

TRANSCULTURAL IMPLICATIONS FOR RE-CONSIDERING MULTICULTURALISM DISCOURSE. A REFERENCE TO GERMAN-TURKISH DIASPORIC FILM *ALMANYA - WELCOME TO GERMANY*¹

IMPLICACIONES TRANSCULTURALES PARA EL REPLANTEAMIENTO DEL DISCURSO SOBRE EL MULTICULTURALISMO. UNA REFERENCIA A LA PELÍCULA DE LA DIÁSPORA TURCO-ALEMANA *ALMANYA-WELCOME TO GERMANY*²

Olesya Dronyak

Universidad de Deusto (Bilbao)

olesya.dronyak@deusto.es

Recibido: febrero de 2016

Aceptado: marzo de 2016

Palabras clave: transculturalidad, cine de inmigrantes (diasporic cinema), autorrepresentación (self-representation), discurso acerca del multiculturalismo.

Keywords: transculturality, diasporic cinema, self-representation, multiculturalism discourse.

Resumen: El concepto de transculturalidad ha marcado su presencia en las últimas películas turco-alemanas en las que se crea un nuevo sentido de pertenencia de la diáspora turca en Alemania haciendo hincapié en las identidades híbridas turco-alemanas. Se sugiere el análisis discursivo del estudio de caso seleccionado - una película titulada *Almanya - Welcome to Germany* (2011) - como un ejemplo de alejamiento de las nociones divisorias de la homogeneidad cultural con el fin de analizar y propiciar la investigación transcultural, sus implicaciones culturales y políticas en el contexto de la creciente diversidad cultural en Europa. De este modo, el artículo contribuye a la discusión sobre la necesidad de cambio del paradigma cultural que es esencial para influenciar los discursos sobre la inmigración y el multiculturalismo hoy en día en los ámbitos político y público en las sociedades culturalmente dinámicas de Europa.

1. This is the revised and complemented version of the paper read at CINE CRI'15: On Cinema and Identity Conference, 10th to 11th June 2015 in Istanbul, Turkey.

2. Este artículo es una versión revisada y complementada de la comunicación presentada en el congreso internacional CINE CRI'15: On Cinema and Identity Conference, que tuvo lugar los días 10 y 11 de junio de 2015, en Estambul, Turquía.

Abstract: The concept of transculturality has marked its presence in the latest German-Turkish films as they construct a new sense of belonging of the Turkish diaspora in Germany, putting a great emphasis on the hyphenated hybrid German-Turkish identities. The discursive analysis of the selected case study – a film *Almanya - Welcome to Germany* (2011), is suggested as an example of departing from the divisive notions of cultural homogeneity with the aim of exploring and elaborating transcultural research, its cultural and political implications in the context of increasing cultural diversity in Europe. In this way, the paper contributes to the discussion on the necessity of cultural paradigm shift that is essential for influencing the discourses on immigration and multiculturalism in political and public domains of contemporary culturally dynamic European societies.

To speak of a given film as art, however, it's not to deny its status as a historical document, a more or less accurate mirror or apt commentary on the society and culture in which it is made and seen.

Daniel Yacavone (2015:xv).

(T)he subjects of the local, of the margin, can only come into representation by, as it were, recovering their own hidden histories. They have to try to retell the story from the bottom up, instead of from the top down.

Stuart Hall (1997b:183-184).

1. Introduction

This paper explores new approaches in interpreting and understanding the hybrid cultural identities and lifestyles of immigrants and their descendants through how they are negotiated in contemporary German-Turkish cinema. The findings of the cinematic analysis testify to the complexity and dynamics of transcultural connections identified as such in self-representations of German-Turkish directors. These findings exemplify new implications in approaching cultural diversity and thus participate in the discourse on the need of the cultural paradigm shift. The latter envisages a move from viewing multicultural societies as spherical or, if to use Guido Rings terminology, «monocultural» (2016), - a narrative in which «cultural differences are portrayed as inferior» (2016:1) and integration is usually equated to assimilation, to drawing upon and exploring more the inter-influentiality and transformative potential of different, or discursively constructed as opposing, cultural elements.

