

# The Study of Migrant Identities through Migrant Literatures<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

What I am presenting here is an outline of a larger work at the state of its inception, where I am going to look at migrant literatures of mostly Turkish immigrants into Germany who in the second and third – sometimes even in the first generation – have chosen German as the medium of their literary production. This project is part of my preoccupation with cultural plurality in the liberal state and I am interested in how questions of cultural and religious identity are problematic in these literatures. I am therefore in need of a workable notion of identity – personal as well as collective – and also of a concept of culture that is broad enough, and dynamic enough, to capture the lived reality of migrants between cultures and languages (part one of this paper). Secondly, I am in need of a methodology of how to read texts of fiction against the grain to extract from them realistic information of a kind that is not normally sought in literary texts. This methodology has been developed by two contemporary Austrian sociologists, Kuzmics and Mozetic.<sup>2</sup> In part two of this paper, I will present their approach and discuss some of the difficulties attached to it. The method has been demonstrated by the two authors using examples from Fontane, Musil and others. Part three of this paper contains a sample demonstration of how the method works in the present case: reading German migrant literature to find out about processes of migrant identity formations.

In both – in the notion of identity and in the notion of culture that I am advancing here, the concept of language plays a major role, both as the medium in which cultural change and changes in personal and collective identity are negotiated as well as language itself as being part of human cultural production. I am therefore, for the first part, interested in these three concepts and their relation to each other: Identity, Language, and Culture. In the second part of this paper, I am going to discuss how literary texts can possibly be used as a basis for considerations that go beyond literary criticism and that are about a particular part of the society, here: migrants, and about a particular problem, here: processes of identity formation in migrant communities from different cultural backgrounds.

In political theory there is much discussion about the accommodation of different cultures within the framework of a liberal democratic state. Very often these discussions leave us with a sense of blankness because the basic concepts are not specified. What exactly do we mean when we speak of the protection of or the right to a cultural identity or what do we mean when we complain that the liberal state is culturally biased? Often the term culture remains vague. Sometimes it is also not clear whether the liberal democratic state is biased for contingent reasons or for principled ones.

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<sup>1</sup> Parts of this paper were presented at the *International Conference on Intercultural Transformations of religious Traditions in literary Texts* organised by the *Society for Intercultural German Studies* in Jaipur, India, 24–27 February 2005. I am grateful for the helpful comments of the conference participants.

<sup>2</sup> Kuzmics, Helmut, and Gerald Mozetic. *Literatur als Soziologie. Zum Verhältnis von literarischer und gesellschaftlicher Wirklichkeit*. Konstanz: UVK, 2003; in the following I am using *Literature as Sociology* as a short hand.

Among the ethical background assumptions of any liberal democratic polity counts the desirability of equality before the law, equality of opportunity and equal access to the process of political will formation. Among these, the opportunities to access the process of political will formation stand out because they can be seen as more general enabling conditions for a whole range of other opportunities. Whatever else one may strive for, the venues for striving as such should be equally open for all.

The question therefore is: Which are the domains of culture with respect to which the liberal democratic state can not help being biased? The point of the following exposition is to suggest one answer: Language. Language has a prime role to play as the medium of information, political negotiation and legal promulgation. A group whose language differs from the recognised language(s) of the polity is of course at a great disadvantage when it comes to realising his or her civic rights. Moreover, there seems to be no alternative for a polity to identify itself with one or a limited number of languages. A polity like India, for instance, with more than 1600 autochthonous languages, can not possibly make official languages out of all of them and at all levels and even the EU with its 25 member states reaches a point where simultaneous consultation in all 20 official languages becomes cumbersome.

Language, therefore, is the cultural domain where even a state that strives to be neutral with respect to all other aspects of culture can not help to be partial. A liberal democratic state can steer clear from religion, to name only one cultural domain, or it can engage equitably with all religious communities, but it can not help privileging one or a limited number of languages as the working language(s) of the polity. At first glance, language may seem a trivial matter, instrumental at most, to the participation in the game of politics. One could easily argue that a systematic bi- or tri-lingualism would solve the problem. Thereby every individual could access the political process through one language and still be in touch with its cultural and intellectual heritage and with its community through their respective language. Still, I maintain, the state thereby privileges those whose first language happens to be identical with the language of governance. Only very few gifted people will attain an equal competence in any secondary or tertiary language. For the great majority, multilingualism entails a greater incompetence in each of the languages.<sup>3</sup>

