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## Outsiders, Foreigners, and Aliens in Cinematic or Literary Narratives by Bohm, Dische, Dörrie, and Ören

Ongoing heated exchanges on the merits of dual citizenship in the Federal Republic show how difficult it is for many Germans to conceive of their identity in anything other than ethnic terms. By inaugurating dual citizenship in certain cases, however, the German parliament and its constituents have signaled a readiness to explore other concepts of identity less concerned with lineage. Yet the political successes of a conservative backlash against such ideas demonstrate that a sizable portion of the population still retains a desire for a stable sense of ethnic or "racial" Germanness.<sup>1</sup> Although the tradition of constructing German identity around a mythical Germanic past or German "blood" is yielding to the reality of Germany's increasingly multicultural social make-up (Dirke; Jaraus; *Zeit*; Leggewie/Şenocak 131–36), almost half of German youth claim to be suspicious of "foreigners" (Williams) and some assert the primacy of their own ideas of Germanness violently and adamantly. This combination of anxiety about and yearning for a definitive identity is increasing at a time when changing laws and demographics in Germany make it more and more difficult to pinpoint who is German and who is not.<sup>2</sup> Exactly this quandary has intrigued writers and film directors in the Federal Republic of Germany since the 1960s, and growing numbers have been probing the complexities of German identity politics through various figurations of the "German" and the "foreigner."<sup>3</sup>

A recurring literary and cinematic trope used to enact evolving ideas about Germans and non-Germans in the FRG is the figure

who is neither the one nor the other. In films, novels, and stories, characters whose identities fluctuate between "German" and "foreign" offer contesting notions of what being German means by challenging the very desirability of "being German." This essay investigates a selection of four such challenges. In Irene Dische's short story "Eine Jüdin für Charles Allen" (1989) ["The Jewess" in the original], Aras Ören's novella *Bitte nix Polizei* (1981), Hark Bohm's film *Yasemin* (1987), and Doris Dörrie's film *Keiner liebt mich* (1994) the figure of the "German" becomes just as much an outsider as the ostensible "foreigner" and vice versa.<sup>4</sup> The diverse backgrounds of the authors and directors preclude the possibility of pigeonholing the questions they address into neat categories that concern only specific groups. Dische frequently populates her fiction with culturally disoriented, urban figures and explores stereotypes about Germans and Jews. Ören's work focuses on the difficulties Germans and Turks in Berlin confront in their attempts to negotiate intercultural differences. Hark Bohm has created numerous films about young people and the difficult process of maturation (Gollub/Stern 25), often involving youth of different ethnicities. Dörrie has achieved renown for her cinematic probing of gender and multicultural issues. Yet the representative narratives analyzed here all culminate in different scenes of emotional or physical (dis)union to illustrate the disastrous consequences of privileging one aspect of self over others. These unsuccessful couplings expose a broad range of constantly and often violently shifting, interrelated positions be-

tween the boundaries of German and non-German, of insider and outsider.

In these narratives, the intermediary figure who is also inscribed as Jewish, Turkish, American, or African, prevents any settled sense of self from permeating the story.<sup>5</sup> Encounters between such figures and textualized mainstream Germans and/or foreigners in the FRG set in motion a dynamic of attraction and repulsion that alters the central position the German figures occupy, a dynamic with repercussions for the positions of the non-mainstream figures. These attempts at cultural redefinition are at the same time efforts to reconceptualize an increasingly blurred German/foreigner duality without resorting to a relativity that would deprive "Germanness" of any meaning. The varying approximations of Germans and non-Germans reveal aspects of an evolving notion of multicultural Germanness that depends on a differentiated concept of "foreigner."<sup>6</sup>

These developments are related to issues addressed in filmmaker and feminist theorist Trinh T. Minh-Ha's writings on the permeability of the border between insiders and outsiders. Trinh proffers the notion of the "Inappropriate Other," an outsider who steps inside and calls into question the very differences between those living at the center of a system and those on the margins. The "Inappropriate Other" can also be an insider who steps outside, likewise confounding the distinctions between inside and outside of society. Trinh expresses the confusion of positions as follows:

Not quite the Same, not quite the Other, she stands in that undetermined threshold place where she constantly drifts in and out. Undercutting the inside/outside opposition, her intervention is necessarily that of both a deceptive insider and a deceptive outsider. She is this Inappropriate Other/Same who moves about with always at least two/four gestures: that of affirming "I am like you" while persisting in her difference; and that of reminding "I am dif-

ferent" while unsettling every definition of otherness arrived at. (*No Master* 74)

As Trinh makes clear, none of the figures can assume a new position that does not overlap with the former.

In the narratives under consideration, meetings among various figures along the spectrum of insider and outsider in Western German society instigate a decentering process. In that sense, these four texts expose the erotic and often violent dimensions of perceptions of alterity, identity, and assimilation. By referring to Trinh's concept of the Inappropriate Other, my article will show how the texts use figures of "deceptive" foreigners and natives to dismantle essentialist ideas about ethnicity. The narratives trace how multifarious concepts of "foreign" and "German" continually converge and undermine each other, and their different vantage points suggest the complexity of that process. Similar to Trinh's diffuse insiders and outsiders, the multi-aculturated figures in the texts bring into focus the partiality of German constructions of both native and foreigner and the often violent moves to deny and transcend that partiality. My analysis of diverse constellations of foreigner, German, and in-between figures moves from a focus on outsiders who wish to remain on the margins, to outsiders who long to become German insiders, to a figure who does not wish to occupy either position at the expense of the other and, finally, to a set of "Germans," all of whom are to varying degrees alienated. Indeed, the alienated German in the final example becomes a metaphor for an outdated mono-ethnic German identity. In all the narratives the longing to be an insider or outsider is exposed as "self"-delusion. Yet this longing persists despite its permutations.