The incorporation of transcultural research within the discourses on multiculturalism and multiculturalism policies is topical for a contemporary culturally heterogeneous Europe; as Steven Vertovec denominated it, a continent of «super-diversity» (2007). The latter has been a result of increasing international migrations in the aftermath of the Second World War and onwards, characterised particularly by movements of Eastern and Southern populations to the West. On the one hand, this prevailing pattern of mobility from a non-geographical Europe has been gradually interfering in political efforts to construct a common European

identity based on the «family of nations», to use Anne McClintock's definition (1995:357), where «nations» are uniform entities formed as such historically. On the other hand, the immigrants coming from the South and the East could be incorporated in the «nation», that is to say, be transferred from the «others» to the «us» category, by becoming a «well-integrated» migrant, namely the one who «assimilated functionally into ways of speaking, thinking, and behaving in the host society» (Hamberger 2009:4). Yet, it is highly problematic to define the 'well-integrated' migrant in practical terms, since the complications arise in connection to the degrees of integration, the factors that contribute to this process, and the policies that are involved.

Each European country has had a different immigration history and different immigration and integration policies to accommodate this diversity which shaped (and continue to do so) the practical reality for migrant/diasporic subjects.

2. Multiculturalism Policies' Background in Europe

Although specific to each country, the approaches towards multiculturalism policies (initially aimed to address “the cultural clashes”), the policies of integration and inclusion, the presence/absence of anti-discriminatory policies, media and public discourses on immigration and immigrants, as well as cultural and national specificity of each country have all contributed to how migrant/of migrant descent subjects are perceived within a wider public of the majority population. Multiculturalism policies and the degree of their implementation, in particular,

have had a significant influence on the positioning of the diasporic subjects in the society of reference and their cultural and socio-economic location within it. These policies, that can be generally characterised by the recognition of the cultural diversity within the nation-state and by the elaboration of the strategies towards dealing with and accommodating this diversity; or as Dewing and Leman put it, directed at “management of diversity through formal initiatives in the federal provincial and municipal domains” (2006:1), have undergone different scenarios and trajectories in different immigrant host societies.

Frequently complex and controversial, multiculturalism policies in European countries have included the strategies that depended on the socio-political environment of the specific nation state, yet frequently derived from the patronizing position of the ethnic majority or directed at the maintenance/construction of the essentialist narrative of a culturally homogenous society. They have also been attached to the parallel search for historical grounds and justifications of “Europeanness” and of a common European identity, a narrative in which the non-European migrant minorities were not incorporated.

In spite of the official rhetoric on the “failure of multiculturalism” since Merkel's speech in 2010 and blaming this “failure” on the “reluctance” of immigrant descent communities to “integrate” (Weaver 2010), many recent studies on multiculturalism suggest that multiculturalism policies, as seen in their extended understanding, have been weak and insufficient in most European countries (Banting et al 2006). As a consequence, the “failure of multiculturalism” can be blamed on

its poor implications and its overall “half-hearted” nature, to use Rattansi’s words (2011) rather than on the new minorities’ reluctance to integrate.

Drawing upon the scheme of eight principles and the degrees of multiculturalism that include applying multiculturalism policies on constitutional, educational, and public media levels³, Banting, Johnson, Kymlicka and Soroka’s empirical research concludes that most of the European immigration countries have been ‘weak’ adopters of multiculturalism (e.g. France, Germany, Norway, Spain – scoring less than three principles) or ‘modest’ (the Netherlands, Sweden, UK – scoring between three and 5.5 principles). To compare, Australia and Canada have been characterised as ‘strong’ adopters of multiculturalism policies – scoring more than six principles (2006). Although such a measurement could appear to be quite generalised and highly institutional, it does provide us with an approach to evaluate the contested multiculturalism policies in Europe due to their youth and inexperienced character. Indeed, in many European states, including Germany, the multicultural strategies meant to address and regulate relations between the majority and the new minorities have been in delay for decades, which has resulted in policy makers’ encountering more challenges while new immigration movements have been observed. Most of the contemporary multiculturalism policies have thus been a response to the policy vacuum or ad hoc initiatives towards immigrants-natives co-existence in a moment when the increasing diversity, now so obvious

3. For a more elaborated discussion of Kymlicka’s theory of multiculturalism principles and 8 most common forms of multiculturalism policies, see Banting and Kymlicka (2006: 56-57).

in Western European nation states, has become impossible to ignore.

3. Theoretical Opportunities of Transculturality for Multicultural Societies

It is important to discuss what transculturality can propose for the reshaping of the multiculturalism discourse and what implications it can have for multiculturalism policies. I will explain my motivation of referring to films to illustrate both the potential of transcultural research and the value of diasporic self-representations which embark on negotiating transcultural identities and testify to the need of incorporating transcultural discourse in that on multiculturalism.