Federalism and decentralisation with Local languages as official languages in state or village level parliaments or councils can offer alleviation but never a complete remedy. To this dilemma neither liberalism nor multiculturalism have a satisfactory solution, but it compels us to try to limit its impact. If there is a choice between linguistic homogenisation and the preservation of linguistic diversity than the latter is to be preferred.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Thus, a person may be able to speak Hindi but not read it well so that she may not be able to access the Hindustani literary and intellectual heritage where at the same time she may speak and read English well, a language that is useless to her in interaction with her community members.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Dusche, Michael. ‘Multiculturalism, Communitarianism, and Liberal Pluralism.’ In *Religious Pluralism in South Asia and Europe*, edited by Jamal Malik and Helmut Reifeld, 120-144. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Aside from causing a dilemma in the attempt of the liberal democratic state to be neutral with respect to culture, language causes trouble also in another respect and that is identity. A liberal democratic state needs to rely on the loyalty of its citizens. This loyalty is normally ensured through a sense of belonging to a political collective organised within a certain territory. Ideally one would want such a sense of common identity to be as inclusive as possible to insure the loyalty of all citizens. Since there is hardly any polity whose members all share the same ancestry, race, ethnicity, or religion, the collective identity of the citizens of a liberal democratic state would better not be based on any of these categories. A common identity based on race or ancestry, for example, excludes those who happen to be of a different race or ancestry, which is bad enough. What is more, these categories do not leave the excluded with any way of getting themselves included since the categories are based in their physical nature, which they can't change.

Identity markers such as ethnicity and religion, which are based in culture, fare slightly better. At least theoretically, certainly however for subsequent generations of citizens, there is hope that they may integrate themselves into the majority culture even though at the price of a major loss in continuity, which puts a strain on personal and group identity, which members of the majority culture do not have to suffer.

Ideally however, the political identity would be based on something that people can chose to embrace irrespective of their race, ancestry, or ethnicity. Such a base could be a set of shared values, constitutional principles or basic laws that are blind to such naturalistic or cultural categories as race and ethnicity. Ideally this set of constitutional principles or basic laws would be based on a conception of justice that is acceptable for all so that no one would have a good reason not to choose allegiance to these principles.<sup>5</sup>

An adequate theory of justice would provide a solution only if it weren't for language. Although language does not have to figure among the prime identity markers for a polity, it certainly can not be completely ignored. Hence my strong vote in favour of a polity organized along the lines of federalism and Local self-governance to give as many autochthonous linguistic groups a chance to participate in political deliberations in their own language. Where this is not possible for practical reasons, the education system has to ensure that linguistic minorities are offered training in the majority language(s). This is especially pertinent in the case of immigrant groups who due to their dispersion can not claim any special territorial status around which any political institutions could be built.

Another interesting consequence of the following reflections will be that there can be no such thing as a right to an identity. As we will see, identities are never fixed and a constant struggle over identity and change of identity is simply a fact of life everybody all the time has to cope with. It would make no sense at all to try to fix identities or to try to preserve them with the help of the state. All a state can be asked to do is not to interfere unless the dialectical processes of identity formation lead to social expectations and established patterns of behaviour that infringe upon the fundamental rights of citizens.

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. Jürgen Habermas' concept of 'constitutional patriotism'.

A question that I have not gone into in any depth here, but that needs to be tackled in this context is the question as to whether or not and to what degree language is itself a container for a cultural heritage whose content would resist translation into another language. Can a minority that is forced to give up its language preserve its cultural heritage even in the guise of a new language?

Linked with this is the question as to how personal identity is affected by change of language. From the preceding discussion it is to be expected that a shift in the medium of communicative interaction necessarily affects the way this interaction takes place not to speak of the fact that mostly a shift in the language implies that an individual now has to negotiate its identity with a different collective that confronts it with different expectations. That is, even if the new language would not be linked to any different patterns of human behaviour, the new medium by itself would deprive the individual of certain ways of expressing itself and it would grant it new ways of self expression. Whether this trade-off is acceptable for the individual or not, it certainly implies a major change in identity. This is supported by the frequent observation that anyone learning how to communicate in the language of a different collective changes not only the way she speaks. Even her gestures, the way she walks and carries herself will change ostensibly. An individual becomes palpably a different person when diving into a different linguistic universe.<sup>6</sup>