Dische's short story "The Jewess," for instance, focuses on an American visitor's growing fascination with his Jewish and German heritage, which he sees represented in the figure of a Jewish German woman who works in his deceased father's store in West Berlin. These two characters turn out to be

intermediary figures, who attempt to firm their sense of self by inhabiting what for them is an oppositional Germanness. The Jewishness they seek in the FRG runs counter to the non-Jewish German identity they abhor. Indeed, the narrative evokes shifting concepts of alterity to probe the interconnection of the "Jewish Question" to the "German Question" in 1980s West Germany.<sup>7</sup> The coming together of an apparent foreigner with a composite insider reveals the deceptive nature of their identity claims and how that deception derives from perverted notions of ethnic difference. Likewise, their forced union emphasizes an inability to attain any absolute position of insider or outsider. As the tale draws to a close, the violent merging of the two protagonists, Charles Allen, a virginal American Catholic of German and Jewish heritage, and Esther Becker, an East German who has left her former-Nazi father behind and assumed a Jewish identity in the West, shatters their delusion of stability so much that, like the Humpty Dumpty Charles recalls a few scenes earlier, "no one will ever be able to put [it] together again" (29).

However, the narrative at first seems to stage the gradual exposure of a "true" identity as it traces Charles's exploration of his Jewish heritage, deceptively embodied by Esther. Charles's simultaneous repulsion from and attraction to Esther's vulgar display of Jewishness appears to peak in a tentative acceptance of his own Jewishness during their mirrored embrace midway through the story:

[...] and then she placed something on his head.

"Turn around, sit down, and look at yourself," she said.

He did as he was told and saw a swarthy young man in a blue suit with a white cap on his head. In the background a woman in white, a Star of David glittering at her bosom.

Fascinated, he watched as her arms slid around his chest and her cheek came down to his. In the mirror he saw how she bent down to him, and how, driven by the image, he responded: a Jewish lover.

The image proved fleeting. No sooner did he turn his head, than it was gone. Charles struggled briefly out of a kiss to seek his reflection again, but the cappy tumbled off his head, and he found only his familiar self in the mirror. (40)

This chain of events underlines the irreality of Charles's embrace of a Jewish identity. Both he and Esther perceive Jewishness as external to them, as something to be worn for display. Charles's "familiar self," which is what remains when he stops focusing on the reflection of their kiss, is an unstable mix of desires and fears, an instability encoded in the disparate selves emerging from his fascination with Jewish stereotypes, his making the sign of the cross under duress, and his perfect German. A similar instability is apparent in Esther's masquerade as a Jew.

The tension between Charles and Esther sets up the internal dynamics of the narrative, which are propelled by the allure and fear of what the FRG represents to a descendent of Jewish German parents. Charles views the characters he encounters in West Berlin from the perspective of an all-American, Catholic tourist who fears a resemblance to Germans, both Jewish and non-Jewish. He uses his foreignness to shield him from his heritage, embodied by the shop he has inherited from his father, which is named "Die Schöne Heimat." Significantly, he must decide whether to accept the shop by the ninth of November. Already while going through customs at the airport, Charles worries about his lack of a German accent, in part because he could be discovered as a descendent of Jewish emigrants and in part because he could be mistaken for any German at all: "A mistake to talk German! He was immediately recognized" (3). The subsequent juxtaposition of Charles in a *Pension* with an aged former Nazi and a late middle-aged concierge nostalgic for the fascist German past betrays Charles's unease with his German heritage as much as a fear of his Jewish past. He thinks to himself, "Speak English, even with the other steady lodger, Herr Nad-

ler, who only understands German. Concentrate on speaking English without any accent, R's belong in the trough of your mouth, and not rattling at the back of your throat. Smile often. Wash behind your ears, polish your loafers. Admit to nothing" (4).

This foreign figure suppresses his insider qualities to remain alien to a German identity he detests and to better approach a self he desires. He covets the role of Jewish outsider in the FRG. His later "admission" of his "real" Jewish identity to Esther's mother demonstrates his acceptance of Esther's "recognition" of his Jewishness. As he has gotten to know the disfigured Esther, who was most likely his father's lover, she appears to be the key to his ambivalent longings for a firm identity, and a connection to his father. The same age as Charles, she is in many ways his negative image, a worldly counterpoint to his naiveté. Just as Charles at first refuses to wear his father's gray fedora, Esther refuses to discuss her father, projecting her hate and fear onto her mother. Esther's exaggeration of and obsession with Jewishness seem to overcompensate for the crimes of her Nazi father. Esther's and Charles's patrilineage make them both misfits in West Germany.

The FRG becomes literally the fatherland in this tale of a younger generation marred by the past. The red scarf Esther wears as a talisman, supposedly a souvenir from her birth, reiterates the color of the red scar above her lip. That scar and her missing teeth connect her to her violent father, for a photo preserves her image as a child sitting scarred and toothless on his lap. Charles's gullibility in accepting as fact her descriptions of being Jewish in Germany exposes his own anti-Semitic prejudices and ambivalence toward his father's legacy of semi-legal activities, such as selling goods of questionable origin. After participating in smuggling, the sale of stolen merchandise, and passing a bad check, that is, after having become deceptive himself, Charles wonders if he has found "happiness at last" (56) with Esther and with his own sense of Jewishness. Yet by

making the sign of the cross when he confesses to Esther's mother that he is a Jew, the narrative reveals the superficiality of his idea of Jewishness. Horrified when he discovers Esther's deception about her past, especially because he has accepted her perverted performance of Jewishness as a demonstration of his own "nature," Charles rapes her. By assaulting the representative of "Die Schöne Heimat" and returning to Oregon, he is trying to sever his ties to his fatherland. This attempt is emphasized metaphorically when he drops his father's white yarmulke in the street the next day as he boards a taxi for the return trip to America. His realization that his passions have been directed toward an illusion of an identity unleashes his repressed desires in a destructive manner. Yet just before he attacks Esther, he removes the apron he has been wearing in her kitchen. He thus reasserts a suppressed form of masculinity as he attacks her in a rage. But that manifestation of gender identity is just as perverse as Charles's other ideas about self (see also Gilman, "Male" 224). In the effort to break with his father's land and from a "feminized" distortion of Jewishness, he repeats the violence attributed to Esther's father. Although he rejects "Die Schöne Heimat," he wears Esther's red scarf as he departs, an indication that he is unable to escape the violent German past. The talisman signifies the deceptiveness of his position as outsider and the persistence of his yearning for the illusion Esther embodied.

