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Turkish-German Screen Power – The Impact of Young Turkish Immigrants on German TV and Film

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This article argues that with the emergence of a new generation of directors, screenwriters, actors and comedians, most of them Turkish born and having grown up in Germany, Turkish-German film has undergone a fundamental transformation throughout the last decade. Inspired by European migrant film productions, filmmakers like Fatih Akın have contributed to a new tone in Turkish-German cinema. Turkish comedy also forms a new genre which has spread over to German television, where Kaya Yanar has successfully established ethno-comedy. Furthermore, new TV-series, like *Türkisch für Anfänger*, blend the Turkish and the German together in an exploration of the experiences of a patchwork-family. Meanwhile, German public broadcasting channels try to demonstrate a degree of normalization in the area of migrant experience, presenting new, positive image of the integrated migrant on screen. This article takes a closer look at what might be described as Turkish-German screenpower.

1. The ‘Turkish Turn’ in German film-making

In the decade since German unification, there has been a remarkable development in German-Turkish filmmaking. A new energy has spurred productions for cinema screen and television alike, and never before have there been so many Turkish names in the ranks of directors, producers or actors. Two generations are at work in the filmmaking business: besides the first generation of directors who migrated to Germany as young adults and started (or even continued) their artistic career in the new country, there is a second generation, the children of the immigrants. Having access to both German TV and cinema, as well as to Turkish films (via home video) and Turkish broadcasting channels (TRTint via cable and more recently all Turkish channels through satellite television), and later to an international TV schedule via satellite, as well as to international cinema, this generation’s media socialisation has been at least bi-cultural, if not transcultural. These young Turkish-German filmmakers of the ‘next generation’ are creating a new German Cinema at the turn of the millennium.

The ‘Turkish Turn’ in Turkish-German filmmaking¹ comes with a new way of telling stories, with new concepts of space and time, with increased speed, fast cutting, and with music drawn from contemporary subcultural scenes. Filmmakers of the generation born in the 1970s, like Fatih Akın, Kutluğ Ataman, Thomas Arslan, Ayşe Polat, and others, reflect their own cultural background in a far more relaxed way than the generation before them did. This certainly has to do with the simple fact that they, unlike their parents, grew up in the country where they started their professional filmmaking career. For them, Germany was no longer ‘40 square-metres’, but their country of origin. And even despite the increased xenophobia of the post-unification era, these young filmmakers make a point of being German and Turkish at the same time. Yet in so doing, they do not operate with traditional binary oppositions, but with transcultural characters and storylines.²

Depicting Turks and Germans not strictly apart from one another, but in intermeshed relationships, also lessens the burden of ‘purity’ that seemed to dominate earlier film productions. Deniz Göktürk (2000) judges the liminal effects of the German-Turkish traffic between the borders (‘Grenzverkehr’) to be a deliberate undermining of a supposed, ‘code of purity’ (‘Verstöße gegen das Reinheitsgebot’) for the representation of monolithic Turkish and German cultures. Petra Fachinger (2007: 244) identifies a ‘new energy that manifests itself in a new Turkish-German self-definition’ which no longer carries the burden of representing the ‘other’. This difference in perspective on Turkishness in Germany seems to come with the generational shift. The burden of defining oneself as the other in the sense of being *a Turk* versus *the German* seems to belong to the filmmaking of the first generation.³ In many films of the 1980s, hybridity is unknown and the worlds are neatly divided. Things German and Turkish are strictly apart in pre-unification film

¹ For the Turkish Turn in Contemporary German Literature, see Adelson (2005).

² Deniz Göktürk identifies a new point of view in movies like *Berlin in Berlin* (1993), where otherness suddenly refers to the German. Due to a dramatic plot, the German protagonist is forced to stay with a Turkish family in Berlin and thus becomes ‘the other’ who is being observed and even displayed to Turkish family members: this role reversal is at the core of the film’s ironical conception, as Göktürk states, and it is through this reversed perspective that the stereotypical view on Turks in German film is undermined (Göktürk 1998: 113 and 2000: 337-339).

³ On Turkish-German filmmaking from the 1970s to the 1990s, see Göktürk’s articles. Tom Cheesman opposes the categorization by generation, suggesting that there are different strategies of dealing with the “burden of representation” in the texts of Turkish authors (Cheesman 2006). As to Turkish-German film, the generational differentiation seems to remain important.

productions. While Göktürk holds the peculiarities of the German funding system responsible for a certain tendency to restrict the migrant figure to a life between cultures in a ‘cinema of duty’ (Göktürk 2000: 333), not all critics agree with this view, even though an anthology of the mid 1990s refers to the uneven, distorted representation of foreigners in German film as ‘getürkte Bilder’ (Karpff et. al. 1995). Guido Rings (2008) suggests that, in contrast, there has been a shift in the representation of boundaries in migrant cinema after unification that takes the form of politically incorrect satire and a clear marginalisation of the themes of xenophobia and racism. Clear-cut cultural boundaries have been gradually blurred, and the former guest worker figure substituted by protagonists with transnational features (cf. Rings in this volume).

Figures like Fatih Akin’s protagonists Nejat in *Auf der anderen Seite* (2007) or Sibel in *Gegen die Wand* (2005) are typical examples of the transcultural character of the new German cinema made by Turkish-German filmmakers. Both Nejat and Sibel are second-generation Turks in Germany, both move from Germany to Turkey in order to try out another option in life. Both are able to live in either country and shift from one place to the other for good without major problems, and even their Turkish, however rudimentary, suffices for a new start. The main conflicts come with personal rather than with cultural affairs, as both figures rebel against their fathers, and even if both figures end up in Turkey leading almost exactly the kind of life their fathers had planned for them, it is the availability of both possibilities, of a life here *or* there that marks the difference.

Almost all of Akin’s films are situated in more than one country, but this does not mean that a transnational topography dominates the film. Whether the movie tells a love story that has the lovers loose and find one another in a journey across Germany, the Balkans, and finally Turkey (as in the road movie *Im Juli*, 2000), or a story of brotherly rivalry set in Germany and Italy (*Solino*, 2002), or the dramatic story of a rebellion and an *amour fou* in Germany and Turkey (*Gegen die Wand*, 2004), or a story of finding, loosing and searching for a friend or a father (as in *Auf der anderen Seite*, 2007) – each tale is situated in a transcultural setting. Yet, whether the figures live out their experiences in Germany or abroad does not really change the storyline. Living here or there is a possibility the figures try out. When Nejat resigns from his job at the German department in Hamburg only to take over a German bookshop in Istanbul, he represents the flexibility of a transcultural

generation ready to move from one country to another, knowing that there is a job-opportunity on either side.