Another question that I have ignored here is the question of identity of languages themselves. Wittgenstein’s notion of language suggests that we are idealizing when we speak of languages as well-defined and distinct entities. We should rather think of languages as universes of communication games all related in the way of family resemblance but with no guarantee that at the far ends of these universes games still share a common feature that would warrant even minimal communication. Cutting out allegedly well defined ‘languages’ from this continuum is of course highly artificial and problematic. Nevertheless, I would tend to believe that the idea of linguistic boundaries, although hard to define, is not completely vacuous. The thumb rule used by linguists who define language as a realm where people, in spite of differences in dialect, can still communicate without assistance of an interpreter seems a viable way do relegate this problem to the background.

## **1. Identity, Language, and Culture**

In my dealing with Identity, Language, and Culture, I am arguing for the following three propositions:<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Conversely, a person who is perceived as a stranger from the way she carries herself will cease to be perceived so when blending in with her environment. Astonishingly this even works when the person remains recognizably foreign due to physical appearance but manages to communicate through the way she carries herself that she is no alien to her environment.

<sup>7</sup> The expert will easily make out three influences from the philosophical tradition, first, the interactionist sociology in the following of George Herbert Mead (cf. his *Mind, Self, and Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934), second, Ludwig Wittgenstein’s pragmatist account of meaning and language (cf. his *Philosophical Investigations*. Trans. G. E. M. Anscombe. New York: Macmillan, 1953), and, third,

(1) The process leading to collective or personal identity is mediated through communicative interaction a large part of which occurs in the medium of language.

(2) Language is the domain where communicative interaction is facilitated by speech acts. Languages comprise different but possibly overlapping sets of expressions and patterns of communicative interaction through speech.

(3) Culture is the domain of communicative interaction with language as one of its most important sub-domains. Cultures can be described as consisting of different but overlapping sets of patterns of communicative interaction.

## 1.1 Identity

In questions of identity, I am following an interactionist approach<sup>8</sup> according to which questions of identity, for contingent reasons, involve a social dimension, that is, we cannot form a personal or collective identity without others recognising it.<sup>9</sup> The reason lies in the social dimension of language itself.<sup>10</sup> Since who we are is expressed in language and language relies on commonly accepted patterns of communicative interaction, the symbolic representation of ourselves equally is in need of common acceptance among the users of that language. The symbolic representation of ourselves in discourse, call it the ‘placeholder’, can be a name (i.e. ‘Feridun’) or a definite description (i.e. ‘der Kanake’<sup>11</sup>). In any case it relies on commonly understood ways of reference to a person.

This placeholder may be attributed to us by others or we may be successful in convincing others to use the self-description that we would prefer. But even then, the notion of ourselves subsequently becomes public domain and gets detached from its authorship. In any case, the least that is required is a provisional agreement between the individual and a collective on how to refer to that individual. A name would be the lowest common denominator. There is not much that a name commits us to. ‘Feridun’, for example, for

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Jürgen Habermas’ theory of communicative action (cf. his *Theory of Communicative Action* (two volumes). Trans. Th. McCarthy. Boston: Beacon Press, 1984 & 1987). By referring to these authors, however, I do not wish to suggest that all of the following is necessary in line with their work nor do I wish to subscribe to everything else these authors might have also said in the connection if it is not strictly implied in my present rendering of these.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Krappmann, Lothar. *Soziologische Dimensionen der Identität. Strukturelle Bedingungen für die Teilnahme an Interaktionsprozessen*. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1969, p. 20f., where he explains this approach in 5 points. Since humans, as Krappmann states in point 5, live in a symbolic environment, all entities, structures, persons and patterns of human behaviour receive ‘meanings’ through a *collective process of interpretation*. Elsewhere, I have coined the term *collective hermeneutics* for the same regarding the normative background assumptions of a liberal democratic state (cf. Dusché, Michael. *Der Philosoph als Mediator. Anwendungsbedingungen globaler Gerechtigkeit*. Vienna: Passagen Verlag, 2000, §3).

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Honneth, Axel. *Kampf um Anerkennung*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1992.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Taylor, Charles. “The Politics of Recognition.” In *Multiculturalism. Examining the Politics of Recognition*, edited by Amy Gutmann, 25-73. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994, 32f.