Stable identity in Dische's story proves elusive. By locating Charles and Esther at the margins of West German society, the narrative uncovers contradictions in concepts of what it means to be an outsider. Either character could pass as a mainstream West German, but both choose to downplay their resemblance to that group in favor of adopting an oppositional pose. Esther's assumption of a marginalized position suggests the inadequacy of the German identity she was expected to accept once she crossed into the West, but her difference is so exaggerated that it ultimately replicates the anti-Semi-

tism from her past that she seeks to escape. Charles's flight from his German and Jewish heritage occurs when he discovers that those ethnic concepts are void of the meaning he had invested in them. Charles's yearning for the idea that Esther represented turns out to be a desire for the nonexistent. His horror at the void in his past becomes anger at the bearer of that truth. Indeed, "[f]or the first time since his arrival in Berlin Charles Allen showed emotion" (57). When he violates Esther, he aims to destroy his bonds to the lies to which he had succumbed (see also Lorenz, *Keepers* 268).<sup>8</sup> The attack is also an effort to forcefully possess his negative image, a futile attempt to solidify his identity. His return to Catholicism and America are efforts to hide from the knowledge he has obtained, that is, that his heritage in West Berlin exists only as a deformed imitation of an ethnic identity. The concomitant subversion of his seemingly fixed American identity remains unvoiced but obvious. "True" identity and reclaiming his father's past, in the sense of attaching himself to an innate self, is unachievable. "Culturally displaced" (Barron), he remains an uneasy mix of old and new worlds: he speaks fluent German and English with a German accent; he compulsively checks the latest baseball scores throughout his existential adventure, and he turns to the Catholic church in search of solace.

Thus Charles and Esther's efforts to be Jewish, Esther trying intentionally and Charles at first unconsciously, cannot obliterate the other competing aspects of their selves. The only apparent constants are the brutalizing effects of the Nazi past on the postwar generation, both Jewish and non-Jewish. The underlying sameness hindering their efforts to establish themselves as different from the West German mainstream turns out to be the residue of German fascism. It is the root of their deceptive practices, violent physical union, and their inability to move beyond stereotypical ideas of Jewishness. The text thus reveals the inextricability of the Jewish and the German questions—their difference is only partial.

One cannot harmonize them by absorbing one into the other, especially when both identities are themselves in flux (see also Zipes 152). Likewise, the younger generations cannot separate themselves decisively from past perversions of identity.

The horror of fulfilling distorted dreams of identity likewise culminates in a rape scene in Ören's *Bitte nix Polizei*, which recounts seemingly parallel tales of an illegal Turkish worker and a traditional, working-class, but dysfunctional German family. The stories eventually intersect to the detriment of all involved. The novella suggests seemingly insurmountable odds at achieving Turkish-German unity by focusing on miscommunication and silences. Yet the difference once again proves partial in a scenario where outsiders are brought together with ostensible insiders. Struggling to eke out a living in a cold, snowy West Berlin, the illegal Turkish worker Ali Itir cannot speak German and is alienated from his fellow Turks as well. He cannot comprehend the speech of a leftist student preaching workers' rights, for example, nor can he articulate the longings expressed in his dreams.<sup>9</sup> The snow accentuates the state of almost silence in which he lives, but it also connects him to other isolated Berliners who slog through it on their way to work. His figure, not of mixed heritage like Charles but eager to assume a new persona, occupies a different place on the spectrum between center and fringe. Rather than trying to establish an identity in opposition to the West German mainstream, Ali falls victim to his efforts to possess what turns out to be a distorted image of Germanness as reflected in Brigitte Gramke, a teenaged beautician's apprentice.

Like Ali, the working-class Gramke family is unable to communicate, a situation illustrated by the contrast between the characters' dreams and the ways they interact. Brigitte dreams of a happily married, middle-class life with her boyfriend, but the two of them rarely speak intimately. In the narrator's words, "Aber am meisten litt sie darunter, daß sie all das, was sie nicht wollte,

nicht ausdrücken konnte, daß sie die richtigen Worte nicht fand [ . . . ]" (18). The snow envelops them all and deadens their attempts to express their thoughts and wishes. The novella's central image, a dying old German man whom no one rescues after he has slipped and fallen on the street curb, embodies the lack of human warmth in Ören's world.<sup>10</sup> And exactly that inability to reach out to others connects the Turkish and German workers. Their isolation unites them so that the foreigner/German duality seems to disappear in the frozen landscape and reveal the irony behind their suspicions of one another. Both groups long to escape their status at the margins of society as the snow covers their differences. Yet just as that cover is temporary, so too will the results of their efforts be fleeting.

Through converging stories of Turks and Germans that climax in the scene of sexual assault/procurement of sex between Ali and Brigitte, the narrative appears to express the similarities of two ethnic groups, especially the working classes. Ali's encounter with Germans, for example, is based on mutual distrust. His attempt to assist the old German man slowly freezing to death in the snow—an old man who had raped Frau Gramke many years earlier—fails precisely because of his fear of Germans, and their fear of him, a fear based on cultural difference (50–51). The linguistic incompetence of all involved also reflects the impossibility of any successful synthesis. If the characters could converse, the narrative seems to suggest, they would learn that the differences they perceive mask the common human sufferings of the German and Turkish working classes at the bottom of the economic ladder.

Yet beneath such universality lies a more tenacious layer of cultural difference based on the past that includes Ali's memories of his days in the Turkish army and Frau Gramke's recollections of her grueling work in the rubble of postwar Berlin. On the one hand, the outsiders in this text alert the reader to the superficiality of working-class German-Turkish differences, but, on the

other, their ineffectual intercourse stresses the persistence of the ingrained ways of thinking that bind the figures to the culture in which they grew up. For instance, the detective in charge of identifying the body of a dead Turkish man (Ali?) recalls the murder of three Turkish people, a case during which

er zum ersten Mal mit Ausländern zu tun gehabt [hatte] und [hatte] erfahren müssen, daß die Gedanken und Gefühle, das Schweigen dieser Menschen wie eine Mauer waren, gegen die nicht anzukommen war. (116)

In addition, the old man's lingering death in the snow stresses a fascist mindset that continues to haunt the younger generation, of a continuing tendency toward the violent suppression of difference. The only recourse for figures like Ali is to flee from this mentality.