For Fatih Akin's generation, shifting between Germany and Turkey has become much easier than it had been for their parents twenty, thirty years ago.⁴ In his movies, it is simply a matter of taking a plane or a car. Because the transnational boundaries are easily overcome, the movie can tell other stories of a universal character: the loss of a beloved, the search for love. Referring to places, persons or models beyond his direct environment comes naturally in Fatih Akin's transcultural work, and this habit of 'crossing the bridge' makes him a transcultural artist par excellence.⁵ His artistic and financial involvement in transnational German-Turkish co-productions is having an increasing impact on Turkish cinema too (Farzanefar 2007). Akin's international success sheds light on the new Turkish-German cinema as part of the (new) 'New German Cinema' that has been hailed as an outbreak from the ghetto at the end of the 1990s (Göktürk 2000).⁶

⁴ This does not, however, indicate an insuperable generation gap. In contrast to Alain Bergala, who observes precisely this phenomenon in French cinema (Bergala: 61), the contemporary productions of German-Turkish cinema and TV are full of sometimes ironic intermedial references to film and literature of the first and second generation. Although this referencing has not yet resulted in the filming of a novel (as Tevfik Başer did when he adapted Saliha Scheinhardt's novel for his *Abschied vom falschen Paradies*, 1988), quotations are distinct. In Fatih Akin's *Auf der anderen Seite*, Selim Özdoğan's novel *Die Tochter des Schmieds* (2005) plays a role in the father-son-relationship, and the novel is explicitly mentioned in the credits. In earlier films, Akin also alluded to authors of the generation before him, like Güney Dal and Adalet Ağaoğlu, once again bridging generational worlds.

⁵ Tom Cheesman (2007) has coined the term *cosmopolite*.

⁶ According to Göktürk (2000), the breakthrough of a so-called 'New German Cinema' (meaning the 'next' new German, i.e. multicultural German cinema, cf. Göktürk 2000:239) came with a new generation of filmmakers of non-German, particularly Turkish origin, who presented their films in the 'New German Cinema' category at the Berlin Film Festival in February 1999, together with many new transnational film productions. Among those young filmmakers were Thomas Arslan (*Dealer*), Kutluğ Ataman (*Lola and Bilidikid*) and Fatih Akin (*Kurz und schmerzlos*), whose films, though very individual, still had several things in common. None of them told a 'tale of poor guestworkers', nor the story of how 'Leyla gets liberated by Hans'. Each of them dealt, rather, with themes of modern urban life instead, i. e. the existence of a drug dealer between legality and crime in Berlin (Arslan), insights into the Berlin transvestite scene (Ataman), or a classical gangster-story situated in Hamburg. All three films depict the Turkish figure as a 'Großstadt-Cowboy' (Sterneborg 1999), and the urban space (Berlin, Hamburg) as the setting and a major element of the 'Großstadterzählung', a tale of the city rather than of its inhabitants (Vogt 2000). Showing at the same festival were productions with regional support like the trilingual melodrama *Aprilkinder* (1998) by Yüksel Yavuz, or *Kanak Attack* (1998), Lars Becker's adaptation of Feridun Zaimoğlu's tale of a young Turkish drug dealer, and Hussi Kutlucan's *Ich Chef, Du Turnschuh* (1998).

The Turkish Turn in filmmaking produced films that dealt with this generation, a generation on the move, taking things with a good deal of irony and humour. European and particularly British film productions with ironical, multicultural stories, like *East is East* or *Bend it like Beckham*, as well as productions without explicit migrant contexts like *Trainspotting* or *The Commitments*, depicting contemporary society both realistically and humorously, may have influenced the German(-Turkish) film scene as well. It now seemed possible to think of Turkish-German film productions that had Turkish or Greek protagonists without necessarily telling migrant tales. In this way, the ‘New German (Turkish) Cinema’ offers a fresh view on cultural matters.

2. ‘Turkish light’ – A New Genre

If transculturalism is the main characteristic of the new Turkish-German cinema, another key feature of the movies from the late 1990s onwards is the role of humour. This concerns productions for cinema and television alike, and connects to other contexts too, e. g. the East-West-German in productions like *Goodbye, Lenin!*, where reviving the GDR inside a home serves as an ironical comment on the political context of German unification and the ongoing nostalgia for the former GDR. Likewise, directors like Akin or Kutlucan use irony as an instrument to convey their critique of discriminatory relations between Germans and non-Germans. While they critically ridicule certain aspects of minority affairs, more recent productions renounce the subtlety of irony in favour of the grotesque. This new genre could be subsumed under the name ‘Turkish light’ (‘light’ or *‘lite’*, meaning light-weight): Turkish-German co-productions aiming at a multicultural mass-audience who want to have a good laugh at the confusions of multiculturalism.

Kebab Connection (2005) is an example of this new humour in Turkish-German film. Ibo, a young German Turk, dreams of producing the first German Kung-Fu-movie ever, but gets into trouble with his family and German girlfriend instead. This comedy, starring a brilliant Denis Moschitto as newcomer in a mostly migrant cast, referenced the style of advertisements and Kung-Fu films, as well as the speed of the new comedy genre. Written by Fatih Akin and Ruth Thoma, co-produced by Akin’s Wüste Filmproduction,

Westdeutscher Rundfunk (WDR) and Arte, *Kebab Connection* became the summer hit of 2005. A year earlier, *Süperseks* had worked on a similar pattern, telling the story of young Turkish Elviz (also starring Denis Moschitto) who, because of financial problems, starts the first Turkish-language sex-hotline in Hamburg. Since employees and clients all belong to the same Turkish community and after a while begin to recognize each other, comical chaos ensues. This film, too, was a co-production of private and public service institutions, including Studio Babelsberg Motion Pictures, Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen (ZDF) and Arte. Both films set their stories in a multicultural (mostly German-Turkish) milieu, operate with the plot device of a young, attractive hero getting into trouble and solving the problem in a creative, rather unconventional way, thereby creating comical chaos with a happy ending. And both productions present the migrant milieu as one of tradition and taboo, invention and creativity, chaos and comedy at the same time. They gain lightness through their fast pace and general tongue-in-cheek tone, and they profit from a remarkable range of (young) actors of Turkish or multicultural descent (like Denis Moschitto, Hilmi Sözer, Tayfun Bademsoy, Adnan Maral, Adam Bousdoukos, and many others). They are reminiscent of productions like *East is East*.

Interestingly, this ‘Turkish light’ genre emerges at the same time as German public debates over the supposed ‘failure of Turkish integration and the existence of a Turkish (Islamic) “parallel society” that ‘threatens’ German society with orthodox religious views, rigid traditionalism, domestic violence, and honour killings. According to this debate, which is lead by major institutions of the German media, the concept of multiculturalism has ‘failed’. Turkish feminist rights activists like Seyran Ateş or sociologists like Necla Kelek accuse Turkish men of threatening the liberalism of German society with their violent orthodoxy – a view that is not, however, shared by all critics (Cheesmann 2007: 114f). Still, the debate has renewed old stereotypes of the violent Turkish-Muslim enemy, not least through countless pseudo-objective ‘documentaries’, which constantly present the same topics from the problem area: Islam (terrorism, menace), the women’s question (headscarves), patriarchy (honour killings, forced marriages), social problems (unemployment, criminality), often confusing information with cliché. The tendency to construct an image of the ‘problematic Turk’ in the media has increased since the terror

acts of 9/11. Media and politics have continually depicted Turkish immigrants as part of the Islamic menace to western society ever since (Butterwegge 2007).