<sup>11</sup> Here is, of course, allusion to Feridun Zaimoglu, the author of *Kanak Sprak. 24 Misstöne vom Rande der Gesellschaft*. Hamburg: Rotbuch, 2000, and his *Koppstoff. Kanak Sprak vom Rande der Gesellschaft*. Hamburg: Rotbuch, 2000. All examples using the name Feridun, however, are fictitious. Any resemblances to the real life person by the name of Feridun Zaimoglu are be purely accidental.

the average German may suggest that the bearer has a migratory background. But beyond that we do not learn much about the person. It is an almost vacuous placeholder and no particular expectations come along with it.

The situation changes if we start using definite descriptions as placeholders. ‘The author of *Kanak Sprak* or ‘the writer’ already contain claims to a certain identity, namely that of a German writer, author of a book by the title *Kanak Sprak*. This identity could theoretically be contested by either side. The collective could question Feridun’s identity as a writer, or as a German, or as the author of that particular book, and ask for proof. Feridun himself could question the identity ascribed to him by claiming that he is not a writer, or not a German, or not the author of *Kanak Sprak*.

Moreover, not only does identity depend on a communicative and therefore social dimension, communicative interaction itself depends on identity since the way communicative interaction (linguistic or other) is to be understood depends, among other contextual information, on who the interacting partners are. For example, if person A calls person B by the derogative ‘Kanake’, B may feel insulted if A is anybody but a Turkish migrant. However, if A is a Turkish migrant himself, ‘Kanake’ loses its depreciative taste and becomes a ruff way of calling out to a buddy.<sup>12</sup>

The communicative side to identity leads to a constant struggle between the individual and the collective over the most appropriate placeholder. The point of dispute invariably results from the fact that language uses terms that fit a large number of objects whereas the individual has the desire to be addressed in its distinctiveness. The expression ‘the writer’ fits a great many people in the world and may not be all Feridun wants to be represented as. He may wish to include adjectives into the description such as in ‘the German poet’,<sup>13</sup> ‘the educated kanakster’,<sup>14</sup> ‘the pop-writer’,<sup>15</sup> or the like. But even this, ultimately, will not do.

The desire for complete representation in language and the practical exigencies of communication that allow only for a limited number of words in a definite description can not, in principle, be reconciled. Therefore the agreement between the individual and the collective will never be final. Its identity is therefore never completely fixed. Identities are constantly subject to negotiation in the communicative situation itself and beyond, except, maybe, for routine interactions where the relevant aspects of a person’s identity are fixed by context.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Much like ‘nigger’ in American English.

<sup>13</sup> Weidemann, Volker. ‘Der deutsche Dichter. Ein Blick auf das Werk des Schriftstellers Feridun Zaimoglu und seinen neuen Erzählungsband ‚Zwölf Gramm Glück.’ *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung*, 29 February 2004.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Löffler, Udo. ‘Sprache ist der Büchsenöffner.’ *die tageszeitung*, 8 January 2003.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Zaimoglu, Feridun. ‘Knabenwindelprosa.’ *DieZeit* no. 47, 18 November 1999.

<sup>16</sup> Krappmann mentions the interaction at a railway ticket counter as an example (Loc. cit. 58). Another example is that of Wittgenstein where he illustrates a particular language game by reference to a group of masons collaborating in the construction of a building.

Given these assumptions about personal identity and patterns of linguistic behaviour, what is the relation of collective identity to patterns of human behaviour in general, that is, how do we situate the process of collective identity formation in the wider context of human culture and what is the role that language plays in this connection? Some further observations are in place which I shall briefly mention in the following seven points:

1. It seems evident that every person belongs to a potentially infinite number of social collectives. Of these, of course, not all are of the same relevance to that person. For example, a person may be at the same time a writer, a Muslim, a male, a boy-friend, a German, a speaker of so many languages, a train passenger, a person who snores, etc. Therefore, no person is associated with only one collective identity.

2. Within each collective there can be proper sub-collectives. For example, the collective of 2<sup>nd</sup> class train passengers is a proper subset of the train passengers.

3. Collectives can overlap and intersect. For example, being a writer and a male, Feridun would find himself in the intersection of the sets of writers and males.

