural films in cultural identification processes, analyzes political representation of "otherness" in popular national discourse, as well as audience reception of German cinematographic works, and contributes to intercultural scholarship on issues of identity, multiculturalism, national consciousness, and globalization (Collier, 2005; Fleischman, 1998; Mueller, 1998; Schami, 1998; Mendoza, Halualani, & Drzewiecka, 2002; Senocak & Tulay, 1998; Zaharna, 2000).

Specifically, I will analyze selected cinematographic works of the current most popular intercultural German-Turkish filmmaker and *auteur,* Fatih Akin. Provocative and funny, sharp and intense, sometimes contradictive and always surprising, in each and every movie, Fatih Akin makes his impressively large and diverse audience hold their breaths. His movies resemble bitter-sweet cross-cultural tales of loss, mourning, forgiving, and transformation. Year after year, the filmmaker wins various prizes (in 1998 Bavarian Film Awards, Best New Director; in 2004 "Golden Bear" at the Berlin Film Festival; in 2004 European Film Awards, Best Film, Audience Award; in 2007 Antalya Golden Orange Film Festival Golden Orange Award, Best Director; in 2007 Bavarian Film Awards, Best Director;, in 2007 LUX Prize for European Cinema awarded by European Parliament; in 2007 Cannes Film Festival, Best Screenplay; in 2010 Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany for his contribution in depicting the problems of Turkish-Germans). Most importantly, Fatih Akin exposes his audience to a virtual journey across time and space to the world of the "other" in every movie he makes. People in Germany and, in fact, in all of Europe, are fascinated by this widely celebrated filmmaker without realizing the underlying politics of his choice of cultural diversity and their representation.

This dissertation's focus on the artist and his works reflects the current international fascination, almost obsession with Akin as a "the ultimate intercultural filmmaker," a "cultural ambassador" (Halle, 2008), and a poster child of the German national discourse with regard to popular representation of cultural otherness. The audience loves his at times provocative, at times romantic works; European film critics consider him a trendsetter for a new transnational/transcultural art movement; and

German scholars celebrate him as a new *Heimatfilm* (homeplace/homecoming film) and a new "cinema of dissent" movement and as a multicultural version of the New German Cinema. With his award-winning film *Gegen die Wand* (*Head On*, 2004), Fatih Akin has "proved phenomenal" (Halle, 2008, p. 164) and is reckoned one of the most innovative and ground-breaking figures in European cinema. The filmmaker has acquired an inviolable authority (re)presenting not only a new German-Turkish identity in a Germany that embraces its diversity, but also, and more importantly, a transcultural unity in Europe, at least on the surface level. In other words, the name of Fatih Akin became representative of (if not synonymous with) German and European multiculturalism.

This dissertation will call into question the very nature of contemporary German multiculturalism. In this research I will critically address complexity of Germany's relationships with cultural diversity and the country's inability to come to terms with its past as decisive for the failure of creating non-discriminatory and inclusive multiculturalism. I will use Akin's multicultural films as actual "cultural case studies" to prove my claims regarding the phenomenon of multiculturalism. Using critical and interpretative research approaches, I will comparatively analyze Akin's cinematographic representation of the Italian immigrants (the most integrated) and the Turkish immigrants (the least integrated) on examples of three movies: German-Italian *Solino* (2002), as well as German-Turkish *Gegen die Wand* (*Head On*, literally – *Against the Wall,* 2004) and *Auf der anderen Seite* (*The Edge of Heaven*, literally – *On the Other Side*, 2006). In addition to the analysis of the selected movies *per se*, I will also address Akin's identity, cultural self-identification and social positionality in their relation to his cinematographic and scholarly perception, representative of the German national discourse on

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multiculturalism. By focusing on the politics and the interpretation of cultural identity, this dissertation will illustrate that Akin is celebrated only if his work reflects his own ethnics and class roots. As long as the filmmaker's work is synonymous with representing complexity of German-Turkish cross-cultural dynamics, his authenticity and authority are neither questioned nor criticized. What the filmmaker actually proves through his focus on German-Turkish dualism is Germany's inability of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (coming to terms with its past) with regard to the most "othered" cultural group, the Turks, represented from the intersectional cultural perspective (Collins, 2000) of not only their ethnicity but also class, sexuality, and religion.

Using a historical approach, I will explore the reasons behind the German "selectivity" with regard to inclusion or exclusion of the respective Italian and Turkish immigrant (post-*Gastarbeiter*) communities. My research explores how German-Turkishness made equivalent in meaning with multiculturalism in Germany through Akin's cinematographic work, strongly resembles colonial nineteen-century ideologies. This dissertation further illustrates how such one-sided cross-cultural focus relates to the lack of non-discriminatory and inclusive multiculturalism in Germany (and Europe).

Having re-visited the *Gastarbeiter* pages of the German history and defined the role of Italian-ness *(italianità)* and Turkish-ness in the social, political, and cultural realm of German-ness, I will locate Fatih Akin's *persona* in the national discourse. For that purpose, I will introduce Akin's own cinematographic, cultural and social identification in its relation (and often opposition) to his perception by film critics, multicultural scholars, and general audience. In my research, I will attempt to explain Akin's

overwhelming success as a way of giving up on his integrity and progressiveness as a

cosmopolitan multicultural *auteur*. I will critically address the politics of Akin's

cinematography arguing that the filmmaker's voice went back where the German national

Grand narrative sent him – to the margins, concentrating on and celebrating German-

Turkish duality. Through a thorough cultural analysis of Akin's cinematographic works

in the cultural context of the contemporary *Multi-Kulti Deutschland*, I will show how

Akin's professional trajectory reflects some uncomfortable truth about the German

national sentiment towards the "self" and "the other," as well as the growing German

need for acquiring new consciousness and initiating a social change with regard to

multiculturalism. I will address these complexities by means of going back to their roots

– i.e., to the contradictory German past.

Revisiting Cultural Memory: *Gastarbeiter* & German Multiculturalism

> *The Federal Republic of Germany is not a country of immigration. West Germany is a country in which foreigners reside for varying lengths of time before they decide on their own accord to return to their home country. Over the long-term this basic orientation serves the economic and social interests of the Federal Republic of Germany as well as those of the home countries.*
> (Report prepared by the Federal Minister for Labor and Social Order, 1977)

> *Germany: the country with 6.5 million foreigners and no immigrants.*
> (Kramer, 1993, p. 60)

> *Did you know that more than 90% of all foreigners have jobs that no German are willing to do? Did you know that they help secure our retirement system and contribute to paying the costs of unification? Did you know that they pay three times as much in taxes as they receive in social benefits? It is not just that the boat is large enough for everyone, but without foreigners it would fall apart. Hatred makes us dumb.*
> (Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund, Referat Migration, 1992)

It is truly impossible to talk about contemporary German multiculturalism without

referring to the infamous German past with regard to cultural diversity, particularly to the

Gastarbeiter pages of its history. In fact, the history of immigration and the era of multiculturalism in Germany were shaped by economic forces. Specifically, in order to supply a workforce able to fuel economic growth in the post-war times, Germany opened up its frontiers to poorer foreigners in need of employment. This is why, due to a labor shortage during the famous *Wirtschaftswunder* ("economic miracle") in the 1950s and 1960s, the German government signed bilateral recruitment agreements with Italy in 1955, Greece in 1960, Turkey in 1961, Portugal in 1964 and Yugoslavia in 1968. These agreements allowed the recruitment of *Gastarbeiter* to work in the industrial sector for jobs that required few qualifications.

Interestingly enough, the national discourse about the postwar labor migration has often treated the presence of guest workers as tangential (an issue of manpower and labor markets) rather than central to the primary concerns of the Federal Republic. However, paradoxically, *Gastarbeiter* were never marginal to the core concerns of German society but rather occupied a central place (Chin, 2007). It is thanks to the impacts of the social phenomenon of guest workers that the national debate about the parameters of German identity shifted into the direction of a new multiethnic nation.

Compared to other countries that provided Germany with *Gastarbeiter* laborers, Turkey was the least developed economically, with the highest unemployment rates that practically "pushed" tremendous amounts of its citizens (about 4 million people) out of the country in search for employment (Dayioglu-Yugel, 2005). Naturally, after 1961, Turkish citizens (largely from rural areas) soon became the largest group of *Gastarbeiter* in Western Germany. Gradually, Turks and guest workers became conceptualized and treated as one and the same, and the fact that the labor recruitment program and

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subsequent migration had encompassed multiple national groups quickly disappeared

from public consciousness (Chin, 2007). The perception at the time on the part of both

the West German Government and the Turkish Republic representatives was that

working 60–80 hours a week in Germany would be only temporary. The migrants were

allowed to work in Germany for one or two years before returning to their home country.

Some migrants did return, after having built up savings. However, many migrants

decided not to go back to their home countries and were joined in Germany by their

families.

Children born to *Gastarbeiter* received the right to reside in Germany but

unfortunately were not granted citizenship; this was known as the

Aufenthaltsberechtigung (right to reside) (Ackleson, 2005; Dayioglu-Yugel, 2005). The

reason behind it is that, in contrast to most Western nations, the Federal Republic defines

citizenship biologically. While one is an American if one is born on American soil *(ius*

soli), one is a German if one is born to German parents *(ius sanguinis)* (Harnisch et al. p.

4). This principle results in the following absurdity: the ethnic Germans from, for

example, Russia who lived in Russia for most of their lives and do not speak any

German, typically have little problems acquiring German citizenship, but the second- or

third- generation children of *Gastarbeiter* families, who have never lived in their country

of ethnic origin and speak German like natives are not granted the same privilege and are

labeled as foreigners.

Certainly, in face of current globalization, the situation has been gradually

changing, and Germany has come to the realization that it needs to reconsider its attitudes

towards its cultural diversity. In fact, both policy-making and cultural production, as Chin

(2007) suggests, need to be understood as constituent parts of an ongoing, constantly shifting public dialogue on the guest worker question. The national discursive analysis is a narrative thread linking key historical interwoven-ness between labor policy, cultural production, social welfare, and the media. Nevertheless, even today, almost half a century after the *Gastarbeiter* emerged as a social and economic phenomenon, immigrants in Germany still deal with the unresolved issues of citizenship, nationality, belonging, and various challenges of defining their national and cultural identities. Despite some development towards long-term residence, the social situation of the guest workers has not improved significantly over the years. Turkish laborers still work in mostly low-prestige, low-income jobs, predominantly in production and service; their children's education is below the level of the rest of the population (Harnisch, Stokes, & Weidauer 1998, p. 174). Overall, immigrants play a disproportionally small role in Germany's labor force, many of them never recover from their start in an "education-free monoculture" (The Economist, March 13th-19th 2010). Nearly one third of Germany's Turks, the largest group of immigrants in the country, have no secondary-school diploma, and just 14% qualify to go to the university.

Ironically, Germany needs the contribution of its foreign citizens for a variety of reasons, not least of which are economic ones. It has been estimated that Germany needs about 300,000 immigrants per year in order to compensate for the shrinking "ethnic" German population and for the concomitant deficit in the budget of, among other things, the mandatory state pension fund (Harnisch, Stokes, & Weidauer 1998, p.10). Yet, more than half a million immigrants cannot do the jobs for which they are trained because Germany does not recognize their qualifications. A country in demographic decline

cannot afford such waste (The Economist, March 13th-19th 2010). To head off such

relative decline, Germany needs to transform; not only the welfare state but also its

attitudes towards immigrants. In the last decade some progress has been made: in the past

ten years it has done more to integrate minorities than in the first forty years. For

example, the government passed the citizenship law in 2000, which said that people not

born German could become citizens. This was followed in 2005 by an immigration law

that "inched opened the doors" for skilled foreigners (The Economist, March 13th-19th

2010).

But that does not mean that Germany has become more relaxed about immigrants.

In some ways it is less so. Citizens of non-EU countries, for instance, cannot hold dual

citizenship, which they are able to do in France and the Netherlands (The Economist,

March 13th-19th 2010). Certain immigrant groups integrate into the German society quite

easily, whereas others are not granted this so-called "cultural passing" because their

culture (perception of which is strongly affected by various historic, political, and

economic events) seems to be too critical for the German society to deal with. In other

words, cultural acceptance or, respectively, cultural "othering" and concomitant

marginalization of cultural diversity are extremely selective (i.e., exclusive and

containing discriminatory ideologies) based on the culture of the "other."

Understanding Selective Othering

In the Federal Republic, history is read as a diary of the community of fate, the nation's personal experience, to which Others have no access. This conception of history as ethnic, collective memory was tied to the question of guilt after the crimes of the Holocaust. Precisely because Germans continued to parcel out their history and describe it in ethnic terms, they remained unable to deal with their cultural diversity. Removing these compartments and dissolving the ethically homogeneous idea of the past would accomplish significant ideological work for the present.

Among all the post-*Gastarbeiter* groups of different generations, the Turks

represent the "most difficult to integrate and most marginalized" (Göktürk, 2000;

Erdogan, 2009). Italian immigrants, on the contrary, have completely merged into the

German society, miraculously turning into the "most easily assimilative group"

(Colonella, 2005). The roots of the integration discrepancy are rooted in the identity

politics of the respective immigrant populations. White Euro-centric mostly Catholic

Italians in Germany are so blended into the German environment they are hardly

considered immigrants or foreigners any more. Their perception differs drastically from

the Turks, the most numerous and mostly marginalized immigrant group in Germany.

Compared to the native German population, the Turks are too different in their race,

ethnicity, non-European cultural heritage, different religion, as well as certainly other

perspective on gender (roles) and sexuality. Intersectional difference in identities results

into the corresponding difference in social belonging, and this phenomenon is

multifaceted. Although religious difference of the communities under consideration plays

an important role in the politics of their exclusion or inclusion, my research is not

narrowed down to the analysis of religion *per se*. Instead, belonging to a certain religious

affiliation is considered a salient, yet not sole, component in the intersectional paradigm

of critical cultural analysis.

Already in the 1980s, Hans Ulrich Wehler, one of the nation's most prominent

historians, sought to differentiate Catholic Italians from Anatolian Muslims, suggesting

that certain foreigners simply could not be successfully integrated into West German

society (Wehler, 1982). Specifically, Wehler questioned the fundamental capacity of non-

Western peoples to participate in liberal democracy. More recently, in 2002, Wehler even

called for a clear definition on borders, emphasizing the fact that Turkey and other

eastern lands have never been part of a historic Europe and, thus, did not participate in

the defining European experiences. Wehler also warned that cultural divergences are too

deeply engraved in Europe and the Islam of Turkey remains an obvious cultural barrier.

Naturally, in response to the obviously growing Turkish immigrant population in

Germany, Wehler suggested to fortify the boundaries between German and foreign,

European and the Other (Wehler, 2002). This principle of Eurocentricity, in particular

defined by religious affiliation, operates as a means of exclusion of the Turkish

community and simultaneously welcomes the Italian (i.e., another European) immigrant

community in the host country of Germany.

The controversies of the German-Turkish reception as compared to a binary

opposite German-Italian reception in Germany gain additional salience now in face of the

current political events in contemporary Europe. The fact that Germany figures itself

around 1990 as a European nation, and so does Italy (in part by figuring Turkey as a non-

European one) attests to the ongoing topicality of the cultural issues. The popularity of

these discursive models goes back to the current debates as to whether the Federal

Republic is or is not an *Einwanderungsland* (country of immigration) with flourishing

multiculturalism. Paradoxically, although cultural diversity is in fact an essential part of

the German population, the Federal Republic has never understood itself as a

multicultural society and never acknowledged it (Wagner, 1998, p. 143). This is

especially true with regard to the German perception of the cultural diversity, whose

identities such as race, ethnicity, class, religion, differ too much from those of the native

German population. Besides, in Germany, the Turkish community has been increasingly

discussed in terms of a "Muslim problem," an ideological development that has spurred

renewed public debate about the criteria of assimilation, integration, and belonging (Chin,

2007). The Turks whose cultural identities diverge most from that of the native Germans

represent a group most radically discriminated against by the practices of what Collins

(2000) defined as "the matrix of oppression."

As history has proved, xenophobia and racism have long been intrinsic

characteristics of the German nation. Historical German Master Narrative, deeply rooted

in politics of racism and genocide, shaped the consciousness of the nation very

significantly. Disengaging from the practice of culturally marginalizing the "other" is

something the Germans are still unable to deal with anywhere, from the daily news to the

recent chancellor's address. White native Germans occupy social positions of powerful

center on the job market, allowing immigrants to take underpaid often humiliating jobs

that usually require animalistically difficult labor but little or no education. In the daily

news, non-native immigrants are typically represented either as *klassische faule*

*Sozialfäll*e (classic lazy welfare cases) or, especially the youth, as troublesome criminals.

Not surprisingly, being German and being non-white just does not seem to go together in

the minds of most Germans (Harnisch, Stokes, & Weidauer 1998, p. 77), yet cultural

"othering" does not stop at racism. Racial discrimination is only one of the layers of the

complex matrix of oppression against cultural "otherness" in Germany. The politics of

exclusion, together with the practices of almost colonial exoticizing of the "other" by

native Germans occur on what Collins (1994, 2000) defines as intersectional level. This

dissertation will illustrate and critically analyze selective nature of the intersectional

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"cultural othering" in the arguably multicultural German society using popular culture

(specifically, Fatih Akin's selected cinematography) as a research sight.

Fatih Akin: Cultural Ambassador, Cultural Chameleon, or Cultural Deviant?

Is cultural identity something through which I recognize myself, or is it something through which others can categorize me?
I prefer neither my Turkish nor my German culture. I live and long for a mixed culture. I am forced to live like this because I neither live in Alaska in an igloo, nor in Anatolia deep in a hut. I would rather be intoxicated by other cultures, e.g., through the music of Bach and Mahler, through films of Tarkovsky or Buñel or Akira Kurosawa.
I recognize myself again.
I should like best to wake up in the Japanese manner on a tatami mat in rooms with transparent paper doors. Then I would gladly breakfast in the English manner, and then, afterward, with foreign indifference, work in the Chinese manner, diligently and zealously. I should like best to eat French food and, bestially satisfied, bathe in the manner of the Romans, gladly I want to hike like a Bavarian and dance like an African. I should like best to possess Russian patience and not have to earn my money in the American manner. Oh, how I would like a Swiss passport in order to avoid suspicion and hold a numbered bank account. I should like best to fall asleep in the Indian manner as a bird on the back of an elephant and dream in the Turkish manner of the Bosporus.
Do I also want something through which I can recognize myself, or something through which others can categorize me?

(Zehra Cirak, 1994)

In the last couple of decades the name of Fatih Akin became synonymous with the

representation of German and European multiculturalism in popular culture. Akin's

career breakthrough came with a drama *Kurz und Schmerzlos* (*Short Sharp Shock*, 1998),

an autobiographical story of three friends – Turkish, Greek, and Serbian. The film was

celebrated as a popular success, Akin's star as a filmmaker began its rise, and the

scholarly discourses concentrated on his depiction of the Hamburg underworld and of

Turkish identity in that city. The fact that Fatin Akin himself is a son of *Gastarbeiter*

from Turkey and was born and raised in the multi-cultural Altona district of Hamburg

was highlighted as decisive for the authenticity and salience of his cross-cultural

discourse in the film.

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Then came a comedy *Im July* (*In July*, 2000), which also focused on German-Turkish relationships, overly exaggerated national stereotypes, and connected two cities Akin defines as his homes – Hamburg and Istanbul. Interestingly enough, what film critics, cultural scholars and simple movie lovers defined and enjoyed as contemporary cinematographic multiculturalism was, in fact, nothing other than German-Turkish-dualism on screen, represented by a German-Turkish filmmaker. This public and scholarly fixation on Akin's ethnicity as a decisive criterion for authenticity and success of his cinematographic works (though seemingly natural) has imposed significant limitations for the perception of the film-maker's *persona* and pre-defined future topicality of his films. Not surprisingly, already in 2004, Akin complained in one of his interviews (Artechock Film, 2004) that it is a social *Fehlwahrnehmung* (misinterpretation) to fixate on his ethnic origin. Although he considered himself both Turkish and German, he definitely characterized himself as a *Weltbürger* (citizen of the world) who takes pride in his creative cinematographic freedom to deviate from the German-Turkish roots in his work (Artechock Film, 2004).

Then came *Solino* (2002), a German-Italian drama (which I will thoroughly analyze later in this dissertation), whose script Akin adopted because of its powerful and authentic story. Interestingly enough, *Solino's* script, which was neither a masterpiece nor a representative depiction of the Turkish ethnic group in Germany, to him read like his own personal history. Akin could entirely identify, as he admitted in his interviews with *Filmeszene Spezial* (2002) about this Italian-German film, with *Solino's* plot and its protagonists. Yet his identification was obviously not satisfactory, either for the general

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public opinion, or for scholarly research. The film was considered non-authentic by the Italians, and received similar responses in Germany.

Akin's Positionality: Authenticity, Authority, Voice

Since we know even bridges have an end
There's no need to hurry going over
Yet bridges are where it gets coldest

(Zehra Cirak, 1994)

Issues of authenticity, authority, and voice have often been brought into the scholarly conversation about the Italian-German movie *Solino* (but never about its German –Turkish followers *Gegen die Wand* or *Auf der anderen Seite*). Although *Solino* was neither Akin's script nor his cultural story, in his interviews about the film, the artist defines the story as if tailored for him, in the sense that it reflects an undeniable universality in conveying all *Gastarbeiter* voices, including the generation of his parents. Akin sees *Solino* as a transnational narrative, a cross-cultural bridge, and a *Denkmal* (memorial) to the first *Gastarbeiter* generation, his own aunts and uncles. As its director, Akin is acting as a cultural nomad. With regard to Italian immigrants, Parati (2005) claims that nomadism gradually replaces migration, and becomes a cultural privilege. Yet, it brings with it a certain difficulty in the need to explain oneself wherever one is. Often, the identity of a nomad is questioned and people ask for a narrative they can categorize, and a voice they are able to hear. In other words, a cultural nomad has to claim certain social positionality, authority, and voice that are not always granted accountability. Speaking in colonial terms, "the question of the representation of difference is always also a problem of authority" (Bhabha, 1999, p. 418). Besides, as Alcoff (1992) once said, "a speaker's location (which she conceptualizes as their social

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location, or social identity) has an epistemically significant impact on the speaker's claims and can serve either to authorize or disauthorize one's speech" (Alcoff, 1992, p.7).

Not surprisingly, Akin is not granted the authority and the voice of the authentic representation of *italianità* in *Solino* – quite a bitter fact, considering striking resemblance of Solino's script with Akin's own autobiographical story. Paradoxically, Solino's main protagonist, Italian *Gastarbeiter* son Gigi, is an almost identical cinematographic reflection of Akin's cultural identity (except for ethnicity, of course). Both Gigi and Akin come from typical working families, their passion and diligence propels them into a different social class – Akin's path from the edge of the society to its center has indeed been extremely successful (Berghahn, 2006). Most importantly, Both Akin and Gigi identify as filmmakers, first and foremost, and this identity obviously means more to them than their ethnicities.

Ironically, Akin's perception of "self" does not correspond with the public, scholarly and cinematographic discourse on his work and his *persona*. Although by putting his own filmmaker identity in the foreground, Akin manages to capture and depict various national discourses very successfully, he is deprived of the authority of representing multiculturalism which goes beyond the dominant German-Turkish trend. Although the filmmaker very successfully masters class travel, he remains enchained to his ethnicity, which is called in the foreground of any discussion about the controversial *auteur*.

In public discourse on Akin, the filmmaker's ethnic roots have always been directly correlated with his professionalism, authenticity, voice, and his success – a fact that has a significant political meaning in light of contemporary German (and European)

politics. After in-successful attempt by the filmmaker to be a cultural cosmopolitan bridge, even a cultural chameleon, Akin did what the great German Master Narrative told him to do – got back to his cultural roots, to the place where he initially started. Because certain circles just never break.

Cultural Chameleon Thrown Back to his Roots

The big problem with Heimat (homeplace) is that a person is expected to choose one. It would be better simply not to have one. Or best of all: to have a whole lot of them.
(Lea Fleischmann, 1998)

Akin went back to his cultural roots and very successfully "played his ethnic card" with the Turkish-German *Gegen die Wand* (*Head On*, 2004) and the *Auf der anderen Seite* (*The Edge of Heaven*, 2006) – two other movies I will analyze in this dissertation. If previous Akin's films included ethnic minorities other than Turkish, *Gegen die Wand* and *Auf der anderen Seite* are ultimately focused solely on German-Turkish relations in the German underworld, bringing those discursive relations back from the margins. *Auf der anderen Seite* even goes one step further by not only focusing on the German-Turkish binary and, as this dissertation will further illustrate, multifaceted incompatibility of two cultures, but also bringing the protagonists back to where they came from: to Turkey. In other words, in his cinematographic works, Akin gradually takes a journey in a reverse direction with regard to the loudly celebrated alleged German multiculturalism.

Changes happen not only on screen but also with the self-positionality and self-identification of the filmmaker, whose previous claims of being a *Weltbürger* (a world citizen) narrowed down to the defensive and even provocative statement of being a Turk. Furthermore, he goes back not only to his ethnic but also to his class roots of the Turkish

"otherness" in the German underworld. In his interview with a Munich journalist, Rüdiger Suchsland, Akin admits drawing on his cultural roots in *Gegen die Wand* and *Auf der anderen Seite* by making the films less naive than *Solino*, and turning them into real, up-close and personal "dark and dirty" movies. Their protagonists, with their alcoholism, sex orgies, and suicidal attempts are located on the societal edge. In these movies, Akin goes back to his ethnic and class roots, and contributes to the discursive construction of an almost colonial German-Turkish social binary.

Ironically, when Akin was taking small acting roles in the past (the period before he was offered his own film to direct in 1998), he was greatly disappointed by the stereotypical hooligans and underdogs he was asked to portray. Yet years later, having achieved considerable celebrity, he does, in fact, portray them himself and gains great credit for exactly that. In his interview with the radio station *Deutsche Welle* (2004), Akin claims both to oppose cultural tradition and, yet, remain loyal to it, a statement which is a contradiction in itself, yet, allows for different interpretations. In his interview with *Der Spiegel* (2008), Akin refers to *Der Spiegel's* article in 1973 *"Die Türken kommen – rette sich, wer kann"*, (The Turks are coming, save yourselves who can) and adds that today they (meaning himself too, as he identifies with the Turks in this interview) no longer tell their stories from the margins, but from the center of the society, with an authority and an authenticity that can no longer be questioned or challenged. However, the binary of German-ness vs. Turkish-ness as synonymy of German multiculturalism remains the same.

Detailed Dissertational Overview

My study brings together interdisciplinary scholarship on art narrative from cinematography, critical/cultural studies, and communication. In particular, I use post-colonial and critical feminist theories along with art narrative and elements of performance ethnography to examine German multiculturalism and its representation in popular culture.

In chapter 2 of this dissertation, I provide cultural and historical context of the *Gastarbeiter* phenomenon, in which I further locate Fatih Akin's selected cinematographic works and explore the methods I will use in my research. Cultural context allows understanding of the complex and controversial German past and the nation's historically complicated relations with its cultural diversity. Addressing a unique German phenomenon of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (inability to come to terms with its past) provides valuable insights on the historical processes of German social construction of the identities of the "Others." This cultural connotation contributes to a better understanding of Fatih Akin's cinematography, its political implications, and the specificities of representation of diversity on screen.

Chapters 3, 4, and 5 are the actual film chapters. Specifically, this dissertation focuses on Akin's German-Turkish films *Gegen die Wand (Head On)*, addressed in chapter 4, and *Auf der anderen Seit*e *(On the Other Side),* addressed in chapter 5, compared to their less celebrated German-Italian predecessor *Solino (Solino)*, analyzed in chapter 3, with emphasis on the historical, political, and cultural contexts of these movies and representation of cultural "otherness."

Chapter 3 will critically address the German-Italian movie *Solino*, focusing on Eurocentricity, particularities of German-Italian historic and contemporary relations, and representation of gender and patriarchy as they relate to (re)formation and normalization of the new European identity. This chapter will specifically illustrate Italian cultural "passing" in Germany as a result of the common European past of the two cultures and their common values, defined by the European Master Narrative.