On the other hand, probably in reaction to this negative trend, the public broadcasting services have tried more recently to pay tribute to (Turkish) immigration to Germany. The aim is to establish a positive picture of the integrated migrant through TV (Buettner 2007). In a recent and new turn in German television, the notion of 'Integration im TV' not only calls for an increased representation of migrants on and behind the screen (i. e. presenters, hosts, actors, scriptwriters, directors), but also opens the door to Turkish themes in the fictional realm. This is how two productions of the 'Turkish light' genre for German television came about, and it is interesting to see how they deal with the task of depicting Turkish migrant life in Germany.

Meine verrückte türkische Hochzeit (2006) clearly leaned on the US-American box-office hit *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* in telling the tale of an intercultural romance. Here, it is a Turkish-German wedding project that has to overcome all possible difficulties associated with cross-cultural relationships. Yet, even though this production of private channel Pro Sieben was nominated for the German TV Award (Deutscher Fernsehpreis) in 2006, and won several awards (Grimme-Preis, Bayerischer Fernsehpreis) a year later, the romantic comedy is marred by the way it depicts Turkish figures, trying to incorporate all possible examples of the 'typical' Turk, including an irascible Turkish father, a menacing brother, a religious sister and several Turkish-run grocery shops. Presenting the whole range of clichés that mark the distorted view of Turkish migrants, it thereby continues the tradition of 'getürkte Bilder' in German film (Karpff et al 1995). On the whole, the film does not keep its promise of being hilarious or even crazy ('verrückt'), mainly because it cannot decide whether to be ironic or not.

The same goes for *Zeit der Wünsche* (2005), another ambitious TV-production for the public service channel ARD, the saga of Turkish migration to Germany. In two parts, the story unfolds of the life of three Anatolian friends who all go to Germany as migrants. While their experience of being guestworkers fulfils their existential expectations, their general happiness is undermined by a fatal love-and-betrayal conflict. Heroine Melike escapes from a forced marriage to temporary freedom in Germany, but is finally shot by her

ex-husband, who comes from Anatolia to carry out an 'honour killing' on German soil. Developing the storyline towards this tragic ending marred this TV double-feature on Germany's Turks. This might have been due to the scriptwriter's provenance,⁷ or even, to argue with Göktürk, to the fact that this production profited from public film funding, thus aiming it at a mostly German TV-audience. Trying to tell tales of Turks by means of a multicultural cast also affected the language: while the two previously mentioned cinema productions used their mixed cast without indicating language changes, the TV productions made a point of using the Turkish accent. By means of a distorted German, it is made clear to the audience that guestworkers struggle at least with language, if not with German culture as a whole – language already marks the Turk as different on German TV. Overall, the sentimental saga reconnected in unfortunate fashion to the tradition of the 1980s migrant 'cinema of duty', as well as contributing to the ongoing public debate on 'Turkish incompatibility'. Moreover, via its melodramatic finale, it also confirmed the prevalent notion of the 'failed integration' of Germany's Turks.

Zeit der Wünsche reached a wide audience through television.⁸ The thoroughly positive reaction to it might be explained with reference to what postcolonial theory has called 'history written from the margins into the centre': at last the story of German immigration,⁹ or more specifically, the story of the *Turkish* migration to Germany, had been officially acknowledged by German TV and the entertainment industry. *Zeit der Wünsche* had successfully turned the story of Turkish migrants into an evening's worth of story on screen, however questionable the picture of the migrant it conveyed in the process.¹⁰

⁷ Turkish film veteran Tevfik Başer (*1951) continued his already established dramatic approach to the subject. The melodramatic ending, with the heroine getting shot in the middle of the street, is also reminiscent of the 1980s Turkish Yeşilçam Cinema.

⁸ The DVDs were later supplemented with Turkish dubbing or subtitles for the migrant audiences, much to the delight of Turkish viewers (cf. consumer comments on <http://www.amazon.de>).

⁹ The story of the German Republic has recently been re-interpreted as a story of immigration, see Motte (1999).

¹⁰ See Cheesman's reflections on the similar effects of Necla Kelek's work (2007: 117).

2.1 Ethno-Comedy

Whether a production like *Zeit der Wünsche* still belongs to the 'light' genre, remains open to debate. In general, though, the taste for comedy is spreading from cinema to TV. Comedians like Kaya Yanar entertain the audience with what has been newly established as a Turkish brand of ethno-comedy. Kaya Yanar, born in 1973, the son of a Turkish mother and an Arabic father, started as a stand-up comedian while still a student. His popular comedy-show *Was guckst du?!* on private channel SAT1 ran from 2001 to 2005 for five seasons. Yanar presented many ethno-gags and incorporated different ethnic types, e. g. a first-generation Turkish migrant with moustache and pre-modern views (Yildirim), an Italian gigolo (Francesco), a Polish criminal, and many others. Among those, the Indian (Ranjid, a clever-naive figure played by Yanar with a lot of brown make-up and a permanently smiling face, old-fashioned jumpers and a great Indian accent) and the Turkish Macho (Hakan, disco doorman with little brain but a line that became a classic: 'Ey, du kommst hier ned rein!') became the audience's favourites. Excerpts from foreign language TV-programmes (with comic effects often resulting from comical culture-clashes), witty sketches, corny and risqué jokes all added up to fulfil the prime aim of his show, i. e. to base comedy on ethnicity, and to have fun. Similar to Sascha Baron Cohen's principle of adopting pseudo-ethnic identities, e. g. his character Ali G., which may well have been an inspiration for Yanar, ethno-comedy worked on the comical side-effects of minority cultures: a funny accent (Ranjid), comical appearance (Hakan), machismo gone wrong (Francesco), etc., with politically incorrect jokes about 'the other' – nothing less than a perfect example of mimicry.

So why does this taste for a laugh about ethnicity work so well without being tasteless? Doesn't Yanar confirm the stereotypes, rather than question them? Thanks to his remarkable comic talent, this stereotyping can be understood as being itself a parody. The primary effect comes from the first principle of ethno-comedy which is that the 'native ethno' can tell jokes which 'native Germans' would never dare to tell in public. So, if 'political correctness' is guaranteed by the fact that Yanar himself has a minority background, then his ethno-comedy works as a perfect mimicry. On the other hand, the genre itself defines the humour as a harmless means of entertainment, rather than as a

means to criticise and educate the audience. Unlike satire, comedy does not primarily intend to attack social evils, but rather distract from them.¹¹ While Turkish-German satire¹² presents ‘typical Turks’ or ‘typical Germans’ to grotesque effect not just for the sake of comedy but also for more political purposes (e. g. by presenting the ‘over-integrated Turk’ as a victim of official German integration policies), Turkish ethno-comedy happily indulges in the joke, just for the sake of a good laugh. The message here is to entertain and to have fun.¹³

In keeping with the principles of comedy, Kaya Yanar is at the centre of the comedy show. The ease with which he deals with issues of identity is typical of his generation. In the biographical notes on his homepage, Yanar refers to an untroubled, cosmopolitan childhood growing up in the multicultural environment of Frankfurt, where being different was ‘interesting’ rather than problematic.¹⁴ This again aligns him with his audience, many of whom are young migrants who identify with him, as well as young to middle age Germans who join in the fun. Yanar’s famous slogan ‘Was guckst du?!’, half-mocking the migrants’ linguistic deficiencies, half representing their readiness to defend themselves (the ‘what’s up?’ of young Kanaks), has become a cult phrase. So, Kaya Yanar’s embodiment of the light-hearted, permanently joking Turkish-German comedian from the younger generation could be regarded as resulting as much from the breakthrough of the second generation into film and literature, as from private television companies ‘going ethnic’ in the 1990s.