Transculturality as a concept for (re-)considering cultural engagements and cultural identities has only recently become a trend in academic research. The conceptual framework of the concept is not new and many of its important elements such as cultural hybridity, Bhabha’s “Third Space” (1994) and Pratt’s “contact zones” (1992) have been in the process of theorizing throughout the second half of the 20th century. The notion of *transculturation* was coined by Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz in 1947, later extended by Mary Louise Pratt (1992), and elaborated by Wolfgang Welsch into its current understanding as transculturality (1999). Although it is still in its early stages of theoretical framing and empirical testing to be conducted within multiple socio-cultural frameworks, this scientific category offers interesting solutions with regard to cultural connections and to culture as a whole.

The understanding of transculturality that will be used in this paper is as it is defined by Welsch, namely as a blend of cultures that “emerge from each other” (1999:203), while I also add that transculturality is both a process and a result. As a process it combines a transcultural encounter, which consists of an encounter between individuals with different cultural backgrounds and which constitutes a chance for transcultural connection, exchange and the subsequent formation of transcultural practices. Such practices combine different (or considered as such) cultural lifestyles, meanings and references - a result that can be characterised by different cultural configurations and dynamics.

As Welsch asserts, transcultural formations that come about within this process of interweaving result from “transcultural networks, which have some things in common while differing in others, showing overlaps and distinctions” (1999:203). In this way, the concept denies invariability and promotes dynamic cultural identities that are pushed forward by transcultural permeations. I will operate with Bhabha’s notions of hybridity and “Third Space” (1994) as important transcultural components. Developed within the post-colonial studies, hybridity constitutes a process which creates a new product of cultural identity that goes beyond the original culture and a “received” tradition (1994:2). The “Third Space” is a transcultural abstract territory or a virtual cultural field where the process of hybridization “enables new cultural positions to emerge” (Rutherford 1990:211). A more recent research on transculturality by Flüchter and Schöttli (2014) addresses the dynamics of transculturality with the objective to

expand Welsch’s conceptual scheme. The authors consider transculturality as present “in all human societies, practices, and institutions”, but whose dynamics vary according to its historical and contextual specificity (2014:2-4), an idea that highlights the need for cultural diversity-inclusive-environment for the development of transcultural connections and the exploration of transculturality potential.

Due to the recency of the notion of transculturality but also because of its extendable nature, the process of exploring its broader meaning provides a platform for discussion and thus better understanding of transculturality’s contemporary implications in increasingly dynamic multicultural societies.

Films, and especially diasporic cinematic representations, are interesting and important testing platforms in this regard since they function as points where reality is mediated through art and is thus negotiated within art. While being attached to the socio-political, cultural and historical contexts, in which they are created, these representations also dispose of a powerful crossing-the-borders potential. They create the cultural meanings that can be recognised and related to beyond one politically and/or culturally demarcated environment. As types of representation film discourses do not only communicate the ideas of the directors, but by reaching the audiences they can also construct new meanings, re-construct their contexts and influence the process of people’s self-identification.

This paper accentuates filmic self-representations of German Turks rather than their representations by others, suggesting that the former have a unique

potential to complicate the perception of immigration and identity by illustrating complex social and cultural worlds in which immigrants and their descendants find themselves and by representing human experiences, frequently personal experiences, and of dealing with these complexities. The discursive analysis of the selected case study applies the transculturality theoretical model and is in alignment with a comparative reference to cultural constructs in earlier and contemporary German-Turkish films, Fatih Akin's films in particular. This present analysis will illustrate differences in representation and between the complexities in negotiating transculturality by different directors and examine the value of the case study for exploring new transcultural complications.

4. German-Turks and Their Cinematic Representations

For the majority of Turks who came to Germany in the 1960s as guest workers, their temporary work quickly developed into family reunifications and a permanent stay. Within the new waves of immigration, by 2012 about 3 million people of Turkish origin lived in Germany, making up the largest migrant background community in the country (Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, 2014). The factor that greatly contributed to the discursive estrangement of German-Turks was that up until the late 1990s, Turkish immigration had not been considered as a wave of permanent settlers, nor had its social aspects and outcomes been taken into account. In the 1980s-1990s, immigration policies in Germany as well as in many other Western European

countries, while generally perceiving the immigrants as temporary residents or self-isolated communities of strangers, were directed at favouring the preservation of the emerging diasporic communities' homeland identities without their integration into the host societies. Guest workers were expected to leave eventually and the need for multiculturalism policies was not considered. At the same time, policy initiatives based on the perception of the "temporality" of the guest workers residency have contributed to the separation of the 'newcomers' communities from the 'natives', by encouraging such separation in physical terms and on a discursive level.