Chapter 4 will analyze the most celebrated German-Turkish *Gegen die Wand (Head On)* and further explore social construction and consequent interplay of the respective identities. Specifically, I will address the cinematographically-constructed incompatibility of Turkish and German identities, addressing the intersections of ethnicity, gender, religion, and class and their role in the system of oppression of cultural others as a reflection of the German national discourse on the subject of cultural diversity. I will show how the identity of a Turk is made synonymous with the identity of the ultimate cultural "other" in the film, and how the cinematographic German-Turkish dynamics is representative of the actual cultural dynamics in the allegedly multicultural German society.

Chapter 5, which analyzes another German-Turkish work, *Auf der anderen Seite (On the Other Side),* will add on to this argument by further exploring concepts of cultural positionality, critical sexuality, and violence of heteronormativity. I will show how this particular film, in addition to the intersectional marginalization of the Turks, portrays various specificities of their culture in extremities that make Turkishness into an undesired, socially alien component in Germany. I will illustrate how, through such

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radical cultural alienation of the Turkish component on screen, certain German attitudes and views toward cultural diversity become socially accepted and even justified.

All three film chapters are designed in such a way that they build on one another, approaching the concepts of intersectionality and social identity from multiple perspectives, in order to critically address the phenomenon of German multiculturalism in all its complexity.

Chapter 6 of this dissertation suggests a critical discussion that will call into question the nature of multiculturalism in German society. In particular, chapter 6 will address the need of a social change on micro-(individual) and macro-(state and art) levels and will suggest strategies for its implementation. Furthermore, Chapter 6 also entails a conclusion, which, as the name suggests, will summarize the main ideas addressed in this work and will provide the readers with the "takeaway" information about the phenomenon of German multiculturalism and will invite them to reconsider the question of cultural diversity in Germany and in Europe in general. On a larger scale, the aim of this dissertation is to contribute to the on-going scholarly, political and cultural research in the fields of identity, difference, and politics of inclusion.

Chapter Two: Akin's Cinematography in Cultural & Historical Context:

Theoretical & Methodological Orientation

Overview of Tools to Understand and "Dismantle the Master's House"

>   *Borders and barriers, which enclose us within the safety of familiar territory, can also become prisons.*
>
> <div align="right">(Edward Said, Reflections on Exile, 2005)</div>

>   *In this age of mixing and hybridity, popular culture, particularly the world of movies, constitutes a new frontier providing a sense of movement, of pulling away from the familiar and journeying into and beyond the world of the other.*
>
> <div align="right">(bell hooks, 1996, p. 2)</div>

To begin to understand the current fascination for and disagreement with concepts of multicultural society in Germany, one must first place it in the specific historical context of Germany and Europe in the twentieth century (Klopp, 2002). For that reason, I am providing cultural and historical contexts for this research project. Germany's turbulent past has motivated numerous studies of German history, politics, society, economy, and culture. I am primarily interested in the cultural and historic context and the grassroots of the social phenomenon of German multiculturalism. I first go back to the German multifaceted and troubled relationship with the cultural "other," using post-colonial and critical feminist theories as the leading interpretive lenses. I specifically address *Gastarbeiter* – their stories, their voices, and their perspectives – because Fatih Akin's work and positionality take origin in and are inspired by this significant social phenomenon. Locating Fatih Akin's cinematography in the cultural traditions of

Gastarbeiterliteratur and specifically differentiating between the Italian and Turkish guest workers narratives and their dissimilar stories of integration into the German society allow for an in-depth understanding of the politics of representations of cultural diversity in Akin's films. Finally, I elaborate on the methodological framework of this research, with special focus on art narrative and elements of performance ethnography and its "moral pitfalls" (based mostly on Conquergood's [1985] work) as leading approaches to critical cultural analysis of Akin's cinematographic work.

Historicizing Rhetoric of German Borderlands

An important feature of colonial discourse is the dependence on the concept of "fixity" in the ideological construction of otherness.

(Homi Bhabha, 1994, p. 92)

Representation is a crucial location of struggle for any exploited and oppressed people asserting subjectivity and decolonizing of the mind.

(bell hooks, 1995, p. 3)

Although officially Germany has never been a colonizer in the traditional meaning of this word (as, for example, Spain or France), paradoxically the country practices certain colonial relations in one form or the other (Berghahn, 2006). In fact, one of the main reasons why the Germans even initiated both World Wars was their striving for re-establishing relations of power and privilege so that the superior German Arians would finally acquire what they believed they deserved – the world dominance over all the inferior "others." That is why, the heavy burden of guilt inherited by the Federal Republic for the genocide of the Holocaust, committed in the name of a racially pure German *Volk*, made West German leaders anxious to demonstrate a new sense of openness to non-Germans and at least make an attempt to make them respected members

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of the German society (Chin, 2007). At the same time, the burden of guilt seems to be too

heavy to bear, thus the overwhelming majority of the contemporary native German

population usually practices what Bohrer (1991) defines as "cultural amnesia," or

unwillingness to remember.

Interestingly, the very word "remember" (re-member) evokes the coming together

of severed parts, fragments becoming whole (hooks, 1995), yet the Germans reject a

holistic approach towards cultural diversity and prefer to live apart from the "other," as

they always did in the past. The concept of historically salient German *Volk* suggests

problematic of what Carillo Rowe (2005) defines as "Be-Longing," or the eternal un-

satisfied quest to become included into a certain cultural group. In Germany, multi-

cultural individuals can neither decide at some point to become a member of the German

Volk, nor can they relinquish this membership (Klopp, 2002). It is this lingering notion of

the *Volk* that makes acceptance of theories and practices of multiculturalism as mutual

integration a formidable challenge in Germany. In the controversial German society,

there is no necessary assimilation, unifying ideal that would make diversity itself a source

of national identity and unity (Kanstroom, 1993). Not surprisingly, Germany's colonial

past and its post-colonial repercussions are frequently not even part of the school system

(Harnisch, Stokes, & Weidauer, 1998). As a result, younger generations of Germans

grow up in the purposefully created milieu of cultural ignorance and absence of critical

self-reflexivity, not realizing what colonialism is and how harmful it can be.

Yet both the past and the present power dynamics in Germany with regard to the

"self" and the "other" clearly show that Germany indeed exercises colonial power

relations. The most typical characteristic of the colonial rule is the rigid hierarchical

division of the world into the powerful colonizers and powerless, voiceless and

dependable colonized. Historically, colonial distinctions were set centuries ago by white

Eurocentric rule, which has operated by setting up visible, rigid, and hierarchical

distinctions between the colonizers and the colonized - the ideal imperial agent embodied

(Mohanty, 2003).

Various critical scholars have challenged colonial relations in modern western

societies and suggested decolonizing epistemologies (Bhabha, 1994; Spivak, 1999; Butler

& Spivak, 2007). De/colonizing epistemologies represent collective and varied ways of

knowing the hegemonic effects of colonizing discourses and their foundational

assumptions. Colonizing discourses are those that emerged from the post-Enlightenment

European discourses. Nowadays they represent imperialistic discourses forcing polarized

relations between people, their locations, their categories of identification, and their ways

of knowing and understanding the world (Bhabha, 1994). These imperialistic discourses

continue to create Grand/Master Narratives that exoticize and stereotype the narratives of

the "others" or push them to periphery by means of creating un-crossable physical and

rhetorical borders (Spivak, 1999).

The phenomenon of borders is central not only to the studies of colonialism but

also to the critical feminists of color. As suggested by Anzaldúa (2007), the borders and

walls that are supposed to keep the undesirable ideas out are entrenched habits and

patterns of behavior; yet, these habits and patterns are the foes within. She further

emphasizes that rigidity is fatal, it does not allow for what another feminist of color

Lugones (1987) defines as "world travel": a fascinating journey to the world of the "other." Rigid borders serve to fulfill what a famous (post)-colonial scholar Bhabha (1994) defines as the ultimate objective of colonial discourse: to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate type in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administrations and instruction. Typically, the social construction of the inferior "other" takes its origin in the politics of difference. In other words, the distinctions between the colonizers and the colonized are intertwined with the identity politics, so that certain identities are marked as superior and the "others" or, better to say, the "othered" are marked (and treated) as inferior.

What happened in the national German discourse of the 1960s and 1970s with regard to the famous *Gastarbeiter* was the emphasis on "guest" in the term "guest worker," which served to differentiate between those who belonged to the nation and those who did not (Chin, 2007). Specifically, with regard to a typical *Gastarbeiter* identity, Chin (2007) suggests that "The very category of guest worker presumed a racialist understanding of difference insofar as it foregrounded the boundaries between native and foreigner, permanent and transitory, and posited them as impermeable" (p. 123). In other words, intersectional "othering" of non-German *Gastarbeiter* was a cultural normativity in the German society and had a huge impact on the German culture, and the latter forms our beliefs.

Using decolonizing epistemologies and alternative cross-cultural perspectives, this dissertation suggests a new approach towards multiculturalism in Germany by critically analyzing the hegemonic domain of German power and giving voice to

traditionally voiceless culturally "othered" communities. And it starts with exploring the

politics to the *Gastarbeiter* voices.

Gastarbeiter Perspectives & Collective Voices: Reservoir of Promises

> *There has been a long-standing German tension between the desires for cheap foreign labor as well as ethnically pure culture.*
>
> (Brett Klopp 2002, p. 35)

> *Guest worker or foreign worker? I am for the latter: they are not guests whom one serves; they work, and in a foreign land, while in their own land they cannot prosper.*
>
> (Max Frisch, 1967)

The experiences and dreams of the first generation of unskilled guest workers,

who entered German society from the 1960s onwards, together with their difficulties of

living between two cultures and two countries, resulted in the emergence of the so-called

Gastarbeiterliteratur of the 1970s and 1980s. In their literature the authors explored what

it means to survive, to produce, to labor and to create, within a world system whose

major economics impulses and cultural investments are pointed in a direction away from

them, their country, and their people.

As the very term suggests, "guest worker literature" was used as a political

challenge and reclamation of the irony this term implies (Chiellino, d'Adamo, Giambusso

& Abate, 1980). Biondi and Schami (1980) suggested their own name for the

phenomenon of *Gastarbeiterliteratur* and called it *Literatur der Betroffenheit* (literally,

literature of the affected). They explained that the entire guest worker community is

painfully affected by the dominant German culture and thus should be represented as

such in the respective literature. In other words, Biondi and Schami (1980) suggested that

the *Gastarbeiter* affect should be voiced as a commonality of all guest worker

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experiences (independent of their ethnicities and/or countries of origin). Guest workers'

literature problematized the common phenomenon of center and margins but most

importantly, it provided a political space for an alternative perspective. As suggested by

Biondi & Schami (1980),

> It offered the possibility to view the problem of the guest workers not as an
> individual problem of Mustafa from Istanbul or Jannis from Kilkis who had the
> bad luck of coming at the wrong time, working in the wrong factory, or living in
> the wrong place, but rather a collective problem of over four million, of even sixty
> million citizens of the Federal Republic (p. 129).

In other words, not only did this literature allow "individual problems" to be recognized

as collective ones but it also enabled migrant problems to be understood as specifically

German problems. Linguistically, the authors also made a political statement by choosing

to use German, i.e., the common language of this multiethnic proletariat, as the medium

of literary expression. Besides, as suggested by Chin (2007), "a non-German, who writes

in German, opens a dialogue in order to attract understanding for his particular

foreignness. When non-German write in German, they attempt to bridge the distance and

transform it into closeness" (p. 137).

On-going attempts of cultural bridging, eternal quests for belonging and self-

definition of their complex, often hybrid identities are typical themes of *Gastarbeiter*

discourses. They also deal with deterritorialization and the concomitant loss of identity.

Rather than having integration into German society as their overarching goal, the

protagonists of these cultural texts investigate their own cultural origin(s) and mixed

identities and the harm their cultural indefiniteness causes. They rewrite German

traditions and situate themselves in other traditions. Such mixing allows them to question

ideologies of unity and purity still prominent in contemporary Germany (Harnisch, Stokes, & Weidauer, 1998) and illustrate what is defined as neo-colonialism in popular culture, literature, and in the German society.

Critical self-awareness and self-consciousness, typical of *Gastarbeiterliteratur* discourses*,* have always been extremely important in the milieu of decolonizing methodologies. Their relevancy for the art-based narrative and performance ethnography greatly correlates with the ethics of the representation of the "others" in relations to "selves," the relations of power, privilege, agency, voice, and perspective (Conquergood, 1985). A primary concern for art-based writers, scholars, and artists is the question how to make the best use of their hybrid, boundary-crossing approaches to inquiry to bring about culturally situated, political aesthetics that are responsive to social dilemmas. The *Gastarbeiter* writers' response has been to create and encourage open texts that create spaces for dialogues that blur boundaries among researchers, participants, and audiences (Finly, 2008).

In other words, *Gastarbeiterliteratur* serves as a perfect example of how art-based work is able to cultivate new consciousness, a set of experiences and models of agency that run counter to the social forces, a new collective, intersectional, and counter-hegemonic consciousness (Rowe, 2008), progressive and transformative in its nature. Most importantly, by deconstructing the normative social rigidity with regard to cultural diversity, by questioning cultural in-between-ness, and creating a collective discourse of "solidarity of the affected," *Gastarbeiterliteratur* offered a reservoir of possibility of cultural transformation and even a promise of creation of a multicultural society.

Akin's Films vs. *Gastarbeiter* Traditions: Changing Faces of Foreignness

> *Foreignness already began in the homeland, but my father called it "Germany."*
> *Where is my foreign country now, where is my homeland?*
> *The foreign country of my father has become my homeland.*
> *My homeland is the foreign country of my father.*
>
> <div align="right">(Emine Oren, 1980, p. 66)</div>

On their surface, Fatih Akin's cinematographic works follow the traditions and principles of the *Gastarbeiterliteratur* – after all, the latter is factually the literature of his parents, the literature whose very core centers foreignness. Akin's cinematographic works depict the second and the third post-*Gastarbeiter* generations from the positionality of an insider, who knows the world of the non-German Germans from inside out, and literally makes his audiences care about the "other," care passionately.

Akin's passion is, indeed, contagious. The filmmaker makes his audiences either laugh hysterically or cry bitterly, or both at the same time. Having seen his films, movie-lovers are overwhelmed with different, often contradictive emotions such as love, inspiration, rebellion, hate, humiliation, shame, objection, or even guilt, but never, never indifference. In other words, Akin's films are addictive. Furthermore, in addition to being the screenplay writer and their director, Akin often plays minor roles in his own movies, and so does his brother, Cem. Undoubtedly, Akin "connects" with his own work on multiple levels.

Besides, for Fatih Akin, as the filmmaker often emphasizes, it is very important to be reflective about the different attitudes towards his own embeddedness within history. This thought about politics of one's own historical and cultural positionality, grounded in one's critical reflexivity, is central to critical feminist theory – one of the guiding

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theoretical frameworks of this dissertation. Linda Maria Alcoff (2006) specifically

suggested that "we need to become reflectively aware of how our own historical and

social positioning may be affecting our feelings about public acknowledgements of

historical events and constructions of our own identities" (p. 115). Akin's

cinematographic and political choices, both reflective of his identity of being a cultural

"other," a *Gastarbeiter* offspring, focus on cultural diversity in the dominant German

culture. Naturally, all Akin's movies depict what in cultural studies is framed as

"otherness" and, specifically, its complex relationship with the Germanness.

Regardless apparent similarities, Akin's cinematographic and political

perspectives on German multiculturalism drastically differ from that of the traditional

Gastarbeiterliteratur. Specifically, as I will show in the following three film chapters 3,

4, and 5, Akin's cinematographic representation of immigrant communities is an example

of using the dominant Master perspective of the native German population on cultural

diversity as opposed to the voices from the margins, as it was typical of the

Gastarbeiterliteratur tradition. Instead of problematizing and challenging the rigid

dynamics of center and margins, a strategy which was typical of the *Gastarbeiterliteratu*r

tradition, Akin's movies send the message about the incompatibility of the two social

locations. Akin allows the German Master Narrative to take the lead in his

cinematographic perspective and let go of the social promises of the

Gastarbeiterliteratur.

Paradoxically, Akin suggests such dynamics several decades after the actual

challenges of the *Gastarbeiter* movement, i.e., in today's Germany where the sons and

daughters of the *Gastarbeite*r generations are definitely better "plugged into" the German culture, and, unlike their parents and grandparents do not have to struggle at least with the language barrier, citizenship bureaucracy, and major cultural shocks. In other words, speaking in terms of Flores (2003) or Inda (2000), Akin deprives the rhetoric of cinematographic borderlands of one of its most powerful features – the possibility of cultural transformation, necessary for promotion of inclusive and non-discriminatory multiculturalism.

As suggested by Anzaldúa (2007), we only perceive the version of reality that culture communicates. Famous films by celebrated filmmakers, such as Fatih Akin, have a tremendous impact on our vision of the reality, and the interpretative lens we use to make sense of this reality. Dominant paradigms, predefined concepts that exist as unquestionable, unchallengeable, are transmitted to us through the culture. And, more often than not, culture is made by those in power who want to re-claim it over and over again – usually, at the cost of marginalizing and ostracizing culturally different communities. Such version of culture is created and confirmed by the Master Narrative.

Art under the Influence: Impact of Master Narrative on Akin's Films

Media images have so much power that they distort reality.
(bell hooks, 1996, p. 12)

German Master Narrative is multifaceted. It operates on many visible and invisible levels. It expresses itself in practices of educational system, job market, popular culture, mass media, and other institutions. It confirms the German center and (re-) constructs the borders, the pieces of defense that would not allow the "other" to enter, to belong. And it sets its own rules, its own criteria for cultural "passing" of the "other," for

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their social inclusion and integration or, quite the opposite, their marginalization and exclusion.

Three generations after the initiation of the *Gastarbeiter* phenomenon, i.e. in the contemporary Germany, the Italian immigrant communities seem to be completely blended into the native German *ambiente*. Especially the emergence of the European Union with (obviously) the Eurocentric core re-shifted and re-framed relations of power and belonging in the new Europe, allowing selected Mediterranean sons and daughters to elegantly "join the club."

At the same time, in the same post-*Gastarbeiter* Germany, we still observe almost colonial marginalization of certain other cultural communities such as the Turks, on multiple societal levels. Discursively, after the 9/11 act of terrorism, the Turkish community in Germany (and Europe in general) has been increasingly discussed in terms of a "Muslim problem," an ideological development that has spurred renewed public debate about the thresholds of assimilation, integration, and belonging (Chen, 2007). In the national discourse (and in particular in popular culture), the Turks became representative of all the social ills, and their identities characterized as incompatible with and even threatening for that of the native Germans. Threatening religious beliefs, low (poor working) class (often with criminal background of the German underworld); archaic gender-roles that endanger the democracy of the German State are the typical labels of the Turkish "others." Discursively, those labels create such negative images of cultural diversity, that their marginalization and exclusion become an unquestioned cultural norm.

In contemporary German cinematography, as I will show on the examples of selected Akin's films, identities of the "others" are about construction of images and interplay of cinematographic performances, representative of the actual population groups. Movies, these cinematographic essays, conversations, and interviews rigorously and playfully examine what we are seeing, ways in which we think about what we are seeing, and ways in which we look at things differently. This work interrogates even as it continually celebrates cinema's capacity to create new awareness, to transform culture right before our eyes, to create and re-create identities (hooks, 1996).

The work of bell hooks (1995, 1996, 2000, 2004, & 2007) is very important for my dissertation. As a critic who has always worked to address various audiences both inside and outside the academy, hooks recognized that critical discussions of films take place everywhere in everyday life. Across class, race, sex, and nationality, people watch films and talk about them. As a critical feminist of color, hooks considers films perfect cultural texts to call attention to issues of sexism, the convergence of race, sex, and class, and relations of colonial power and privilege. That is why hooks's voice often takes guidance while I look at Akin's work using art narrative and arguing that all three films under consideration clearly represent the perspective of a Grand German Master Narrative with regard to foreignness. Specifically, I use Akin's cinematographic work, operating with de-colonizing and de-marginalizing epistemologies and conceptualizing Akin's films as cultural texts. As hooks (1995) suggests, "visual politics has always been and remains central to that aspect of decolonization that calls us back to the past and offers a way to reclaim and renew life-affirming bonds" (p. 3). Taking into consideration

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the remarkable affect of cinematography as both a cultural and an educational

phenomenon on public consciousness, the impact of the filmmaker's perspective on the

representation of images is tremendous. By means of using certain images, we can

connect ourselves to a recuperative, redemptive memory that might enable us to construct

radical identities, images of ourselves that would go beyond the limits of the colonizing

eye change the world we live (and struggle) in. However, presented differently, images

also possess a tremendous power to confirm already established power relations,

including that of colonization, of drawing up a border, of celebrating patriarchy.

Although Fatih Akin is indeed an intercultural filmmaker whose movies serve as

sharp, political, and funny cultural journeys to the world of the "other," the *auteur's*

perspective fundamentally differs from that of the *Gastarbeite*r movement. Akin's

overwhelming fame and his cinematographic Great German Master narrative, instead of

fair implementing of *Gastarbeiter* voices, confirm hegemonic colonialism as a dominant

perspective in the German popular culture. In other words, in his cinematography, Akin

creates what hooks (1996) conceptualizes as "the dance hall of white supremacist

capitalist patriarchy." Although the following lines by hooks (1996) address Hollywood,

they are very relevant to Akin's cinematographic politics: "Hollywood is the place where

white supremacist capitalist patriarchy can keep reinventing itself; no matter how many

times the West is de-centered" (p.60).

Although Fatih Akin's cinematographic representation of "otherness" critically

addresses and problematizes borders in their relation to identities, the filmmaker's

underlined message confirms the patriarchic power relations of the German Master

narrative. In fact, Akin's very politics or representation is truly comparable with the mainstream Hollywood perspective on cultural diversity, criticized by feminists of color. In their work on visual politics, in particular, on contemporary western cinematography, many feminists (e.g., Allen, 1994, 2003; Foss, 1984, 1995; hooks, 1995, 1996, 2000; Woodward, 2004) claim that, ironically, the focus on diversity has inspired many white filmmakers to exploit mainstream interest in the "other" in ways that have simply created a new style of primitivism. While these filmmakers made us use border crossing and themes of cultural hybridity, they did not do so in any way that was particularly revolutionary and/or enlightening.

In the film chapters of this dissertation, I will show that Akin's work suggests such type of border crossing in his cross-cultural mediascapes. Even more importantly, the filmmaker seems to underestimate and neglect the tremendous powers of visual art: power to de-colonize perspectives, power to transform, and power to connect with the world of the "other."

Power and Promises of Visuality: Films as Vehicles of New Consciousness

Movies not only provide a narrative for specific discourses of race, sex, and class, they provide a shared experience, a common starting point from which diverse audiences can dialogue about these charged issues.
                                                                                    (bell hooks, 1996, p. 3)

Critical visual analysis provides the best view of public artistic production as an interactive process, considering the relationship between artist and work, artwork and viewers, and the roles of the artwork in the larger social context in which it is embedded (Moss, 2010). I apply critical visual methodology to Akin's cinematographic works in the way suggested by Rose (2001) – by considering meaning-making in the production of

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images, the images *per se*, and, most importantly, the social implication of the representation. My aim is to show how Akin's cinematographic perspective silences the voices of cultural "others," representing them in their biased cultural rigidity. Speaking once again in colonial terms, as Bhabha (1994) suggests,

> The representation of difference must not be hastily read as the reflection of pre-given ethnic or cultural traits set in the fixed tablet of tradition. The social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridity that emerges in moments of historical transformation. (p. 3)

Using art narrative, this dissertation explores voices of German cultural "otherness" and re-locates their cinematographic perspectives in the center instead of typical margins; also calling into question Akin's ability of what Alcoff (1992) defines as "the problem of speaking for others." In this famous problem of representation and authority, the element of the perception and interpretation by the audience proves crucial. With regard to the latter, Alexander (2002) suggests certain critical comments and questions. Is there adequate self-awareness and self-exposure for the audience to make judgments about the point of view of the performer? When the performer is representing the cultural "other," there is a performer-based reflexivity. Performance ethnography encourages a critical reflection on the performed population, gathering a clearer understanding of their cultural experience (Alexander, 2002).

In this dissertation, I examine Akin's cultural experiences and his own critical reflexivity arguing that they prove crucial for his own problem of "speaking for others." Furthermore, using art-based work, I show how Akin's particularities of representation of cultural diversity, together with the filmmaker's lack of what Collins (1994, 2000) and

Anzaldúa (2007) define as "new consciousness," work contra-productively on the way of creating non-discriminative cross-cultural cinematographic dialogues.

One of the further important reasons why I have chosen art-based work is because it crosses borders of art and research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008) and can be used to advance a progressive political agenda that addresses issues of social inequity. Such work exposes oppression, targets sites of resistance, and outlines a transformative praxis that performs resistance texts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008), giving authority and accountability to traditionally silenced voices of marginalized communities. Using art-based inquiry, this dissertation illustrates how Akin cinematographically distorts the authentic discourses of cultural "others" in his films through glorifying the Italianness and marginalizing Turkishness. As Senocak & Tulay (1998) argue, "condemnation and glorification of foreigners are pretty much the same things; both are defense mechanisms which are not based on partnership but rather on power relations" (p.275).

I claim that a lack of a non-discriminatory partnership and an inclusive multicultural dialogue is typical of Akin's cinematography. I consider this specificity of the filmmaker's work an enormous obstacle in the way of building inclusive non-discriminatory multicultural society German strives to be. In one of his critical essays, a famous German cultural scholar Wagner (1998) asks:

> But what does a multicultural German society really mean? That a few enthusiastic people can't take their eyes off a beautiful woman from Abyssinia or find black children really cute? Going to Turkish vendor to buy vegetables, to the Greek or Italian place to eat, is this what being multicultural means? (p. 143)

In this work, using Akin's films as cultural case studies, I often go back to these questions by means of critically addressing the very nature of inclusive multiculturalism.

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I try to answer these questions by defining what multiculturalism is and what it is not, what shall be done to promote this complex and necessary social phenomenon, and how visual politics, specifically contemporary cinematography, can be used to initiate the necessary change in public consciousness toward the "other."

Specifically, using movies as cultural texts (hooks, 1996), I use art narrative to allow Fatih Akin's cinematographic work to "speak for itself" first. I start by re-visiting various scenes from the movies and locating the reader in the cinematographic setting in order to implement what Alexander (1996) and Drzewiecka & Nakayama (1998) conceptualize as "the politics of space where culture is being created." Geographical locations of the cinematographic narratives are crucial in Akin's films because they re-shape on-screen identities and influence the audience's perception of what they see and how they interpret it. As suggested by Drzewiecka & Nakayama (1998), "The postmodern urban environment insists upon new formations of identity and identity functions. Within this space, it is difficult to find a fixity or stability in identity, as individuals inhabit many differing identity positions"(p. 29). Different geographical locations (such as provincial and sunny Italian town Solino, urban grey German cities Hamburg and Bremen, vibrating and culturally controversial Turkish metropolis Istanbul) affect their protagonists and re-shift their identities, their ways of being in the world, the ways they communicate, i.e., their discourse practices.

Analyzing cinematographic discourse on screen is a further salient component of the methodology I use in this dissertation. In the film chapters 3, 4, and 5, I elaborate on discourse and its analysis from the perspective, suggested by Foucault (1972, 1977,

1980). The notion of discourse is central to both Foucault's theoretical arguments and to his methodology. For Foucault, discourse has a quite specific meaning. It refers to the groups of statements which structure the way an idea is thought, and the way we act on the basis of that thinking. Thus, discourse is a particular knowledge about the world which shapes how the world is understood and how things are done in it. Most importantly, Foucault suggests that discourse also produces subjects, and I conceptualize Akin's films as cinematographic discourses that produce subjects of native German "selves" and culturally diverse "others" in a particular way. In addition to analyzing the cinematographic discourses *per se*, I always provide historical and cultural connotations for every cultural interaction on screen. As suggested by Robins (1996),

> Cultural relationships develop through history, through accumulation of stories that we tell ourselves about the others; often reflecting fear or ignorance, these stories evolve into mythologies that obscure and deny the reality of the others. All of these factors may work to inhibit cultural interaction, experience and transformation. (p. 82)

I provide cultural and historical contexts because they allow for a deeper insight on the complexities of cultural dynamics in the cinematographic discourse under consideration.