But the broader context of this phenomenon is the privatization of German TV and the rise of comedy shows on private channels such as SAT and RTL, a development, which, according to some critics, has ‘dramatically’ changed German attitudes towards humour (‘Lachverhalten’, as Kammertöns 2007 puts it). The new genre calls for new skills, and consequently, comedians appear to be the newly skilled ‘Lacharbeiter’ (Kammertöns puns

¹¹ For a general distinction, see Wellstein (2007) and Reinhard (2006).

¹² On Turkish-German satire and its most prominent authors, Şinasi Dikmen and Osman Engin, see Terkessidis (2000) and Yeşilada, (2000).

¹³ Yanar insists on having pursued his career independently from any ethnic boom (‘ich bin kein Produkt des Aufbruchs der türkischen community’), nor did he embody the burden of a Turkish identity (‘...ich war einfach nur Künstler, der auf die Bühne geht’). Cited in Lemke-Matwey et.al. (2003); see also Kaiser (2001).

on the German term ‘Facharbeiter’, here). In fact, Yanar belongs to the generation of so-called ‘self-made comedians’ who entered commercial television from the late 1990s onwards, including comedians like Atze Schröder, Oliver Pocher, Rick Kavanian, the famous Kanak-duo *Erkan & Stefan*,¹⁵ and many others. Together they make up the on-screen part of a larger boom in ethno-cabaret and stand-up comedy amongst the 1970s generation. The ethno-comedians among them in particular had the chance to introduce their audiences to minority issues. But the fact that they wasted this chance for the sake of comedy ‘light’ was exactly what disappointed many critics, among them Feridun Zaimoğlu, one of the leaders of the rebellious young Turks of the 1990s.¹⁶

It is characteristic of the TV-comedy genre that it shares some of its impact with the cabaret, and not surprisingly, Turkish ethno-comedy and Turkish-German cabaret have a lot in common. Turkish-German cabaret had long been successful in Germany. Leading artists Şinasi Dikmen and Muhsin Omurca toured throughout Germany with their *Knobi Bonbon* cabaret for over a decade in pre- and post-unification Germany, presenting Turkish-German political cabaret at its best. After their separation, both artists continued with similarly satirical solo performances. Taking up the tradition of political satire from Dieter Hildebrandt’s satirical TV-programme *Scheibenwischer*, Django Asül (*1972) presents straight political cabaret too.¹⁷ Serdar Somuncu (*1968) went on tour from 1996

¹⁴ See <http://www.yanar.de>.

¹⁵ Ironically, the most popular ‘ethno-comedians’ in this field are of (native) German origin: *Erkan & Stefan*, alias Erkan Maria Moosleitner and Stefan Lust, became widely known as ‘typical Kanaken’ through radio and several film productions. Embodied by two ‘native Bavarians’ born in 1971, John Friedman and Florian Simbeck, they had enormous success with their parody of ‘Kanak Sprak’, coining words like ‘krass’ or ‘brontal’ in a vernacular that was believed to be the typical ‘Kanakendeutsch’ of Turkish migrants. In this way, *Erkan & Stefan* in the roles of a German-Turk and his German buddy, made the supposed streetlife of young Turks/migrants popular and acceptable despite the mimicry. Having started at small venues in 1994, the successful duo decided to put an end to their characters’ existence, after more than three movies and countless appearances and media productions, in order to start serious acting in 2007.

¹⁶ Zaimoğlu attacked his comedy colleagues in an article, rebuking them for being merely the purveyors of cheap jokes for a willing audience (‘Der “Isch-hau-disch”-Zahnlücken-Irrwitz schäumte auf einer großen Sympathiewoge’), and challenged them to improve the quality of their comedy. Zaimoğlu (2003).

¹⁷ This temporarily made him the famous ‘Bruder Barnabas’ of the annual Paulaner Brewers Political Satire Event (Starkbieranstich auf dem Nockherberg) in Munich 2007, a role which Asül immediately lost in suspicious circumstances right after his ferocious debut. Christian Mayer refers to unquoted politicians who had protested against the sharp, witty criticism – a critique which they

until 2001 with a reading from Adolf Hitler's 'Mein Kampf', and later with declamations of Joseph Goebbels' famous 1943 war speech.¹⁸ Yet, Somuncu, Asül, Dikmen and Omurca belong to a minority of artists representing classical political satire, while the mainstream opts for the light version of just comedy.

Most Turkish stand-up comedians, like Fatih Cevikkollu, Bülent Ceylan, or Murat Topal, earn their laughs engaging in the intercultural opposition of 'Turks and (or versus) Germans'. Knowing what life as part of a minority in Germany is about, Cevikkollu jokes about being mistaken for a member of the Taliban, Bülent Ceylan reflects on what Germans think of a typical Turk, and Murat Topal draws from his experience as a real life police officer. Embedding their cross-cultural criticism in generally 'light' humour, however, unlike their colleagues from political cabaret, they embrace their audience rather than provoking them. Through television, these comedians get more attention than via their usual stand-up acts.¹⁹ The native German audience, on the other hand, has got to know Turkish ethno-comedy much better than they did a decade ago. The popularity of light-hearted TV-comedy helps to create a bond between the artist and the audience, and with ethno-comedy, this is even more the case, as laughing about the others (here: the Turks) is possible through laughing *with* them. So, the integration of migrant comedians into the vast humour market on German private TV is a success, after all – however 'light' the critical potential.

3. The Turkish Turn in TV-series

With the expansion of the private TV-sector in Germany and the ever rising demand for TV-programme material, US-sitcoms have gained an increasing impact, not only by their mere presence, but also as role models for similar German productions. Claudia Holzer

were not prepared to accept from a Turkish-Bavarian artist. Cf. *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 3 August 2007 ('Ich hätte gerne weitergemacht').

¹⁸ Almost all artists have websites on which they display their programmes and other information; cf. <http://www.die-kaes.com> for Dikmen, <http://www.omurca.de> for Omurca; see also: <http://www.django-asuel.de> and <http://www.somuncu.de>.

¹⁹ Cevikkollu, Ceylan and Topal appeared in a TV-special on Turkish comedy (*Deutsch-Türkisch, Türkisch Deutsch*) broadcast nationwide and hosted by Django Asül in 2007.

(1999) argues that it took a long time to establish German sitcoms on TV. Even more remarkably, ethnic-German sitcoms took until the millennium to emerge. Two recent TV-series have set a new standard for TV-programmes with a Turkish focus. Scheduled as part of the (early) evening programme and appealing to a young and regular audience, both *Alle lieben Jimmy* and *Türkisch für Anfänger* are breaking new ground. Again, it is interesting to compare the ways in which they construct their ethnic element.