The tropes of snow and silence thus accentuate difference as well as sameness. Speech only worsens matters because, as a system of differences itself, it creates or exacerbates the misunderstandings among similarly afflicted yet isolated figures, such as Brigitte and Ali. These outsiders remain at a distance, each trapped in a world of partially coherent memories and dreams from which language cannot release them. The German figures, however, deceive both themselves and the Turks they encounter by emphasizing their essential difference from the "foreigners" and thus their desire to embody dominant notions of Germanness. Bruno Gramke, Brigitte's father, for example, complains about Turks by asserting, "erst wenn die so leben wie ich, dann sind wir gleich" (79).

The narrative itself assumes the role of the in-between figure: alternating chapters and perspectives between Ali and the Gramkes propel the mini-stories into a larger tale of mixed but separate parts. The narrative perspective is partly that of the German characters, partly of the Turkish, but unsatisfactorily so. Masquerading as a German novella, the narrative exposes West Germans

as materialistic xenophobes. Neither storyline can propel the elements of desire at the basis of each character's yearnings into fulfillment. Meetings between the two groups result in violence—either Frau Gramke witnessing the effects of her Turkish co-worker's botched abortion, Ali's assault of Brigitte, or the corpse at the end with a likeness to Ali.

The clash between Brigitte's wishes for independence and excitement via prostitution and Ali's for acceptance into West German society via purchased sex culminates in rape when each misunderstands the other's unexpressed needs for companionship. Coerced physical union cannot satisfy such thwarted desire. Ali's and Brigitte's attempts to overcome their outsider position push them only further toward the margins. Brigitte's efforts to escape her impoverished situation by becoming a "Masseuse" fail and lead to her encounter with Ali, whose violent explosion of sexual energy traumatizes her and chases him out of the narrative.<sup>11</sup> Their attempts to mimic the economically privileged and emotionally detached stance they view as a sign of the mainstream lead to their ruin.<sup>12</sup> They imitate instead the exploitative behavior to which others have subjected them. The younger generation repeats the errors of its elders. And their striving for an unattainable ideal Germanness shows how alienating that ideal is.

By denying the realization of the various dreams, the account favors neither one side nor the other and questions the supposed "advantage" of being German. The deceptively pure snow hides a slippery surface that blurs the distinctions between Turk and German. Yet their different cultural backgrounds, as evidenced through language, keep those distinctions from dissipating, indeed they foment under the pressure of proximity. The writer Gino Chiellino avers that Ören is among a set of writers who choose not to erase cultural and linguistic difference for the sake of reconciliation.<sup>13</sup> Ören's world offers solace in neither the Turkish nor the German position, for while the protagonists

occupy similar social roles, they are all outsiders. And, to a different extent, but more significantly, their differences from their "own kind" also persist underneath the mask of their cultural identity, thereby refuting any assumptions of essential affinity.<sup>14</sup>

The film *Yasemin* takes another tack to the Turkish-German divide by incorporating it into the figure of Yasemin, a Turkish teenager born in West Germany and growing up in Hamburg under the watchful eyes of her extended family. The focus here is on assimilation, represented by the love story between Yasemin and her mainstream-German admirer, Jan. Yasemin's assorted family members embody different levels of assimilation and acceptance of West German culture, signaled by attire, such as headscarves for the women, and ability to speak German. The younger the family member, the more distanced he or she is from the father's absolute notion of Turkish identity. Yasemin, who is bilingual, tucks up her skirt when at school and at times wears a headscarf at home. Jan, on the other hand, appears to incorporate the free and easy German life that Yasemin would prefer to lead. The film explores the effects different types of "Germans" have on each other—one whose membership in the dominant culture is unquestioned and the other who struggles to maintain her difference as she becomes absorbed by that culture. Most interesting in this case is the creation of a Turkish world within the German one, a world in which Jan and the other German figures appear as intruders. Jan becomes just as much an outsider in Yasemin's world as she is in his.

Yasemin is the catalyst for cultural clash. Her in-between existence interferes with her relationship to her family and separates her from her fair-haired German schoolmates. The dictate to be an obedient Turkish daughter, thus repressing her German side, propels her to favor the "forbidden" identity. Her desire to be German, closely connected to her fear of being sent back to Turkey, reveals a hierarchy of cultures, at least as far as women are concerned. The view of Turkish

culture as stifling to women emerges, for example, when Yasemin's mother prevents her from asking her father for permission to continue her studies by admonishing, "Du bist eine Frau. Hast du noch nicht begriffen? Du bist eine Frau." Turkish identity means subordination for the women in this film, women who are doubly marginalized when living in West Germany, for the Turkish family honor depends on the unblemished reputation of its women. In Yasemin's family, for instance, her brother-in-law hides his impotence, the reason for the blood-free sheets after the wedding night, by allowing others to believe his wife was not a virgin. That lie, protecting his honor, besmirches the reputation of Yasemin's sister and thus her whole family. Germans, while insensitive, seem the superior social group owing to their apparent openness to gender roles, shown here by the opportunities for advancement offered to Yasemin at school and during judo classes. The film sets up Turk and German as polar opposites, a typical strategy in Bohm's films (Gollub 26–28), and exposes German prejudices about Turkish backwardness, for example, by focusing on Yasemin's difficulties in obtaining her father's approval to study at the *Oberstufe*. Yet it also questions the complacency of the seemingly more enlightened Germans.