4. Collectives may be contingent on a particular situation or relatively permanent. For example, being a customer of Deutsche Bahn AG (German Railways) may be a less permanent feature in Feridun than being a boy-friend.<sup>17</sup>

5. Collectives use certain markers to indicate belonging. These markers may be based on nature, culture or on an individual's choice. For example, race or gender identities, if highlighted, depend on natural markers such as skin and hair colour, or primary sexual features of the body. Cultural markers may include such features as dress, hairstyle, language, religion etc. Markers that depend on an individual's choice would be such things as political allegiances, spare time activities, personal aesthetic tastes etc.

6. Collectives allow for a certain amount of variability in their prescribed patterns of conforming behaviour in order to do justice to variations in individual dispositions and needs. For example, a literary writer is normally expected to present texts of fiction of his own making. If a person presents us with texts that are based on interviews, translated, and then remade, we may instead take him for a journalist or a social scientist. The strictures that the collective is willing to impose on a person in order to recognise him as a writer may vary from one cultural and historical context to another. We may wonder whether Zaimoglu would have passed as a writer in other times and circumstances.

7. The linking, in a characteristic way, of various collective identities in a particular biography makes for a person's identity. Here the individual imposes certain restrictions in terms of coherence and consistency onto its self-representation, for example in the

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<sup>17</sup> There may even be 'essential' properties of a person such as being the bearer of such and such a name, the son of such and such parents etc. as Kripke and Putnam have suggested (cf. Kripke, Saul. *Naming and Necessity*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1980; Putnam, Hilary. 'The Meaning of 'Meaning'' in Putnam, Hilary. *Mind, Language and Reality*, Philosophical Papers Volume II. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975).

form of an autobiography. The need for and degree of such coherence, however, can vary historically, culturally and individually.

Also the ability of the individual to bring into coherence its various situationally determined ways of being him or herself can vary. At the extreme a sense of personal identity can break down under the tension of conflicting social demands. If the individual yields completely to the expectations of the collective and never opposes the way it is characterised or treated it may literally ‘lose itself in the other’ (cf. the German expression ‘sich im Anderen verlieren’). It may lose sight of its own needs and desires and see only this much of itself as others are willing to see in it. On the other hand, if the individual insists too much on its distinctiveness, it will fail in reaching any agreement with the collective on how to refer to itself, it will fail to assert itself and become all the more subjected to the ascriptions of others. By losing control over its placeholder it loses control over its life since others will represent it as *they* wish without any consideration for who *he* or *she* would like to be.

By now it should have become clear that the process of acquisition of an identity is a dialectical one. In learning how to conform to the expectations of a certain collective, the individual is confronted with expectations that are impressed upon it with the prospect of reward or punishment. A person can either try to live up to these expectations and earn recognition or rebel against them and earn banishment. The tension between the demands of the collective and the expectations of individuals are bound to initiate a dialectical process in which individuals and collectives negotiate their identities through a circle of thesis, antithesis and synthesis.<sup>18</sup> In this process, the collective, which precedes the individual ontogenetically, offers the *thesis* in terms of its expectations regarding the individual’s behaviour. The *antithesis* is offered by the individual that is constantly in need of defining itself in a qualified opposition to collective expectations. This relationship is an unbalanced one as long as we look at only one individual facing the collective alone. As soon as we allow for a greater number of individuals with similar non-conforming tendencies, these individuals may be able to force the collective to negotiate its demands. This process may lead to a homogeneous development, that is, involving the whole of the collective. Thus, the demands of the collective may change uniformly for all its members in response to the pressure of this group of individuals. In this case, the result would be a modified, reformed collective identity that leaves the

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<sup>18</sup> The different responses to the expectations of the collective are reflected in George Herbert Mead’s (Loc. cit.) conception of the ‘I’ and the ‘me’ as two faculties of the self that are in constant disaccord with one another. Mead’s ‘I’ represents the disposition of the individual to assert itself sometimes even against social expectations. The ‘me’ represents a part of the self that conforms to social expectations much like Freud’s super-ego. Sigmund Freud, however, mentions the term ‘identity’ as a synthesis of the faculties of the ‘id’ and the ‘super-ego’ only once in his work (cf. his collected works [London: Imago, 1955] vol. 14, p. 111-205. For a comparison between Freud’s and Mead’s conceptions of the self cf. Krappmann, Loc. cit. 60f.). The term ‘identity’ plays a role in interactionist sociology, which also draws on G. H. Mead (Krappmann, Loc. cit. 17f.). ‘Interactionists claim that society, i.e. the network of mutually interacting individuals, with its values and norms precedes the individual ontogenetically. In the process of socialisation, the child learns how to participate successfully in processes of interaction. This implies not only passive adjustment but exertion of influence on the side of the individual’ (Loc. cit. 21, my translation). As Axel Honneth (Loc. cit.) observes, the individual is constantly engaged in a struggle for recognition. He equally draws on Mead.