Alle lieben Jimmy was produced for commercial channel RTL in 2005 and started in April 2006. This sitcom is about the Turkish family Arkadaş in Neukirchen: the central figure is Cemil/Jimmy (Eralp Uzun), an 18-year-old boy with a sunny disposition and full of beans, whose adventures are at the heart of each 30-minute episode. Father Metin is a successful building contractor, his wife stays at home, and there are also two daughters, Leyla and Fatma. Another regular addition to the family is Jimmy's German friend Ben, whose friendly, sometimes naive temperament contrasts with his pal's more colourful character. Jimmy's female counterpart is his sister Leyla (played by VIVA presenter Gülcan Karahanci²⁰), a vain and complacent young woman completely obsessed by fashion and style, while younger sister Fatma is characterized by her dedication to Islam, her altruism and environmentalism, thus representing the conscience of the family. The main setting is the stylish family home – clearly, these migrants are well off. The Arkadaşes are depicted as the ideal family with an always smiling mum, an affluent, good-natured dad and tidy, happy surroundings – perfectly integrated Turks.

Although Jimmy's adventures, mostly relating to mistaken identity, misunderstandings, or situational comedy, are entertaining, the sitcom lacks a good storyline and remains episodic. There are no real conflicts at stake, and the characters are constantly in good spirits, an attitude already expressed in the opening theme. When for example Ben gets circumcised instead of Jimmy by mistake in the pilot episode, he complains about it, but remains in a good mood, rather than getting into a real conflict over this with his Turkish

²⁰ Although Eralp Uzun starred as the protagonist, it was Gülcan Karahanci who had the most subsequent success with her screen career, partly thanks to her appearance in the sitcom, partly because of her pre-existing popularity as presenter on the private music channel VIVA. In June 2007, Pro Sieben launched a Docu-Soap featuring her wedding to Stefan Kamps, son of Germany's famous bakery chain. Although *Gülcans Hochzeit* was trash TV at its worst, the celebrity soap attracted many viewers among her Turkish/migrant peer group.

friend. Consequently, the characters remain two-dimensional and artificial, and their dialogues, though based on puns and cross-cultural irony, are superficial and without wit.

As to the Turkish element in the sitcom, the general tone is tongue-in-cheek but lacks differentiation. Clichés about Turks are presented playfully, yet even though they are being ridiculed, the irony does not always come across.²¹ The Arkadaş family are presented sympathetically, embodying a kind of positive Mediterranean type. According to yet another cliché, these ‘Turks alla italiana’ are hot-tempered, warm-hearted, with a lot of native flair, and good-natured through and through. However much they fight, they always make up in the end – a feature which is clearly intended by the makers of the series: ‘Doch genauso heftig wie die Familie streitet, so liebevoll löst sie die Sache auch. Schließlich sind sie eine türkische Familie’ – i.e. a loveable bunch by definition. A closer analysis reveals, however, that this family is almost too good to be true, even by sitcom standards.²²

Still, this ‘snug’ version of Turks on German TV has been a success. Despite the somewhat shallow quality of its laid-back character, *Alle lieben Jimmy* won audiences’ hearts and proved the title right. In 2006 it was nominated for several awards, among them the Rose d’Or in 2006 and the Emmy in 2007. Running as the Turkish version *Cemil oldu Jimmy* on the Turkish private channel Kanal D, this product of the Bavaria Studios was the first German sitcom to be exported to Turkey. The second season is starting in 2008. What generally attracted viewers to *Alle lieben Jimmy* was the depiction of the life of a ‘normal, integrated’ Turkish family, a family with the programmatic name Arkadaş (i. e. ‘Friend’) which, in contrast to the mostly negative representation of Turks in the German media, presented the Turks in Germany as in as acceptable and loveable a fashion as possible. This effect might well have been in keeping with RTL’s intentions.

²¹ When, for example, the Turkish community regularly meets in the local Hamam to discuss matters in public, the mise-en-scene quotes a classical orientalist pattern rather than undermines it. On the other hand, with Leyla wearing the shortest skirt possible, while her sister Fatma appears in headscarves, a deliberate bricolage of the image of the Turk is included in scene.

²² There is no space for closer analysis, nor for discussion of the reason why RTL chose this format for Turkish issues (or vice versa). See instead Lambernd (1997).

3.1 *Türkisch für Anfänger*

Türkisch für Anfänger is probably the more interesting TV-production in this area. Produced for ARD, this serial introduces audiences to things German and Turkish through the story of a German-Turkish patchwork-family in today's Berlin. Doris Schneider, a German psychologist, and Metin Öztürk, a second-generation Turkish police officer and widower, move in together, leaving all cultural and other clashes to their teenage children. On the Turkish side, these are Yağmur Öztürk, 15, a convinced Muslim, and her elder brother Cem, 17, a typical Turkish 'Kanaksta'. Both are devastated by the idea of living with their German step-siblings. These are Nils Schneider, a friendly, somewhat innocent 13-year old, and his 16-year-old sister Lena. Bright and clever, she is clearly against the new bi-cultural family project and transforms herself into a little monster. Lena tells and comments on the story in a voice over and a series of short sequences which she records on a video camera for her best friend Katie, who has gone abroad on a school-exchange to the USA.²³ The new family moves into a brick-built, two-storey-house with a little garden in Berlin, and the first season mainly depicts their private life within and outside this house, life at school, in the streets, on the playground and elsewhere.

Launched in early 2006 with the first twelve episodes, *Türkisch für Anfänger* became an instant hit by word of mouth, thanks to its professional production, witty dialogues and sophisticated irony, and to an excellent ensemble of actors.²⁴ The intercultural casting was a clever decision, as it drew not only German and Turkish audiences, but also attracted spectators from other minorities (especially Arab and Iranian) to watch 'their' identificatory figures on screen. *Türkisch für Anfänger* won several national and international awards, including Best Acting for nearly all the main characters, the Grimme-Preis and the Fernseh-Preis. In spite of as yet unconvincing audience ratings, the ARD opted for a second season which started in March 2007, launched it with a big media campaign and the usual cross-

²³ 'Hi Katie!...' is a typical way for Lena to start each episode, catching up with the plot so far both for Katie and the audience. The camera perspective is doubled through the main camera and Lena camera lens.

²⁴ Turkish-German Adnan Maral (Metin) and Anna Stieblich (Doris) as the parents, as well as Emil Reinke (Nils), Tunisian-German Elyas M'Barek (Cem), Persian-German Pegah Ferydoni (Yağmur), who also starred as a Muslim in the Zaimoğlu / Senbkel theater production *Schwarze Jungfrauen*, and an enormously talented Josefine Preuß (Lena).

media marketing, made up of trailers, DVDs, books and audio media, and for a third season which is scheduled for 2008.²⁵

What makes *Türkisch für Anfänger* work so well? In contrast to the *Jimmy* sitcom, the family here is far from ‘cosy’ – in fact, the children hate each others’ guts. Lena and Cem quarrel the most, next comes Yağmur, who rebels against her non-Muslim surroundings and especially against her ‘morally corrupt’ German step-sister. While little Nils is the only one besides his parents to approve of this new family blending,²⁶ the Turkish children blame their new step-mother Doris for having seduced their father into this mess. Metin Öztürk, then, the only family member with thoroughly ‘cosy’ characteristics, is rejected by Lena precisely for his warm-heartedness, while his macho son Cem, on the brink of manhood, despises him for being soft (a ‘Weichei’). So, there is a lot of trouble in the Öztürk-Schneider home, and consequently, a lot of conflicts to be dealt with. The series follows a blended family in the making and it is this above all which contributes, for all its irony and wit, to the series’ credibility.