The Germans—Jan, Yasemin's friend Susanne, and their young teacher—all seem solicitous and eager to make brief excursions into Yasemin's world to help her reach her goals. They are perplexed and intrigued by Turkish difference, but willing to assist Yasemin with ascending to a "freer" life as a German. In this respect, Bohm's film resembles Max von der Grün's *Leben im gelobten Land: Gastarbeiterporträts*, both of which proffer a vision of a better life for Turks who live in the Federal Republic. However, as Arlene Teraoka discerns, "the implicit message of [von der Grün's] portrait of the Turk conveys a sense of his own superiority: we are introduced to a Turk who wants to become like us" (*East, West* 160). One example of the West German view of Turkish as an

exotic, other culture is the scene at a bookstore, where Jan has difficulties finding a book to help him learn the Turkish language. While there are plenty of travel guides, the idea that a German would want to immerse himself in the difference of Turkish culture via the give-and-take of language appears strange. By showing how the available books and calendars about Turkey privilege the exotic over the everyday, the film criticizes a German stance that regards Turkish difference as a matter for observation rather than an opportunity for dialogue. In an ironic twist, the young German employee in the bookstore who calls out to Jan that he should check the bookstores in "Klein Istanbul" turns out to be an Asian German. Her stance that books enabling a dialogue between dominant and fringe culture would be more likely a product of Turkish desire, and thus in the Turkish part of the city, suggests her complete assimilation into the mainstream—a level of assimilation that Yasemin is hoping to avoid.

Tropes such as the exchange of apples show Yasemin's ambivalence about her desire to be German as well as Jan's stronger desire to incorporate her into his culture. Jan first throws Yasemin an apple; she gives him one the next day. He returns it, but then takes it back after she leaves it behind. By returning to him the object of his own enticement, the exchange implies an economy based on Jan's terms, an economy into which Yasemin is reluctant, though tempted, to enter. Jan is unable to kiss Yasemin, but later kisses the apple when he finds it, an action that demonstrates his view of her as fixed, as returning only his projections. Yet as the narrative progresses, her tenacity in rejecting his appropriative overtures compels him to begin a dialogue with her.

After meeting Yasemin Jan also tries to assimilate partially into the Turkish culture he encounters in Hamburg. Yet, his frequent forays into the neighborhood where Yasemin lives show how out of place he is. For example, the space he inhabits there is usually on the outside, while he tries unsuccessfully to



cross thresholds, whether disguised as a wedding guest or perched precipitously outside Yasemin's window. He is the foreign threat who must be repelled, and Yasemin's protective cousin becomes increasingly brutal in his efforts to chase Jan away. While pursuing Yasemin, Jan must temporarily abandon his insider position within the German cultural realm, although from the perspective of Yasemin's relatives, he still represents it. Unlike Yasemin, he cannot cross far into her world, in part because his starting position is so different from hers, but also because configurations of both "the German" and "the Turk" work to maintain the distinction between their respective realms. Likewise caught between two conflicting concepts of identity but prevented from moving further along the spectrum towards "Turkishness," he can only return to the self he was trying to alter. Yet his wish to explore other notions of self suggests a certain fluidity to the Germanness he embodies. Similar to Trinh's *Inappropriate Other*, his figure also questions the difference between center and margin. That difference is so tenuous it must be constantly policed, and Yasemin's cousin is the most forceful guardian of difference. However, by depicting Jan's violent physical assault of the cousin in their climactic "border skirmish" and later by showing Jan take Yasemin away, the film shows the "foreign German" overpower and then absorb the Turkish other on his own, German terms.

From Yasemin's perspective, assuming a German persona would allow her as a woman to study and become a doctor, while her Turkish side would force her to suffer disgrace if she were not to become a fecund mother and housewife—a role at odds with the more progressive ideals represented by the portrait of Kemal Atatürk (1881–1938), or Atatürk ("father of the Turks"), in her room. Atatürk was the founder of the Republic of Turkey and introduced a set of modernizing and westernizing reforms in the 1920s and 1930s. Yet Yasemin's goal can be attained only by abandoning her Turkish

roots, which offer security but threaten to stifle her. Multiple identity appears to be only a temporary state in Böhm's film, a transitional stage of development from a pre-modern to a modern identity. Yasemin's Turkish side is connected to her childhood and her parents, while the FRG represents her future. She sheds her former self like the Turkish clothes she takes off or rearranges after arriving at school. She assumes a German look and at the end is compelled to favor the German part of her identity as can be seen by her riding off with Jan before her father and cousin can send her back to Turkey. She literally embraces Germanness, becoming, like Jan, a foreigner to her family. At first she stares back tearfully at her father as they depart, but then she looks forward in the direction Jan is driving as the camera pans away.

This ending is problematic, however, because it shows she cannot escape on her own. Böhm's film thus falls prey to a problem that feminist scholar bell hooks also sees in the films of Wim Wenders. In hooks's words, "[w]hile it is exciting to witness a pluralism that enables everyone to have access to the use of certain imagery, we must not ignore the consequences when images are manipulated to appear 'different' while reinforcing stereotypes and oppressive structures of domination" (171).<sup>15</sup> Part of two cultures, Yasemin lets the West German one appropriate her, for she needs a German man to rescue her from Turkish men. Her role switch from potential Turkish bride to German girlfriend ends up criticizing the German identity she accepts as much as it does the Turkish one she flees. In both instances she occupies a subordinate position. And in both cases she must conform to a fixed identity that excludes any resemblance to other constructs of self. Yet she does not transform into a German like Jan. Already an outsider among Germans, she becomes an alien among Turks, doubling her foreignness. Thus the scenes of violence—Jan beating the cousin, Dursun, with a pole, Yasemin and then Dursun pinning Jan to the mat during judo practice, Susanne accidentally cutting herself on

Dursun's knife—evoke the dangerous undercurrents of a cultural interchange based on monolithic notions of identity.<sup>16</sup>

The past does not constrain the figures in Dörrie's *Keiner liebt mich*. Rather, an empty future unsettles her characters, a group of Germans from multifarious backgrounds.<sup>17</sup> Both extremes, aliens and stereotypical Germans, fail in this film, but for vastly different reasons. Set in 1990s Cologne during the *Karneval* season, the story of the white German woman Fanny Fink who attempts to find true love revolves around the Afro-German transvestite visitor from the planet "Arcturus," Orfeo de Altamar. Orfeo, whose music and friendship figuratively bring Fanny back from the dead by helping her gain self-confidence, wastes away until he appears ready to die and then disappears, ostensibly fetched home to Arcturus. This multiply alienated figure is, however, one of many eccentrics in the apartment building where Fanny lives, and appears relatively "normal" in the midst of his building mates and the costumed Kölners, a setting that emphasizes the artificiality of the roles they all play. Indeed, the blonde-haired, blue-eyed German characters are the most out of place in this world. Their aggressiveness, egocentrism, materialism, and persistence result in making life miserable for those around them. Fanny's beautiful, blonde, best friend, for example, ends up betraying her with the new, blonde building supervisor, Lothar, the man Fanny believes is destined to be her true love. Orfeo, whose combination of perfect German speech and exotic African appearance defies categorization, sets into motion encounters between the stereotypical Germans and the other Germans and immigrants in the narrative. The real alien, however, is Lothar, whose ruthless way of dealing with the others contributes to his isolation.