Nead (1988) also suggests that "art" can also be understood as a discourse, as a specialized form of knowledge. She says that "the discourse of art consists of the visual images, the language and structures of criticism, cultural institutions, publics for art and the values and knowledges made possible within and through culture" (p. 4). On this understanding, the concept of art goes beyond understanding visual images and becomes knowledges, institutions, subjects and practices which work to shape our consciousness and our vision of the world in a certain way. In other words, discourses are articulated

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through all sorts of visual and verbal images and texts and also through the practices

those languages permit. In Akin's films, I critically analyze the diversity of forms

through which a discourse takes place, i.e., I analyze them intertextualy. "'Intertextuality'

refers to the way that the meanings of any discursive image or text depend not only on

that one text or image but also on the meaning carried out by other images and

texts"(Rose, 2007, p. 142). Thus a specific visuality will make certain things visible in

particular ways and other things un-seeable, invisible and thus seemingly unimportant.

This dynamic of visual (in)visibility, in its turn, has political implications on the relations

of power, privilege, and marginalization – further foci of my theoretical and

methodological framework.

In each film chapter, I analyze its intercultural cinematographic discourses

grounding them in relations to power as defined by Foucault (1972, 1977, 1980).

Foucault was quite clear about discourse's interwoven-ness with power. Discourse, he

suggests, is powerful, but it is powerful in a particular way – because it is productive.

Discourse disciplines subjects into certain ways of thinking and acting. As suggested by

Rose (2007), "human subjects are produced through discourses. Our sense of our self is

made through the operation of discourse. So too are objects, relations, places, scenes:

discourse produces the world and understands it" (p.142). In the movie chapters, I

analyze how its "subjects," i.e., its protagonists are discursively produced, how (and if)

they communicate within the film and with the audience.

I also critically analyze the protagonists' performances and their cultural identities

(e.g., gender, sexuality, religion, or class) from the standpoint of performance

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ethnography as a method. Holling & Callafell (2007) suggest treating the very concept of identity as performance in order to challenge and rewrite the very discourses and identities, i.e., in order to give them possibilities. Jones (2005) suggests that "performance has long been a site and means for negotiating social, cultural, and political dialogue" (p. 777), and such on-screen dialogues are crucial for understanding the intercultural dynamics and identities of "others" in Akin's films. I conceptualize dialogues as spaces of debates and cultural negotiations and explore how well Akin's cinematographic work creates a space for and engages in meaningful dialogues among different bodies, hearts, and minds, and images (Jones, 2005; Conquergood, 1985; Denzin, 1997). Conquergood (1985) specifically suggests that "dialogical performance is a way of having intimate conversation with other people and cultures. Instead of speaking about them, one speaks to and with them" (p. 10).

Using Conquergood's (1985) and Alcoff's (1992) models, I further analyze the *persona* and positionality of Fatih Akin as a filmmaker, an *auteur*, an ethnographer in the famous Alcoff's "problem of speaking for others" he depicts in his cultural dramas. The very idea of ethnographic positionality, according to Madison (2005), demands that we move beyond our subjective selves and "attend how our subjectivity in relation to the Other informs and is informed by our engagement and representing of the Other" (p. 9). I address Fatih Akin's cultural heritage and analyze his own interviews about his life and his work in order to understand his voice and particular positionality which in many ways resemble the famous insider/outsider positionality. As suggested by Madison (2008),

> The position of being both an "insider" and "outsider" suggests that one possess a
> certain kind of knowledge or authority regarding the relational dynamics of two

contrasting or competing worlds. It also implies that the insider/outsider has the ability to move between these worlds with difficulty or ease. (p. 397)

Besides, the insider/outsider position does garner hybrid knowledge that creates space of different and new realities (Madison, 2005, 2008; Anzaldúa, 1987; Collins, 1990, 2000; hooks, 1989). Understanding Akin's positionality and cultural and political attitudes allows exploring the input and the affect of his cinematographic work on the audience and, in a broader sense, its contribution to the ongoing national discourse on the multiculturalism. In the last part of each film chapter I analyze the cultural and political implications of the actual film and of the filmmaker's message. I use the work of Hall (1980) on encoding and interpreting visuality as a model. Hall argued that the mass media and popular culture usually encode what he called the "dominant code," which supports the existing political, economic, social and cultural order. In making his argument, Hall was drawing above all on the work of Gramsci (1934) on "hegemony" as the dominant meanings and values of a society – the sort of power, maintained by culturally constituent forms. I refer to hegemony of the perspective, historically produced by the Eurocentric German Master Narrative, as it relates to the phenomenon of multiculturalism.

This dissertation challenges the normative German Master perspective on cultural diversity. My work as a critical cultural and feminist scholar attempts to emphasize the presence and disturbance of a number of discourses that produce "ascriptive identities that are disabled, colonized, voiceless, powerless, nameless, and hence known and therefore dismissible" (Swadener & Mutua, 2008, p. 37). Going back to the empowering traditions of the *Gastarbeiterliteratur*, and opposing Akin's politics of representation, this

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work validates the traditionally silenced voices of the German cultural diversity. Specifically, on the example of Akin's selected cinematographic work this dissertation shows how the diversity of voices can not only enrich the German cultural scene, but also force us to question concepts of a unified new German identity and an arguably homogeneous national culture.

Validation of the diversity of voices is extremely salient for creation of inclusive multiculturalism because those voices deal with questions of identity and homeland, culture and language, as well as gender, race and class – the concepts crucial for the successful process of effective intercultural communication. Informed and inspired by those voices, this dissertation suggests using new approaches towards cross-cultural belonging through changing the lens of perception of the self, the other, and the (multi-) cultural context. As Alsltany (2009) once said, "if we change the reading/framework/lens, we can transform dislocation into location. We must reconstruct "belonging" to embrace the experiences of all human beings" (p.109). In other words, we must re-consider and re-construct the relationships between cultures, especially the ones known as the cultures of the Grand Master and his servants. And contemporary inter-cultural cinematography serves as a perfect tool to "dismantle the Master's house."

Chapter Three: *Solino*: German-Italian Cultural Togetherness: Celebrating

Common Past, Romanticizing Patriarchy, Living in the "House that Europe Built"

Solino*: Normalizing and Blending *Italianità

> *The South in the German imagination is a hybrid, dialectical construct fraught*
> *with stereotypes of easy-going sensuality and a joy of life transfused with utopian*
> *elements. Over the centuries the South's transformative power has become a truism in the*
> *German cultural tradition, perpetuated by famous travelers like Albert Durer, Johann*
> *Wolfgang Goethe, Felix Mendelssohn, and Thomas Mann who all undertook an*
> *Italienreise, a journey to Italy.*
>
> <div align="right">(Gisela Hoecherl-Alden & Laura Lindenfeld, 2010, p. 115)</div>

> *You don't qualify as a European if you have a European passport, but only if you*
> *have a European Past.*
>
> <div align="right">(Richard Wagner, 1998, p. 144)</div>

In this chapter, I analyze Akin's German-Italian movie *Solino.* Specifically, I

argue that the Italian protagonists in the movie culturally "pass" and confirm German

Euro-centricity and its well-established rigid system of values as the ultimate "passing"

criteria. I begin by providing a brief summary of the plot, focusing on Akin's

cinematographic representation of some well-known Italian stereotypes and the political

and cultural implications of this representation. I continue by analyzing the phenomenon

of Italian-ness, or *italianità*, in the cultural context of German-ness as a dominant culture.

In addition to analyzing the German-Italian dynamics in the actual film, I provide a brief

historical overview of the Italians in Germany, arguing that this immigrant group has

been granted privileged treatment in the host country of Germany from the very

beginning. I further illustrate that although the very first *Gastarbeiter* generations in

Germany had similar stories of their departures from the countries of origin, only Italians seem to be fully enjoying inclusive integration into the German society.

I refer to cinematography which, grounded in and explained through historical and contemporary cultural and political contexts, serves as a social institution that mirrors on screen the specificities of German-Italian relations. In the example of Akin's *Solino*, I address the ethnographic interplay of two cinematographic discourses – the German and the Italian – as they relate to the politics of creating new European identities. Specifically, I will show that, in addition to their shared European past, Italian cultural traditions and values do not contradict those of the native German population and thus allow creating a common ground for the very concept of a new European identity. Analyzing *Solino*'s main protagonist Gigi, I discuss European-ness as a new form of a "generic" cultural citizenship, based on the principle of Eurocentricity as a necessary prerequisite for a successful German-Italian cultural togetherness.

I further explicate the principle of Eurocentricity, decisive for Italian cultural "passing" in Germany, followed by their "blending" into the Euro-centric German environment and romanticizing *italianità.* In the framework of Euro-centricity I address the phenomenon which, in my opinion, constitutes its core component – patriarchy. I illustrate how European patriarchy expresses itself in *Solino* using the example of gender, sexuality and religious specificities in the film. I focus on three female narratives in *Solino* in their relations to the concepts of patriarchy, sexism, and socially constructed gender roles in order to show how Euro-centric patriarchy affects the power dynamics in the multi-cultural Germany, and how it defines the process of new cultural identification

and social be-longing. Finally, I analyze the implications of *Solino* for the complex

phenomenon of German multiculturalism.

Pizza. Pasta. *Basta?*: Experiencing Germany *Eat*-Alian Way

> *The Italians are food-centric people. Much of Italian life revolves around the growing, buying, preparing and eating of food. Whenever possible, meals are shared and eaten in company. The very word "company" comes from two Italian words, <u>con</u> (with) and <u>pane</u> (bread), implying breaking bread in friendship.*

> *The family is far and away the most important social, economic, organizational and political unit in Italy. The nuclear family is divided into: the father, the head of the family, who thinks he does all the work and decision-making; the mother, who in actual fact does all the hard work and takes all the important decisions; the male children who are always spoilt; and the female children who are never spoilt.*

> *In Turin alone a car theft occurs every hour, a bag snatching every hour and a half, and a burglary every two hours. In Naples, for example, the street kids will unscrew your car number plate at one set of traffic lights and sell it back to you at the next, with a smile and, naturally, at a bargaining price.*

> *Italian males rarely leave the nest and, even when they do, those <u>mammoni</u> (Mummy's boys) usually only move into the house across the road. <u>Il tradimento</u>, or betrayal, is what keeps relationships passionate in Italy, and what is love without passion?*
>
> (Martin Solly, 2000, p. 12)

These charmingly bitter-sweet stereotypes about the sons and daughters of the

dolce terra d'Italia are taken from Martin Solly's (2000) satirical book with quite a

controversial title *The Xenophobe's Guide to the Italians.* The Italians have often been

labeled by such representation: in literature, in music, and in cinematography. Akin's

German-Italian drama *Solino* brings these stereotypes to life, sometimes in an innocent

and funny, more often though in a sarcastic, almost artificially exaggerated way.

The movie portrays a story of a southern Italian *Gastarbeiter* family who

immigrate to Germany in the 1970s. Romano, the father, decides to bring his wife Rosa

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and two sons Giancarlo and Gigi to Germany, in search for better opportunities. Famous for its coal mines and grey sky the German *Ruhrgebiet*, the area of their destination, contains promises of financial stability and a brand new start for the family. After his first exhausting day in the mines, Romano quits the job. Together with his wife Rosa, they decide to open a restaurant, letting their sons Gigi and Giancarlo work there. Rosa does all the cooking and cleaning, the boys serve generous portions of her homemade *delicatessen* to the guests, and Romano takes all the credit for the popularity of "the first Italian around the corner" in the *Ruhrgebiet.*

Cinematographic representations of the protagonists in the opening scenes of the movie correspond to the famous clichés about the Italians. All the family interactions take place during either cooking, or eating, or serving food. Romano is represented as a self-centered macho, an ageing Italian *amante* with the cheap charms of a southern seducer. He neither helps Rosa with the restaurant nor talks to his hard-working passionate wife. Instead, Romano prefers some bodily communication: he makes love to her quite frequently, often though without Rosa's mutual desire. In addition to his hard-working brunette wife, Romano starts an affair with a very Nordic-looking blonde German woman. In boisterous conversations with the fast-growing clientele of the restaurant, Romano defines his double love life as a way of displaying his masculinity.

Rosa, Romano's wife, is a caring and sensual hard-working woman. Interestingly enough, she is seldom portrayed in a conversation. We often see her making love to her husband, and in the next scene she is already preparing meals for the family. All the way through the film, Rosa's image is inseparable from colorful images of Italian food.

Except for their bodily contact, Rosa is neglected by her husband, yet adored, almost

worshiped by her sons, Gigi and Giancarlo. The boys are very loud, they fight, they steal,

they lie, and, yet, their performances are enchanting. Paradoxically, in all their chaotic

togetherness, in their delightful dysfunctionality, the family radiates almost palpable

Mediterranean warmth, so nostalgically desired by an *ernst* (serious) and emotionless

Nordic German soul. The success of their family business, i.e., the restaurant named

Solino (whose name means *little sun* in Italian), called so in honor the little town of their

origin, is everything but surprising. Further than that: from being a humble "little Italian

around the corner," *Solino* gradually transforms into a little piece of a sunny Italian oasis

in a grey and colorless German *ambiente*. Magically, by bringing to life numerous

vivacious Italian clichés and stereotypes, Akin invites his audience to virtually undertake

the famous *Italienreise* (Italian journey) following the long-standing German tradition of

traveling south in search for happiness.

Quest for *Italienreise*: Historical and Cultural Context of the Italian-German Synergy

In Rome I have found myself for the first time. For the first time I have been in harmony with myself, happy and reasonable.
(Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Italienreise* 1817/1989)

In the time-honored tradition of German art, literature, music, and more recently, film, the Mediterranean South has been much more than an exotic geographic destination. It also functions as the respiratory of visions of the utopian exotic or erotic Other in a quest for self-fulfillment. The imagined vivaciousness and less rigid nature of the southern landscape and its inhabitants hold the power to transform the more unemotional northern voyager through intercultural engagement.
(Gisela Hoecherl-Alden & Laura Lindenfeld 2010, p.115)

Delicious pasta, accompanied by a glass of *Valpolicella* or traditional *Chianti*, followed by an *espresssino* or a *dolce*… served by two charmingly loud boys with enormous dark eyes and olive skin – boys speaking in a language that sounds like music to a German ear… With these repetitive images in *Solino*, Akin makes his audience forget that, as a matter of fact, they are still in Germany, in a tiny Italian restaurant around the corner, in one of the least picturesque industrial parts of the country. By contrasting *Solino* to its rainy and dreary German environment, the filmmaker invites the audience to a cinematographic escape: a journey to the fascinating world of Italy, otherwise known as a German *Traumland* (dreamland), a *bel paese* of their longings.

The long-standing German fascination with Italy goes back at least to Goethe, Mann and Winckelmann (Halle, 2008) – the fascination that led to exotization of Italy, presenting it as a paradise on earth, a sunny rural country filled with warm-hearted and passionate people, able to warm the typically cold Nordic German souls. Already in 1817, Goethe's warm sentiments towards Italy resulted in literary masterpiece *Italienreise* (*Italian journey*), and a century later another titan of the German Literature, Thomas Mann, wrote the following lines about *la dolce terra* in his famous novel *Tod in Venedig* (*Death in Venice*, 1912),

> There were times when in the morning, gazing dreamily at the blue of the southern sea from under the awning of his cabana… - he would recall his house in the mountains, scene of his summer labors, where clouds drifted low through the garden, violent storms blew out the evening house lights, and the ravens, which he fed, soared to the top of the spruces. Then he would feel he had indeed been whisked off to the land of Elysium, to the end of earth where man is granted a life of ease, where there is no snow nor yet winter, no tempest, no poring rain, but only the cool gentle breath released by Oceanus, and the days flow past in blissful idleness, effortless, free of strife, and consecrated solely to the sun and its feasts. (p. 77)

The long-standing German admiration of Italy found its expression not only in literature

but also in the contemporary cinematography, as for examples in the German movies

Bella Martha (*Mostly Martha*, 2001), or *Man Spricht Deutsh* (*One Speaks German*,

1988). Clichéd and well-spread German *Italiensehensucht* (Italian longing) usually

includes the sun and the sea, music, wine and gastronomy, love, passion, fashion, as well

as beautiful rural landscapes and the famous Italian manner of *godere la vita* – the art of

enjoying life (Rieker, 2003). As suggested by Hoecherl-Alden & Lindenfeld (2010),

"even Italian food is widely accepted by Germans and often holds higher class status than

other immigrant cuisines" (p. 128). Akin's *Solino* certainly follows suit, turning the

German-Italian cultural synergy into an unquestioned normativity with its long roots in

its common European past.

Numerous prominent scholars refer to the phenomenon of Eurocentricity and

shared European past to explain the relative easiness of the German-Italian relationships

(e.g., Chin, 2002; Habermas & Derrida, 2003; Eco, 2002; Wheler, 2002). They call for a

common European vision which, in its turn, presupposes a basic distinction between a

"core Europe" and that which lay beyond. And one major effect of the public

identification if unique values, traditions, and histories was to mark the line between

Europe and its margins, like for example its largely Muslim minorities (Chin, 2007).

Already in the early 1980s, Hans Ulrich Wehler, a famous German historian and

politician, sought to differentiate Catholic Italians from Anatolian Muslims, suggesting

that certain foreigners could not be successfully integrated into German society. His ideas

were greatly supported by a famous Italian scholar, writer and politician Umberto Eco

(2002), who wrote the following lines,

> In the core of Europe lay the fundamental principles of the so-called Western
> world, the Greek and the Judeo-Christian heritage, the ideas of freedom and
> equality born out of the French Revolution, the heritage of modern science that
> started with Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler, Descartes, and Francis Bacon, the
> capitalistic form of production, the secularization of the State, Roman or Common
> Law, the very idea of justice achieved through struggle. (p. 15)

Eco emphasized the salience of Eurocentricity (in history, religion, science, politics, and

culture) for the selective nature of the European multiculturalism. In Eco's model of

multiculturalism, the principle of Eurocentricity became decisive for the consequent

politics of inclusion and exclusion of certain cultural communities. Following this

discussion, in 2002 Wehler questioned the fundamental capacity of non-Western peoples

to participate in liberal democracy and re-emphasized the salience of Euro-centric values

for the Western societies.

The basic assumptions underlying the logic of incompatibility of the "European

West and the Rest" have emerged even more starkly in the recent debates about a

specifically European culture. In 2003, German philosopher Jürgen Habermas, together

with his French counterpart Jacques Derrida, issued an urgent plea for a common

European vision grounded in the shared heritage of Western civilization. Wehler (2003)

responded to Habermas's plea for common European vision by calling for a clear

delineation of borders. He specifically argued that Italy has always been a part of historic

Europe, and participated in the defining European experiences, such as separation of

church and state, Reformation, Enlightenment, and construction of the social welfare

state. These significant shared experiences of the common European past created similar

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values and common cultural memory. The latter has always been extremely important for understanding relationships between people and the cultures they represent. As Audre Lorde (1984) once said, we always have to be aware of the past in order to understand the present, and to avoid making tragic mistakes in the future. The combination of shared past, commonalities of cultural memory and similar (often identical) cultural beliefs and values created the necessary common ground that enabled a successful non-discriminatory Italian-German cultural togetherness. The principle of Eurocentricity also proved decisive for enabling a better integration of the Italian immigrants in Germany during the famous German years of *Wirtschaftswunder* (the economic miracle), which was enabled tofor the most part through *Gastarbeiter* hands.

The commonality and European-ness of their experiences, combined with the German long-standing admiration for Italy certainly played a significant role in a better care and a better social integration of Italian *Gastarbeiter* in Germany. Actually, Italian *Gastarbeiter* favoritism in Germany is a cultural paradox, since this particular immigrant group was ostracized in their home country. In fact, the affluent urban Italian north constantly tried to disengage from the provincial laid back Italian south, the cradle of the poor provincial Italian *Gastarbeiter* communities in search of *opportunita.* In a way, the very social phenomenon of the *Gastarbeiter* occurrence served as an embodiment of the dysfunctional economy and stagnating politics of Italy: the realities opposite to the stereotypical German images of the romanticized *bel paese* (beautiful country).

At the dawn of the *Gastarbeiter* era, i.e., in the 1960s, Italy was striving to become a major industrialized power. The rural south of the country, at that time

overpopulated, was still struggling with the failed *Reforma Agraria* (agrarian reform) of 1949 and 1950, whose consequences were hunger, illiteracy, unemployment, and a flourishing mafia. The *mezzogiorni* (a derogatory term used by northern Italians towards the southern Italians) started leaving the country in search for better opportunities. Discursively, they were either negatively represented in the Italian mass media, or underrepresented, or simply ignored. In the complex process of Italy establishing itself as a politically and economically powerful industrialized country of the European community and thus an attractive country of immigration, the images of *mezzogiorni* as cultural scapegoats were gradually substituted by foreign immigrants of Albanians, Greeks, and Moroccans (Rieker, 2003).

Ironically, although they were marginalized in their own country, negative conceptualization of the Italian *Gastarbeiter* did not fit into the clichéd touristy perspectives the Germans had about *bella Italia* (beautiful Italy*)*. Naturally, already in the 1970s, Italian guest worker families were better integrated in the social system of Germany than other *Gastarbeiter* groups (Colonella, 2005). The increasing number of Italians made themselves present in the trade unions. Italian *Gastarbeiter* children received good local education as well as special language pre-school courses, courses of their native language, and even special courses preparing them for the final exams in Italian schools, so that children would succeed in their studies regardless of their country of choice – Germany or Italy. In school year 2002, for instance, children from Italian guest worker families demonstrated a better academic performance than German children (Morandi, 2004). Furthermore, since the 1990s, Italian migration to Germany has taken a

form of an intellectual *fuga di cervelli* (brain drain) migration. Currently there are about 700,000 Italians living in Germany. According to the German public opinion, they are considered the best integrated ethnic immigration group in the country (Colonella, 2005). Current European politics also contributes to a better German-Italian dynamics. Since 2002, Italians in Germany are granted the privilege of dual citizenship. The abolition of *permesso di soggiorno* (permit of residency) is a further positive step towards the successful Italian integration process. Now, that the economic and political accents in Italy have finally shifted so that Italy and Germany are strong EU members, the two countries turned a new page in their cross-cultural relationships, which in one word are best described thorough Eurocentric "blendability." In other words, the two cultures no longer stand in opposition to one another. Instead, they equally well blend into their shared European-ness and culturally enrich its core.

In Akin's *Solino*, Italian-born-and-German-bred Gigi exemplifies cultural blending of *italianità* and Germanness. He seems to be equally welcome by both cultures – Italian and German. Regardless his ethnic and cultural roots, Gigi seems to be surprisingly, almost artificially "well-plugged" into the cultural context of the typically foreigner-suspicious (if not xenophobic) German society. Considering the circumstances of his so-called "low German start" – coming from an extremely poor low-class *Gastarbeiter* family, with no initial knowledge of the host language and culture – Gigi nonetheless easily manages his class travel by realizing his dream of becoming a filmmaker. He even wins a prestigious film award for his documentary about Duisbrug, a tiny German town in *Ruhrgebiet* that became his second homeplace. His actual first

homeplace, a tiny Italian town of *Solino* in the region of Puglia, the heel of the famous

Italian "boot," also welcomes Gigi with the famous Mediterranean hospitality. There,

Gigi immediately experiences comparable, almost identical success on multiple levels –

as a filmmaker, a lover, and an accepted and respected member of the local community.

In other words, Gigi is represented as a cultural "switcher," a cultural chameleon able and

willing to adjust his "true colors" to the environment and perfectly blur into it. He

behaves very naturally and feels just fine in both, German and Italian cultures, giving the

audience an impression of completely dual and easily switchable cultural belonging. In

fact, the audience is not challenged enough with the question of where exactly Gigi

actually belongs to. He is so natural wherever he is that the European cultural context in

the film gradually becomes a hegemonic normativity, a confirmation of the universality

of European-ness that extends beyond Gigi's initially distinct (German and Italian)

national identities and merges them into the generic one: a multi-faceted European

identity.

Negotiating New European Cultural Citizenship on the German Screen

Film is the most significant marker of simultaneous economic and cultural transformations, a marker of both globalization and transnationalism.
(Halle, 2006, p. 253)

German cinema has served as a key space for the negotiation of cultural citizenship and has functioned as an important facilitator of the debate on multiculturalism and intercultural identity.
(Gisela Hoecherl-Alden & Laura Lindenfeld 2010, p. 117)

The only possible recourse for the new Germany is to fortify the boundaries between German and foreign, European and Other.
(Hans-Ulrich Wehler. 2002, p. 121)

Gigi's cultural adjustability seems a remarkable talent indeed. On a larger level of critical cultural interpretation this "talent" or rather privilege to equally well belong in Germany and in Italy symbolize Akin's successful negotiation of a new European cultural citizenship on screen. This negotiation takes place in various scenes all the way throughout the movie. Obviously, from the very beginning, Gigi felt German in Duisburg – he spoke the language perfectly (even with his Italian brother!), enjoyed driving his sports car (German Porsche, of course!) on the *Autobahn*, and shot his successful documentary about *Ruhrgebiet* which won the first prize in a national German cinematographic festival. He also dated a German girl Jo, although his first childhood girlfriend back in Italy, Ada, promised to loyally wait for him. Gigi never told her not to – he just lived his German life in a parallel universe. As a filmmaker, Akin well "equipped" Gigi with the symbolic attributes of cultural belonging to and successful integration into the German culture. In Germany, Gigi found a welcoming homeplace that effortlessly extended beyond his loving family. Duisburg, Gigi's German home, offered him numerous German clients, great German friends, fast German cars, a blonde German girlfriend, and on top of that, an ambitious yet feasible dream of becoming a filmmaker (the dream Gigi started to realize while shooting documentaries about Germany).

When the circumstances unexpectedly and drastically changed and Gigi had to go back home to Italy after approximately twenty years, it seems like the cinematographic Italian universe was eagerly expecting his return. Back in Solino, Gigi completely re-acquired his Italian identity and way of life, re-learnt the language, and started to make successful and funny documentaries about the town of Solino and its inhabitants. He also

returned to his childhood girlfriend Ada. Gigi became very successful as a filmmaker, this time though in Italy while making films about Italy. Once again, Fatih Akin generously enabled Gigi's successful cultural re-integration, now into the Italian culture. Solino, Gigi's lost-and-found Italian home, offered him a welcoming and open-hearted Italian community, wonderful Italian friends, a truly creative and innovative dream job as an Italian filmmaker, and a brunette sensual Italian girlfriend (always eager to make biscotti Gigi loved as a child). To make Gigi look even more stereotypically Italian, Akin depicted him as a true Italian *mammone* (mummy's boy) inseparable from his mother. Cherishing the most important Italian social phenomenon of *la famiglia,* Gigi later fathered Ada's children and married her shortly after that.

Neither in Germany nor in Italy were Gigi's ethnic roots ever questioned or discriminated against. What counted were his talent, passion, and professionalism. With those features, Gigi not only found his domestic happiness, but also sent a message that Germany can and should be an intercultural home to cultural diversity as long as the latter is European and Euro-centric. Gigi, as a cultural chameleon, can equally well blend into different European environments precisely because of his European-ness. His character contains an enormous trans-cultural potential and an almost nomadic possibility of what Lugones (2003) defines as "the world travel." Yet the possibility is strictly selective, or "per European invitation only." Most importantly, although Gigi is a fictional character, his story perfectly resembles narratives of many Italians in the actual (i.e., non-fictional) German society.