One of the examples of such policies in relation to the artistic sector was the destination of public funds. When in the 1970s-1980s Turkish migrants started to communicate their presence by means of cultural manifestations, literature and films in particular, these artistic representations were limited to specific themes. The subsidies from federal or regional funding authorities were allocated to sponsor those works of German Turks that dealt with the topics of displacement, nostalgia for home and cultural differences. Rob Burns argues that migrant literature of the 1980s succeeds in depicting the cultural resistance of Turkish migrant workers by accentuating "the growing sense of [their] cultural dislocation", by showing the crisis of identity or the alleged incompatibility between German and Turkish cultural traditions (2007:359-360). Accordingly, earlier German-Turkish cinematic representations of the 1980s –coined the "films of victimization" (Burns 2007:358)– echoed the rhetoric of the "us" vs. "other" prevalent in media and political discourses on immigrants in Europe.

They have further contributed to the construction of the allegedly irreconcilable dichotomy between “native German culture” and “visiting Turkish culture”, a conventional scheme that would persist in later discourses and would influence later German-Turkish cinematic representations. A characteristic feature of “films of victimization” was the portrayal of German-Turkish women as protagonists, illustrated as subordinated and oppressed by their Turkish traditions, and who could have been rescued only by “free and liberated” German culture. The preservation of the protagonists’ Turkishness serves as an obstacle in the way of their integration within German society. Tevfik Baser’s *40 Square Meters of Germany* (1986) and *Farewell to False Paradise* (1989) are the best known examples.

Referring to immigrants’ identities, Patricia Ehrkamp suggests “to think beyond dichotomies”, and to “recognise immigrants as agents who are able to forge their belonging and multiple attachments” (2005:347). As a response to the depiction of the German culture vs. Turkish culture dichotomy, in which the latter is explicitly marginalised, new generations of German-Turkish directors have intended to refute this division by dealing with cultural hybridity in their films. The most prominent film director who has responded to this dichotomy countering the representation of Turkish immigrants as cultural outsiders has been Fatih Akin, a German-born director of Turkish origin. *Kebab Connection* (2005) and *Head-On* (2004), in particular, are considered expressions of transcultural practice that challenges the stereotypical meanings of German-Turkish cultural identities. As Petra Fachinger writes, “[Akin] playfully

undermines persisting stereotypes of Turks (...) by reversing character roles” and “undercutting audience expectations and genre conventions” (2007:243). Akin’s *The Edge of Heaven* (2007) and *Soul Kitchen* (2009) provide interesting insights into the life of the German-Turkish community too. While addressing the issues of lost home nostalgia and crisis of identity, they also project the atmosphere of the celebrations vs. uncertainties of multicultural societies and position the protagonists at the centre of the quest for their place in these societies. Rich in cinematography and in their diverse narratives, Akin’s films can be regarded as important points of departure in cinematic research on the contemporary German-Turkish diaspora in its transformative cultural and social context. Yet, newer generations of German-Turkish directors deserve specific attention, especially because they intend to discover new implications of transculturality in their cinematic self-representations. *Almanya - Welcome to Germany* (2011) is one the most prominent among such examples.

5. A Confident Walk Into a “Third Space” as Represented in *Almanya - Welcome to Germany*

Almanya - Welcome to Germany (thereinafter *Almanya*) is a warm-hearted comedy that tells the story of a Turkish guest worker Hüseyin Yılmaz and the lives of his extended family in Germany. The film follows the experiences of the three generations of German-Turks and, although remaining a fiction, is based on the history of Turkish immigration to Germany in the 1960’s and on the life story

of two sisters, film director and screenwriter Yasemin and Nesrin Şamdereli. *Almanya* premiered at Berlinale 2011, some half a year after the heated debate in Germany on immigration and the speech of German Chancellor Angela Merkel on the failure of multiculturalism where she urged for the necessity of the better integration of newcomers. By defying the political declarations on the reluctant integration of Turkish immigrants in Germany, the film screens the great efforts made by German-Turks to integrate, while at the same time retaining their original culture(s).

Similar to Akin's films, *Almanya* illustrates the challenges that immigrants and their descendants face while living between two cultures. However, the difficulties that the protagonists encounter are there to confidently shape their hybrid multiple cultural attachments rather than to be the obstacles preventing their choices in favour of one culture or another, as can be especially observed in the main characters of *Head-On* and occasionally in *Kebab Connection*. Unlike *Head-On*, where the main protagonists drift between two cultures in search of a comfortable place where they could combine their identities, the cultural identities of *Almanya's* protagonists accommodate the transcultural abstract location - Bhabha's "Third Space" - in which such combination is possible. Where the articulation of the protagonists' identities generates new forms of cultural meanings by intermingling their Turkish and German selves, this practice can be referred to as a phenomenon of "Third Space".