The idea of a blended family is not new, though. The ups and downs of a newly constructed patchwork family has been a classic theme in American television ever since Lucille Ball and Henry Fonda starred in *Yours, Mine and Ours* (1968), the humorous story of a widower with 10 children marrying a widow with a further 8. The comedy resulting from the attempt to run a 20-member household (again reminiscent of the 1950s movie hit *Cheaper by the Dozen*), was adapted for TV soon afterwards, and *The Brady Bunch* ran for almost five years (1969-1974), giving the social topic of the blended family enormous popularity. Script writer Sherwood Schwartz wanted to reflect the growing divorce rates and their

²⁵ The first season with twelve episodes ran from March 14 2006, Tuesday to Friday in the early evening (18.50 to 19.20). Ratings were about 2.54 million, i.e. 10.1 % of the audience share, which was below expectations, and consequently ARD refrained from commissioning a second season. This decision was reversed due to a poll: given the ‘overwhelmingly positive reactions’ the ARD kept *Türkisch für Anfänger* in the schedule and continued production. Despite a media campaign including the release of DVDs, soundtrack-CD, and a book version (cf. Kühn 2007), the second season ran in the first half of 2007 with a disappointing 8.1 % market share (1.64 million spectators), which might be due to its being broadcast earlier in the evening than the first season (cf. Keil 2007).

²⁶ The term refers to families in which the partners have remarried after divorce or separation (like in Doris Schneider’s case), or after a bereavement (like in Metin Öztürk’s case). “Blended” here means “mixed”.

familial consequences for a rapidly growing number of step-siblings in the US at that time. *The Brady Bunch* tells the story of widower Mike Brady and divorced Carol Martin, who fall in love, marry and move in together, thus forcing their children to share the same house – just as in *Türkisch für Anfänger*. Part of the success of the *Bradys* comes from the humorous way of presenting the problems, but much more credit has to be given to the fact that the story is told from the standpoint of the children – this is, after all, what *Türkisch für Anfänger* does, too, as Lena keeps her friend Katie up to date. *The Brady Bunch* was followed by TV-movies, stage shows, specials and documentaries, and it also inspired several shows with similar themes on American television (*Step by Step*, *Drake & Josh*, *A Life with Derek*).²⁷ All these shows are also available to the German audience through pay-TV or private channels,²⁸ so it seems probable that script writer Dağtekin got some ideas here (the shared room, the brother-sister-conflict, the mother's bad cooking, etc.) for *Türkisch für Anfänger*.

But *Türkisch für Anfänger* also presents a family with Turkish and German members for the first time on German TV.²⁹ If it is true that the blended families in US TV reflected the growing divorce rates of the 1950s, then it could be suggested that a German sitcom presenting a German-Turkish couple reflects the growing rate of bi-national marriages in today's Germany. Script writer Bora Dağtekin, a second-generation German-Turk with bi-national parents, clearly has experience of what he is writing about. As part of *Türkisch für Anfänger*'s 'Turkish Turn', the family "blending" comes with a mixture of nationalities as Metin Öztürk is a (German-)Turk and Doris Schneider is a German. As in the US-shows,

²⁷ In *The Brady Bunch*, Mike Brady's three sons and Carol Martin's three daughters have to share a house and the parents find themselves in the midst of both gender conflicts (a former all-male household versus a female group) and generation conflict (children against parents). *Step by Step* (US: 1991-1998) combined two divorced adults with their three children (the title of the sitcom plays with the idea of rebuilding a new life step-by-step and step-siblings), as did the sitcoms *Drake & Josh* (US 2004) and *A Life with Derek* (US 2005). *A Life with Derek* sets up a conflict between five children, with Derek and his new step-sister Casey constantly fighting. Drake and Josh are two very different boys who become step-brothers.

²⁸ *The Brady Bunch* ran as *Drei Jungen, drei Mädchen* from 1971 onwards on ZDF for the first time, and was broadcast again on private channels such as ProSieben, Sat1, and is also available on DVD; *Step by Step* was broadcast in 1994 on RTL and other channels; *Drake & Josh* reached German audience in 2005 via private channel Nick and DVD; and *A Life with Derek* started as *Mensch, Derek!* in December 2007 on RTL II.

²⁹ Holzer points out that ethnically mixed couples are very rare in US-sitcoms. *The Fresh Prince of Bel Air*, starring Will Smith, is an exceptional case. (Holzer 1999: 70f).

Türkisch für Anfänger associates its love-story with the parents and locates the clash in the next generation. Part of the clash between the Turkish-German step-siblings, however, is cultural. ‘Who can remain cool when your own mum is making love with Al-Quaida?’ complains Lena, (Kühn 2007a: 6), defining the project of moving in with what she believes to be Albanians as an act of ‘terrorism’. The fact that she mistakes the Öztürks for Albanians already signals the irony underlying the whole show. Stereotypes about the other are a constant feature of the mostly witty dialogues of *Türkisch für Anfänger*.

Generally following the dramatic sitcom structure of conflict-escalation-solution, *Türkisch für Anfänger* indulges in the escalation of a cultural clash that works with stereotypes on either side. So, the family blending also blends notions about the cultural other. Obsessed by the idea of Muslims being terrorists, Lena suspects Yağmur of whispering ‘Taliban’ during her prayers, and when it comes to judging Cem’s outfit, she despises his ‘awful jeans alla turca’ (‘scheußliche Türkenjeans’, Kühn 2007a: 18). In return, Yağmur accuses her of being a ‘Nazi’, while Cem is obviously put off by his step-sister’s ecologically correct but unattractive appearance (‘Ökotussi’). Both sides operate with prejudices about the other right from the start, and yet, these positions are constantly re-negotiated: Cem falls in love with Lena and vice versa, Lena and Yağmur form a coalition of sisters against their ‘crazy mother’. Almost all stereotypes are part of and a catalyst for the later action. Doris and Metin, who are both attracted to one another sexually, later find themselves in a big pre-wedding crisis which goes beyond the initial national cliché of the blond German woman feeling attracted to the erotic Turkish/oriental man. Already the pilot episode displays all the main stereotypes of Turks and Germans in its exposition, from religion (Yağmur’s fundamentalism), to terror (‘the Albanians’), looks (is Metin a hairy guy, wonders Lena), love (Doris finds Metin’s fondness for romance ‘kitschig’ while he insists that it was precisely this that attracted her to him), to language (Cem usually talks a kind of Kanak-vernacular, using ‘isch’ for ‘ich’ and fillers like ‘ey’ etc, although he is capable of speaking standard German, as he proves in a sexually-charged verbal duel with Lena, cf. Kühn 2007a: 25-26).