Today, Italy and Germany equally represent the European Union, the institution that ultimately confirms the principle of Eurocentricity and suggests a concept of a transnational, i.e., "generic" European identity instead of the discrete national ones. The tendency towards generic European transnationality has been immediately reflected in the contemporary German cinematography and, naturally, in works by Fatih Akin, the "ultimate intercultural filmmaker" (Halle, 2006; Petek, 2007; Göktürk, 2003). Various scholars and film critics have posited Germany's long-standing tradition of film production as central to the formation of national identity and culture and highly sensitive to and reflective of social changes (Elsaesser, 1989; Hake, 2002; Chin, 2002; Halle, 2002, 2006). Therefore, Fatih Akin's *Solino* serves as a cinematographic reflection of the current German and European cross-cultural dynamics, rooted in and guided by the principle of Eurocentricity. Celebration of Eurocentricity on the screen is, in fact, one of the reasons Italian-focused film *Solino* is not as popular as it might be – the *attualità* of once distinct *italianità* in contemporary Germany is gone, since the Italians have been removed from the *Gastarbeiter* margins and gradually joined the German (i.e., Eurocentric) core.

Akin's *Solino* is a perfect example of salience of cinematography as an educational means, reflective of the political and cultural relations in the German (and largely European) society. In fact, with the consolidation of the European Union through the elimination of national border controls and the introduction of the Euro, the entire German media industry has experienced significant changes, with a large number of films co-produced across different European countries (Halle, 2006). This has resulted in a

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body of films that favor European cultural identity over the nationalism of earlier cinema (Hoecherl-Alden & Lindenfeld, 2010), as in *Solino.* Having emerged during a time when EU member countries have succumbed to the pressures of globalization, these films no longer focus on cinematographic interactions of single nations within Europe. Instead, they raise the topic of generic transnational citizenship based on similar or identical European values and blurring the initial national differences between the European countries (Halle, 2002). Instead of having a traditional Italian, German, or French citizenship, protagonists of such films are automatically granted transnational European citizenship with the precious benefits of social belonging. That is one of the reasons why in *Solino* the main protagonists find happiness and do not suffer from the cultural dualities of their national identities – apparently, German-Italian bi-culturalness is compatible and even desired in the construction of a new German identity. The Italians do not "germanize" in Germany – instead, they enrich the culture of the host country and blur into it (Halle, 2008).

Furthermore, the success of a movie is also a question of the target audience, reflective of the consumer perspective. Current European audiences are interested in the story of European success, and the *mezzogiorno* pages of the Italian history simply do not fit into the European Master Narrative (Morandi, 2004; Colonella, 2005; Parati, 2005). In the current EU framework, Italian mass media tries to neglect the (rather humiliating) history of the *mezzogiorno Gastarbeiter*, almost non-existent in the national media (Colonella, 2005; Chin, 2006). After the borders have shifted, enabling new Euro-centric relations of power and privilege, Germany and Italy are in the same political, economic,

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and cultural location right now; both being powerful European *Einwanderungsländer* (immigration countries). Non-surprisingly, *Solino*'s cinematographic framing of the contemporary European identity as transnational is well received by the European audiences because it is representative of their own transnational identities: identities of European cultural nomads.

With regard to Italian immigrants in Germany, Parati (2005) frequently addresses nomadism as a privileged cultural version of migration, as in Gigi's case. The phenomenon of cultural nomadism occurs on multiple levels and refers to the intersectional paradigms of identity constructions. Gigi's seemingly natural repetitive letting go of his ethnic roots (like a rolling stone) is only intensified through another apparently natural alteration of his identity – class travel. After all, even the (initially) unfavorable circumstances that bring Gigi back to Italy do not prevent him from developing into a celebrated filmmaker there and thus fulfilling the so-called great European dream, similar to the great American one. Coming from a typical *Gastarbeiter* working family, yet being driven by his passion and rigorous diligence, Gigi magically enters into a different social class. Gigi primarily identifies himself mainly as filmmakers and never mentions anything about his origin, as if the latter did not have enough salience. The European-ness of his identity as dominant and thus normative (like, for example, socially constructed normativity of whiteness or heterosexuality) allows for the apparent invisibility and discursive neglecting of his cultural origin.

The "aftertaste" and the implied political message of this Akin's movie are positive, even glorious. Cosmopolitan Gigi successfully manages to make his films both

in Germany and in Italy and, in force of his bi-culturalness, has a keen eye that captures

the specificities of national discourses in the respective countries he shows in his

documentaries. Everything just comes easily and naturally to him. In the representation of

Gigi's cinematographic performance, Akin falls into one of the ethical pitfalls of

performance ethnography, defined by Conquergood (1985) as "the Enthusiast's

Infatuation." Conquergood conceptualized this quite common moral pitfall as a fast

jumping from the researcher's side to quick and rather superficial conclusions, making

simplistic assumptions of performative practice of the others in an attempt to quickly

assume identification with them. The easiness of Gigi's cultural nomadism, accompanied

by the glorification of his European-ness becomes overwhelming in the film. Although

one could argue that Gigi's success could be interpreted as an exception, the latter usually

only confirms well-established rules. Akin's *Solino* demonstrates that the rule of the

Eurocentric patriarchal centre enables Gigi's painless chameleon-like cultural belonging,

based on Gigi's possession of the "right" identities. Furthermore, as long as Gigi follows

the rules of the patriarchic value system of Eurocentricity, he is also granted happiness.

Challenging Normative Femininity in Realm of European Patriarchy

The concept of sexuality is often used to reconfirm the rigid colonial binaries of the norm and the deviant. In other words, sexuality is a glue that binds intersecting oppressions together.

(Patricia Hill Collins, 2000, p. 145)

Unfortunately, feminist thinkers have to a grave extent abandoned radical discussions of sexuality and the meaning of love in heterosexual relationships

(bell hooks, 1996, p. 27)

Feminism is a perspective, a way of looking at all the issues, a totally different human possibility, a non-patriarchal way of being in the world.

(Johnson, 1999, p. 310)

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Eurocentric value system is a decisive criterion for social belonging and happiness of all *Solino*'s protagonists, and not only Gigi. The film offers several feminine narratives, whose specificities further explicate the complex mosaics of the celebrated Eurocentricity on screen. The first scene of the movie portrays Rosa, Gigi's mother in a cozy little house of Solino, a tiny sunny town in the Italian province of Puglia. She is depicted in the process of cooking and simultaneously talking to her large and loud family. Rosa laughs a lot, talks in a loud voice, eagerly and skillfully runs errands. Every other minute her cooking gets interrupted by her sons, seeking her advice or help Rosa willingly provides. These scenes give the audience the impression that Rosa, a solid, reliable, hard-working (stereo) typical Italian *mamma*, is in fact what Italian culture conceptualizes like *la vera padrona* (a concept , similar in its definition to that of the matriarch) in her family and her community. Paradoxically, in the scenes depicting Rosa's interactions with her husband Romano, she hardly talks but silently serves him instead: either in the kitchen or in the bedroom. When Romano single-mindedly decides to go to Germany in search for better opportunities, Rosa neither objects nor questions that important decision that changes their lives for good. Instead, she obediently follows her husband and continues to serve him, this time in Germany.

Another female protagonist we see at the beginning of the film is a little Italian girl Ada, Gigi's childhood girlfriend and later (with a time interval of approximately twenty years) his wife and mother of their children. In the opening scenes, we see Ada at the train station, weeping over Gigi's departure to Germany, with a box of self-made biscotti and a desperate look in her enormous Bambi eyes, deemed with tears of despair.

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Later in the film, when Gigi finally returns, we see Ada as a young beautiful woman in the blossom of her sensual Mediterranean beauty, trembling at the sound of Gigi's voice and blushing at the sight of her childhood love. Humble and pensive, Ada seldom talks to Gigi. She cooks for him instead.

The image of the third female of the film, German Jo, contrasts the image of Italian Ada on multiple levels. Even as little girls, Ada and Jo look and behave differently. Blonde, loud, stubborn and dominant as a child, Jo develops into an opinionated young woman that fascinates both brothers Gigi and Giancarlo. Gigi, infatuated, starts dating Jo and makes her the main protagonist of his documentary. In the absence of Gigi, defining herself as "progressive," Jo starts sharing bed with his brother Giancarlo, but her unconventional relationship does not work for anyone involved. Jo ends up lonely and misunderstood, leaving Duisburg, with no love, no friends, in pursuit of happiness.

Similar cinematographic stories of Italian Rosa and Ada, contrasted by a controversial narrative of a German Jo beautifully demonstrates that, indeed, gender and sexuality have always been considered critical and vulnerable identities and thus easy targets for the supporters of dominant ideologies. Besides, I have chosen to address social performances of gender and sexuality because they are salient concepts in the critical feminist theory I am using in this analysis. As suggested by Patricia Hill Collins (1994), "sexuality constitutes one important site where heterosexism, race, nation, and gender as systems of oppression converge. This is because all systems of oppression rely on harnessing the power of the erotic" (p. 136). All three females in *Solino*, with their

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complex identities, their differently performed femininities, their contrastive narratives of obedience or rebellion, their positionalities in line with cultural traditions or cultural opposition perfectly exemplify Collin's claims.

With regard to the traditional European perception of normative (regardless whether Italian or German) women's gender performance and expressions of sexuality, sensual and submissive sexual behavior of women is still considered a cultural norm. Unsurprisingly, representations of German-Italian gender and sexuality interactions in popular culture and in Akin's *Solino* specifically are clichéd through the implied female submissiveness, opposed to the celebrated hegemonic masculinity. In the film, we see two strong, sensual, caring, overly-stereotypical Italian women, Rosa and Ada. All the way throughout the movie, they never ask questions, share unconditional love and care for their husbands and children, and constantly prepare typical Italian meals. Very often, they eagerly turn mundane cooking into their passionate calling with a touch of Mediterranean flirtation and exoticism. The representation of the very way Rosa and Ada cook in *Solino*, as well as the choice of food and the way of its serving are both stereotypical and political at the same time. As suggested by Hoecherl-Alden & Lindenfeld (2010), "Italian food embodies the utopian vision of the South as carefree, sumptuous, and relaxing. Germany, in contrast, appears as cold, wet, and colorless" (p.124). *Solino*'s scenes in which Rosa and Ada's cook and serve *ravioli* or *tortellini*, elegantly accompanied by gorgeous Italian *vini* and followed by self-made *dolci*, contain enormous communicative power. Those scenes always bring *la famiglia* together, inspire an innovative and successful food-centric family business, and serve as settings for

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flirtatious and passionate love-makings scenes between Italian protagonists: first Rosa and Romano, later Gigi and Ada. In a way, food serves as the never-failing Italian (actually, Eat-alien) means of communication. By contrast, German Jo is never portrayed making or consuming food.

Like other international food films (like, for example, *Mostly Martha*, or *No Reservations*) by focusing on food in a stereotypical and normatively gendered way, *Solino* glosses over much of the tension surrounding gender and nationhood and embraces implicit but significant politics of patriarchy as hegemony. In fact, cinematographic representation of politics of food in *Solino* follows the well-established tradition of Hollywood "food" cinematography. Holding to the trappings of Hollywood narrative cinema, the treatment of gender, race, ethnicity, and class in those movies often allows the viewer to evade the actual politics of identity thorough an idealized, utopian treatment and revel in the seemingly "authentic" culture of exotic or erotic Others. As suggested by Hoecherl-Alden & Lindenfeld (2010),

> While these films present food in a different and even challenging fashion, they gloss over more difficult questions of identity, politics, economics, and society. Often, these films use the bodies of women and people of color to mark a space of difference that is easily consumable and nonthreatening to the hegemonic viewing population. In this manner, the spectator can work through social anxieties about Otherness without having to face some of the harsh realities of the embodied experience of raced and gendered bodies. (p. 121)

In other words, cinematographic exoticizing and romanticizing of food often tends to shift spectators' focus away from other complex (and problematic) issues, such as normative sexism and gender discrimination, known as well-established values of the Eurocentric rule. Focus on food also glides our attention away from what became known

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as "internalized female oppression," embodied by under-represented and marginalized female figures (Mohanty, 2003; Collins 2000, hooks, 1995, 1996, 2000), such as female protagonists of Rosa and Ada in *Solino*. In the framework of such socially constructed feminine inferiority, the gendered representation of Rosa and Ada seems natural. Besides, as it is frequently the case with European matters, this representation is deeply informed and influenced by the shared Italo-German European past – specifically, its historical and religious particularities of the image of Madonna and its significant impact on the conceptualization of normative European femininity.

It is this image of all-forgiving, comprehensive and self-sacrificing Madonna that best fits the cinematographic representations of Rosa and Ada in *Solino*. Akin's narrowing their roles in the movie to that of loving and caring mothers and spouses with no voice is an image, very close to the traditional German concepts of *3K: Kinder, Kirche, Küche* (children, church, kitchen). It does not shock the Germans, rather it makes them nostalgic. So does Rosa, *la tipica mamma* (a typical Italian mother). So does Ada, Gigi's childhood Italian girlfriend, a sensual and submissive Italian *ragazza* who has been waiting for him all those years with open arms, no reproaches, and self-made *biscotti.* The fact that, while being in Germany, Gigi had another girlfriend is quietly accepted by Italian Ada who never asks any questions or voices any opinions. She lives and breathes for Gigi, her loyalty and self-sacrifice for his sake appears unnatural, almost pathetic. And Gigi never feels guilty either for having had an affair with Jo or, even more importantly, for considering his betrayal as acceptable, even normative.

The very concept of Eurocentricity is grounded in the intersections of "socially acceptable" identities such as for example religion, gender, and sexuality, whose "national particularities" are insignificant compared to their very dominant "Euro-core." In the religious milieu, the concept of Italian Catholicism certainly reflects the ideals of the German Catholicism, including worshiping of Madonna. At the same time Gigi's German girlfriend Jo, whose liberal sexual views allowed her sharing her bed with both brothers, gets punished for her hyper-sexuality with loss of identity, un-satisfied quest for love, and never-found happiness. Her story contrasts Rosa and Ada's Madonna-inspired narratives. Further than that, her story, pictured by Akin in quite wild sexual scenes, confirms the normativity of patriarchal "Virgin/Whore" duality, and the power of sexuality as an instrument of oppression. As bell hooks (1996) suggested, "Despite interventions made by contemporary feminist movement, women are still struggling to find a sexual voice, to find places where our desires and fantasies can be articulated in all their strangeness and perversity" (p. 27). A woman whose "sexual voice" sounds too loud and openly pronounce unconventional sexual desires and fantasies usually ends up like *Solino*'s Jo: misunderstood, lonely, and unhappy.

That is why the Grand Eurocentric cinematographic narrative, used by Fatih Akin, suggests a bitter ending for a rebellious non-traditional woman like Jo, who chose to perform her gender and sexuality in a "deviant manner" and got punished. In contrast to her, conservative and submissive Ada, "the good girl," is rewarded with a fulfilled intimate relationship with Gigi, *la famiglia felice* with children, and even a clichéd romantic provincial Italian wedding. That is why one of the last scenes in the movie

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depicts truly gorgeous Italian landscape with Gigi and Ada as they relax at an outdoor wedding with their *bambini* playing around, in the warmth of the original Italian *Solino* sun.

Although the ending suggests that Italian influence represented by Ada can help to revitalize Germany embodied by Gigi and thus naturally diversify and enrich new European multicultural identity, it reifies this order as a patriarchal and heterosexual one that sweeps women into the parameters of a traditional marriage (Hoecherl-Alden & Lindenfeld, 2010). Similar to many recent intercultural European films, *Solino* produces a classic heterosexist Hollywood ending, complete with white wedding dress and celebration of patriarchal normativity. The very fact that Gigi finds his happiness in the realm of traditional gender performances of his bride and his mother confirms that family traditionalism and gender/sexuality conservatism serve as key elements of the intersectional profoundly complex matrix of hegemonic Eurocentricity. The latter is a fundamental criterion of the success of the German-Italian cultural relationships within the "new Europe" which is still driven by the old principle of patriarchy.

The very concept of patriarchy is so deeply ingrained into the phenomenon of Eurocentricity that it is quite difficult to actually define what it is, as it is always challenging to give definitions to well-established social norms. I suggest conceptualizing what patriarchy is and challenging its practices in the way described by critical feminists of color as a crucial element of critical cultural analysis of *Solino.* Daly (1999) defines patriarchy as a sexiest social system that is distinctly unnatural and constitutes a limiting and destructive realm of women. Strahawk (1999) claims that patriarchy is a hierarchical

system maintained by the belief that some people are more valuable than others. I understand patriarchy as an ideology of marginalization of cultural diversity by means of conceptualizing difference as inferiority. Most importantly, I understand patriarchy as the leading European ideology. This very idea comprises the focal point of my claims about selective, non-inclusive nature of the "alleged" German (and European) multiculturalism: diverse populations are only included and integrated, when their identities are socially (i.e. politically, institutionally, and culturally) "approved" from a Eurocentric patriarchal standpoint.

Multiculturalism in *Solino*: Symphony of *le Vieux Monde*

If the notion of Europe existed at all, it was composed of its very differences, as a delicate unity of differences.

(Gerard Delanty, 2002, p. 45)

Akin's *Solino* leaves lasting bitter-sweet impressions on its audiences. It is sharp and funny, sarcastic at times. The "aftertaste" of the story is acidic in its predictability of *faux* multiculturalism, making its *faux pas* on different intersectionally connected levels. Although on the surface, the filmmaker creates quite a utopian idea of multiculturalism in action, what Akin's multiculturalism in *Solino* actually does is re-confirming the old Eurocentric values of "self" and the "other." Those values are rooted in the historical and contemporary phenomena of patriarchy, belonging, exclusion, sexism, and intersectional oppression of culturally different "others." Dwelling on the commonality of the Italian-German shared European past, Fatih Akin re-confirms its values: the selection of the "right" ethnic, national, gender, religious and sexual identities. By validating European-ness as the decisive criterion for the cultural "passing" and the following acceptance of

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the *italianità* into the "selectively friendly" German host environment, Akin makes *Solino*'s audiences mistakenly believe that Germany indeed is a country of multiculturalism.

Certainly, historical and cultural dynamics of the past do influence the present and the future, yet they should not (and cannot) completely define it. Otherwise what happens is a cultural stagnation, the opposite of an inclusive and dynamic progressive multiculturalism. What we see in *Solino* is a cross-cultural *déjà vu* of the predictably charming, passionate and quarrelsome Italians, accompanied by world-famous images of their legendary cuisine, Mediterranean machismo, and Madonna-like femininity. In other words, Akin's representation of his Italian protagonists could not be more clichéd than in *Solino.* There are several dangers of dwelling on those well-known stereotypes. Such representation: 1) simultaneously affects the filmmaker and his positionality; 2) distorts and oversimplifies the images of protagonists; 3) misleads the audience and, most importantly; 4) generally creates an unrealistic and artificial picture of culture and prevents its natural alteration and progression. Obviously, Fatih Akin's representation of German-Italian cultural dynamics in *Solino* brings all those dangers to life. Firstly, in the politics of representation of the Italian protagonists, Akin makes the ethical mistake Conquegood (1985) conceptualizes as "the Enthusiast's Infatuation." Being enchanted by the Italian culture, Akin cinematographically represents it in a rather simplified and charming yet biased way and as a result makes the mistake Alcoff (1992) defines as the "problem of speaking for others." Secondly, Akin's cinematographic dwelling on the old stereotypes and oversimplified images of the Italians in *Solino* does not allow them to

develop, to progress. Speaking metaphorically, they are imprisoned in their on-screen representation of what is known as typical, traditional, and static *italianità.* Thirdly, the audience, while watching the film made by such a celebrated filmmaker and a pronounced "cultural ambassador" (Halle, 2006) as Fatih Akin considers his vision of the Italian-German cross-cultural cinematographic dynamics a norm. A cultural norm that allows two European nations to celebrate their Eurocentric togetherness on screen: togetherness driven by rigid values of hegemonic patriarchy.

The leading question of this dissertation addresses the very nature of the social phenomenon of inclusive and non-discriminatory multiculturalism: what it is and what it is not. It is impossible to claim the inclusive nature of *Solino*'s cinematographic multiculturalism if the latter excludes images of real women, their diverse voices and their desires. If it celebrates patriarchy as a socially accepted normativity. If it validates the principle of Eurocentricity as the necessary criterion for cultural passing and social inclusion. If it re-confirms political and rhetorical borders between the "European West and the Rest" instead of challenging them. If it plays the same old symphony of the dominant Old Europe, *le Vieux Monde*, written by the European Master Narrative. Multiculturalism that should be called "Euro-culturalism" instead. In the German-Italian *Solino*, the Master's tools are not even trying to dismantle the Master's house: the Master's tools are refurnishing and celebrating it instead. The house that Europe built.

Chapter Four: *Head On:* German Turkish Cultural Incompatibility:

Conceptualizing German *Others*, Confronting "Sins of the Fathers," Unpacking the

Matrix of Intersectional Turkish Marginalization

***Head On:* Eurocentric Germany Meets the Ottoman Empire**

> *The Turkish people were not shaped by Christianity, rather by Islam – another high culture, and I stress, high culture. The fact that the state founded by Ataturk in 1918 is secular and understands itself as European changes nothing, anymore that the fact that our state is also secular rather that the earlier Holy Roman Empire. Even in its more secular form, the cultural impulses of Christian and Islamic high culture have a lasting effect on our peoples. This contributes, in addition to a pronounced national pride of the Turks, to the fact that they are not assimilable. They want to remain what they are, namely Turks.*
>
> (Alfred Dregger, 1982, p. 4892)

> *Prejudice? Yes, what is prejudice? It's seldom open and direct, but usually very subtle and often converted with a veil of friendliness.*
>
> (Helga Emde, 1998, p. 86)

In this chapter, I analyze Akin's absolute poster movie: his most celebrated cinematographic success and multiple award winner *Head On*. This intercultural drama focuses on the Turkish underworld of probably the most urban and culturally diverse German city – Hamburg. *Head On* followed the 2002 *Solino* by two years and the opposite representation of German multiculturalism. *Solino*'s main protagonist Gigi, a young man of Italian decent, was equally welcome in both cultures, Italian and German. *Head On'*s main protagonist Sibel, a young woman of Turkish decent was alienated by both the German and the Turkish cultures.

Head On focuses on the currently extremely problematic cross-cultural dynamics (actually duality) between the Germans and the Turks. Unlike provincially-touchy and sunny *Solino*, *Head On* is a harsh urban film. It addressed the complex interconnected concepts of Turkish identity (such as ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, and religion) in their opposition to the German identity, turning a Turk into an undesired cultural alien in the German environment. Speaking metaphorically, a unique German concept of *Zweisamkeit* (lonely/isolated togetherness) best defines the German-Turkish dynamics of the film.

Culturally provocative, intensely disturbing and consistently violent, *Head-On* won Akin admirers around the world, from established filmmakers to lovers of world cinema. In 2004 it won multiple prizes and awards (including the most prestigious German award "Golden Bear" at the German Film Festival Berlinale for the best film, and the best European film on multiculturalism at the Cannes Film Festival). Regardless of the film's fame, Akin's building upon the discursive binaries of German "civilized selves" and Turkish "barbarian others" makes *Head On* a step back in the discourse of inclusive multiculturalism.

I begin the film's analysis with its short summary, focusing on the cultural implications, and politics of representation of Turkishness. I continue by addressing a complex German phenomenon of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (coming to terms with one's past) as decisive for defining the politics of exclusion of certain communities into the arguably multicultural German society. I provide historical and cultural connotations that shed light on the German inability and unwillingness to accept and properly integrate

its largest immigrant community – the Turks. I approach the complexity of the German-Turkish relations, starting with the absence of common European past and ending with the opposition of their cultural identities on multiple levels.

I use Collin's (1994) intersectional approach towards identity which suggests that different identity layers (such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and class) are interwoven with one another and should be analyzed in their togetherness and mutual influence. Thus, having addressed what Alcoff (2006) defines as "visible identities" of the Turks, I analyze the Muslim religion and its impact on gender performances of the Turks within their families and in public spaces. I specifically focus on performances of Islamic femininity and masculinity as culture-specific. I further explore the complex nature of Turkish identities in *Head On* by analyzing the protagonists' class as confirming the on screen matrix of Turkish cultural marginalization. I also address the salience of Akin's cinematographic and political positionality for the politics of representation of diversity. Finally, I draw conclusions about the main political message *Head On* entails for the present and future dynamics of the German and European multiculturalism.

German-Turkish *Zweisamkeit*: Alien Component to the New German Identity

The Turkish state shall take the necessary measures to ensure family unity, the education of the children, the cultural needs, and the social security of Turkish nationals working abroad, and shall take the necessary measures to safeguard their ties with the home country and to help them on their return home.
(Turkish Constitution, 1982, Article 62)

Integration requires effort from those that are to be integrated. I will not show respect for anyone that is not making that effort. I don't have to respect anybody who lives off welfare but rejects the state, doesn't do enough for his children's education and constantly produces little girls in headscarves.

I don't want the country of my grandchildren and great-grandchildren to be largely Muslim, or that Turkish or Arabic will be spoken in large areas, that women will wear headscarves and the daily rhythm is set by the call of the muezzin. If I want to experience that, I can just take a vacation in the Orient.
(Thilo Sarrazin, 2010, *Germany Abolishes Itself*)

Head On is a dramatic story of a Turkish-German girl Sibel who enters into a pretense marriage with a Turkish-German deranged garbage collector in order to break free from her conservative Muslim family. Her "arranged" husband, Cahit Tomruk is a German of Turkish descent in his forties. He has given up on life after the death of his wife and seeks relief in drugs and alcohol. One night, he intentionally drives his car head-on into a wall, and barely survives. At the psychiatric clinic he is taken to, he meets Sibel Güner, a German-Turkish girl who has tried to commit suicide. She forces Cahit to carry out a formal marriage with her so that she can break out of the strict rules of her conservative Muslim family. Sibel tells Cahit frankly that she prefers an independent sexual life, so they initially live as roommates with separate private lives. They eventually fall in love and start living in a traditional marriage.

Things take a drastic turn as Cahit kills one of Sibel's former lovers out of anger and jealousy, and he has to go to jail. Sibel's parents claim that she brought shame upon the family, dramatically burn all her pictures and condemn her as a daughter. Sibel flees her family and goes to Istanbul, Turkey, to stay with her cousin Selma, a divorced woman who manages a hotel. Sibel accepts a job as a maid in Selma's hotel, but finds her new "Turkish" life to be as restrictive as a prison. So she leaves Selma's apartment to live what she calls a "free life" with a bartender who provides drugs and alcohol. Eventually, he rapes her and throws her out. Broken and miserable, roaming the street that night,

Sibel baits three men into beating her up and stabbing her. She seems to be relieved in what she hopes to be death, however she survives the stabbing. Yet the spirit of old Sibel seems to be gone for good.

Several years later, Cahit travels to Istanbul upon his release, searching for Sibel. He finds out that she is in a long-term relationship and now has a daughter. When Cahit and Sibel meet, Cahit is surprised to see what has happened to the woman he once knew and loved. She looks estranged, showing slow-motioned apathetic reactions to anything he asks or suggests. She no longer talks, her movements are almost mechanical, the *Feuer und Flammen* (literally, fire and flames) of Sibel's *persona* he knew are gone for good. When Cahit asks Sibel to run away with him for a brand new start together, she agrees to, but never shows up. The film ends with Cahit on a bus still in Turkey, presumably travelling to Mersin, the city where he was born. We never see what happens to Sibel after all, yet somehow it no longer matters; since the person we see at the end of the movie is a shadow of what she used to be anyway, her spirit broken, her resistance gone, her cultural longing and loss almost palpable. A product, even a hybrid of two immensely different cultures, German and Turkish, Sibel ends up alienated by and unhappy in both.