group intact albeit changed. The group as a whole would find to a new *synthesis*, i.e. it integrates on the basis of a new provisional consensus, which finds expression in a new set of legitimised patterns of behaviour. The dialectical circle is complete. As examples we may think of any civil rights movement that presses for the demands of a minority and achieves a new set of norms governing the whole of the society. Thus the women’s movement has changed the established patterns of expectations that society imposes on all women and not only for those women who pressed for it.

In an alternative course of events, the collective could break up into different factions, some sticking to the old rules, some progressing along new lines. Here, the dialectical process breaks down and the outcome is social differentiation. We may think of the struggle over the right way to salvation in early modern Europe which lead to a break down of the unity of the church and to a splintering into numerous factions of reformed churches (including the catholic church itself).

Even after the individual has settled questions of collective identity, i.e. questions of being or not being part of certain social groups by affirming and conforming to their expectations and established patterns of social behaviour, its problems of maintaining identity do not end. Still, while largely accepting and behaving in accordance with group norms, individuals are bound to have needs and desires that would lead them into conflict with group expectations if they were to be followed. Thus individuals are constantly negotiating with the group about the *interpretations* and *implications* of norms that they generally accept. In their particular circumstances, individuals negotiate the ‘meaning’ of a certain norm. This negotiation, to a large extent, ensues in the medium of language. It is the linguistic representation and even legal codification of social norms that attempt to limit the range of possible interpretations (particularly in legal language) and at the same time offer a tool for the re-wording and re-interpretation of their underlying intention. Even in the domain of politics arguments often take the form of a struggle over divergent understandings of language. We may be reminded of the struggle over the term ‘secular’ in the Indian polity over the past ten odd years.<sup>19</sup>

Since language as a social phenomenon is also the medium in which each individual negotiates within itself its own identity across time (diachronic perspective) and across the different social roles that it has to master (synchronic perspective), personal identity can not be separated from collective identity. Personal identity is thus not less social than collective identity.

In order to understand what makes for the identity of a person or a collective, we should also be able to say in what sense a person or a collective can fail to have an identity. One suggestion would be that a person fails to have an identity when she fails to maintain a certain amount of coherence and consistency within her belief system and in the way her actions confirm or betray her professed beliefs. The strictness that we should impose on the coherence and consistency of beliefs and actions should, however, not be

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. Cossman, Brenda, and Ratna Kapur. *Secularism's Last Sigh? Hindutva and the (Miss)Rule of Law*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001, an essay that ‘explores the contest over the meaning of Hindutva and secularism in the legal arena’ (p. xvi).

exaggerated. As a person can not have an identity except by responding to social demands and since these social demands are often incommensurable, a person often can not help incorporating these inconsistencies into itself (or its self). As Adorno once said, there is no being right in the wrong. It would be too much to ask for a well integrated personality where the social circumstances are full of contradictions.<sup>20</sup>

## 1.2 Language

Wittgenstein rejects the traditional conception of meaning, that he identifies with Augustine, and according to which each word of the language corresponds to an entity that is its meaning.<sup>21</sup> ‘Meanings’, according to the later Wittgenstein, do not have to be conceptualised as entities but can be seen as finding expression in patterns of social behaviour. Says Wittgenstein: ‘The meaning of a word is its use in the language.’<sup>22</sup> The use of an expression, of course, can not be conceived outside the domain of social interaction. Underlying this reduction of meaning to social interaction is the desire to explicate something obscure by reference to something evident. ‘Meanings’ in this approach are not any entities at all. There is no use for the hypostatic noun ‘meaning’. Wittgenstein would prefer the verb: ‘To mean’ something is to intend and expect to be understood in a certain way and to elicit the appropriate response in terms of behaviour, linguistic or other, in the partner(s) of the interaction. The noun ‘meaning’ is thus only to be understood as the substantivised form of the verb ‘to mean’ just as ‘throwing’ is the substantivised form of ‘to throw’ without necessarily implying that there are such entities as ‘throwings’.