Lothar and Orfeo occupy opposite positions, with Fanny between them. Yet the happy ending does not signal a synthesis in this narrative, either. Lothar, like Fanny, leads a morbid existence, trying to cure his impotence in a series of dead-end encounters

with women in the coffin-like bed where he sleeps. His love of his car, where he deceives Fanny with her best friend, further demonstrates his solitude, a place that cocoons him from the rest of society. His supposedly friendly overtures to the residents when he introduces himself are only the first step in his plans to evict them and turn their apartments into condominiums. His good looks, stylish clothes, and pushiness make him stand out from the others. Lothar regards himself as the central figure in the world of the apartment building and as a real "Lothario" but turns out to be a misfit, despised and distrusted by all the residents but Fanny. One resident, for example, warns Fanny that he is not the building manager at all, but "Hanumann, der weisse Affenmensch. Vor dem mußt du dich in Acht nehmen." Lothar's lack of perception, his blindness to the pain he causes Fanny and to the troubles he brings upon the residents, hinders him from altering his lonely position, quite in contrast to Fanny, who after moving in with Orfeo gains friendship, love, companionship, and, to a certain extent, insight.

The final scene that shows Fanny's own coffin/bed thudding onto Lothar's car as he drives by below stresses the anachronism of such a stereotypical German as Lothar in today's multicultural society. This kind of German cannot deal successfully with others because of a lack of empathy and open-mindedness. His success is only material, based on coercion or exploitation. While Dörrie does not go so far as to conjoin Fanny and Orfeo sexually, choosing instead to pair Fanny with a white, brown-haired, German "Softie," the critique of the mono-ethnic type in favor of the multicultural German gives an interesting twist to the insider/outsider question. Here, the insider, Lothar, is alienated in his central position. Orfeo is the model for Fanny's maturation. The future lies with a different kind of German—or does it?

Orfeo exemplifies Trinh's concept of "deceptive outsider" and that deception reverberates in his interactions with more conventional Germans. For instance, he profits

from Fanny's kindness. He overcharges her for his prognosticating and steals Lothar's Armani suit left at her apartment. Before Orfeo disappears, he convinces her to take out a loan and buy him a bar of gold for his return to the planet Arcturus, thus casting doubt on his reasons for leaving. He leaves behind an emerald ring that is actually made of glass. Yet he does vanish mysteriously. By having his disappearance coincide with the end of *Fasching*, the narrative seems to signal an end to the "unnatural" intimacy between Fanny and Orfeo, to imply their emotional melding belongs to a "verkehrte Welt." Yet Fanny suddenly possesses some of Orfeo's traits, like his magical ability to start stalled elevators, and thrives after he is gone. She has incorporated some of his difference in order to alter her position. Her feelings of marginalization, ignored by Lothar and challenged by Orfeo, begin to evaporate. She assumes a central position among the residents when she entertains them in her apartment right before they are all evicted. Exhibiting her own blended identities, part Orfeo, part the others (her mother, the members of her Buddhist group) with whom she interacts, Fanny appears to escape the limitations of native and foreigner because she separates from both Lothar and Orfeo. Multicultural in this film comes to imply an internal as well as societal transformation.

However, by concluding with Fanny's good-humored acceptance of Orfeo's supernatural powers and blindness to his manipulations the film maintains the stereotype of the Afro-German as exotic and dangerous. The concept of German identity has changed in this film but it still depends on a foreigner it can define or absorb. While Lothar embodies the most alienating qualities in the film, his ignorance of that fact helps him survive in a world in which others like him still wield power. The alienating effects, however, of Lothar and his ilk's need for an inferior against which to measure themselves can be seen in Orfeo's feelings of insurmountable difference from and suspicion of those around him, feelings that make him wither

as Fanny blossoms. His thwarted love for a male newscaster remains unvoiced, too "strange" to articulate to an unsuspecting Fanny.<sup>18</sup> Even his "singing" performance at the gay bar where he meets his lover consists of his silent mouthing to a recording of a German chanteuse. On the other hand, he is quite vocal in his mysterious role as extra-planetary visitor. Son of a German mother and a Senegalese father, Orfeo's ability to speak perfect *Hochdeutsch* and perform Senegalese magic incantations unsettles the conventional German characters and prevents them from accepting him on his own merits, on the basis of his "true" persona as former East Berliner Walther Rathinger. His performance as dying extraterrestrial, that is, his assumption of the role of extreme outsider, is a response to a society that can view him only as an alien presence. This German is so different because he is not different enough, and the narrative has to banish him magically from the plot.

Orfeo's posing thus illustrates the degree of difference acceptable in the world Dörrie presents. None of the *Karneval* revelers stops at Orfeo's palmreading table until he rewrites his sign with the poorly spelled message, "wil zürük nach Afrika!". Germans diverging from the mainstream cannot thrive unless they disguise themselves as a stereotype. Fanny accepts Orfeo as he appears and ignores both the evidence of her shrinking funds and Orfeo's inconsolable grief that their relationship is not an egalitarian one. She deceives herself as much as he deceives her. Lothar mistakes his otherworldliness as a trick to avoid paying rent. He is willing to accept Orfeo/Walther as a German, but only as an unequal, indebted to him. The ailing Orfeo is in a similar position to Trinh's non-native "native" whose integration must never be complete. "The goal pursued is the spread of a hegemonic dis-ease. Don't be us, this self-explanatory motto warns. Just be 'like' and bear the chameleon's fate, never infecting *us* but only yourself, spending your days muting, putting on/taking off glasses, trying to please all and always at odds with

myself who is no self at all" (Trinh, *Woman 52*). By showing Orfeo reject Lothar's view of him in favor of Fanny's belief in his alien powers, the film exposes a yearning for new concepts of identity, for an escape from the insider/outsider dichotomy. Yet that longing finds no satisfaction.