One of the main themes Akin raises in all his cross-cultural cinematographic works is a complex concept of the contemporary German identity with its numerous multicultural components. In *Solino* the Italian-ness seems beneficial to the allegedly multicultural German identity, and turns the latter from the national into the generic European one. In *Head On*, on the contrary, the Turkish component of the new German

identity turns the latter into a strange hybrid construction, composed of incompatible and often mutually exclusive values. This cinematographic dynamic in *Head On* brings to life colonial-like relations between the German "self" and the Turkish "other" and re-confirms power relations, rooted in the controversial German past and the history of marginalizing undesired communities. As Bhabha (1994) suggested,

> The discriminatory effects of the discourse of cultural colonialism do not simply refer to a dialectical power struggle between self and other, or to discrimination between mother culture and alien cultures. Discrimination between the mother culture and its bastards, where the trace of what is disavowed is not repressed but repeated as something different – a mutation, a hybrid. Hybridity is the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities; it is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination. Hybridity is the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity affects. (p. 159)

Akin's cinematographic representations of Sibel and Cahit, their identities and their empty, unhappy endings, are in fact representative of cultural positionality of German-Turkish hybridity in contemporary Germany. German Turks are not quite welcome either in Germany, their host country, or in Turkey, their lost homeplace. The cultural transformation the Turks necessarily undergo in Germany makes them way too different from the culture of their origin. In a way, their initial non-European cultural heritage gets distorted and often completely lost under the "German influence." On the other hand, that same non-European difference makes them culturally "indigestible" for the host country of Germany, unwilling to tolerate that much difference of the *Anderer*. To make matters worse, their Turkish "mother culture" does not assist its emigrants to successfully integrate in a foreign country. Although the Turkish constitution concentrates on maintaining close ties with home country and ensuring a welcoming re-entry for its

citizens working abroad, it does very little to actually integrate the Turkish community into the host country, such as Germany. As a result, German-Turkish cultural hybrids experience a cultural loss of their "Ottoman" self, and at the same time, the cultural longing of inclusion by the not-that-hospitable German host. Germany, still struggling with *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (inability to come to terms with its past) and complex relations of "self" and "other," makes its Turkish immigrants into its target group of social marginalization and exclusion.

Impact of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* and Islam on Turkish-German Incompatibility

Oppressed groups are forgetting all the time. Because to remember may mean giving up whatever privileges we have managed to squeeze out of this society by virtue of our gender, race, class, or sexuality.

(Cherrie Moraga, 2000, p. 45)

First time I remember seeing pictures of the Holocaust was in the tenth grade and the moving picture were already there in my mind somehow before they showed me what I already understood that these people were killed for the spirit-blood that runs through them.
They were like us in this. Ethnic people with long last names with vowels at the end or the wrong type of consonants combined a colored kind of white people.

(Cherrie Moraga, 2000, p. 65)

Früher war's der Jude mit der Hakennase. Oder der schwarze Mann mit der Negervisage. Heute haben sie's auf uns Muslime abgesehen. Manchmal frag ich mich warum wir uns immer im Kreis drehen. Ist es wirklich so wichtig wie du aussiehst, was du anziehst? Ob du Jude bist, Muslim oder Christ.
Earlier it was a Jew with a hooked nose. Or a black man with the Nigger visage. Today, they have targeted us, the Muslims. Sometimes I wonder why we always go around in circles. Is it really so important how you look, what you wear? Whether you're a Jew, a Muslim or a Christian?

(Ammar114, 2000, *Liebe Schwester*)

In 2004, *Head On* won an impressive amount of awards and made Akin world-famous. Most importantly, by focusing on the unsuccessful German-Turkish cultural

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dynamics on screen, Akin centered the problematic Turkish element of a new German identity with significant political implications about the nature of German multiculturalism. In the multicultural society Germany strives to be, the ongoing discussions about new cultural self-identification are inseparable from the infamous German past and at the same time interwoven in the constantly changing European public sphere. The re-definition of a new German (thus European) "self" and defining a new (non European) "other" in the framework of the European Union suggests there are a number of complex processes that contribute to how people shape and enact their identities. Such social and cultural processes are influenced by historically determined definitions of the "self" and the "other." German "sins of the fathers" (for example the Holocaust) continue to define the degree of belonging of certain immigrant groups to the German society. Memories of the infamous "haunting past" still influences German public consciousness and animate people's *Angst* of the unknown and threatening non-white non-Christian cultural "others" (Wagner, 1996; Robins, 2007).

German intercultural complexities have significant political implications for the entire united Europe, since contemporary Germany has a very strong political and economic presence in the European Union. Located in the very heart of *le vieux monde,* Germany also strongly influences cultural dynamics in Europe, its self-identification and its ongoing insider-outsider negotiations. Mohanty (2003) suggests that:

> One of the primary questions feminist teachers and scholars have to face in the European Union studies network, is the meaning of "community" – who are the insiders and the outsiders in this community? What notions of legitimacy and gendered and racialized citizenship are being actively constructed within this community?

This struggle and other similar struggles are fundamentally about redefining borders, about including "outsiders" and reformulating what counts as the inside. Borders, especially those drawn to mark legitimate and illegitimate knowledges are often porous. While the geographical and cultural borders of nation-states since World War II and the decolonization of the Third World were carefully drawn, economical, political, and ideological processes always operated as if these borders were porous. (p. 188)

Twenty one years after its Unification, today's Germany re-defined the cultural image of its alien and undesired Easterner. An *Ossie*, (a derogatory term used to refer to the Eastern Germans) became substituted by a *Kanake* (a derogatory term used to refer to the Turks).

Contemporary and historical German-Turkish relations perfectly exemplify the processes of border-building between two distinctly different cultures: border building with political implications for the entire Europe. Historically, the narrative of Turkish *Gastarbeiter* in Germany radically differs from that of the Italians. From the very beginning of their coming to Germany back in the 1960s, this cultural group is still the least integrated and most marginalized by the host country (Halle, 2008; Rings, 2008; Petek, 2007). Although current political and economic discourses of German-Turkish relations are focused solely on Turkish potential future EU membership (most of the EU countries vehemently resist), the actual German-Turkish issue has its roots in the alleged incompatibility of the two cultures and the values and identities these cultures have produced.

Not surprisingly, a Turkish component of German multiculturalism has always been quite problematic. Already in 1982, a heated Bundestag debate on the topic of multiculturalism took place in the German parliament. Speaking on behalf of CDU

(Christian Democratic Union, the largest and most influential German political party), its outspoken leader Alfred Dregger suggested that Turkey's embrace of the outward trapping of European secularism did not mitigate the fundamental, irreconcilable differences that existed between Turkish and German cultures. As evidence of this, Dregger pointed out that largely insular Turkish "ghettos" had developed in all the major West German cities. While he praised the instincts of Turks to keep to themselves and maintain their unique culture, he argued that they should do so in Turkey rather than Germany.

Twenty years later another famous German politician and historian, Hans-Ulrich Wehler emphasized the shared European experience as decisive for the current multicultural dynamics in Germany. Wehler underlined that Turkey has never been part of historic Europe and thus did not participate in its defining European experiences. He further warned that cultural divergences are so deeply engrained in Europe that the Islam of Turkey remains an obvious cultural barrier.

Just a couple of months ago in August 2010 a famous German politician (Social Democratic Party) and a former member of the Executive Board of the *Deutsche Bundesbank* Thilo Sarrazin, published a book under a provocative title *Deutschland schafft sich ab* (literally, *Germany Abolishes Itself*). In the book, he denounced the failure of Germany's post-war and *Gastarbeiter* immigration policy, sparking a nation-wide controversy about the costs and benefits of the very concept of multiculturalism. He specifically claims that of all the minorities in Germany, Turkish and Arab immigrants

are most unwilling to integrate. With regard to these predominantly Muslim immigrant groups, Sarazzin (2010) suggests that,

> No other religion in Europe makes so many demands. No immigrant group other than Muslims is so strongly connected with claims on the welfare state and crime. No group emphasizes their differences so strongly in public, especially through women's clothing. In no other religion is the transition to violence, dictatorship and terrorism so fluid. (p. 156)

The leading theme of the book suggests that Germany's immigrant Muslim communities are reluctant to integrate and prefer to rely more on social services than on self-discipline and willingness to work. Furthermore, Sarazzin warns that the Muslim population growth may well overwhelm the German population just within a couple of generations and that their intelligence is lower as well. Interestingly, the politician claims a direct correlation between the Muslim religion and the level of intellect and intelligence. He writes that even the German decline in education is caused by immigration from Turkey, the Middle East and Africa, and because of them, "we are, on average, becoming dumber in a natural way" (p. 123). The book became a national bestseller. According to the data from *Media Control* (29 October 2010) already two months after its publication *Germany Abolishes Itself* became the best-sold German book on politics of the decade. National polls suggested that almost half of the population agree with his views and even 18 percent would vote for his party if he started one (*Berliner Morgenpost*, February 3, 2011). *Der Spiegel International* journal (October 9, 2010) suggested that Sarrazin embodies the rage of Enlightened German people, sick and tired of being confronted with pre-Enlightenment elements returning to the center of German society; people sick and tired

of reading about Islamist associations that have one degree of separation from terrorism, of honor killings, of death threats against cartoonists and filmmakers.

Lack of proper education, laziness, and involvement in crime: these labels have often been made synonymous with the Muslim (predominately Turkish) population in Germany: in the media, as well as in political, scholarly and popular discourses. Islam pronounced as an unacceptable religion is certainly only one of the components in the intersectional paradigm of Turkish marginalization in Germany. Ethnicity and race of the Turks also add to their social marginalization. Critical character of Turkish ethnicity and race is also grounded in German history. Flinn (2007) often addresses the German inability to come to terms with its past and its need for margins, that goes back to the filthy dualism of *Inländer* (nationals) and *Ausländer* (foreigners), and the country's early encounters with Jews and other non-white, non-Christian ethnic populations. The ideology of intersectional marginalization of the "other" deeply ingrained as "culturally inferior" in public consciousness, echoes one of the justifications made by the Nazis in 1939 for starting the war and exterminating Jews (and other non-white non-Christian peoples). Currently, instead of Jews, Muslims have gradually become the new German "others": living on their streets, taking their jobs, and provoking their xenophobic sentiments.

Turkish Femininity: Split between Family and Foreignness

> *The girl is crazy somehow. She wants to kill herself, she is going head on into the wall. She does not accept the pressure. There is a certain kind of pressure, a certain kind of dogmatism, that especially Turkish females face in our society, here in Germany more, than in Turkey.*
>
> (Fatih Akin 2004, interview to the *Deutsche Welle*)

The "West" has traditionally represented a twofold challenge in the Middle East: a horizon on which to fathom or rethink one's self, and a negative limit-case, a sort of antiworld of temptations that one should worry about.

(Marnia Lazreg, 2009, p. 112)

As a cinematographic and cultural text, Fatih Akin's *Head On* perfectly portrays the un-easiness of contemporary German-Turkish relationships. In addition to intersectionally addressing the pronounced incompatibility of the two cultures, Akin complicates *Head On*'s German-Turkish struggle by locating it in the unique culture of Hamburg's Altona.

Cinematographic images of Altona are central to *Head On* and, in fact, inseparable from all Akin's Turkish-German films – after all, it is his place of birth, residency, and creative inspiration. Altona is the ultimate *multi-kulti* urban borough of Hamburg. In the early 19th century, it was the cradle of the largest Jewish community in Hamburg, a center of Jewish life (Lowenhtal, 1977). Today, a little German "melting pot" Altona is the nest of the city's biggest Turkish community, a mix of myriad minorities that live there side by side: black-, brown-, olive- and mocha-skinned ethnic minorities who live together with the stereotypically-looking *Nordisch Nobel* (*Nordic Noble*) native Germans: tall, blond, blue-eyed. In Altona, one never knows what's around the corner – a fancy Italian restaurant, a "hole-in-the-wall-like" Moroccan *Imbiss*, a tiny Chinese diner, a Farsi-speaking fruit vendor, or a famous *Döner-Kebab* stand. Some Jamaican or Turkish music in the background, and impressive skyline of breathtakingly beautiful architecture, contrasted by the mighty tides of the Elbe and its gigantic container ships from all over the world. Loud, colorful, and dynamic, Altona has its own distinct culture that simultaneously embraces various ethnic traditions and imposes

dynamic cross-cultural interactions. Altona is a cultural paradox: it is archaic and modern at the same time. It is culturally transformative, rebellious, and transgressive.

Head On's main protagonist, young and beautiful Sibel is in many ways a curious product of the Altona culture, its embodied rebellious and transgressive hybrid. A cascade of raven-black hair, slightly brownish skin and liquid-centered dark eyes betray the Turkish origin of the young woman. Sibel's "visible identities" (Alcoff, 2001) drastically contrast her impeccable German language and her non- traditional for typical Turkish (Muslim) women dress code. We often see Sibel wandering streets of Altona in a bright-colored mini-skirt and a blouse with a deep décolleté that leaves very little to imagination. She prefers excessive makeup that allows her dark eyes to stand out on her pretty face. Unlike most Turkish Muslim women, Siebel never wears a headscarf. Many scenes portray Sibel in a bar drinking alcohol, or dancing and flirting with men in cheap and shabby nightclubs. In one of the scenes this Altona Turkish-born German-raised female declares that she wants to "live her life feely, have fun, and have a lot of sex in her life just as men do."

Right after this declaration Akin shows us a different side of Sibel. At home with her Turkish family, Sibel does not wear any makeup. Her pastel-colored formless clothes decently cover her body. We only see her talking to her mother and never to men in her family. She speaks Turkish in a very soft voice – actually, at home she hardly talks at all. Another domestic scene portrays Sibel's father and brother in the kitchen in a heated discussion about the young woman. Although Sibel only discloses her "humble and obedient Turkish side" when at home, even that humbleness is not enough for the strict

and conservative Muslim men in her family. Sibel's father and brother call her behavior "unacceptable" and "shameful." They are alarmed by the fact that Sibel does not cover her head in public, unlike "the faithful and devoted daughters of Allah." Both men frequently quote the Koran as they talk about Sibel. Finally, they make a decision to "save her from shame." As a result of their discussion, they come to the conclusion that only a marriage to a good Turkish man would be able save their daughter and sister. Sibel, who overhears their conversation, is desperate: she finds herself unable to change the rules of what many German feminists define as execution of "Islamic archaic patriarchy" (Halle, 2008). Baumgartner-Karabak & Landesberger, Turkish-born German feminists, (1978) write:

> Turkish marriage and divorce are often carried out according to Islamic law. The Koran contains exact prescriptions relating to the treatment of women, against whom it discriminates strongly. Orientation to the world, moral ideas, and customary behavior are prescribed by religion, whose content is enforced by relatives and the village community. Firmly fitted within the patriarchal family, the trajectory of women's lives is completely predetermined. Decisions are first made for her by the father; after the wedding, by the husband. They have little influences on the choice of marriage partner. Their role in the household is characterized by unconditional subordination to the husband and the head of the household. Their social place within the family and in the village is defined by their sons. (p. 68)

Such descriptions are very relevant for the *Gastarbeiter* Turkish women (as Sibel's mother) who typically come from rural parts of their country of origin. As suggested by Olson (1982), women in Turkey (especially in its rural parts) tend to be relegated to a more "closed," private sphere, where they are responsible for bearing and taking care of children, managing the household, and working in fields. In contrast, men operate primarily in the public domain. They are generally in charge of the shopping and conduct

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business in "open" arenas such as the mosque, market, or café. Donna Lee Bowen and Evelyn Early (1993) have explained this pattern of sexual segregation in terms of "honor" and "shame," both of which depend entirely on a woman's sexual behavior and reputation. In order to avoid shame and protect their honor, fathers, husbands, and brothers must ensure the chastity and fidelity of the women in the household, just like Sibel's father and brother do.

When in Germany, traditional Turkish women that accept such gender division face an additional challenge of being foreigners without any helpful social networks. Being loyal to their Muslim cultural customs, they stay in opposition to the more egalitarian and permissive standards of traditional Western European femininity. In fact, Turkish Muslim women often define performances of gender and sexuality of their native German counterparts as "vulgar" and "immoral" (Rings, 2008; Petek, 2007; Halle, 2008) and try to minimize and if possible even avoid any contact with them. Naturally, their Turkish families (rhetorically) and their apartments (physically) become their only safe spaces, often the only spaces they know (or are allowed to occupy), as it was perfectly illustrated in another German-Turkish film *40m^2 Deutschland* (*40m^2 Germany*, 1986). The bitter irony is that often these spaces become prisons for many Turkish women, as in case of Sibel. Even worse is the fact that there are seemingly not too many alternatives to their social (and personal) isolation. Gueltakin-Neumann (1983), suggests that:

> If a Turkish woman complains about certain troubles or even repression in the family, the European woman in most cases wish that she would make herself independent. This kind of self-sufficiency, however, often means flight from the family, loneliness, and a hopeless situation for foreign women and girls. For the majority of Turkish women immigrants, the family plays the biggest role in the

foreign society. If they disown it, they lose every contact to the community. (p. 12)

Turkish women in Germany usually end up being in a painful space of cultural in-betweenness. The close ties with their Turkish families, instead of being their matter of choice, become their matter of necessity, their matter of social survival. At the same time, Turkish women cannot completely cut German culture, the culture they live in, out of their lives. Consequently, many Turkish women, similar to Sibel, are challenged by the incompatibility of their parallel domestic and public realities, realities that stand in cultural opposition to each other. To make matters worse, native Germans also try to avoid contact to the conservative and submissive Turkish women. Many Germans consider Turkish Muslim women wearing *hijabs, nijabs* or *burcas,* alien bodies, voluntarily participating in their own oppression. Von Paczensky (1978) writes:

> Turkish women now live in our cities as unassimilable, strange bodies. It is no wonder that they provoke prejudice. They walk humbly two steps behind their husbands, and even relinquish the particular domain of women – shopping for food and clothes – to their husbands and children. They contradict every imaginable image of women: they do not do justice to the traditional role of an efficient mother, who self-confidently manages the household; much less do they meet emancipated demands on their own ways of life. (p. 8)

Von Paczensky's lines locate the presumably "archaic" traditional Turkish Muslim femininity in the cultural opposition with the "progressive" Western European femininity, making their standards mutually incompatible. What is means for the German-Turkish women like Sibel is an unresolved cultural in-betweenness that gradually turns Turkish women into estranged bodies on German streets.

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Estranged Body… Estranged Beauty… Estranged Performance

Prophet, tell your spouses and daughters and wives of believers that they should cover themselves with a mantel when they go out. Thus they will be perceived as decent women and not harassed.

(Sura 33 of the Koran)

Islamic femininity should define a certain way of being and feeling oneself – and wanting to remain – a woman before God and among other human beings, spiritually, socially, politically, and culturally – free, autonomous, and engaged.

(Tariq Ramadan, 2004, p. 143)

Desire has the power to do just that, to make us forget who we are. It both disrupts and deconstructs. It diminishes and disembodies.

(bell hooks, 1996, p. 13)

Head On's Sibel represents many Turkish women in their attempts of self-definitions within the German culture. Her character is impulsive, many-sided, and contradictory at the same time. Her on-going negotiations of her own rules of gender and sexual behavior, her rebellion, transformation, tragedy, and final breaking represent intra-personal and inter-cultural struggles of many Turkish women on German streets. Their struggles are multifaceted.

In her very first conversation with Cahit, Sibel declares that she wants to have as much sexual freedom as men do. She does not specify whether she means Turkish or German men. In her judgments, Sibel glides over the intersectional concept of Turkish female marginalization and focuses solely on the gender inequality she rebels against, concentrating on patriarchy as a universal phenomenon. Certainly, patriarchy entails some universality that established masculinity as superior to femininity. As suggested by a feminist scholar Marnia Lazreg (2009),

> Masculinity, regardless of culture or geographic context, is predicated upon notions of femininity. It is the degree of psychological distance that men establish

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between themselves and women that determines how they will define themselves and what attitudes they will adopt with women. (p. 50)

In our society worldwide men enjoy a more privileged social positionality and a great variety of freedoms. However, despite the normative social positionality of men as superior to women, the concept of patriarchy is multilayered and culture-specific. Just like Islamic femininity, Turkish (Muslim) patriarchy also has its own distinct way of being in the world. Turkish patriarchy is grounded in the interplay of gender with other identity layers which, in their powerful togetherness, create a concept Collins (1994, 2000) defines "the matrix of oppression."

Confronted with the Turkish patriarchy, Sibel gradually realizes that what she calls her "imprisonment" is very complex, and that her complex German-Turkish culture is actually more an obstacle to her social and personal liberation than solely her gender. In many scenes of the movie we see how Sibel tries to break out of the framework of specifically traditional Turkish female subjectivity she finds unbearable. In her "discursive resistance," Sibel declares that she does not want to either have an arrange marriage, or to pretend she is modest. She repeats that she deserves to be independent, enjoy sexual freedom, and have as much fun as her male counterparts, including her own brother. In her "visual resistance" Sibel goes beyond the rejection of the idea of wearing a *hijab*. With her tight low-waist skinny jeans, blouses with deep décolletés, high heels and mini-skirts, Sibel eagerly emphasizes her feminine shapes. Finishing her look with an excessive amount of mascara and bright lipstick, Sibel turns into the ultimate *mutabarrajat*, or a woman who makes herself pretty (Larzeg, 2009).

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Traditionally strict Islamic Middle Eastern cultural standards put forward that

Muslim women should be "invisible" in public. The Koran suggests that if properly

covered, they "will be perceived as decent women and not harassed" (Sura 33).

Traditional female attire such as a *hijab*, a *nijab*, or a *burca*, quite commonly worn by

Turkish women in Germany, indeed leave very little of women's bodies to be seen.

Women who disobey and make themselves visible and pretty are usually called

mutabarrajat, a derogatory term that gives insights of the "beauty standards" of the

Islamic culture. Lazreg (2009) provides an insight on this cultural phenomenon:

> Women who wear makeup or do not cover their hair earn the label of
> *mutabarrajat*, or "women who make themselves pretty." The label is used with a
> negative connotation since the female body must not be "displayed." Adoring the
> body implicitly means finding it worthy of grooming, love, enhancement, and
> perhaps pride. I cannot stress how deeply damaging this notion is for women,
> especially the older generations, who wore veils, all their lives and internalized
> the view that the body must be repressed. When considered in the context of their
> busy lives taking care of large families, this notion results in women neglecting
> themselves. They avoid grooming themselves, let themselves go, aided by their
> entourage that is all too quick to remind them they are "too old," even when they
> are not, to "adorn" themselves. Social contempt for the female body thus turns
> into women's resentment of their won bodies. Consequently, women act as if they
> were disembodied. (p. 33)

Numerous scholars point out that modesty in the Middle Eastern societies refers to a

whole array of ideas and practices, including modalities of covering the body partially or

totally; character traits such as bashfulness, humility, diffidence, and shyness; and the

system of beliefs and customs that embed gendered conceptions of sex, chastity,

virginity, adultery, and the like. German-raised Sibel vehemently tries to reject such

practices. That is why, having realized that in her family marriage is the only possible

way to break free; she arranges her own wedding with Cahit, a man she hardly knows.

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Interestingly enough, although the story takes place in Altona, the most multicultural part of Hamburg, of all the multi-ethnic men she knows, Sibel picks a Turkish man to marry. Certainly, accepting a Turkish husband on the side of their daughter and sister is easier for her male family members, yet another underlining logic of Sibel's (i.e. Akin's) choice is their common Turkish origin. In other words, picking a German-born low-classy Turk feels like Sibel's inability of letting go of her own cultural roots and norms, it feels like home. And, paradoxically, for a certain period of time, even her emancipation is trapped by the institution of a classic heterosexual patriarchic romance.

Paradoxically, although Sibel and Cahit "fake" their marriage, Akin presents to the audience numerous clichéd romantic scenes from a life of what seems like a traditional married couple. Even their happiness for a moment seems real yet possible only when they fall into the traditional Turkish gender roles: when Sibel cleans Cahit's apartment, cooks traditional Turkish food, always stays home, and makes love to him upon request. Unlike Italian Rosa and Ada who, in addition to their families *per se* also enjoyed fulfilling public lives in *Solino*, Sibel's short-term "happily ever after" in *Head On* literally cannot exceed the walls of Cahit's shabby apartment. The cinematographic discourse created by Akin suggests that a Turkish woman like Sibel can be happy only in such a relationship, which in its turn is criticized in the German national discourse for its "archaic, anti-democratic, and threatening" character (Paczensky, 1986; Baumgartner-Karabak & Landesberger, 1978). Paczensky (1986) specifically claims that Turkish women fail to live up to Western society's most basic standards, not even fulfilling "traditional European" female roles. Her implications are that the Islamic customs she

describes in her book *Die Verkauften Braute* (Sold Brides) "contradict" and prove

ultimately incompatible with the historical emancipation of European women.

In the film's original language, i.e., German, *Head On*'s title is *Gegen die Wand*,

what literally translates as *Against the Wall* in English. Metaphorically speaking,

numerous Turkish women in Germany – like Sibel, like her mother, and many others –

are constantly trying to break through a double-layered cultural wall, usually without

much success. The first layer of the wall is raised by ignorance, biases, and

marginalization caused by the native Germans. The second layer of the wall is raised by

the gender-restrictive, often sexiest Turkish culture which frequently turns Turkish

women into prisoners: of their own desires, of their own bodies, and of their male

partners. The latter, i.e., Turkish males represent the ultimate challenge to Turkish

women like Sibel in Germany. Paradoxically, being socially marginalized and usually

occupying the lowest layers of the social class (window cleaners, plumbers, garbage

collectors), Turkish males still expect almost royal treatment from their wives, their

absolute obedience and their impeccable domestic services. Such unconventional and

socially inacceptable for Western standards gender interplay distances Turkish culture in

Germany even further.

Turkish Masculinity: Saga of Muslim *Müllmenschen*

*And then we give birth to sons, who become men. And we are unable to defend
ourselves against this most intimate, most beloved of oppressors.*
<div align="right">(Cherrie Moraga, 2000, p. 207)</div>

*The greatest fear of most Turks both in Turkey and in Germany is that people
could speak badly of their daughters.*
<div align="right">(Ayse, 1998, p. 237)</div>

Understand. My family is poor. Poor. I can't afford a new ribbon. The risk of this one is enough to keep me moving.

<div align="right">(Cherrie Moraga, 2000, p. 55)</div>

If male protagonists in *Head On* would not speak their typical mixture of German and Turkish, the component of Germanness in the movie would be hardly recognizable. In this cultural drama, Fatih Akin provides a perspective on Turkish men, typical of many large urban cities in Germany. Whether in Hamburg, Berlin, Munich, or Cologne, closed in their ethnically homogeneous communities, Turkish men significantly stand out on German streets. They stand out in a way which is alien to and often judged by the host culture of Germany.

Turkish men in Germany usually practice Muslim religion. Although Germany has an impressive amount of mosques in larger cities like Hamburg, Cologne, or Berlin, the fact that German citizens of Turkish origin are also German citizens of the Islamic faith appears increasingly to arouse fears of contact among native Germans (Senocak & Tulay, 1998). After all, Christian religion has always been one of the most salient identifications of the Germaneness *per se.* Today, a large (and growing) number of the native Germans are *Islamophobes* (Flinn, 2007; Senocak & Tulay, 1998). Finn (2007) specifically claims that turning Muslims into scapegoats, responsible for most evils happening both in Germany and in the world, has become too trendy – which nowadays, in light of current politics, is quite a popular worldwide trend.

Another popular trend of the representation of the Turks, as in *Head On*, is locating them on the lowest levels of a class pyramid and by doing so discursively normalizing the social reality of their low-classiness. Typically, Turkish men in Germany

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are blue-collar workers: they work in construction, in car manufacturing plants, as window cleaners, and as garbage collectors. Following this pattern, *Head On*, Cahit and his male in-laws occupy a very low class of the societal "trash," or *Müllmenschen* (Rings, 2008). Ironically, Cahit's job is in fact a *Müllsammler* (a garbage collector). His newly acquired Turkish relatives also do not strive for any "high" culture, not even for at least some decent education. In conceptualizing such kind of literally and cinematographic imagery, Hoecherl-Alden & Lindenfeld (2010) suggest that "a notion of cultural superiority underlies the imagined dichotomy of the intellectual and more cerebral German Northerner who lacks the emotion and intuition of the Turkish Southerner" (p. 124). German-Turkish protagonists follow this representation pattern. Throughout the movie, we never see them involved in any kind of an intellectual activity. Instead we see a lot of "competing Muslim masculinity": in order to somehow "spice up" their lives, Turkish men in *Head On* visit prostitutes and later share their stories, not leaving out most intimate and peculiar details. Interestingly, most of them are married and have kids.