In saying this, I do not wish to contest the possibility of a theory of meaning that uses entities such as propositions, intensions, extensions, or interpreted logical forms<sup>23</sup> as semantic counterparts for linguistic expressions. For certain purposes the stipulation of ‘meanings’ as entities may be useful. For other purposes, semantics may be reduced to a form of syntax and for yet others, semantics and syntax may reduce to lexicology. In fact it seems that, with certain limitations, each domain of language can be represented in every other domain and each may be useful for different ends. Wittgenstein seems to do the same when he takes pragmatics as basic and then models meaning on the concept of use of language.

According to Wittgenstein, understanding an utterance of language amounts to knowing its use, that is, knowing how to respond appropriately to a pattern of linguistic behaviour. Linguistic behaviour being only a part of the whole range of human social behav-

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<sup>20</sup> ‘The aim of a well integrated personality is despicable.’ Adorno, Theodor W. ‘Zum Verhältnis von Soziologie und Psychoanalyse.’ In *Sociologica. Frankfurter Beiträge zur Soziologie. Band 1*, 11-45. Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1955, p. 29 (my translation).

<sup>21</sup> ‘That philosophical concept of meaning has its place in a primitive idea of the way language functions. But one can also say that it is the idea of a language more primitive than ours’ (Wittgenstein, Loc. cit. §2).

<sup>22</sup> Wittgenstein, Loc. cit. §43

<sup>23</sup> Cf. my ‘Interpreted Logical Forms as Objects of the Attitudes.’ *Journal of Logic, Language, and Information* 4, no. 4 (1995): 301-315; or more extensively ‘Signification in Opaque Contexts. Interpreted Logical Forms as Attitude Contents.’ In *Signification in Language and Culture*, edited by Harjeet Singh Gill, 161-194. Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 2002.

our, we might as well say: Understanding an instance of intentional human behaviour (both linguistic and non-linguistic) means knowing how to respond appropriately to the corresponding behavioural pattern of human behaviour. This knowledge comprises two things, (a) knowledge of the relevant pattern and (b) the ability to recognise a token behaviour as an instance of a pattern type.

We have seen how language offers only relatively coarse tools for the representation and expression of individual needs and desires in a socially acceptable and comprehensible way. In this very general sense, language itself becomes a system of social norms with the corresponding demand on the individual to conform to collective expectations as to how to express herself. Again, the same dialectics is at play here as in the case of any relation between collectives and individuals. The individual's particular needs and desires are a constant challenge to the collective's identity in terms of linguistic behaviour, and the collective will have an interest to control these. If the dissenters become too numerous, however, that is if needs and desires change on a social scale, the group's linguistic norms will either be adjusted – then the group's linguistic identity changes – or the group breaks up and differentiates into sub-groups. Thus, languages evolve and (or) linguistic communities break up and differentiate into variant uses of language, dialects, sociolects, jargons (youth, professions), and ultimately new languages. Very interesting in this regard are the social processes that led to the evolution of Hindi and Urdu as two almost separate languages.<sup>24</sup>

### 1.3 Culture

In a very broad sense, what distinguishes culture from its opposite is that cultural phenomena seem to follow rules whereas phenomena outside the sphere of culture follow laws. Laws are different from rules in that they do not permit exceptions. Natural laws, for instance, always hold true or they aren't laws at all. Thus, the day apples fail falling to the ground, Newton's law of gravity is no longer valid. Social rules, by contrast, hold only generally true and they do allow for exceptions. Thus, the fact that there are instances where people do not abide by the rule that they should not cross an intersection while the red light is on does not mean that the rule is not generally valid. Natural laws are universal and precise, rules of social practice are generic, vague, and fuzzy. For example, the validity of the social norm that bans lying is not threatened by a few people who do lie whereas the validity of the law of gravity would be threatened by a single instance of the apple not falling to the ground.