The above set of unfulfilling or disturbing encounters between figures coded as Afro-Germans; Jewish, American Germans; Germanized Turks; Turkish immigrants; and mainstream Germans thus complicates ideas of difference to such an extent that conventional notions of "German" and "foreign" prove untenable. For the narratives demonstrate the difficulty of determining who is German and who is foreign. The figures' disparate starting points near the center or edges of mainstream society in the FRG bring under scrutiny misperceptions about what constitutes natives and foreigners and the desires for firm differences between them. The various types of outsiders analyzed above approach the cultural mainstream from different vantage points, yet the insiders they meet appear stranger and stranger. The recourse to deceptive identities—Esther as Jew, Brigitte as prostitute, Orfeo as palm-reader—exposes the artificiality of any fixed positions of identity as well as the powerful compulsions to ignore this artifice. The pairing of Germans with non-Germans cannot lead to a union of opposites into a harmonious whole, for there are no opposites. Those "basic" identities themselves are in flux. The trope of sexual coitus, whether implied or enacted, merely brings into closer proximity illusions of semblance or alterity. Such an effort to forcibly fuse constantly mutating elements into one pair of fixed identities explodes into even more alienated forms of identity. Indeed, the concept of Germanness has become as strange to the German figures as it is to the foreign characters. And that confusion undercuts in turn the apparent otherness of the outsiders. The result is a multiplicity of mutating identities, none of which is "truly" German. By challenging the fixity of Germanness—including the idea of

innate Germanness still at work today—the texts also reveal facets of the "insider" in figurations of the "foreign." Furthermore, each figure is inscribed within specific traditions and histories that, depending on circumstances, enliven, complicate, or stymie interaction with others. The narratives thus expose the malevolent strangeness of constructs of homogeneity and suggest the need for more creative ways of imagining group identities in multicultural German society.

## Notes

\*I would like to express my gratitude to Jacqueline Vansant for her helpful comments on a draft of this essay.

<sup>1</sup>For an analysis of the 1999 CDU-campaign against the dangers of dual citizenship and its effect on the elections in Hessen, see *Der Spiegel*. Political scientist Claus Leggewie also sees a failure among intellectuals to lessen emotional reactions to German multiculturalism (*Zusammen* 68). Sociologist Elçin Kürsat-Ahlers contends that German hesitation to initiate equal rights and anti-discrimination policies demonstrates a negative connotation to the term multiculturalism, which merely marks a semantic change in an otherwise continuing policy of encouraging minorities to re-migrate to their countries of origin (Horrocks/Kolinsky 114–15). And Italian writer and resident of Germany Gino Chiellino writes of the exclusion of foreigners from forming policies devoted to their concerns, thereby safeguarding homogeneity. "Wohlgemerkt, in allen drei Fällen wird die multikulturelle Gesellschaft in Funktion des eigenen Parteiprogramms und nicht ihrem Inhalt definiert. Ihr werden Ziele gegeben, die womöglich nichts mit den Interessen der Ausländer zu tun haben, denn an der Definition solcher Absichten haben die Ausländer nicht mitgewirkt" (G. Chiellino, "... offene Kulturgesellschaft!" 13).

<sup>2</sup>A new law on dual German citizenship took effect on 1 January 2000. From that date on, "children born in Germany of foreign parents will acquire German nationality from birth. If they also acquire another nationality, they will have to choose between the German and the other nationality upon reaching their majority." A list of eight points clarifies the law fur-

ther (Essential Elements). For the latest developments concerning this law and the new immigration law see «<http://www.germany-info.org>».

<sup>3</sup>Intellectuals in Germany have been questioning concepts of Germanness with increasing energy since the 1980s, attempting to redefine the relationship between mainstream and fringe cultures (Weinrich; Weigel; Kürsat-Ahlers; Leggewie; Suhr; Chiellino; Cohn-Bendit and Schmid; Giesen; Seligmann; Şenocak and Tulay; Bade; Saalfeld; Harnisch, Stokes, and Weidauer; *Zusammen*, etc.).

<sup>4</sup>See also Lorenz and Posthofen's informative volume, especially the introduction, in which they contend, "The smallest site of the conflict of center and margin is the individual in its loneliness and its connectedness" (19).

<sup>5</sup>Adelson stresses that the idea of assuming a multicultural, positional identity often rests on an unquestioned concept of a priori fixed identities (see, for example, "Imagining" 268). In the films and stories under consideration here, as the blended figures bounce against various constructs of "the German," "the Turk," etc., they reveal the mutability of such notions.

<sup>6</sup>As the term "German" becomes more multi-valent, the concept of "foreigner" grows more differentiated as well. Peck, Ash, and Lemke, for example, differentiate between German ideas of the foreigner and the stranger, the latter expressing someone who is alienated in his/her own land. They note that the term "stranger" has often been applied to German Jews (61–63). This distinction, however, does not hold in the texts under consideration, for "foreigners," "strangers," and others often change positions.

<sup>7</sup>Since Dische originally wrote her story in English, even though the German version was the first to appear in print, the parenthetical page references will refer to the English edition.

<sup>8</sup>For different readings of this scene, see Remmler 200–03; Gilman, "Male" 223–24; Herzog 12–13.

<sup>9</sup>Kuruyazıcı writes that Ören creates a kind of "Spannungsfeld zwischen der Fremde und der Heimat" (96).

<sup>10</sup>Ören's depictions of the street as site of cultural exchange, "Orte, an denen sich Schicksale kreuzen" (Weinrich 15), recur in other works of his, such as *Was will Niyazi in der Naunynstraße?* (1973). Places of interaction, streets also emphasize a merging of surfaces, of

hasty, fleeting encounters.