The film narrative is structured into two interwoven time frames, two separate actions taking place in Turkey and Germany. The visual moving between both strands that proceed till the end of the film

implies the interconnection between the past and the present, making the present incomprehensible and incomplete without its past. The action set in the present introduces Hüseyin Yılmaz, already the grandfather, who gathers his big family at his home in Germany, where he has been living for 45 years, to announce a surprise. Hüseyin is happy to tell that he has bought a house in Turkey and insists that his wife, their children Veli, Muhamed, Leyla and Ali and grandchildren, 22-year-old Canan and 6-year-old Cenk, accompany him for a holiday, as he says, to their *Heimat*. At the same time, German-born Cenk, the son of Ali and German native Gabi, finds himself in the crisis of identity, straddled between his Turkish background and his life in Germany. Cenk comes to terms with this uncertainty during his school time when he is asked to choose the football team he wants to play for, Turkey or Germany. During the dinner at his grandfather's place, Cenk finds himself in a confused state with the discussions at the table about where the family belongs, and at that very moment he poses a question which is the nucleus of the whole film, "So, what are we now, Turkish or German?" His cousin Canan takes the initiative to recount the story of their grandparents' life in Turkey and their immigration to Germany. Listening to Canan's story, Cenk embarks on an imaginary journey throughout the past of his family in search for his roots and the answer to his question.

The action set in the past illustrates young Hüseyin in the remote Southeastern Anatolia, his falling in love and subsequent marriage with Fatma and her giving birth to three children. The scene goes on as Canan continues to explain the financial hardships that Hüseyin had to face

in Turkey which eventually led him to immigrate to Germany in 1964 as a guest worker; and later brings Fatma and their children to live with him in Germany. The protagonists' lifestyles are based on a combination of what they have been practicing in Germany with the experiences that they brought with themselves from Turkey or what they learned from their parents and grandparents.

Grandfather Hüseyin is shown as the most conservative character having successfully reproduced a part of Turkish culture in his German home by promoting collectivist traditions, hierarchy, and the maintenance of strong bonds between the family members across several generations. An illustration of this is the episode of the clan gathering for dinner at Hüseyin's house. The family members are struck with the news that Hüseyin has bought a house in Turkey and with his insistence that they all accompany him to see it. As the patriarch, Hüseyin anticipates unquestioned loyalty and refers to his word as the word of law. He becomes irritated when his family reacts reluctantly to the idea of going to Turkey and as they start a discussion in protest. Hüseyin seems to be torn between his children's better association with the German way of life and his longing for Turkish *Heimat*.

The second and third generation of Hüseyin's family are shown more as German individualists for whom the interest of the group are of less priority. Ali, Hüseyin's fourth child born in Germany, is the one who complains the most about the necessity to go to Turkey alluding to other plans that he had made with his wife. Ali is an interesting example of a cultural hybrid. His German mentality and German behaviour intersects with the affiliation to

his Turkish heritage. Ali tends to behave in a characteristic German manner being straightforward and strongly independent, but when his son Cenk asks whether they are German or Turkish, Ali says they are Turkish.

The characters of Hüseyin's three children who were born in Turkey and moved to Germany at a very young age also offer an interesting quest. The interwoven strands of past and present trace the change within the self-perception of these protagonists across the time. Veli, Muhamed and Leyla, day by day embrace the German way of life but continue to remain strongly connected to their Turkish roots. As adults they are confident about their Germany identity, but at the same time they are proud to have a Turkish background. The Christmas episode illustrates how, although being Muslim, they want to associate themselves with the German/Western European tradition of Christmas celebrations. They teach their mother the "rules" to be followed, namely decorating the Christmas tree, wrapping the presents, serving special food. Throughout time their new cultural experience occupies an important place in their mentalities. The things and behaviours that seemed so strange and inappropriate earlier now become so normal, habitual, and even desirable. The metaphoric illustration of their acclimatization within the German society is found in the episodes about the moustache. On their arrival in Germany they laugh at German men not wearing a moustache while all men in Turkey do. Within a short span of time, Leyla asks her father to shave his moustache off because, in her opinion, Hüseyin's image does not correspond to where he lives. On a visit to Turkey the feeling of alienation and unfamiliarity overwhelm them. Yet, they

continue to adhere to certain traditions learned from their parents. When Leyla finds out about the pregnancy of her daughter Canan, she feels ashamed and an angry outburst follows wherein she refers to the fact that Canan should have married first.