But instead of simply subjecting them to laughter, *Türkisch für Anfänger* deconstructs many of these stereotypes on two levels. When Lena complains about Turkish Arabesc music, the reproach of bad taste does not simply represent German rejection of Turkish

music, but also alludes to ‘highbrow’ Turkish contempt for a popular ‘lowbrow’ music genre – this is a joke both Turks and Germans laugh about, even if for different reasons.³⁰ When Cem expresses disapproval of his stepmother’s meagre abilities as a housewife, he seems to be the nasty Turkish macho. On the other hand, he simply verbalizes what all the others think, too (without expressing it unpleasantly). Even when his sister attempts to outdo Doris on the household front, displaying in the process the Turkish virtue of the ‘*ev kızı*’ (housewife, or rather *housegirl*), she fails and is forced to admit that Doris, however ineffective her housekeeping, does make the perfect mother by virtue of her enormous psychological capabilities. Her qualities as the household’s leading figure, the one who actually holds this wild family bunch together, goes against all stereotypes. With this kind of differentiation, the sitcom goes beyond the usual pattern of harmony being threatened and re-established.

In this way, intercultural taboos are more than mere triggers for a good laugh; they serve in the representation of real conflicts as well. Islam plays a distinctive role in the family life, as Yağmur forces everybody to respect her strict and intolerant lifestyle. Obviously, this does not work out, and, in keeping with the exaggerated situational comedy concept of the series, things go terribly wrong. When Doris orders out and accidentally gets pork instead of beef, she unwillingly forces her orthodox Muslim stepdaughter to commit a major sin. Yet, it is also Doris who restores her reputation at the Koran school (by ‘accidentally’ making Yağmur’s greatest enemy eat pork too). This is not some pseudo-conflict, but a real one, causing major trouble that lasts for more than one episode. A conflict, which the figures are constantly trying to resolve, however small the steps they take. At the same time, it is not all about religion, as Doris’s bad cooking is a torture to all the family members alike (the dispirited poking around at take-out pizzas at the dining table is a running gag). This is how the series becomes credible and in parts realistic, for it discusses problems that could happen in any family, whether transcultural or not.

³⁰ Yağmur’s green plastic alarm clock in the shape of a mosque, with the alarm a muezzin’s call to prayer, is made fun of too. Although it is delivered via Lena’s notorious contempt, the irony is directed universally against objects of bad taste, which both sides, Turks and Germans, would mock. The whining of Arabesc hurts the ears of a Turkish music connoisseur as well as those of the Germans, and a bric-a-brac alarm with a distorted metallic muezzin’s voice is ridiculous in any case.

Türkisch für Anfänger does not just work with the traditional sitcom storyline of family trouble followed by the reestablishment of family order in the end (although it does this too). It discusses intercultural and generational matters at the same time, as well as effectively playing with concepts of culture. When Cem greets the new German family members on the morning after the first night with a friendly ‘Na ey, ihr Kartoffeln’, he obviously expresses affirmation of the Germans in his own Turkish world. But what exactly does he mean when he exclaims the following when confronted with his naked stepmother: ‘Ey, wollt ihr mich verarschen? Sind wir an der Ostsee, oder warum hat die nix an?!’ In what way are ‘they’ having ‘him’ on, and who is the ‘we’ in this constellation? Confusing the relaxed habits of a former student of the 1980s with east German bathing traditions, trying to make a point about (Turkish) moral codes, while also being overcome by post-pubescent anxieties, Cem’s response triggers laughter in a comical situation. Beyond this, the multi-layered play with stereotypes also reflects the complexity of the intercultural issues negotiated by his figure. This is far from being a superficial gag.

Extending the usual character development in sitcoms, the main characters in *Türkisch für Anfänger* develop with each new episode to the point of unpredictability. Lena has the widest range in this respect, negotiating matters with her step-sister against all odds, and changing her mind about her best enemy Cem, shifting from one extreme to the other: the transformation of mutual loathing into a major teenage crush on the part of the two antagonists becomes the main topic of the second season. Cem’s character, too, shows great capacity for development. Despite his declared machismo, he learns to face and to express more subtle feelings in communicating with the female sex. The Kanaksta (usually depicted as a solitary figure) is shown here as the son of (step-)parents who both care very much about his development and who guide him through the difficult business of teenage love. Irony enters the picture when experienced therapist Doris addresses the angry young man with ‘Na, kleiner Mann’, while the embarrassed youngster tries to keep up his cool facade for his buddy Costa.³¹

³¹ The friendship between Cem and his Greek schoolmate Costa is another example of subtle irony and clichés turned upside down in *Türkisch für Anfänger*. Allowing a Greek and a Turkish boy to be best friends means breaking a taboo for Turkish and German audiences alike. Brought together by the ‘Ausländerförderunterricht’, the supposed ‘enemies’ ally themselves against the institutional discrimination of the German school system. Accordingly, they appear as typical Kanak boys, with

On the level of production, *Türkisch für Anfänger* works with a lot of jump-cuts, shot-counter-shots and point-of-view shots creating lively scenes. Fast-motion sequences highlight hysterical moods, slow motion (and slow sound) are used to express failure. The main characteristic is the enormous speed of both scenes and dialogues. Particularly the witty and ironic verbal duels are reminiscent of screwball comedies – a rare quality in evening series of this kind. Much of it is down to script writer Bora Dağtekin’s extremely good grasp of intercultural puns and situation comedy, which may be due to his talents but also to his bi-cultural (German-Turkish) background: both the themes and their representation seem to profit from his personal insight into the ups and downs of intercultural life. Even though *Türkisch für Anfänger* has had three directors and several script writers besides Dağtekin in the course of just two seasons, the highly professional standards to which it is made have been consistently maintained: critics are unanimous in their praise for the fast wit of this series.

To an extent the production borrows from other successful shows such as David E. Kelly’s *Ally McBeal* (interior monologues and inserted ironical voice-off comments from the main character, presentation of the city as a character in its own right, the use of music to underline elements of the action). When Yağmur establishes an anonymous chatroom romance, references to *You’ve Got Mail* appear in the story line (lover round the corner is Costa, blind date, mistaken identity) as well as in directing (computer-keyboard-typing and final ‘bang’-sound when pressing ‘enter’, use of an original soundtrack). Quoting from the famous Hollywood movie is again ironic, as Nora Ephron’s *You’ve Got Mail* (1998) was a remake of Ernst Lubitsch’s *Shop Around the Corner* (1938) – the successful film of a German *migrant* in the US.³²

rapper outfits, rude manners, bullying, and kanak speech patterns (‘Ej alter, was geht’). This stereotype is, however, once again undermined by their social background, for both come from academic migrant families, with respectively a police officer and a doctor as fathers. Another ironic sideswipe is having the Greek character speak with a heavy stutter (convincingly put on by Arnel Taci), thus making him appear ridiculous. When Costa finally becomes aware of his deficiency, however, it is Cem who consoles him. The comic turns into real affection in a truly emotional scene, and as comedy turns straight, the story is again rendered realistic.

³² With respect to the intercultural influences in German movie history, Deniz Göktürk points out the difficulty of defining the boundaries of a ‘pure blooded’ German cinema: ‘Bei soviel “ausländischem Blut” ist es schwierig, die Grenzen eines “rein” deutschen Kinos zu bestimmen.