<sup>11</sup>Whether Ali is the body fished from the canal at the end of the story is left open and later made problematic in Ören's more recent narrative, *Berlin Savignyplatz* (1996), in which he appears again. For more on his continued literary presence see Ackermann, "Wandlungen."

<sup>12</sup>Carmine Chiellino notes the primacy of consumption as a driving force in Ören's oeuvre. "Die Konsumkraft des Einzelnen oder der Familie stellt sowohl für das ansässige städtische Proletariat, als auch für die Gastarbeiter die gewichtigste Kommunikationsform mit der Umwelt dar" (C. Chiellino, *Am Ufer* 317); Suhr argues that Ören "reduces the class conflict to a problem of communication" (229).

<sup>13</sup>"Das Festhalten an den ästhetischen Prinzipien einer Kulturminderheit geschieht nicht aus dem Wunsch zum konfliktuellen Widerspruch, sondern gerade deshalb, weil die Andersheit der Fremden etwas ist, was nicht zur Disposition stehen kann, um die Betriebszugehörigkeit als deutscher Schriftsteller zu erwerben" (G. Chiellino, "Fragen zum heutigen Stand" 242).

<sup>14</sup>David Horrocks and Eva Kolinsky write with regard to Turkish migrants in Germany, "they wish to be regarded as ethnic minorities, different in nationality, background, and culture but recognized as legitimate groupings in German society. Acceptance as a minority implies that residency, and not nationality, matters. It also implies that cultural diversity is not perceived as a danger but condoned as a social reality, if not welcomed as enrichment" (xiii). See also Adelson's essay probing literary figurations of Turks, Germans, and Jews and her critique of conventional representations of German-Turkish encounters as meetings between two whole worlds ("Touching," 113–14). Ören's multifaceted narrative of Germans and Turks also criticizes this stance.

<sup>15</sup>Hooks reveals unreflected patriarchal, heterosexual desire as the driving force in Wim Wenders's film *Wings of Desire* and concludes, "Current trends in avant-garde cultural production by white people which presume to challenge the status quo regarding race and gender are ethically and politically problematic" (171).

<sup>16</sup>See also Teraoka's nuanced reading of Jakob Arjouni's detective fiction, in which she argues against the rigidity of viewing identity as

either Turkish or German, against "the habit of thought that conceives of identity according to categories presented as mutually exclusive" ("Detecting" 276); see Adelson's statements about the danger of "double othering" ("Price") which the film also illustrates.

<sup>17</sup>Dörrie asserts that through this film she was "more or less trying to depict the way Germany is right now, which is multicultural, but nobody seems to want to acknowledge it." The setting of Cologne reflects her view of it as "a very multicultural city" (Phillips 178).

<sup>18</sup>Dörrie avoids repeating stereotypes of black sexuality by making Orfeo chaste, but that also maintains the separation between white and black Germans, a separation that Orfeo's parents did not heed, thereby resulting in an "alien" being. For more on such stereotypes see Gilman, "Black"; Lester; Opitz et al.; Campt et al.

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## Errata

In the last issue of *GQ*, "der Druckfehler-teufel" duplicated several endnotes as a substitute for the correct ones that belonged with Albrecht Classen's "Mutter zu Tochter." Notes 56–64 should have read as follows:

<sup>56</sup>Johannes von Tepl, *Der ackermann*, Hg. von Willy Krogmann. 2. Aufl. (Wiesbaden: Brockhaus, 1964) Kap. 9, 108; vgl. dazu Johannes de Tepla Civis Zacensis: *Epistola cum Libello ackermann und Das büchlein ackermann.* Nach der Freiburger Hs. 163 und der Stuttgarter Hs. HB X 23. Erster Bd.: *Text und Übersetzung*, hg. von Karl Bertau. Zweiter Bd.: *Untersuchungen* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1994).

<sup>57</sup>*Die Lieder Oswalds von Wolkenstein*, hg. von Karl Kurt Klein. 3., neubearb. und erweiterte Aufl. von Hans Moser, Norbert Richard Wolf und Notburga Wolf (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1987) Kl. 44, 52–53.

<sup>58</sup>Ann Marie Rasmussen, "Bist du begehrt, so bist du wert. Magische und höfische Mitgift für die Töchter," *Mütter — Töchter — Frauen. Weiblichkeitsbilder in der Literatur*, hg. von Helga Kraft und Elke Liebs (Stuttgart-Weimar: Metzler, 1993) 7–33, hier 8.

<sup>59</sup>Frakes, *Brides and Doom*, 97 et passim; Rasmussen, *Mothers and Daughters*, 104; Miklautsch, 127–30.

<sup>60</sup>Siehe z.B. Elisabeths von Nassau-Saar-

brücken *Hug Schapler*, zitiert nach: *Romane des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts.* Hg. von Jan-Dirk Müller (Frankfurt a.M.: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1990), 302ff.; vgl. dazu Albrecht Classen, *The German Volksbuch. A Critical History of a Late-Medieval Genre* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1995).

<sup>61</sup>Lynn Abrams and Elizabeth Harvey, "Introduction: Gender and Gender Relations in German History," *Gender and Gender Relations in German History. Power, Agency and Experience from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century*, ed. L. Abrams, E. Harvey (London: UCL Press, 1996) 7.

<sup>62</sup>Heide Wunder, "Gender Norms and Their Enforcement in Early Modern Germany," *Gender and Gender Relations*, 39–56.

<sup>63</sup>Siehe dazu Rasmussen 176: "Neidhart's poetry sexualizes peasant mothers and daughters, representing them as being sexually ungovernable, lacking in self-control, and erotically active."

<sup>64</sup>In *Gräfin Yolanda* scheint zwar die Mutter ihre Tochter stark zu missbrauchen, um sie ihrer Heiratspolitik gefügig zu machen, doch erweist sich am Ende, dass ihre Motivation in der Liebe zu ihrer Tochter bestand, die sie nicht ans Kloster verlieren wollte; vgl. dazu Rasmussen 6; Mielke-Vandenhouten, *Grafentochter — Gottesbraut*, 196f.