The third generation of Hüseyin's grandchildren Canan and Cenk accommodate the space of uncertainty and confusion about identity and sense of belonging confronting questions about who they are, where they belong and what is proper or improper for them to do. When Canan finds out that she became pregnant from her English boyfriend, she hesitates whether she should tell her family. She fears a very negative reaction because, as she later communicates to her grandfather, her prospective future now contradicts Turkish tradition according to which a Turkish woman should marry a Turkish man and to the Islamic tradition of "saving face" or "family honour", that is, in particular, not to get pregnant before marriage. Being exposed to living in-between German and Turkish traditional cultural worlds, Canan realises that she does not know what is right and what is wrong under such critical circumstances.

Different factors contribute to the construction of the cultural identity of *Almanya's* protagonists. The influence of immigration, cultural shock and acclimatization within the German society, multi-layered and complex cultural practices, crisis of identity and subsequent feeling of belonging to German and Turkish culture and at the same time not belonging to any of these cultures are among the important factors. Operating with symbolic meanings of shifting perceptions prepares the grounds for going beyond the margins of uniformity.

Negotiation of protagonists' identities, especially those of the third generation Canan and Cenk, goes through their constant positioning between two cultures and the resultant confusion that derives from this positioning. *Almanya* makes this confusion, the crisis of identity, to be understood as a positive process through which it is possible to eventually realize who you are and where you belong to. As Ayhan Kaya writes about the reality of displacement and the condition of uprootedness "Turkish migrants and their descendants experience a permanent tension between homelessness and home in a way that leads to the construction of more complex and multiple identities" (2007:490), and this is exactly what *Almanya* discloses. In other words, the crisis of identity which is invoked by living in-between serves as a way, a bridge to enter a "Third Space", where the hybrid cultural positions are negotiated and renegotiated. For Canan the tension and confusion leads to the realization of her hyphenated identity and the advantages that she can extract from this identification. After grappling for a while with contradictory emotions about her unexpected pregnancy, Canan is relieved by her grandfather's positive reaction to this news. This is the point when Canan realizes the hybridity of her family and herself, in particular through the fact that the family accepts the marriage to a non-Turkish, non-Muslim man. Such cultural disposition or re-position which accommodates the space neither of "pure Turkish culture" nor "pure German culture" emerges as the resistance to the cultural purity and to the cultural exclusion that follows from this purity. Cenk finally receives an answer to his question. In the pre-final episode each member of Cenk's family is visualized in Cenk's

imagination as standing by his/her self of 30-40 years ago. This scene renders the message of a complex coexistence of their Turkish beginnings with their German experiences. The summary voiced at the end of this scene validates this message:

A wise man answered the question ‘what are we?’ We are the sum of everything that has happened before us, everything that is happening right before our eyes or seems fitting for us. We are the people or the things which affect our existence and in return are affected by our existence. We are everything that came after us and everything that could not exist without us (Şamdereli 2011:94:48-95:19).

The visual technique of interwoven time frames has communicated the integrity of the past and present. The experiences that followed the displacement and the reproduction of the Turkish cultural world in Germany made the identities viewed in terms of continuous modification. The Turkish culture no longer exists in the protagonists’ identities, at least in its original nature. It is present in particular practices of their everyday life. Their Turkish selves are modified and re-discovered in a new light, sutured with the attachment of Germanness and the re-attachment of Turkishness. The German-Turkish cultural synthesis reigns first and foremost in a hybrid language that is used for communication and in their hybrid lifestyles and mentalities. This synthesis persists as they surpass the restrictions of cultural uniformity by compounding their old and new experiences embracing the heritage, the tradition and the modernity in a new scope.

6. Conclusive Points: Transcultural Implications of Cinematic Analysis for Multiculturalism Discourse

Drawing on the cultural findings within the analysed example of contemporary German-Turkish cinema, I will conclude with a discussion of the elaborated transcultural meanings and inter-dependencies as implications to re-consider the multiculturalism discourse.

Almanya generates transcultural meanings by depicting different ways of behaviour and different self-perceptions of the representatives of Turkish community in Germany. In contrast to the protagonists of the “films of victimization”, usually female characters, who are confined to closed spaces of their Turkish culture which are recreated as autonomous locus in German society with little or no contact with the outside world, in *Almanya*, as well as in Akın’s films the protagonists of Turkish descent actively interact with native Germans and people of other ethnicities. German Turks do not live in a parallel society anymore and interaction enables them to carve out new spaces, open to cultural melding and boundary-crossing lifestyles.