Türkisch für Anfänger has been enormously successful, as the number of awards prove, and against the evidence of the ratings, ARD wisely decided on a third season. The key to the high quality of *Türkisch für Anfänger* lies in the way it deals with clichés and stereotypes, story and characters for the sake of an exciting and entertaining series. On one level presenting the chaos and frenzy of a blended family, *Türkisch für Anfänger* also lives up to its title by inserting intercultural dimensions too. These are presented in both a funny and an ironic way; funny in terms of the jokes about intercultural aspects and ironic in terms of the subtle message that lies behind these: conflicts exist, but they can and have to be negotiated, if not solved. In this respect, *Türkisch für Anfänger* is far ahead of Germany's migration policies. Maybe it is closer to what actually happens in the many bi-cultural relationships which, according to the statistics, are more and more popular in Germany. Not without irony, critics pointed out that *Türkisch für Anfänger* could serve as a model for future projects, with the theme explored in relation to other major minorities in Germany, e. g. *Russisch für Deutsch* or *Afrikanisch für Einsteiger* (Keil 2007).

4. Turks on German TV: Demonstrating Normality?

The new turn in German television, which is trying to pay tribute to (Turkish) immigration to Germany and establish a positive picture of the integrated migrant through TV, has come rather late. The under-representation of migrants in the German media has long been lamented. A recent study on *Migrants and Media* conducted by Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen (ZDF) noted an alarming lack of people with migrant backgrounds in German television and media. Nor are there enough presenters, talk show hosts or actors, or script writers, directors or editors. Nearly half a century after the first wave of guest worker migration, the call for a greater representation of migrants has finally been heard throughout Germany's media landscape. Still, there is no reason to be enthusiastic about the (slowly) changing agenda, as Turkish-German author Hilal Sezgin remarks. On the contrary, her analysis comes to a disappointing conclusion: apart from programmes specifically dedicated to the multicultural 'coexistence' of Germans and non-Germans,

Vielmehr scheint es geboten, die Filmgeschichtsschreibung unter dem Vorzeichen nationaler

migrants hardly appear at all.³³ Moreover, despite the general intention to demonstrate ‘normalization’ in public service broadcasting, this notion of ‘Integration im TV’ has become distorted by a media-supported debate over the problem areas of (Turkish / Muslim) immigration, by means of which a hostile atmosphere has been nurtured, one in which immigrants are pushed to the margins of society. The same is true for the film business. Many actors of Turkish origin complain that they are reduced to acting ‘the other’, while the roles of the ‘ordinary Germans’ go exclusively to German (meaning: of German descent) colleagues. Once a migrant, always a migrant: they remain ‘the other’ with that sign on the forehead that marks them as different (‘Stempel auf der Stirn’, cf. Oulios 2007). Adnan Maral recalls the reaction when he applied for a German role: ‘Why, we have our German actors for that’ (Buettner 2007).

During the official ‘Integration Week’ (‘Woche der Integration’) in November 2007, public broadcasting channel Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen dedicated a slot to the ‘Wohngemeinschaft Deutschland’,³⁴ presenting many interesting films and features, even if everything non-German was thrown into one big, generalizing melting-pot (Hoff 2007). The crux already revealed itself in the title. Considering migrants to be merely members of a ‘commune’ or of a ‘shared house’, rather than as permanent residents, means expecting them to move out some day. Probably, the notorious preposition ‘mit’, by means of which minorities are usually defined as non-participants in the German language, inspired the metaphor: a ‘Wohngemeinschaft’ and its ‘Mitbewohner’ is far removed from what is implied by concepts of transcultural existence. Whatever the case, those citizens ‘with a migrant background’ (Menschen ‘mit Migrationshintergrund’, as the latest of euphemistic and evasive phrases in this area has it) are not supposed to feel like *immigrants*, nor to feel as if they were at (their own) home. So, despite the deliberate intention to establish a positive counter-image of the migrant in German television, the question remains, how normal the proclaimed ‘normalization’ really is for naturalized Germans.

Kanonbildung zu überdenken’. (Göktürk 2000: 330).

³³ See Sezgin 2007: 55, ‘Wo “Zusammenleben” nicht explizites Thema eines eigenproduzierten Spielfilms ist, kommen Migrationshintergründer offenbar überhaupt nicht vor”’.

³⁴ See <http://www.zdf.de/ZDFde/inhalt/1/0,1872,7112353,00.html>.

In the meantime, Turkish-German filmmakers of the next generation put all their transcultural experiences and skills to work for the benefit of their creative output. Telling stories of how Turks and Germans share their lives, and telling these stories extraordinarily well, they achieve more transcultural understanding and artistry than any media campaign has ever achieved so far. Considering films like *Auf der anderen Seite* or series like *Türkisch für Anfänger*, the impact of Turkish-German screenpower on German film and TV is promising.

Filmography

Films

Auf der anderen Seite (Germany 2007). 122 Mins. Dir.: Fatih Akın. Screenplay: Fatih Akın. Prod.: Anka Film / Corazón International / NDR / Dorje. First release: 27 September 2007.

Gegen die Wand (Germany 2004). 121 Mins. Dir.: Fatih Akın. Screenplay: Fatih Akın. Prod.: Bavaria Film International / Corazón International / NDR / Pan Film / Wüste Film / ARTE. First release: 11 March 2004.

Kebab Connection (Germany 2005). Comedy. 96 Mins. Dir.: Anno Saul. Screenplay: Fatih Akın / Ruth Toma / Jan Berger. Prod.: Creado Film / Wüste Film / WDR / ARTE. First release: 21 April 2005. (<http://www.kebabconnection.de>)

Süperseks (Germany 2004). Comedy. 95 Mins. Dir.: Thorsten Wacker. Screenplay: Kerim Pamuk / Daniel Schwarz. Prod.: Magnolia Filmproduktion / Valerian Film / Studio Babelsberg Motion Pictures GmbH / ZDTV / Studio Babelsberg / ZDF Productions / ARTE. First release: 30 September 2004. (<http://www.sueperseks.de>)

TV-productions

Alle lieben Jimmy (Germany: RTL 2005). TV-Sitcom. Dir.: Sophie Allet-Coche. Writer: Tac Romey. Prod.: Bavaria Film GmbH. 16+ episodes x 23 mins. First shown: 4 April 2006.

Meine verrückte türkische Hochzeit (Germany: Pro Sieben 2006). Romantic Comedy. 90 Mins. Dir.: Stefan Holtz. Screenplay: Daniel Speck. Prod.: Nina Müller / Pro Sieben. First shown: 30 March 2006.

Türkisch für Anfänger (Germany: ARD 2006-) TV-serial. Dir.: Edzard Onneken and others. Writer: Bora Dağtekin. Prod.: Hofmann&Vogues Ent. 36+ episodes x 25 mins. First shown: 14 March 2006.

- Was guckst du?!* (Germany: SAT1 2001-2005). Ethno-Comedy hosted by Kaya Yanar. Idea: Kaya Yanar. Prod.: SAT1 / Bonito TV Produktions GmbH. 5 seasons running from 26 January 2001 – 25 December 2005; episodes x 25 Mins.
- Zeit der Wünsche* (Germany: ARD 2005). 176/188 Mins. Dir.: Rolf Schübel. Screenplay: Tefvik Başer. Prod.: Filmfabrik Spiel- und Dokumentarfilmproduktion GmbH / WDR / BR. First shown: 12 January 2005.

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Biodata

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