Compared to his male counterparts, Cahit is an exception, in many ways he is a struggling Turk. They do not drink – he is almost an alcoholic (he also uses drugs). They value their community – he is a loner by choice. They have quite extended families – he has a non-traditional wife in a "fake" marriage. Paradoxically, though, his feelings towards his "fake" wife are real. And instead of going to prostitutes, he prefers rich sexual life with his own wife – a concept alien to the mainstream Turkish culture. There is a particularly shocking scene in the movie that perfectly illustrates this paradox. When Cahit asks his new (in-law) male relatives, while the latter are bragging about their sex

with whores, *"Warum fickt ihr nicht eure eigene Frauen?"* (Why don't you fuck your own wives?) he almost gets beaten up. What German-raised Cahit seems to forget (or be unaware of) is the specificity of Turkish gender and sexuality performances in their relation to the institution of marriage and Turkish motherhood. The fact is that typically, in the eyes of Turkish men, Turkish women stop being objects of sexual desires the moment they become mothers. They are respected and yet sexually ignored – a concept of sexuality, alien to the German culture, which pushes the Turkishness in the film even further to the margins. The Muslim religion the Germans fear, the trashy underworld the Germans loathe, the alien gender/sexuality performances the Germans despise all add up to the matrix of the intersectional cultural isolation and alienation of the Turks in the German society. Fatih Akin's most celebrated cross-cultural drama *Head On* contributes to the politics of exclusion of Turkishness as the cultural "otherness" in the realm of Euro-centric Germanness. Ironically, this particular film that cinematographically symbolizes failure of truly inclusive German multiculturalism, made Akin's star as a filmmaker, a political figure, and a "cultural ambassador" (Halle, 2006; Petek, 2007) reach its zenith.

Paradoxically, during making of *Solino* in 2002 (and just two years prior to the phenomenal success of *Head On*), Akin tried to disengage from his cultural roots. A son of poor Turkish *Gastarbeiter* from Altona, in his interview to *Der Spiegel* magazine (2002) Akin called himself a *Weltbürger* (a citizen of the world). Unfortunately *Solino* did not have the expected success, not only because of the Italian-German specificity but also because Akin's authenticity as a film director was called into question. Just two

years later in 2004, during shooting of *Head On*, Akin emphasized his Turkishness as a decisive component of his own creative positionality. In his interview to the radio *Deutsche Welle* (2004), to the question whether he has to be Turkish in order to deal with the subject of Turkish immigrants in Germany in such a blunt manner, Akin answered:

> I did not much think which were the Turkish elements. I was born with it and grew up with it. I was on the inside and did not reflect upon it that much. I did it later, though, when I was making the movie.

By completely identifying with the Turkishness in the movie as something he "was born and grew up with", the issues of authenticity have never been raised against Fatih Akin, neither in film reviews, nor in the scholarly research. With *Head On,* the filmmaker's star started to shine brighter than ever. Most importantly his positionality in regards to Alcoff's (1992) "problem of speaking for others" drastically changed into what Conquergood (1985) defined as "Curator's Exhibitionism" with multiple elements of "Custodian's Rip-off:" the ethical traps of performance ethnography. In the famous ethical pitfall of Curator's Exhibitionism, the ethnographer overly identifies with the other, to the point of exoticizing and romanticizing the latter, recreating thus the colonial vision of the noble savage and just intensifying the difference between the self and the other. Critical feminists of color (Lorde, 1984; Collins, 2000; Madison, 1998; Anzaldúa, 2007; Moraga, 2000) often criticize this exotisizing and the consequent eroticizing of women of color, like Sibel and her cousin Selma in *Head On* – the processes that historically created images of jezebels, mummies, *chingadas*, maids and many others – images that overly dominate popular culture and re-create and re-confirm negative images of the "others" in public consciousness. Numerous elements of "Custodian's Rip-

off" in Head On represent an attack on the part of the filmmaker, who often approaches

and appropriates Turkish culture without care and is thus hurtful, careless, and even

destructive. This specific approach very much resembles the historical colonial approach

towards those "wild savages" and is still deeply engrained in public consciousness

(Conquergood, 1985). Unfortunately, until such consciousness gets challenged and

changed, the idea of inclusive and non-discriminatory multiculturalism in Germany (and

in Europe) will remain utopian, as it is in *Head On*.

Multiculturalism in *Head On*: Turkish Be-Longing

One of the fundamental challenges of diversity is to understand our collective differences in terms of historical agency and responsibility so that we can understand others and build solidarities across divisive boundaries.

(Mohanty 2003, p. 191)

Multiple award winner *Head On* is an impressive movie: impressive in its

bluntness, in its bitterness, in its hopelessness. *Head On* is much more than a cross-

cultural drama that depicts current uneasiness of the German-Turkish relationships: it is a

cultural tragedy. In his famous film, not only did Akin bring to life the entire German

(and generally European) negative prejudices and biases against the Turks, he also sent a

political message about a complete failure of the Turkish integration in Germany. In the

politics of representation of Turkishness, Akin practiced a combination of what

Conquergood (1985) defined as "Custodian's Rip-off" with and "Curator's

Exhibitionism." Akin's "Custodian's Rip-off" in *Head On* progresses throughout the

film, as he adds up layers of intersectional Turkish cultural incompatibility, depicting

Turkishness as a "barbarian" culture in opposition to the "civilized" Germanness. This

specific approach very much resembles the historical colonial approach towards those

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"uncivilized cultures" of the "indigenous others" in need of salvation and enlightenment from the mighty and civilized Eurocentric Masters (Conquergood, 1985).At the same time, culturally identifying with his Turkish protagonists and thus practicing the famous Conquergoodian "Curator's Exhibitionism," Fatih Akin placed himself in a provocative opposition to the German culture. Identifying as a Turk, although he was born, raised, and educated in Germany, with his personal story Akin emphasizes the lack of Turkish integration in the country, followed by the social marginalization on this immigrant group in the German society. With Akin's authenticity as *auteur* being defined as impeccable, *Head On*'s representation of the Turks does not ever get either questioned or challenged by the audience. Cinematographic representation of the intersectional Turkish incompatibility with the native Germanness becomes a norm.

All the way throughout the movie, the cinematographic representations of the Turks fall into the category of the uncivilized wild "others" of the German slums, the low-classy German urban underworld that becomes so overwhelming that it slowly excludes the original Germanness in the film and focuses on the margins. In a way, Turkish migrants and native Germans rather coexist than interact in space, transforming *Head On* into a sad story of the failure of a multicultural dialogue on screen. As a cultural context, Germany becomes a symbol of modern sin with the traditional colonial binary of Turkish ghetto versus the native Eurocentric core. This situation seems to be even more critical for Turkish women who end up experiencing double marginalization, followed by double tragedies and never-satisfied quest for belonging. Sibel is one of many Turkish women whose cultural experience in Germany could be best conceptualized in what

Carillo Rowe (2003) defines as "Be-Longing," a hopelessly destructive and painful

longing for something they will never be granted in Germany, a country marked by

Vergangenheitsbewältigung, a country haunted by its controversial past.

Historical and cultural dynamics of the German past significantly influences its

present: public consciousness, public reason, as well as cultural, social and institutional

values. The infamous German *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (inability to come to terms

with its past) with troublesome self-identification as a nation accompanied by xenophobic

sentiments towards cultural diversity still allow the Germans to single out their cultural

scapegoats. Like the Jews or the Blacks in the past: images still present in the German

public memory. Audre Lorde (1984) suggested that cultural memory is given to us to

remember the past and not to repeat its terrible and tragic mistakes. Otherwise Germany

will never break out of the vicious circle of discriminatory relations with the "other," and

the new consciousness towards openness and inclusions, towards a non-discriminatory

dialogue – the pre-requisite of real multiculturalism – will never be built.

In the framework of the guiding theme of this dissertation about the nature of

inclusive and non-discriminatory multiculturalism, Akin's *Head On* suggests that

German-Turkish cross-cultural dynamic is doomed to be a binary of two cultural

oppositions. The very prefix "multi" in the word should be substituted by "incompatible-

bi"-culturalism. Bi-culturalism that normalizes Turkish synonymy with the German

social margins and simultaneously archaic-and-pervasive conceptualization of gender

roles and sexualities. Bi-culturalism that instrumentalizes women by turning them into

either invisible and sexually unattractive domestic workers or easily available sex-

obsessed toys. Bi-culturalism that ignores women's own voices and desires. Bi-culturalism that validates the principle of Eurocentricity as the necessary criterion for cultural value system and the following politics of inclusion and exclusion. Bi-culturalism that continues to raise social, political and rhetorical borders with the Turkish "other," the way it always did in the past, with changing faces of "otherness." Speaking metaphorically, *Head On* is a cinematographic requiem to the German multiculturalism, written by the European Master narrative. In the German-Turkish *Head On*, the Master's tools are far from trying to dismantle the Master's house: the Master's tools are re-fencing it instead. The house that Europe built.

Chapter Five: *On the Other Side:* **the Ultimate Conceptualization of Turkishness as**

a Culture of Extremes, Facing the Consequences of Border Crossing, Living in

Double Exile

On the Other Side **of German Normativity**

> *Let me in!*
> *I am a human being, a female person, don't you understand me?*
> *Sex.*
> *You all make me unequal.*
> *Housewife and mother.*
> *Nooooo. Please, doesn't anyone understand me?*
> *Sure.*
> *All of us. But stay as you are and do not change.*
> *But understand me, I want to be equal.*
> *But please not like us! You do not belong to us!*
> *HELP! They want to stone me and they are almost succeeding!*
>
> (Helga Emde, 1998, p. 86)

In this chapter, I analyze *On the Other Side;* Akin's another German-Turkish

celebrated drama and a multiple award winner. After receiving the Best Screenplay

Award at the 2007 Cannes Film Festival, the movie won the Lino Brocka Award in the

International Cinema category at the 2007 Cinemanila International Film Festival in the

Philippines. The film also won five awards at Antalya Golden Orange Film Festival (for

best director, editing, supporting actor, supporting actress and special jury award). In

2010, the European Parliament awarded its newly established LUX prize for European

cinema to the film, a month later in November the movie won the Critics Award at the

European Cinema Festival, in Seville. In December 2007, the movie won the best

screenplay award at European Film Awards and was also nominated for best director and best film. This culturally radical, politically "loaded" and disturbingly violent film brought Akin more admiring audiences and received very positive reviews from established filmmakers and film critics as well as political and cultural scholars.

Similar to *Head On, On the Other Side* is also culturally provocative and bitterly-violent. From a critical cultural perspective *On the Other Side* takes an even more radical step back in the cross-cultural discourse: the film opposes multiculturalism, making its idea look utopian, even dangerous. I specifically explore the on-screen intersectional cultural extremities and multi-layered "border-crossings" that make the idea of peaceful and mutually respectful German-Turkish coexistence impossible.

I begin by providing a brief summary of the complex plot of the celebrated movie under consideration. I continue with the analysis of the German-Turkish cultural duality, previously addressed in *Head On*, building upon the phenomenon of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (inability to come to terms with its past) and its affect on the politics of Turkish marginalization. I illustrate how the representation of Turkish cultural extremes in *On the Other Side* makes Turkishness not only incompatible with but also threatening to the native German culture.

Then I separately analyze three parallel stories in the movie. First, in the story of a Turkish prostitute Yeter, I address the concept of Islamic femininity in its relation to the Muslim religion and its radical practice of honor killing. I continue with the exploration of German-Turkish class relations in their correlation with patriarchal violence and hegemony of heteronormativity. In the second story, a cross-racial queer romance of

German Lotte and Turkish Ayten, I continue analyzing "critical" sexuality and its

implications for women's self-identifications, solidarity and potential for a cross-cultural

dialogue. Further, in the story of Nejat, a celebrated *Germanistikprofessor* (professor of

German Studies) of Turkish origin who returns back to Turkey, I analyze the politics of

space and cultural positionality. I illuminate the controversial German-Turkish cultural

in-between-ness and consequent alienation and homelessness as decisive for the

dynamics of the German multiculturalism. Finally, I re-visit Fatih Akin's cultural and

political positionality and draw conclusions about the main political message *On the*

Other Side contains for the further development of the German and European cross-

cultural relationships.

Extremes of Cultural Incompatibility: Price of Crossing the Line

> *All sexiest thinking and action is the problem, whether those who perpetuate it are*
> *female or male, child or adult. It is also broad enough to include an understanding of*
> *systematic institutionalized sexism.*
> <div align="right">(bell hooks, 2000, p. 1)</div>

> *Always we are alone when we write to the kings*
> *Those of the heart and those of the state.*
> *And still our hearts are frightened.*
> <div align="right">(Herta Mueller, 1998, p. 160)</div>

> *To understand feminism it implies one has to necessarily understand sexism.*
> <div align="right">(bell hooks, 2000, p. 1)</div>

After the overwhelming success of *Head On* in 2004, in 2007 Akin followed up

with the representation of German-Turkish intersectional cultural incompatibility in his

other cinematographic drama whose title is suggestive of its plot: *Auf der Anderen Seite*

(literally, *On the Other Side*). Although some major themes in both German-Turkish

films under consideration are very similar, like for example the "irreconcilable" cultural

differences in German vs. Turkish perspectives on gender and family roles, or traditional Muslim standards of femininity; this movie brings those differences to their extremes. By doing so, the cultural gap between the Germans and the Turks in the movie continues to grow drastically, leaving the implications of an irresolvable issue of cultural incompatibility.

Similar to *Head On, On the Other Side* (*The Edge of Heaven* is an alternative title) is another harsh urban movie, shot in two major cities – German Bremen and Turkish Istanbul. Compared to Head On, its story is more complex, containing three parallel stories that gradually flow into one. The opening scenes of the movie show a "prostitute district" of Bremen. Young and aging, of various cultural origins, cheap and "classy-posh", Bremen prostitutes embody diversity. Yeter, a Turkish woman in her late forties, is one of them. With her blonde wig and impeccable German language skills, her ethnicity remains concealed, until one day she speaks Turkish with one of her clients and two young Turkish men overhear the conversation. They start following Yeter and threaten her with honor killing. Frightened, Yeter quits her job and takes an offer of her old Turkish client Ali – a widower who offered to her to stay with him, run his household, please (only) him sexually and allow him to be her provider in exchange. Yeter agrees just to find out that Ali treats her as a maid and a sex toy. To make the matters worse, in an outburst of jealousy, Ali accidently kills her and goes to jail. The coffin with Yeter's corpse is sent to Turkey.

Ali's son Nejat is a *Germanistikprofessor* (professor of German Studies) in Bremen. An intellectual son of a poor Turkish *Gastarbeiter*, Nejat is disgusted by Yeter's

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"easy virtue" yet touched by Yeter's personal story. Yeter, a single mother of a 27-year-old girl Ayten back in Istanbul, prostitutes in order to enable her daughter's better future and good education. After Yeter's violent death, Nejat decides to go to Turkey and find her daughter. In Turkey, unable to locate Ayten through her relatives, Nejat posts flyers of Yeter throughout the area of Istanbul hoping that it will lead to the daughter. When he posts a flyer in a small German language bookstore that happens to be for sale, he finds himself charmed into buying it and staying in Turkey for ever.

Ayten, Yeter's daughter, is a member of a radical Turkish Communist resistance group. When her cell is raided, she flees Turkey and goes to Bremen to find her mother. Ayten cannot find her, because Yeter never mentioned prostitution and always told her daughter that she works in one of Bremen shoe stores. Having searched all the Bremen's shoe stores, Ayten finds herself in the middle of a foreign city, with nobody she knows, and only shabby English to communicate. At a university campus, she meets Lotte, a German student who offers to help with food, clothes, and a place to stay. Ayten and Lotte become lovers and Lotte decides to help Ayten search for her mother. The quest is cut short when a traffic stop exposes Ayten's illegal status and she is deported to Turkey and immediately imprisoned there. Devastated, Lotte travels to Turkey to help Ayten. Finally granted a prison visit with her imprisoned lover, Lotte follows her request and retrieves the handgun Ayten acquired in the riot. Lotte's bag, with the gun inside, is snatched by a crew of boys. One of them is inspecting the gun and accidentally kills Lotte.

Lotte's mother Suzanne travels to Turkey to bring her daughter's corpse back to

Germany. In Istanbul, Suzanne meets Nejat, then still imprisoned Ayten, and later Nejat's

father Ali, deported to Turkey upon his release. Gradually, the stories of the movie

intermingle into one tragic story of loss, and the protagonists undergo cultural

transformations that change their values, attitudes and lives for good.

Yeter's Story: Struggling with the Patriarchic Violence

Understanding that females could never be liberated if we did not develop healthy self-esteem and self-love feminist thinkers went directly to the heart of the matter – critically examining how we feel and think about our bodies and offering constrictive strategies for change.

(bell hooks, 2000, p. 31)

Turkish sons are raised from day one as radical dictators. It is dinned into them that their sister represents the family honor, which must be protected at all costs. Because honor is so prominent and one hears from an early age that is the most important thing to protect, one cannot, especially as a son, avoid taking it very seriously (Ayse, 1998, p. 237).

Whoever I am I must believe I am not and will never be the only one who suffers.
(Cherrie Moraga, 2000, p. 68)

Similar to *Head On*, German-Turkish *On the Other Side* also focuses on the

specificities of the "archaic" Turkish interplay of gender roles in their opposition to the

corresponding values of the German host culture. Yet singling out gender from the

intersectional matrix of identity construction would be too simplistic. After all, gender

has always been an extremely powerful ideological device particularly expressive in its

correlation with race, ethnicity, nationality, and class. As suggested by West &

Zimmerman (1987), "the very process of "doing gender" involves a complex of socially

guided perceptual, interactional, and micro-political activities that cast particular pursuits

as expressions of masculine and feminine natures" (p. 126). In relation to what West &

Zimmerman define as a "doing gender," both movies also address the intertwined

political and religious implications of honor killings, greatly discussed and criticized in

the German national media today. Only, compared to the dynamics in *Head On,* the

interconnected issues of gender, religion, and death in *On the Other Side* are not only

implied but brought to life – or, death, to be precise.

The particularity of *On the Other Side* is the fact that it brings all the cultural

issues of German-Turkish interaction to the extremes. If Sibel wanted to have a sexually-

rich life and sleep with different partners, Yetter is a prostitute *per se.* If in *Head On* the

actual phrase "honor killing" was never pronounced and vendettas never officially

declared, in *On the Other Side* we see two young Turkish men of Muslim faith, who first

threaten Yeter and later realize their threat into a manhunt. For them, Yeter represents

cultural shame and disgust. They publically offend her, not considering a prostitute a

person having soul and feelings, but instead an animal, even a beast.

To the contrary of what the young Muslim men prefer to believe, Yeter's "choice"

to be a prostitute was not really the matter of choice, as she gradually reveals in her

cinematographic narrative. Being a poor single mother who fled from Turkey in unstable

political times to earn at least some money and support her daughter, Yeter tried her luck

searching for more "dignified" jobs in Germany. Paradoxically, well-educated and almost

bilingual, Yeter did not have any luck finding any other job than in a *Puff* (a German

bordello). Although in Turkey Germany is usually envisioned as a country of unlimited

opportunities and gender equality; similar to Sibel from *Head On,* Yeter experienced her

"German" exclusion on multiple levels. Although theoretically Yeter could embrace her

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"gender liberation" and live her life in public and enjoy a well-paid respectable job and a welcoming community, in practice she ended up lonely, disrespected, and on the lowest level of the social class. All the way throughout the film, all the interactions of Turkish Yeter with the native Germans were limited to that of a prostitute with her clients. Not a single time did she have an interaction with a local German woman, an interaction that could have created a space of a dialogue between the women, an interaction that could have changed Yeter's life and save her. A promising cultural and social phenomenon of what Mohanty (2003) defines as "transnational feminism," and Carrillo Rowe (2004) calls "power lines" – similar concepts I understand as voluntarily mutual support and inclusive solidarity among women of very different cultural (racial, ethnic, class, sexual) backgrounds – never happened in Yeter's life. As hooks (2000) once said,

> The only genuine hope of feminist liberation lies with a vision of social change which challenges class elitism. Western women have gained class power and greater gender inequality because a global white supremacist patriarchy enslaves and/or subordinates masses of third-world women. (p. 43)

Darker-skinned Yeter, a poor woman living, like Sibel, in the German underworld, has to fight the challenges of her fate and two cultures (native and host) on her own. Being alienated by the Germans, Yeter is simultaneously persecuted by the Turks for being a "shameful and disgusting" cultural deviant. The two young Turkish men following Yeter bring their Muslim beliefs to the extremes: they start to threaten her with a violent death. They say that "her life path is false in Allah's eyes, she should immediately stop," otherwise she would not avoid the "honor killing." There is a film scene in which Akin specifically focuses on the performative act of their threat: their black eyes burning on pale faces, their heads elevated in solemnity, their voices softened out of respect for

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Allah. The language they use to declare the threat is very eloquent, with long grammatically complex sentences. Their glum discourse is constructed of words like *moral, pride, faith, dignity* and *honor.* The two men seriously consider themselves Allah's messengers to restore the "proper order of things" and not realizing how they simultaneously practice the act of gender-based violence. What the two men define as "Allah's propriety of things" allows them to normalize instrumentalization and devaluation of bodies of Muslim women, turning the latter into helpless and vulnerable targets of systematic violence.

Interestingly and sadly, honor killing is still a mundane act of violence in western democratic countries like Germany or the Great Britain (Bernard-Godfrey, 2010; Robins, 2007). There, most Muslim women get introduced to alternative perspectives on the phenomena of gender, sexuality, religion, and family as a social institution. It is the clash of the incompatible, mutually exclusive perspectives and performances that results in the act of honor killings. More often than not, this act of religion-justified gender-based violence comes from the victims' families. As a result, many Muslim women end up being triple-victims: to the alienation by the "inhospitable" host culture, to the condemnation by their own "betrayed" original culture, and to the male domination in their families. Just several months ago after a violent case of honor killing committed in London, Anita Bernard-Godfrey (2010) wrote a poem under the self-explanatory title *Honor Killing*, a poem that perfectly addresses the complexities and cultural implication of the issue,

What's that you say? You've heard today of another Honor Killing?

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A father along with older brother did the deed together
They crept as cat upon their prey and severed cord that tethered
This crime of passion does incite a blood lust old as dawn
From Allah's book it did begin and all that it does spawn
Mohammad was the one who birthed this beastly reign of terror
Along with his companions true who copied all his errors
For women were to him no more than merely right hand chattel
To treat no better than would he his camel, goat or cattle
And hell to him was filled with them for women were most sinful
And killing them was no more a sin than dispatching meat for table.

These bitterly-realistic lines summarize the process of first conceptual and later physical

transformation of Muslim women's bodies into nothing more than flesh in the eyes and

later executions of supporters of honor killings. On Yeter's example in *On the Other*

Side, Fatih Akin demonstrates how deeply typical Turkish gender and sexuality values

are interwoven with the radical Muslim values of female/family honor, and how little

compatibility and understanding they entail with regard to the native German population

and their culture. As Devrim (1998) argues, "Muslims don't live so that they can do what

pleases or what occurs to them. They live for the life beyond. They obey Allah so that

they can enter heaven after death" (p. 243). Naturally, in the (predominantly Muslim)

Turkish culture, the concept of honor develops into an unchallenged hegemony with

unlimited legacies, including (and justifying) violence and death – values that are again,

alien to the native German culture. And, as Akin demonstrates in both German-Turkish

cross-cultural dramas, Allah obviously imagined very dissimilar gender roles for men and

women in the society. West & Zimmerman (1987) suggested that "rather than as a

property of individuals, gender is an emergent feature of social situations: both an

outcome and a rationale for various social arrangements and means of legitimizing one of

the most fundamental divisions of society" (p. 126). In other words, Sibel and Yeter's

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destinies are more than individual tragedies: they are representative of major social

constructions and gendered relations of power in the society.

Prior to her violent death, Yeter's decision to move in together with her former

client Ali to serve him and be dependent on him tells a lot about the relations of privilege,

gender inequality, and class dynamics in the German society. As suggested by hooks

(2000), "a return to a patriarchal male-dominated household where men are providers is

the solution offered to women by conservative politicians who ignore the reality of mass

unemployment for women" (p. 51). Like many women facing unemployment and

poverty, having no place to stay, no money, and being threatened, Yeter's choice to move

in with Ali is not really a choice but a survival necessity. Scared and uncertain, Yeter has

to accept his demands and conditions. Those demands imply that Yeter should serve him

as a professional prostitute and a good Muslim wife at the same time: thus not only

satisfy him sexually but also be obedient, humble, do all the household work and not

leave the house, at least not without a *hijab*. Just a couple of days later Yeter realizes that

no matter how hard she tries, she is being abused and turned into the old man's maid and

sexual slave, and a battered partner. To make the matters worse, Yeter's physically and

socially weaker positionality disables her resistance. As suggested by hooks (2000),

"patriarchal violence in the home is based on the belief that it is acceptable for a more

powerful individual to control others through various forms of coercive force" (p. 61).

hooks further differentiates between the notions of patriarchic and domestic violence,

arguing for the former:

> The term "patriarchal violence" continually reminds the listener that violence in
> the home is connected to sexism and sexist thinking, to male domination. For too

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long the term domestic violence has been used as a "soft" term which suggests it emerges in an intimate context that is private and somehow less threatening, less brutal, than the violence that takes place outside the home. That is not so, since more women are beaten and murdered in the home than on the outside. (p. 62)

The fact that a larger number of women become victims of violence in their homes rather than on the streets is shocking. Shocking and somehow absurdly ironic is also Yeter's destiny. Forced to give up prostitution to live "properly", to take upon monogamy in a traditional heterosexual relationship defined as "propriety" in the framework of patriarchy, Yeter falls a victim to her unreasonably jealous and abusive partner and experiences what Yep (2003) defines as "symbolic, discursive, psychological, and material violence of heteronormativity." (p.19) Yep further suggests that heterosexuality goes beyond being merely sexual: it is a social phenomenon that tells us a lot about the relation of power and privilege in the society. Yep (2003) specifically claims that,

Heterosexuality is a key site of male power and dominance. It is a patriarchal institution that subordinates, degrades, and oppresses women. As such, it is hardly surprising that heterosexually-identified women can readily identify sites of emotional, psychic, physical, and economic suffering in their relationships. (p. 19)

Yeter's case is a perfect example of an imperfect destiny of a victim to a systemic social violence. A violence that started on the streets and ended up at home: a home where even if forced into the strict boundaries of a heterosexual relationship, women are still not safe. A woman and a Turk, Yeter faced a double alienation and a double loss: first the loss of her *persona* (similar to Sibel in *Head On*), then the loss of her life. As other Turkish "gender-deviant" females in Akin's films, Yeter also gets punished for her "wrong choices" of gender and sexuality performances, and with every film, the punishment gains in severity. Symbolically, the coffin with Yeter's corpse is sent back to Turkey, to

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her cultural roots. Her journey ends up there, on the other side of the Black Sea. Yeter's

violent ending one more time illustrates how profoundly violence is ingrained in the

allegedly inclusive German society.

As a cultural text, German-Turkish *On the Other Side* focuses on violence. Akin

shows us that violence has different forms, different targets, different names, different

methods and different places of execution. Institutionalized, systematic, and even creative

violence against the "other" has well established itself as normativity in Germany and

other Western civilizations. In order to become a truly inclusive society Germany strives

to be, it needs a profound change: a multicultural German home cannot be built on the

fundament of normative violence.

Ayten and Lotte's Story: the Price of Queer Romance: Do and Die

Loving you I like living in the war years…
Loving you has this kind of desperation to it, like do or die…
Loving in the war years calls for this kind of risking
Without a home to call our own
I've got to take you as you come to me, each time like a stranger all over again.
Not knowing what deaths you saw today
I've got to take you as you come, battle bruised, refusing our enemy, fear

We're all we've got. You and I
Maintaining this war time morality where
Being queer and female is as warrior as we can get.