The notion of culture as a particular set of norms and behaviour becomes questionable when the combination of “proper” and “improper” is celebrated. *Almanya*’s protagonists do not set limits to their lifestyles by adhering to particular cultural practices pre-constructed as intrinsic to one culture or another. They make the combination possible which frequently looks natural and unconditioned. As Welsch contends,

“in meeting with other lifeforms there are always not only divergences but opportunities to link up, and these can be developed and extended so that the common lifeform is fashioned which includes even reserves which hadn't earlier seem capable of being linked in” (1999:202).

Almanya employs irony and humour to make fun of cultural misunderstandings and to undermine the static and restrictive politics of identity through depicting the shifting perceptions of the protagonists and the natural transformations of their cultural selves within time. The metaphorical visual elements such as interweaving time frames are employed to indicate the transcultural potential of the protagonists and the importance of the experience of cultural encounters in the formation of one's cultural identity.

Multiple cultural attachments facilitate the process of integration. The second and even to larger extent the third generations tend to communicate with each other more in German than in Turkish and actively embrace German mainstream lifestyles. At the same time, they also identify themselves with their Turkish heritage and preserve certain Turkish cultural traditions passed on them from their ancestors. The multiple cultural attachments of the protagonists thus challenge the idea promoted by German-Turkish films of the 1980s that the preservation of the protagonists' Turkishness serves as an obstacle on the way to their integration within German society. In *Almanya* this preservation by no means impedes their integration, but rather makes the process of adaptation less tensed because the protagonists are able to complement the elements of two cultures with one another without the

necessity to make a choice in favour of a particular set of cultural values.

Transcending the discursively constructed borderline becomes a natural way to build and enter a “Third Space”, where transcultural identities can flourish. *Almanya* and the films of Fatih Akin as contemporary German-Turkish films forge the meanings that cannot be restricted to single cultural environment, the meanings that transcend the imaginary constructed borderline between discursively separated Germans and German Turks. The cultural identity of the filmic German-Turkish heroes and heroines is negotiated and questioned when they go beyond their conventional cultural habitats, namely when they start to practice or associate themselves with particular lifestyles, norms or traditions that are unusual for the cultural environment in which they are discursively positioned. The imaginary borderlines that separate one habitat from another thus acquire new role and now perform a double function. They do not separate and exclude, but now they function as crossings and thus unite and include the inhabitants from different cultural locations that are constructed as such within the discursive practice. Thus, the discursively constructed borders also perform as the points of cultural encounters, the places where the alien becomes familiar, the improper becomes proper, and the coexistence of heterogeneous cultural environments becomes possible. Crossing the border stands not only as an act of “violation”, namely the transgression of the norms and customs set as intrinsic to the particular culture, but is also an act of creation of new practices, fusion of cultural traditions, habits, lifestyles.

Şamdereli's protagonists seem to confidently enter and accommodate the «Third Space», a space located on the constructed borderline, not through rebellion as is the case of protagonists of some of Akın's films, but via peaceful renegotiation of their cultural selves. Canan and Cenk confidently live on the border inhabiting the space where the German and Turkish habitats are merged. Here, the possibility to be German and Turkish at the same time becomes feasible. Whatever way the protagonists go through to enter this space, once the border is crossed their identities appear to be in the constant process of negotiation and renegotiation and thus cannot be essentialist. The produced meanings are transcultural in Welschian perspective and the transculturality's implications in the discussed case study speak for themselves.

What remains to question is how *Almanya* re-considers the role of the context in transcultural dynamics - an important element in the extended understanding of Welschian transculturality. By challenging the political discourse on the multiculturalism failure in Germany, in particular, the film challenges the contextual construct with which this political discourse operates. In artistic discourse, namely in immigrant/diasporic cinematic self-representations, the socio-cultural context of the contemporary immigrant society appears as a transculturally-favorable environment. Here, transcultural identities frequently come into being naturally and the quest for cultural attachments results worthwhile. Yet, the way it works may differ in different diasporic self-representations. In *Almanya*, the socio-cultural contextual framework for transculturality proves

viable when functioning complexly within the reflection that moves both ways – from the “original” culture to the “host” culture, and back, and while such reflection back and forth is facilitated, or at least not impeded.

All these transcultural implications – the importance of cultural interaction for the development of transcultural identities, the necessity of preserving and developing multiple attachments in the process of adaptation in new homelands, and the significance of accommodating a “Third Space” by transcending and thus challenging the discursively constructed borderlines–, are important exemplifications of transculturality hinting at the necessity of the concept's incorporation within the discourses on multiculturalism as well as its further exploration for multiculturalism and integration policies in Europe.

Filmography

- Akın, F. 2004. *Head-on/Gegen die Wand*. Germany: Arte and Bavaria Film International.
- Akın, F. 2005. *Kebab Connection*, 2005. Germany: WDR, Wüste Filmproduktion, Arte and Creado Film.
- Akın, F. 2007. *The Edge of Heaven/Auf der anderen Seite*. Germany/Turkey: Anka Film.
- Akın, F. 2009. *Soul Kitchen*. Germany: Corazon International.
- Baser, T. 1986. *40 Square Meters of Germany/40 qm Deutschland*. Germany: Studio Hamburg.
- Baser, T. 1989. *Farewell to False Paradise/Abschied vom falschen Paradies*. Germany: Ottokar Runze Filmproduktion and Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen (ZDF).

Şamdereli, Y. 2011. *Almanya - Welcome to Germany/Almanya – Willkommen in Deutschland*. Germany: Roxy Film, Infa Film.

Bibliography

Banting, K., Johnson R., Kymlicka, W., Soroka, S. 2006. "Do multiculturalism policies erode the welfare state? An empirical analysis." Pp. 49-91. In *Multiculturalism and the welfare state: Recognition and redistribution in contemporary democracies*, edited by Banting K., Kymlicka W. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.

Banting, K., Kymlicka, W. 2006. *Multiculturalism and the welfare state: Recognition and redistribution in contemporary democracies*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.

Bhabha, H. 1994. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge.

Burns, R. 2007. "The Politics of Cultural Representation: Turkish-German Encounters." *German Politics*, 16(3): 358-378.

Dewing, M., Leman, M. 2006. *Canadian multiculturalism*. Library of Parliament, Parliamentary Research Branch, Canada. In <http://www2.parl.gc.ca/content/lop/researchpublications/936-e.htm> Retrieved August 27, 2015.

Ehrkamp, P. 2005. "Placing identities. Transnational practices and local attachments of Turkish immigrants in Germany." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 31(2):345-364.

Fachinger, P. 2007. "A New Kind of Creative Energy: Yadé Kara's *Selam Berlin* and Fatih Akin's *Kurz und Schmerzlos gegen die Wand*." *German Life and Letters*, 60(2): 243-260.

Federal Office for Migration and Refugees. 2014. *Migrationsberichte/Migration report 2012*.

In <http://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Publikationen/Migrationsberichte/migrationsbericht-2012.pdf> Retrieved February 25, 2016.

Flüchter, A., Schöttli J. 2014. "Introduction." Pp. 1-26. In *The Dynamics of Transculturality: Concepts and Institutions in Motion*. edited by Flüchter, A., Schöttli J. Cham: Springer International Publishing.

Hall, S. 1997. "The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity." Pp. 173-188. In: *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation, and Postcolonial Perspectives*, edited by McClintock A., Mufti A., Shohat E. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Hamberger, A. 2009. "Immigrant integration: Acculturation and social integration." *Journal of Identity and Migration Studies*, 3(2):2-21.

Kaya, A. 2007. "German-Turkish Transnational Space: A Separate Space of their Own." *German Studies Review*, 30(3):483-502.

McClintock, A. 1995. *Imperial Leather. Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*. New York and London: Routledge.

Pratt, M. L. 1992. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. New York: Routledge.

Ortiz, F. 1995. *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, Trans. Harriet de Onís.

Rattansi, A. 2011. *Multiculturalism: A very short introduction*. Vol. 283. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Rings, G. 2016. *The Other in Contemporary Migrant Cinema*. New York: Routledge.

Rutherford, J. 1990. "The Third Space. Interview with Homi Bhabha." Pp. 207-221. In *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, edited by Rutherford J. London: Lawrence and Wishart.

Vertovec, S. 2007. "Super-diversity and its implications." *Ethnic and racial studies*, 30.6: 1024-1054.

Weaver, M. 2010. "Angela Merkel: German multiculturalism has 'utterly failed'." *The Guardian*. In <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/oct/17/angela-merkel-german-multiculturalism-failed>. Retrieved August 14, 2015.

Welsch, W. 1999. "Transculturality - the Puzzling Form of Cultures Today." Pp. 194-213. In *Spaces of Culture: City, Nation, World*, edited by Featherstone M., Lash S. London: Sage, In: http://www2.uni-jena.de/welsch/papers/W_Welsch_Transculturality.html Retrieved April 24, 2015.

Yacavone, D. 2015. *Film Words: A Philosophical Aesthetics of Cinema*. New York: Columbia University Press.