(Cherrie Moraga, 2000, p. 23)

Female sexuality and its different expressions and varying performances are focal

themes of the *On the Other Side*. As the very name of the film suggests, Akin addresses

non-traditional sexualities, depicting the power of the erotic from different sides. Having

addressed Sibel's hyper-sexuality and Yeter's sex-based occupation followed by

patriarchal violence; Akin exposes his audience to the romantic and tragic story of the

same sex desire. A darker-skinned Turkish Ayten (Yeter's daughter) and a blonde

German Lotte fall in love. Their romance starts when Ayten, a radical political activist,

illegally flees to Germany to avoid jail. At the university campus of Bremen, homeless

and hungry, Ayten meets a blonde German girl Lotte, an exemplary student. Their

"chemistry" is overwhelmingly strong: the two young women are mutually fascinated by

each other's personalities, political ideas, tempers, charismas, and later bodies. The only

difference in their sensations is that Ayten seems to have known about and have

embraced her sexuality a while ago, while for Lotte the realization of her lesbianism is

quite overwhelming from the beginning. In a way, Lotte's "sexual awakening" is belated,

initially humble and concealed because of the atmosphere she grew up in. In contrast to

Ayten, who has lived on her own in Turkey for quite a while, Lotte, also a single child,

has never left her old-fashioned caring mother Suzanne. Although initially Lotte is

hesitant to even confess to herself the strength of her sentiments and her desire, she

finally gives in and fully embraces her emotionally intense relationship with Ayten.

Similar to Moraga (2000), Lotte is taking the risk of making her connection,

> I had known for years that I was a lesbian, had felt it in my bones, had ached with
> the knowledge, gone crazed with the knowledge, wallowed in the silence of it.
> Silence is like starvation. Don't be fooled. It's nothing short of that, and felt most
> sharply when one has had a full belly most of her life. When we are not physically
> starving, we have the luxury to realize psychic and emotional starvation. It is from
> this starvation that other starvation can be recognized – if one is willing to take
> the risk of making the connection – if one is willing to be responsible for the
> results of the connection. For me, the connection is an inevitable one. (p. 44)

The story of Ayten and Lotta could indeed be entitled "Loving in the War Years": their

romantic narratives involving taking risks, crossing borders, dealing with arms, fleeing

from the armed forces, showing resistance, having nobody but one another, and dying,

too. Their love, as Moraga (2000) would agree, has indeed that "desperation to it, like do or die" (p. 23). Their romance is intense yet is not meant to last long, since right after the two women develop a deep romantic relationship, Ayten gets deported from Germany and ends up in jail in Turkey. Lotte, driven by her feelings for Ayten, follows her there, responding to her sexuality quest and fearfully enjoying the risk of border crossing – geographically, rhetorically, and sexually.

Sexuality has always been one of the most important concepts of culture. Sexuality, as suggested by Foucault, (1878/1990), is a privileged site of social organization, knowledge, identity, experience, and individual and collective "truth" in Western societies. Besides, as suggested by Yep (2003), "in Western cultures, sexuality has been organized around the homosexual/heterosexual binary, a symmetrical and oppositional coupling of a marginal category (homosexuality) with a privileged class (heterosexuality)" (p. 12). More often than not, as in case of Lotte and Ayten, those choosing to belong to the marginal category of homosexuality end up being socially excluded, culturally "othered", and severely punished for their choices. Although the following lines by Moraga (2000) were written about the United States, they could easily be applicable to many other countries, including Germany; "In this country, lesbianism is poverty – as being brown, as is being a woman, as is being plain poor. The danger lies in ranking the oppression. The danger lies in failing to acknowledge the specificity of the oppression" (p. 44). *On the Other Side* does not show clearly whether Lotte and Ayten, having chosen lesbianism, a marginal category of sexuality, are aware of the social

oppression that comes with their choice. What the film clearly shows though is the predictably tragic, war-like ending of their homosexual romance.

Ironically, acknowledging of the oppression *per se* does not prevent either oppression or (quite frequently) aggression and veiled homophobia. Typically, a tragedy that usually involves some kind of a loss (of self, love, or life) is a typical ending of literary and cinematographic narratives of homosexual romances. As Alexander (2007) commented on the politics of cinematographic representation of a homosexual romance in the *Brokeback Mountain*, it is quite predictable that there will be no picture of two happy gays romantically holding hand in the sunsets. Their story is doomed to end up tragically, usually with a stupid death (i.e. not the death of a "real man"), and should serve as a political message, even a warning if you will, for those choosing homo- over heterosexuality. Pelias (2007), with regard to the fate of romantic homosexual relationships, also suggests that "if we choose to have such a relationship, our fate will be either violent death or loneliness" (p. 948). Thus it comes as a little surprise that once Lotte joins "the other side" of sexuality, she immediately gets stupidly killed on the streets of Istanbul by a Turkish kid. Be it *The Brokeback Mountain*, or *On the Other Side*, the political message regarding same sex love and desire is similar – gay people get punished, often killed, absurdly and stupidly, and their death is everything but glorious.

The tragic homosexual romance of Lotte and Ayten in *On the Other Side*, though grounded in the politics of sexuality, simultaneously addresses other cultural dimensions, including race, class, nation, and gender in their interwovenness in the cultural memory. In other words, although on its surface Lotte and Ayten's story can be read solely as a

story of same sex desire, it is actually "queer" on a more complex intersectional cultural level. After all, as suggested by Collins (2000), "sexuality constitutes a specific space where hetero-sexism, race, nation, and gender as systems of oppression converge to reconfirm the rigid colonial binaries of the norm and the deviant" (p. 136). Ayten and Lotte's story indeed echoes colonial binaries. What we actually see in addition to a homosexual romance is how a white well-educated middle-class Christian German intellectual Lotte first tries to help and later falls in love with a "wrong girl": a darker-skinned uneducated low-class Muslim Turkish criminal Ayten. Idealistic and innocent, Lotte gets seduced through "forbidden love and desire" and dares to leave her home, her safe space (Germany) and cross borders not only sexually and rhetorically, but also socio-geographically. She goes to Turkey, to the cultural space of the German ultimate "other." There, she gets killed. Another violent ending Akin suggest as a predictable outcome of a "queer" cross-cultural relationship, another violent punishment of "crossing the line."

Nejat's Story: Be-Longing to the Other Side of the Black Sea: Painful Cultural In-Betweenness

The German Passport.
It smells of betrayal of the weaker amongst us.
This deceptive reward for conformity hides in vain from the others.
From the conflict deeply buried in the trouser pocket.
No!
At the end of the foreigners' Law and my insecurity
There will be no German passport I myself falsified
Before the future, the tangible future of the children of my children
And not by any new border.

(Gino Chiellino, 1998, p. 203)

One of the reasons why *On the Other Side* makes its audience hold their breaths is the unique cinematographic narrative, in which places and people intermingle in

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(initially) parallel universes that flow together into a fascinating story in the end. In this movie, the filmmaker contrasts and politicizes cultural locations and border-crossings in a very challenging way. In the opening scenes of the movie, having spent several minutes in the bright-colored district with ethnically diverse prostitutes, the audience is unexpectedly taken to the streets of Istanbul to virtually participate in brutal political riots. Just when the latter reach their climax, the audience is magically transferred into a huge lecture hall of the University of Bremen, to listen to a lecture on German history, taught by Nejat, a Turkish-born German-raised *Germanistikprofessor* (Professor of German Studies).

Of all the personages in Akin's movies, Nejat is probably the most challenging and difficult to interpret because of the contradictions in his identities. At the beginning of the film, we see him almost "dissolving" in his element – the world of the German academy. A couple of moments of watching neatly dressed and well-groomed Nejat in the classroom teaching German history and linguistics in his beautifully eloquent German language make the audience realize that *Germanistik* (German Studies) is more than Nejat's profession – it is calling. The auditorium where he teaches is full of enthusiastic students; rigorously following the professor's every word… After the lecture, in his free time, Nejat reads – German literature and culture seem to occupy both his professional and his personal spaces. Except for his slightly "exotic" for the German ear name "Nejat," one could claim that the young man is a "German to the backbones."

Then a location in the movie abruptly changes, welcoming the audience to enter into a shabby and filthy apartment of Ali, an aging Turkish ex-*Gastarbeiter*, celebrating

impressive for his old age "sexual success" with a bottle of cheap beer. Wearing dirty

baggy clothes, mumbling some incomprehensive mixture of Turkish and German (mostly

curse words from the latter), Ali produces quite disgusting impressions on the audience.

His obvious belonging to the "trashy" class of the German society, his quite "primitive"

lifestyle reach their climax on screen when he brings home scared and hopeless Yeter,

forces her into another sexual intercourse, and then makes her clean his house and cook.

The two settings, that of the university and that of Ali's apartment suddenly seem

to collide when Nejat opens Ali's apartment with his own key, and calls Ali "father."

Around him, Nejat's personality completely changes. Instead of the eloquent, almost

bookish German, he switches to a linguistically limited mixture of two languages. He

talks about very mundane things to his father, not mentioning what matters to him most:

his work as a German professor. In the course of the conversation, Ali starts to badmouth

Nejat's choice of profession, and his son does not say a word in his defense. Nejat seems

to be a different person, with a different face. As many German-Turks (especially of

second and third *Gastarbeiter* generations, i.e. those born and raised in Germany), Nejat

seems to be caught between two cultures and show his different (almost opposite) sides

all the time. Ayse (1998), a German-Turkish cultural scholar with a similar identity

dilemma, once wrote. "I did not find it particularly funny having two faces. It bothered

me a lot that I had to change constantly. But I had to if I did not want my life to be hell"

(p. 203). Obviously, Nejat also has two faces and lives two parallel lives which could not

be more different: lives he constantly has to switch back and forth. Nejat's German life is

an exciting life of a well-educated, well-mannered and well-groomed German

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intellectual. Nejat's Turkish life is a depressing existence of a humiliated son of an uneducated, poor and sloppy *Gastarbeiter*.

Nejat's rather pensive and tacit personally does not allow for unequivocal clear interpretations of his own bi-cultural-ness. Nonetheless, his choice to leave his beloved German academy and travel to Turkey to find Ayten, a daughter of a prostitute he initially despises, is not easy to understand. When Nejat finally arrives to Turkey, the audience sees the young man's excitement, as if his not-yet-clearly-verbalized nostalgia of the lost homeland finally finds its expression. Nejat's very *persona* is simultaneously lost and found: lost in his home-sicknesses and found in his almost forgotten Turkish homeplace. In many ways, Nejat reminds the audience about the typical representative of post-Gastarbeiter literature, or *Literatur der Betroffenheit* (literally, *literature of the affected*), like Chiellino (1998), who wrote,

> Yes, it's true
> Coca-Cola will never still my thirst for water
> From our mountains, from our sea
> The bread is not warm, it doesn't taste of trusted hands
> Although it is certainly less uncertain here and now.
> The conflict remains, so does the contradiction,
> From the incision that separates me from a familiar life
> I feel the knife cutting my skin in two. (p. 201)

Nejat's commitment to and love of the German culture as a dedicated and passionate *Germanistikprofessor* (Professor of German Studies), contrasted by the increasing nostalgia for Turkey, the lost homeplace of his father, symbolize Nejat's deep cultural split.

Nejat's cultural contradiction becomes even more obvious when he simultaneously makes two decisions, paradoxical in their togetherness. He decides to stay

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in Turkey for good, and he becomes an owner of a German store and creates his little "German bubble" in Turkey, almost welcoming his uneasy bi-cultural-ness. In contrast to Gigi in *Solino*, who acted Italian in Italy and German in Germany and was happy in both geographical and cultural locations, Nejat seems to be longing to belong and constantly torn between the two. And, unlike Gigi, family ties do no bring him salvation – rather, like in case of Sibel, they intensify his feelings of a painful inbetween-ness.

There is a powerful scene at the end of the movie, in which intra-personal and inter-cultural dynamics allow for different interpretations. Upon his release from jail, Ali is deported to Turkey, looking for Nejat who rejects his criminal father. Susanne, having lost her beloved daughter Lotte, is trying to reason with Nejat and make him forgive his father by appealing to the Christian virtue of forgiving sinners. Although initially Suzanne cannot convince Nejat to forgive or at least not to reject his father, she wakes up his interest in the religious matters, and they get involved into a passionate discussion. Suzanne recalls a story from the Bible, where Abraham is asked to sacrifice his son Isaac. Nejat reminisces about being scared by the story as a child and asking his father if he would sacrifice him if God told him to. When asked by Susanne what his father's answer was, Nejat told her that "He would make God his enemy in order to protect me." Obviously, his father's answer, in addition to showing his deep devotion to his son, also expresses his religious positionality. Ali is certainly not Christian, nor would he be ever willing to sacrifice his beloved son for a worshiped Christian God. It is in that moment of childhood memories Nejat decides to forgive his father. He travels to Trabzon, a little Turkish town at the Black Sea, to reconcile with him. Although they never actually meet

in the movie, one of the final scenes shows Nejat on the beach in Trabzon, starring at the Black Sea, waiting so long that the sea as a cultural space in the movie gradually becomes overwhelming.

Politicizing spaces and critically addressing issues of cultural positionalities is certainly one of the main focuses and inter-cultural strengths of *On the Other Side.* Alexander (2003) once said that "a cultural site is not only a geo-social locale of the ethnographic gaze. It is a particular site marked by the cultural practices of the people who live there. These spaces serve as a register of cultural identity." (p.106) Somehow, although *On the Other Side* is officially categorized as a German film and Akin is celebrated and awarded as a German filmmaker, his Turkish protagonists in both *Head On* and *On the Other Side* end up in Turkey, going back to their ethnic roots – dead, like Yeter, broken, like Sibel, deported, like Ayten, released from jail, like Cahit and Ali, or in a search of self, like Nejat. Somehow, the deep quest for belonging of all these Turkish protagonists does not get satisfied in Germany; their growing foreignness becomes almost palpable day after day. Chiellino (1998) reflected upon such post-*Gastarbeiter* sentiments about their homelessness and their nostalgia in the following lines,

> The journey stops.
> It is April, August, December
> A part of it is living the everyday life of the railway stations where for a long time no one is more wanted under the foreign sky
> The sharpness of thought is endangered
> It is difficult to refuse to fight with thoughts in foreign past. (p. 202)

Bitter mixture of internalized oppression, unpronounced nostalgia, failed cultural belonging, and overwhelming unhappiness indeed takes all Turkish protagonists in the movie away from Germany and brings them to Turkey, their lost homeplace. Their

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forever lost home is located (geographically) *on the other side* of the Black Sea and

(politically and rhetorically) *on the other side* of German (and European) cultural norms.

Right after the release of *On the Other Side*, Akin (2007) gave an interview to the

German radio station, *Deutsche Welle*. The filmmaker was asked why all his German-

Turkish protagonists always return to Turkey, where their roots are, and whether they do

so to find if not happiness then at least some piece and quiet. Akin was specifically asked

whether his German-Turkish cultural dramas purposefully send the message that

immigrants can find peace only where they came from. The filmmaker (2007) answered

with the following words:

> Well, I don't know. The tricky thing about all the stuff is that their personal home
> is Germany. She (Sibel) was born in Germany. He (Cahit) grew up in Germany.
> He is so German that he does not almost speak Turkish anymore. He (Nejat) does
> not even look Turkish anymore. They go somehow to a foreign country, or to a
> new country. Not to their home. That is a general idea. They have to escape.

Interestingly enough, right after the phenomenal success of *On the Other Side*, another

German-Turkish film, and right after his statement about the necessary escapism of the

immigrants from Germany, Fatih Akin left the country and went to the United States.

There, together with other famous filmmakers, he worked on one of multiple vignettes of

the multicultural drama *New York, I Love You*, released in movie theatres in 2009. The

cultural dilemma in his part of the movie addressed the representation of a Chinese

minority in the city. In a way, *New York I Love You* served to the filmmaker as a site of

his own creative escapism, an opportunity to disengage from his most typical cultural

theme: the Turks in Germany. This time, while cinematographically addressing Alcoff's

(1992) "problem of speaking for others," Akin did not fall into any of Conquergood's

(1985) "ethical traps." He neither displayed the "Enthusiast's Infatuation," being enchanted by *italianità* in *Solino*, nor the combination of "the Custodian's Rip-off" and the "Curator's Exhibitionism" with regard to the Turkishness in *Head On* and *On the Other Side*. Instead, in *New York I Love You*, his first film that had nothing to do with Germany and its diversity, the filmmaker practiced what Conquergood (1985) defines at "the fifth stance of the performance ethnography": an inclusive cross-cultural dialogue with the "other."

Maybe Fatih Akin absolutely needed to leave Germany to at least temporarily disengage from his own German-Turkish identity/*auteur* dilemma and become, at least for one film, what he always wanted to be: a *Weltbürger* (a citizen of the world). Yet just a year after, in 2010, Akin's "Altona quest" won over the quest for *Weltbürgertum* (world citizenship). Akin returned to Hamburg and made a new multicultural film, *Soul Kitchen* (2010), this time a comedy that again addressed the marginalization of diversity and cultural dynamics of the urban German underworld. The famous district of Altona served as a setting for the movie. In the same year, Akin was received a very prestigious German award: Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany (*Verdienstorden der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*) for his contribution in depicting the problems of Turkish-Germans.

Multiculturalism in *On the Other Side*: Extremes vs. Normativity

Even if we think we are not personally racist or sexist, we are clearly marked by the burdens and histories and locations. So what does it mean to think through, theorize, and engage questions of difference and power? It means that we understand race, class, gender, nation, sexuality, and colonialism not just in terms of static, embodied categories but in terms of histories and experiences that tie us together – that are fundamentally interwoven into our lives.

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Fatih Akin's turbulent *On the Other Side*, another award-winning German-Turkish drama leaves the audience speechless. In one single film the amount of cultural paradoxes, the depths of losses, and the brutality and absurdity of violence is just overwhelming. In this well-known film, building upon the themes of intersectional German-Turkish cultural incompatibility, and further intensifying already existing biases and prejudices against the Turks, Akin confirmed the political message about a complete failure of the Turkish integration in Germany. Further than that: in *On the Other Side* the filmmaker made the German-Turkish cultural incompatibility an urgent social phenomenon by means of cinematographically bringing all the Turkish cultural divergences to their absolute extremes, unacceptable for a Western democratic society like Germany.

The very title, *On the Other Side*, symbolically represents the Turkish cultural side in the allegedly multicultural Germany, opposite to the host country's social normativity. Islamic fate in the film progresses into a fanatic quest of honor killing. Longing for gender and sexual liberty turn Turkish women in the movie into social outcasts: one of them (Yeter) is a prostitute, another two (Ayten, and later Lotte) are lesbians. Striving for social justice brings one of the protagonists (Ayten) into jail; another (Lotte) finds her death. Patriarchal violence and violence of heteronormativity result into domestic murder of Yeter.

Violence in *On the Other Side* is even more complex and overwhelming than in *Head On*. In a way, *On the Other Side* is the ultimate manifesto of the representation of

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Turkish marginalization, a cinematographic sonata of punishment of inacceptable border crossing experiences. In addition to addressing what has already become "traditional" cross-cultural German-Turkish issues of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality and class, the filmmaker focuses on the politics of space and crossing boundaries: geographical, political and rhetorical. The issues of cultural positionality, longing and belonging, as well as the impossibility of female sexual freedom, addressed in *On the Other Side*, make this movie extremely political and informative of the obstacles of successful development of inclusive German multiculturalism.

In relation to the leading theme of this dissertation, i.e. the nature and practices of inclusive and non-discriminatory multiculturalism, Akin's *On the Other Side* suggests that not only is German-Turkish cross-cultural dynamics doomed to be a binary of cultural oppositions, but any German-Turkish cultural hybridity results in a tragedy and just should not happen. If the prefix "multi" in the word "multiculturalism" should be substituted by "incompatible-bi"-culturalism in *Head On*, it should progresses into "mono-culturalism" in *On the Other Side*. Mono-culturalism that locates Turkish culture *on the other side* of the German social normativity. Mono-culturalism that makes Turkishness synonymous with the German underworld, poverty, and criminality. Mono-culturalism that accepts Christianity as the only acceptable religion in Germany and portrays Muslim faith and its practices in its most extreme forms. Mono-culturalism that sends even most successful German Turks back to their ethnic roots and makes them culturally homeless. Mono-culturalism that makes women vulnerable, dependable, and disposable in the patriarchal realm of hegemonic heteronormativity, that brings them

loneliness, violence, and often deaths. Mono-culturalism that punishes love, desire, and cross-racial women's solidarity, like in the story of Lotte and Ayten.

Hooks (1996) once said that "to love fully one must be able to surrender – to give up control. If we are to know love, then we cannot escape the practice of surrender" (p. 27). Both Lotte and Ayten know this surrender in *On the Other Side*. Certainly, the very fact of their romance contains some dialogical possibility, since it gave them the courage to speak up and act up to their choices. As Moraga (2000) wrote, "one voice is not enough, nor are two, although this is where dialogue begins" (p. 50). However, the dialogical possibility of the story is swept away by the hegemony of mono-culturalism which rejects the idea of what Conquergood (1985) calls "the fifth stance of performance ethnography," a cross-cultural dialogue. As Moraga (2002) once said, "the real power, as you and I well know, is collective. I can't afford to be afraid of you, nor you of me. If it takes head-on collision, let's do it" (p. 44). Being *On the Other Side* of the Eurocentric collective power, and experiencing the *Head On* collisions with the exclusive German mono-culturalism ends in multiple tragedies for Turkish protagonist in Akin's films.

Speaking metaphorically, the European Master narrative in *On the Other Side* produced a cinematographic warning against the incompatible Turkish component to the German identity and the very idea of inclusive multiculturalism. Furthermore, this film is a call into action: to stop trying the mutually hurtful dualistic togetherness that is doomed to fail anyway. In the German-Turkish *On the Other Side,* the Master's tools are being sharpened and brutally used: physically, rhetorically, and politically. They are being used to wound the Turkish "others" and throw them out for good, send them away to their

forever lost homeplaces right into their painful cultural in-betweenness, most importantly

– out of the house. The house that Europe built.

Chapter Six: Contemporary Germany: a Country of Immigration? Suggesting New

Policies, Encouraging On-Screen Cross-Cultural Dialogue and Inspiring New

Consciousness as Prerequisites for Inclusive Multiculturalism

Living in the Master's House: Selectiveness of German Multiculturalism

> *What is my Europe? I really don't know. I cannot know. The real unity of Europe is inevitably poisoned by the difference of our many languages, by the discomforts and the suspicions that ensue from it, by the old rivalries and rancours rooted inside our tormented past of fratricidal wars.*
>
> (Oriana Fallaci, 2003, p.186)

> *My family is dying. My blood and heart relations are vanishing with each passing of seasons. I am next. I know. Always next. I pray only for the courage to remember what I may never have the chance to live. And in the remembering may I know and in the knowing may I teach.*
> *It's the little bit I have to offer the exiled and forgotten I call my nation.*
>
> (Cherrie Moraga, 2000, p.213)

Multiculturalism has become a major trend worldwide these days. Various newspapers, television, music and films around the globe frequently address the complex topics of cultural diversity, on-going immigration, and increasing globalization. The concept of multiculturalism became representative of very diverse social and cultural processes. Bhabha (1996) suggests,

> Multiculturalism – a portmanteau term for anything from minority discourse to postcolonial critique, from gay and lesbian studies to chicano/a fiction – has become the most charged sign for describing the scattered social contingencies that characterize contemporary *Kulturkritik*. The multicultural has itself become a 'floating signifier' whose enigma lies less in itself than in the discursive uses of it to mark social processes where differentiation and condensation seem to happen almost synchronically. (p. 55)

In Germany, a country located in the very heart of Europe, national (political and popular) discussions of the country's growing diversity and constantly-changing national identity gain salience and urgency. These discourses are also central to the cinematographic work of currently the most celebrated German and European filmmaker Fatih Akin. German-Turkish Fatih Akin is recruited as a dream-come-true for the (European and otherwise) advocates of multiculturalism, serving as the new poster-boy of European cinema (Petek, 2007). In the media and in the scholarly research, he is claimed to equally and skillfully engage with political and cultural issues of both countries. He is often called a political ambassador (Halle, 2006; Petek, 2007; Göktürk, 2003). In Germany and Europe, Fatih Akin's films serve as "cultural texts" (hooks, 1996) that play both educational and culturally informative/transformative roles in lives of his enormous and diverse audiences. In many ways, the concept of German multiculturalism represented in Akin's cinematography mirrors the broader concept of the European multiculturalism: in its roots, in its values, and in its practices.

All three of Akin's films I analyzed in the previous chapters demonstrated that the discourse on multiculturalism in Germany is selective in its nature. It draws a symbolic border between the Western Europeans (as in the case of Italians in *Solino*) and the non-European "others" (as in the case of Turks in *Head On* and *On the Other Side*). The Euro-centric cultural core, as Akin's cinematography has demonstrated, remains an un-challenged normativity and re-confirms European patriarchy. That is the reason why an Italian and thus European identity shares a myriad of similarities with a German identity, rooted in their common European past and affecting their common European values, as

demonstrated in *Solino.* As suggested by Robins (1996), "in its cultural development, Europe came to see itself as self-identical and self-sufficient" (p. 80). As a political and cultural site, Europe prefers to stay in its realm, as it always did. In fact, the very understanding of German and Italian identities gradually changes in public consciousness. It extends beyond the singularity of European national identities and creates a common European identity in its plurality, equally embracing Germanness and *italianità* as its components. United and strong, Europe fortifies its borders between "the west and the rest": physically, politically, and rhetorically.

Europe has always needed its historically created fixed borders that distinguished and separated it from the culturally different "others." At the same time, those borders enabled Europe's strong political, economic, and cultural positionality, its Western dominance (Bhabha, 1994, 2000; Lorde,1984; Mohnaty, 2003). Lorde (1984) suggests that,

> Much of western European history conditions us to see human differences in simplistic opposition to each other: dominant/subordinate, good/bad, up/down, superior/inferior. In a society where the good is defined in terms of profit rather than in terms of human need, there must always be some group of people who, through systematized oppression, can be made to feel surplus, to occupy the place of dehumanized inferior. (p. 114)

Historically, Europe has marginalized different cultural groups that usually were represented by culturally (racially, ethnically, and religiously) different populations (Bhabha 1994, 2000; Lorde 1984; Chin, 2007; Wagner, 1998; Mohnaty, 2003). Located in the European core, Germany is representative of the Western European attitudes towards the non-European "others." At the same time, as I illustrated by providing historical and cultural context of the country's cultural dynamics, Germany adds up its

own, unique cultural phenomenon of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (inability to come to

terms with its past) to the common European cultural memory and to the contemporary

discussions of multiculturalism. Today's Germany, still haunted by its turbulent and

infamous past (the past that lead to extermination of "others" such as Jews and other

people(s) of color, gays and handicapped), still struggles with its cultural diversity.

Critical re-visiting of the German "sins (and crimes) of the fathers" illustrated that,

unfortunately, "Germans do not have any real experiences with minorities. They have

lived with themselves and by themselves, in their un-touchable cultural milieu, whose

normativity has never been challenged" (Wagner, 1998). Germany's inability to come to

terms with its past, as well as the nineteen century ideologies of Euro-centrism and

nationalism oppose rather than try to understand and tolerate diverse ethnic realities

(Shafi, 2003). The Germans still distinguish between the evil East and the good West.

The growing tendency towards anti-Muslim sentiments in the West and German

"othering" of the evil East became synonymous with marginalization of Turkish

population. These tendencies are hardly surprising in light of today's political events (the

world after 9/11, the war in Iraq, terror attacks in different parts of the world, and the

current crisis in Libya). Turkish inhabitants in Germany, as Fatih Akin's *Head On* and

On the Other Side have demonstrated, represent the least integrated immigrant group

whose cultural identities were depicted as archaic, anti-progressive, and generally

incompatible with the identities of the native Germans. Robins (1996) suggests,

> Through the dualistic imagination of the dynamic West distinguishing itself from
> the static and immobile Orient, the world is divided between the enlightened and
> the benighted. Its Other is made to symbolize whatever is alien to western

modernity and its project of development. Europe thereby closed itself
imperiously to the reality of these other cultures. (p. 62)

Depicting Turkish culture in Germany as archaic and regressive is typical of Akin's

cinematography and is generally representative of well-spread European attitudes. In both

Head On and *On the Other Side*, the filmmaker intersectionally depicted Turkish identity

layers of ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, and religion as alien to the corresponding

German identities. The filmmaker's cinematographic framing of the Muslim religion

goes beyond "incompatible" and is represented as "threatening" to the German liberal

democracy. As an *auteur* and ethnographer, Akin confirms the perspective of the

European Master Narrative on the "Muslim problem" (Wagner, 1998; Senocak & Tulay,

1998; Robins, 1996; Chin, 2007). The following lines by Fallaci (2003) bitterly reflect

political and cultural attitudes of different Western societies worldwide, united in their

Islamophobia (Senocak & Tulay, 1998; Robins, 1996)

> The best trained and the more intelligent Muslims do not stay in the Muslim
> countries. They stay in our countries, in our cities our universities, our business
> companies. They have excellent bonds with our churches, our banks, our
> television, our radios, our publishers, our academic organizations, our unions, our
> political parties. They nest in the ganglia of our technology. Worse: they live in
> the heart of a society that host them without questioning their differences, without
> checking their bad intentions, without penalizing their sullen fanaticism. A society
> that keeps them in the spirit of its permissive democracy, its unconstrained
> broadmindedness, its Christian pity, its liberal principles, its civilized laws. (p. 97)

In her claims, Fallaci (2003) intensifies and radicalizes negative attitudes towards Muslim

"others." She suggests that the Muslim culture cannot occupy a legitimate place in the

Western society without being threatening to it, without being incompatible with its

political and cultural values. Although Akin's perspective differs from that of Fallaci

because he locates his Turkish Muslim protagonist on the margins (not in the centre) of

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western society, the main political implication of the scholar and the filmmaker are very similar: Muslim "otherness" is an undesired component in the western society. Further than that: both Akin's cinematographic narratives of *Head On* and *On the Other Side* send their Turkish "others" away, move them into a cultural exile, back to where they originally came from.

Calafell & Delgado (2004) suggest that "the image of moving from, moving to, or moving through is commonly encapsulated in the notion of crossing over. Itself a multilayered term reflecting dislocation, language change, and social mobility, crossing over often involves narratives of loss, liminality, even rejection" (p. 12). The Turkish protagonists of Akin's cross-cultural dramas always end up in isolation, experiencing a tragedy of cultural in-betweenness and a sense of a loss and homelessness. They end up being socially rejected in the host country of Germany and culturally misunderstood in Turkey, the country of their fathers. Their cinematographic stories resemble bitter destinies of the actual (i.e., non fictional) Turkish population in Germany. Senocak & Tulay (1998) write that:

> Among young Turks there still reigns that spirit which merely laments split identity: i.e. speechlessness. They are writing an endless book of memories, using shreds of childhood, in lost or not yet found languages, and the pages remain empty. They have not yet found a language to translate this book in order to communicate it to others. For their fathers and mothers they are a lost generation (p.258).

As a critical cultural scholar and a linguist, I find it very appealing how Senocak & Tulay (1998) use the term "lost generation" to describe the young Turks in Germany. The actual term "lost generation," or *une génération perdue* was introduced by Gertrude Stein (1920) to describe people of the 1920s who rejected American values after the First

World War. Many of them expressed their rejections in writing, like Hemingway or

Fitzgerald. And the two authors indeed produced unique literature masterpieces (like A

Farewell to Arms and *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, or *This Side of Paradise* and *The Great*

Gatsby). The generation of young German Turks Senocak & Tulay (1998) conceptualize

as "lost" is also rejecting the values of a different kind of war: a war of two cultures,

German and Turkish, a war that produced German-Turkish cultural hybridity, cultural in-

betweeness, and homelessness.

The young generation of Turks expresses their rejection in silence, in discursive

denial, in cultural exile. The following Banerjee's (2002) lines wonderfully illustrate this

phenomenon:

> Born in Germany, I speak the language, German, the only language I can speak
> perfectly, If there is such a thing as the perfection of a native speaker; in
> Germany, your language is your passport. Or is it? Every time I am in Frankfurt
> Airport, people insist in addressing me in English. As I strive to shed the accent I
> don't have, my language suddenly sounds artificial, thus confirming their
> prejudices – I am not German. (p. 118)

These insightful lines could easily refer to the German-born Turkish protagonists in

Akin's films. They look different from the native Germans. They are treated differently,

too. Lonely, unhappy, and culturally torn, they undertake cultural journeys to find selves,

their lost homeplaces, their voices, and their happiness. And they fail: wherever they go,

they never belong; they are always *pushed to the other side.* As both *Head On* and *On the*

Other Side have shown, as a cultural space, the presumably multicultural Germany does

not accept, tolerate, or properly integrate its Turkish population. I think that the following

Anzaldúan (1994) lines could be a poetic summery of their cultural positionality in

Akin's cinematography and, alas, in the allegedly multicultural German society:

Away, she went away.
But every place she went
They pushed her to the other side
Kept in the shadows of other.
No right to sing, to rage, to explode.
You should be ashamed of yourself…
Pushed to the edge of the world,
There she made her home on the edge
Of towns, of neighborhoods, blocks, houses,
Always pushed toward the other side.
In all lands alien, nowhere citizen.
Away, she went away
But each place she went
Pushed her to the other side, *al oltro lado.* (p. 99)

One of the most striking particularities of Anzaldúa's (1994) poetry is the feeling of

hopelessness it causes in its readers. It strongly resembles the bitter aftertaste Akin's

films leave on the audience. The fatality of inter-cultural communication with the non-

European diversity, the rigidity and immobility of the old, fixed, almost colonial borders

are typical of Akin's cinematography. In both *Head On* and *On the Other Side*, Akin built

the film discourses upon fixed cultural anti-Turkish biases and prejudices, making

cultural transformation and possibility of an inclusive dialogue impossible. Bhabha

(1994) once said that "The social articulation of difference is a complex, on-going

negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridity that emerge in the moments of

historical transformation" (p. 2). Yet the transformation cannot occur if the German and

the Turkish protagonists, like in Akin's films, co-exist in the space and do not have a

dialogue. In both *Head On* and *On the Other Side*, the absence of contact and

communication between the German "self" and the Turkish "other" is overwhelming.

Conquergood (1991) suggests that "communication becomes even more urgent and

necessary in situations of displacement and exile. The discourse of displacement is a

project that beckons rhetorical and communication scholars"(p. 357). Inspired by

Conquergood's words, I also strive to emphasize the salience of cross-cultural contact

and non-discriminatory dialogue as imperative for creating inclusive multiculturalism. As

a communication scholar, a feminist, and a German "other", I strongly believe that

Germany has a great potential for a social and cultural change that could be beneficial for

its constantly changing population.

Home Europe Needs to Re-Build: Learning from the Past

Dealing with them is impossible. Attempting a dialogue, unthinkable. Showing indulgence, suicidal. And he or she who believes the contrary is a fool.
<div align="right">(Oriana Fallaci, 2003, p. 99)</div>

Today already they rescue the air and the tongue
From the danger of a possible future of foreigners in their country
A decision against minority
Finds support and applause of their friends.
<div align="right">(Gino Chiellino, 1998, p. 203)</div>

A fair measure of global progress requires that we first evaluate how globalizing nations deal with "the difference within" – the problems of diversity and redistribution at the local level, and the rights and representations of minorities.
<div align="right">(Bhabha, 1994, p. 3)</div>

German *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (inability to come to terms with its past) is

indeed an essential obstacle in its contemporary conceptualization of and dealing with the

country's growing cultural diversity, as I showed in the previous films chapters of this

dissertation. The powerful ideologies of the past certainly define those immigrants who

culturally pass and get easily integrated into the German society (like Italians as in

Solino), and whose who end up being marginalized and socially excluded as a result of

their cultural differences (like Turks in *Head On* and *On the Other Side*). Unfortunately,

no matter how problematic and controversial the German (and generally European) past

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could be, its influence on the current dynamics in the society should not be underestimated. After all, as Fallaci (2003) says, "Memory may fade, hypocrisy may win, but history cannot be cancelled. It can be ignored or forgotten. It can be falsified but it cannot be cancelled" (p. 126). Unable to cancel the past and its impact on the present, we can yet re-visit the history from an alternative perspective and treat it not as an obstacle and an embodiment of shame but as a source of critical self-reflexivity and empowerment, as a source of re-thinking fundamental attitudes and principles instead. Re-visiting historical and cultural differences should extend beyond being informative (and thus fixed) into being culturally challenging and transformative (and thus dynamic). Critical cultural (self) reflexivity can make us re-asses relations of power and privilege in the past, present and future as well as discover and explore alternative ways and great possibilities of inclusive and non-discriminatory intercultural communication. As Lorde (1984) suggests,

> Too often, we pour the energy needed for recognizing and exploring the difference into pretending those differences are insurmountable barriers, or that they do not exist at all. This results into a voluntary isolation, or false and treacherous connections. Either way, we don not develop tools for using human difference as a springboard for creative change within our lives. We speak not of human difference, but of human deviance. (p. 116)

Akin's cinematography demonstrated both cases, addressed by Lorde. In the Italian-German *Solino*, the cultural differences were addressed as hardly existent, non-disturbing, even charming. In his German-Turkish *Head On* cultural differences were portrayed as irreconcilable, incompatible with the principles and values of the native German culture. In *On the Other Side* those culture differences were represented in the extremes that framed them as threatening for the German society, provocative of conflicts

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and unavoidable cultural tragedies. Bhabha (1994) suggests that "To see the cultural not as the source of conflict – different cultures – but as the effect of discriminatory practices – the production of cultural differentiation as signs of authority – changes its value and its rules of recognition" (p. 163), and I agree with this claim. Fatih Akin's cinematography portrays Germany as a very modern and dynamic space which serves as a location of cultural struggles and conflicts for Turks, the most numerous and least integrated cultural German minority. At the same time his films portray Turkey as an economically and politically stagnating archaic space with barbaric, even threatening cultural values (judging by the standards of Western liberal democracy).

Apparently, judging by Fatih Akin's films, the same time that brings innovations and progress to Germany (and Western Europe) seems to stand still in the Ottoman Empire. With regard to Europe, Robins (1996) writes, "Is Europe actually capable of transforming its perceptions of the non-Europe that surrounds us? In order to do so it would need to rid itself of its myths of the others, and to allow that they are real, diverse and complex peoples" (p. 82). In fact, Akin's celebrated cultural dramas consistently build upon those myths, stereotypes and biases Germany (and Europe) have against the Turks (and other non-white non-Christian populations). That is why the Turkish cultural diversity in the movies by this currently most celebrated European filmmaker is always synonymous with the German "trashy" underworld and its typical constituents such as crime, prostitution, violence, followed by cultural exile and loss. As long as the Turkishness and the Germanness are represented through the fixed cultural duality of the good and the evil, the progressive and archaic, the civilized and the savaged, these two

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cultures will not be able to find a common ground, necessary for effective and non-

discriminatory cultural communication. As suggested by Bhabha (1994),

> What is theoretically innovative, and politically crucial, is the need to think
> beyond the narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those
> moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of differences. These
> in-between spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of self-hood
> singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sights of
> collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself.
> (p. 1)

Represented through the binary of culturally incompatible differences (as in Akin's

films), Germany and Turkey simply do not have the potential for finding their

communalities and for re-thinking their constantly developing identities, and their

inevitably intersecting roles in the dynamic European public sphere.

In the constantly changing political, economic, and cultural European climate,

Germany and Turkey (as well as many other countries) should re-consider their

knowledges of and attitudes toward their neighbors. Contemporary Germany is firmly

embedded in an evolving and growing European Union as well as a globalized economy.

What it entails for the German society is an on-going change in its public sphere, and the

consequent alteration of the German national identity and its salient component – cultural

diversity. At the same time Turkey, like most of the world's cultures, has also been

significantly affected by the process and forces of globalization (Robins, 1996). The

increasing trans-nationalizations of markets, the growth of global media and

communications, the mobility of populations (tourism, migration) have all worked

towards the dissolution of the old rigidities in the national culture. In other words, these

two seemingly distinct cultures have much more in common than it might seem on the

first sight; more similarities than contemporary popular culture and mass media make us

believe. Recognition of those communalities and a reciprocal desire from both sides to

work from there could, in fact, greatly benefit Turkey, Germany, and Europe in general.

Robins (1996) specifically argues that:

> Turkish culture and society have been historically pulled into the sphere of
> European influence, shaped by it in ways that have invariably been difficult and
> frustrating. Now, as Turkey experiences significant transformations and confronts
> new difficulties of its own, the nature of the European response will be a
> significant issue. European acceptance of what is happening (for what it really is)
> could help considerably in the development of a more creative and democratic
> culture in Turkey. At the same time, this unexpected bend in history offers
> possibilities for Europeans to meet themselves. If they could but make use of
> them, then we might see a revitalization ad remoralization of European culture
> too. (p. 79)

European (and German in particular) identification of "self", "other", and relations

between the "self" and the "other" could greatly benefit from a deviation from the still

existent fixed political, economic, and cultural boundaries. This alternative identification

of the German/European "self" not in opposition to but in recognition and acceptance of

the "other" enables peaceful coexistence without the sacrifice of personality and

difference, and contains gaps through which the other, the foreigner, can enter and exit

painlessly (Ayse, 1998). As suggested by Bhabha (1994, 2000), the practices of

globalization non-discriminatory multiculturalism must always begin at home. The home

Europe needs to re-build.

Inclusive Multiculturalism In-Action: State, Art, & Public Consciousness

> *As members of a profit economy, we have all been programmed to respond to the
> human differences between us with fear and loathing and to handle that difference in one
> of three ways: ignore it, and if that is not possible, copy it if wee think it is dominant, or
> destroy it if we think it is subordinate. But we have no patterns for relating across our
> human differences as equals. As a result, those differences have been misnamed and*

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misused in the service of separation and confusion. Certainly there are very real difference between us of race, age, and sex. But it is not those difference that are separating us. It is rather our refusal to recognize those differences.

(Lorde, 1984, p. 115)

Cultural experience is always experience of the others; the others, the real others, are the indispensable transformational objects in historical change. History is created out of cultures in relation and interaction: interrupting identities. Non-Europe could now play a critical role in re-historicizing European culture. Europe must become open to cultural interruption. Without this there is only the past.

(Robins, 1996, p. 82)

Consciousness is simultaneously singular and plural, located in a theorization of being "on the border."

(Mohanty, 2003, p. 55)

There are multiple ways to approach the phenomena of globalization and inclusive multiculturalism. Alternative approaches extend from the macro-level of state and its institutions to the micro-level of the state of mind, or individual consciousness. On the level of the German state, certain institutional policies should be introduced and some improved in order to better integrate the constantly growing cultural diversity in the country. First of all, German immigration laws should be re-visited and changed in a way that would improve the conditions of the foreigners' residency and enable their better integration in the host country. As suggested by Senocak & Tulay (1998), "Despite German announcements to the contrary, a serious will for integration is not evident as long as debureaucratization and liberalization of German naturalization laws and its practice are left out of the discussion" (p. 260). The national discourse on multiculturalism should lead to the practical changes that would legally enable better integration policies for immigrants in Germany. Besides, in the current political, economic, and demographic situation in Germany, it would be necessary to give

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citizenship to all foreigners who live and work in the country permanently without being

discriminatory selective about them. In her recent book *German Multiculturalism* Brett

Klopp (2002) claims that "Citizenship is a necessary condition for full political inclusion

– to vote and run for office at all levels of government – in most states of the world" (p.

157) But this process should not be compulsory: the naturalization should not force the

foreign citizens give up their original citizenships and thus symbolically sacrifice their

original identities. Wagner (1998) suggests that it would also be necessary for Germany

to accept dual citizenship, as it has been tolerated quietly in the case of many ethnic

Germans from Eastern Europe. If the foreigners are bi-cultural, it is only natural that they

should have the legacy to have dual citizenships. Harnisch, Stokes, & Weidauer (1998)

argue that:

> Different models for an inclusive multicultural society cannot be discussed until
> foreigners have attained the same legal status as all other citizens. In the absence
> of such a policy, racial and ethnic differences as the ground for differences in
> legal status will continue to undermine any multicultural model. (p. 9)

Legalizing the status of foreigners in Germany creates the necessary premises for the

inclusive model of multicultural German society. Furthermore, as suggested by Wagner

(1998), in addition to citizenship, foreigners should also be granted minority rights, if

they want them. (These might include, for example, accredited schools with more than

one language of instruction.) Institutionalized politics of inclusion and empowerment

with respect to cultural diversity should be a crucial element of the truly inclusive

multicultural society contemporary Germany strives to be.

Mass media, popular culture, and art in general are also very powerful institutions

that require a significant change. Visuality, as I showed in the examples of Fatih Akin's

films, indeed has the power of influencing our minds, of creating certain images of "selves", "others" and our relationships with people and cultures different from ours. Jensen (2002) conceptualizes arts as representative of the social reality around us and capable of changing it:

> If we want to change the world, we need to do it directly. The arts aren't good *for* us; they *are* us – expressions of us. We can't look to the arts to transform us, or make the world a better place. To make things better, we need to dispense with instrumental logic and intervening variables, and find democratic ways to identity and engage in right action. It's up to us, not art. (p. 206)

Akin's cinematographic imagery, instead of discursively fortifying the boundaries between the European German "selves" and the non-European "others," might suggests creative ways of a cross-cultural contact on screen. The filmmaker's celebrated work, if changed in the way that would indeed "include" the "others" like Turks, might even serve as a practical and quite effective means of implementing non-discriminatory multiculturalism. Akin's numerous audiences would (literally and metaphorically) see how a contact with the "other" takes place on screen and positively affects both parties involved, culturally transforms their identities, and enriches their concepts of "selves." As suggested by Robins (1996):

> We must consider identities in terms of the experience of relationships: what can happen through relationships, and what happens to relationships. In this way, we can take up again the question of dynamism versus closure in identity. Ideally, cultural relationship and interaction will be open to new experience. It will be possible to confront and modify more basic cultural emotions (fears and anxieties) and to recognize the other as a culture apart, not as a projection or extension of one's own culture. On this basis, reciprocity becomes feasible, and it will be possible to display empathy, concern and responsibility in the cultural relationship. (p. 79)

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Contemporary German and European cinematography, as Akin's films have

demonstrated, plays an educational, even pedagogical role in lives of many people. The

images we see and interpret together with the cultural interactions we observe in films

have the power of creating certain visions of the world. They also have the power of

either confirming or challenging our values, our attitudes, and our relations with different

people and cultures. Only through an open, non-judgmental visual contact with the

"other" will the film audiences involved be able to liberate themselves from existing

anxieties and fears of cultural difference in their minds. This liberation is transformative

because it allows for a reciprocal dialogue with the "other" in the everyday non-fictional

interactions: a dialogue that reaches beyond "irreconcilable differences" and creates

solidarity and truly inclusive multicultural community. Bhabha (1994) writes:

> Political empowerment, and the enlargement of the multicultural cause, comes
> from posing questions of solidarity and community. Social differences are not
> simply given to experience through an already authenticated cultural tradition;
> they are the signs of emergence of community envisaged as a project – at once a
> vision and a construction – that takes you "beyond" yourself in order to return, is
> a spirit of revision and reconstruction of the present. (p. 4)

Creating images of solidarity and community in the intercultural cinematographic works

is certainly a further milestone in the institutional approach towards inclusive

multiculturalism. With the modernized and liberalized foreigner laws, the German society

might create the premises for the social inclusion. With the right imagery, Germany

might show how such inclusion looks like. The unique ability of cinematography to

extend beyond existing cultural limitation and create an alternative reality on screen

contains a reservoir of possibilities for cultural interactions that, instead of fear and

anxiety, might be based on tolerance, solidarity, and love. As suggested by hooks (2000):

Were we, collectively, to demand that our mass media portray images to reflect love's reality, loving interaction would happen. This change would radically alter our culture. The mass media dwells on and perpetuates an ethics of domination and violence because our image makers have more intimate knowledge of these realities than they have with realities of love. (p. 95)

Unfortunately, ethics of domination and a profound knowledge of violence are indeed representative of Akin's famous cinematography. The filmmaker's overwhelming success and the growing popularity of his films signify the existing need of such imagery in the society. Obviously, people want to see violent intercultural dramas that typically bring social alienation, cultural discrimination and painful loss to the cultural "others" they depict. And this thought scares me: as an educator, a critical cultural scholar, a feminist, and a mother of multicultural children. It scares me not so much because it tells me something about Fatih Akin and his work – mainly it scares me because it tells me something about the society we live in. It makes me realize that as individuals, we are not ready for a social change, because the change should start with ourselves, our attitudes, our values. The change should come from within.

Improved state regulations and altered art images alone cannot transform Germany (and Europe in general) into a multicultural society. Certainly, they can create prerequisites for a change and visually suggest how the change might look like. Yet the decisive alteration should happen on the individual level of public consciousness. Social change towards inclusive multiculturalism can be effective only when it occurs on multiple levels that would include not only the German state and art but also the state of mind of the German population. As suggested by Senocak & Tulay (1998):

Change and contact are key words in a multicultural view of society. It is necessary therefore to explore ways to overcome latent and obvious fears of

contact, to track down prejudices, to break through the ghetto and create an atmosphere in which the foreigners and familiarity are in constant contact, so that something new can grow. This is a process which can be enjoyable but is just as painful as rubbing wounds. (p. 258)

Change of consciousness towards cultural diversity is, indeed, difficult yet necessary for the sake of promoting inclusive multiculturalism. A universal change of consciousness means the start of a long overdue discussion of repressed identity problems and fear of contact with foreigners (Senocak & Tulay, 1998), a process that contains a reservoir of possibility of cultural transformation. This change starts with deconstructing the rigidity of the concepts of "self" and the "other". In other words, the change of consciousness is in many way what Ngugi and Seetaramulu (2009) define as "decolonization of the mind," an alternative perspective on the specificities of cross-cultural communication.

The possibility of cultural transformation, of finally moving away from the binary of the "self" in opposition with the "other", the powerful centre and the powerless margins was often addressed by critical feminist of color such as Collins (2000), hooks (1986, 1994, 1996, 2000), Anzaldúa (2000, 2003), Alcoff (1991) Rowe (2000) and Mohanty (2003). Hooks (2000) suggests that:

Living consciously means we think critically about ourselves and the world we live in. We dare to ask ourselves the basic questions who, what, when, where, and why. Answering these questions usually provides us with a level of awareness that enlightens. (p. 55)

Whether new, critical consciousness remains just a dream or can one day become reality depends on whether we: 1) gain knowledge of critical self-reflexivity; 2) learn to accept differences and use them productively; 3) acquire skills how to have contact and an open dialogue with each other.

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In the 21st century, the era of globalization and migration, the contemporary

German society has to be reflective about the fact that its population and its national

identity have changed a lot. With the number of non-German residents in the country and

in face of the newest political and economic developments in the constantly extending the

European Union, promoting inclusive multiculturalism and learning how to accept and

tolerate people's differences is no longer a matter of choice but a matter of necessity. As

Alcoff (2006) suggested, "Consciousness itself is never fixed, never attained once and for

all, because discursive boundaries change with historical traditions." (p.145), and those

conditions require a fundamental change. One of the most progressive and transformative

features of new consciousness with regard to cultural otherness, as suggested by

Anzaldúa (2003) is letting go of the old rigid colonial boundaries and building what she

conceptualizes as "*mestiza* consciousness." She specifically suggests that,

> La *mestiza* constantly has to shift out of habitual formations; from convergent thinking, analytical reasoning that tends to use rationality to move towards a single goal (a Western mode), to divergent thinking, characterized by movement away from set patterns and goals and toward a more whole perspective, one that includes rather than excludes. (p. 101)

With the *mestiza* element, German national identity (and generally European cultural

identity) would no longer be able to manifest itself as hegemony over others. It would

enable what feminists of color (Anzaldúa, 2003; Collins, 1994; Banarjee, 2003; Alcoff,

1992) define as "cultural bridging," or a way to connect the opposite cultural sides.

Another alternative to the metaphor of bridging cultures is the concept of cultural

nomadism, also typical of both post-colonial and critical feminist theories. Braidotti

(1994) claims that:

Nomadic consciousness consists in not taking any kind of identity as permanent. The nomad is only passing through, s/he makes those necessary situated connections that can help her/him to survive, but s/he never takes on fully the limits of one national, fixed identity. The nomad has no passport – or has too many of them. (p. 25)

Cultural nomadism contains a reservoir of possibility of mutual respect, accountability, and fair representation with regard to cultural otherness. As suggested by Alcoff (2006),"proponents of nomad subjectivity announce that fluidity and indeterminateness will break up racial and cultural hierarchies that inflict oppression and subordination" (p.275). Most importantly, both cultural bridging and cultural nomadism erase cultural hierarchies and enable cross-cultural communication on equal terms, in a form of an open, inclusive dialogue, based on reciprocal respect, tolerance, and one day maybe even mutual love.

Only through integration of fundamental changes on multiple levels (of state, art, and the state of mind, or public consciousness) can Germany finally step out of the shadows of the past and move on in the direction of progressive and inclusive multiculturalism that would allow for a new perspective on cultural diversity – seeing the latter not as a threat but as a valuable asset in building a new, better and fairer society.

Conclusion

Yes: I have always realized that written words can influence people's minds and actions more than bombs, than bayonets.

(Oriana Fallaci, 2003, p.51)

This dissertation addressed the concept of multiculturalism in Germany in the framework of the European Union in the century of globalization and global migration. Germany as a cultural location represented a very fertile ground for research on

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multiculturalism due to its unique controversial history with regard to cultural diversity. Therefore, a historical approach, especially with respect to the phenomenon of *Gastarbeiter,* was greatly emphasized. This work illustrated the inability of the German society to come to terms with its past as a significant obstacle in the process of creation and promotion of inclusive multiculturalism.

This dissertation demonstrated discriminatory selectiveness of the phenomenon of German multiculturalism, using contemporary cinematographic German dramas *Solino, Head On* and *On the Other Side* by Fatih Akin as case studies. Specifically, Italian and Turkish immigrant/post-*Gastarbeiter* groups were examined in the respective cinematographic works: their integration in the host country of Germany, their representation in the German film culture, and the overall political and cultural implications of the celebrated Akin's films. The particular ethnic choice of the above-mentioned communities was made because of their opposite social positionalities in Germany: the Italian cultural group being very successfully integrated into it, even blended into the environment (as in case of *Solino*); and the Turkish community being marginalized and excluded from the German society (as in cases of *Head On* and *On the Other Side*).

Cultural and political positionality of Fatih Akin, a transnational trend-setter and a poster-child of the contemporary German and European cinema, was a further subject of critical cultural analysis of this dissertation. Popular, scholarly, and political foci on German-Turkishness in Akin's *persona* and his work represent cultural and political tensions in Germany and Europe: tensions that disable creation and promotion of the non-

discriminatory multiculturalism and re-conceptualization of a new national and cultural identity in Germany (and Europe in general).

This dissertation showed that the contemporary conceptualization of the German multiculturalism that has became synonymous with the mostly negative representation of Turkishness in Germany contains the danger of repeated Eurocentricity and colonial politics of selective cultural "othering." Through invitation to critically re-visit some controversial pages of the German past and even more critically analyze the country's present in relations with the cultural "other", the present dissertation aims to contribute to the process of promotion of fair and inclusive multiculturalism in Germany and Western Europe. This dissertation suggested fundamental changes on the levels of state, art, and public consciousness to ensure alternative ways of cross-cultural communication that would finally "dismantle the Master's house" and make Germany (and Europe) into a welcoming homeplace for different cultures.

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