According to some, the sphere of culture is defined by reference to symbols, metaphors, or symbolic actions with characteristic meanings (denoting and connoting) and not by reference to rules governing human behaviour. Some have suggested the term 'root metaphor' for the basic beliefs underlying each cultural sphere, for example the belief in purity and impurity underlying the South-Asian conception of caste. Such deep-rooted beliefs control the interaction of individuals in a very basic and pervasive sense and

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<sup>24</sup> Cf. Misra, Salil. 'Transition from the Syncretic to the Plural: The World of Hindi and Urdu.' In *Religious Pluralism in South Asia and Europe*, edited by Jamal Malik and Helmut Reifeld, 268-297. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005.

often sub-consciously.<sup>25</sup> Wittgenstein, however, has taught us how ‘meaning’ (also the meaning of metaphors) can be translated back into ‘social practice’. What Wittgenstein observes about language is essentially true of everything that involves intentionality whether this be human actions, speech acts or even rituals.<sup>26</sup> Knowing the meaning of something in this broader sense would be equivalent to understanding and knowing how to respond appropriately to patterns of human behaviour, linguistic and otherwise. This understanding can be implicit and sub-conscious or explicit and conscious. Even beliefs can be construed as actions involving a conscious or sub-conscious decision of ‘holding something true’. Belief systems lead to characteristic *ways of interaction among individuals and among collectives* that can in themselves be seen as spelling out what the respective beliefs ‘mean’ for a collective that shares the corresponding cultural sphere.

All communicative interaction is marked by the feature of intentionality. Intentionality, in this construction, would be tantamount to the expectation of appropriate responses in the partners of social interaction. The intention that makes for the communicativeness of an action would be nothing more than the expectation that partners would respond appropriately. An act lacking intention would carry no such expectation.

## 2. Migrant Literature and Migrant Identities

The purpose of the above discussion of the terms identity, language, and culture was to equip us with the concepts needed to elicit proof of the relevant identity struggles featuring in migrant identities in Germany from a corpus of recent migrant literatures in the German language. The methodology applying here and in other cases where literature is being read not for its own sake but used as a source of evidence for questions emerging from a wider culture studies or even sociological perspective has been developed by the two Austrian sociologists, Kuzmics and Mozetic. The title of their work, ‘Literature as Sociology’, serves me well as a term for their methodology.

*Literature as Sociology* cautions us to ask which of the various sociological approaches could be fruitfully applied to which of the various kinds of literature. The authors point to the fact that the emergence of sociology as an academic discipline and the period of the realist novel in the later half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century coincide. There seems to be an affinity here which is mediated through a common interest of the sociologist and the writer in learning and depicting social realities. This affinity operates largely under the paradigm of positivism. In today’s post-modern intellectual scenario a different affinity comes to the fore. Sociological literature and related literatures such as historiography itself can and must be read and analysed as kinds of literature with all the means of literary criticism. From this the authors conclude that we should neither fall into the trap of a naïve realism according to which only sociological literature is objective whereas fiction is merely subjective. In fact, both are dealing with reality in a certain way and both use literary means to represent this reality. This may be less so in certain genres of

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. Dipankar Gupta. *Culture, Space, and the Nation-State*. New Delhi: Sage, 2000.

<sup>26</sup> If somebody were to perform her part in a marriage rite and then go home and continue her single life, she would be failing to understand the meaning of the marriage ritual.

literature such as poetry and more so in the genre of the novel, particularly, of course, the realist novel. Thus, the authors conclude:

The more individualistic a sociology is and the closer it is to human activity and psychology, the more plausible may seem a reference to fiction.<sup>27</sup>

Some possible functions that literature can perform in a sociological perspective would encompass:

1. The function of illustrating social realities that have already been ascertained by means of its richness, vividness, and concreteness. Here, of course, the matching literary genre would be the realist novel. This presupposes, however, an independent account of the reality that is being illustrated through sociological means.

2. The function of serving as a source of information, especially if other sources are scarce. Possible fields of application are the spheres of privacy and intimacy, value and opinion, psychological processes, subjective world views, experiences and emotions and the emotive validity that an otherwise objective social reality may have for the individual, in other words, the whole subjective dimension of social reality that is hard to access with quantitative sociological methods. Processes of personal and collective identity formation are certainly among these. An investigation into these processes through the medium of literature requires, however, a critical evaluation of the sources through comparison with other sources, independent arguments for their reality content and the awareness of the mechanisms of the particular genre of that literary source.

3. In a limited sense, the authors claim, literature can even be used as a source of inspiration on methodological grounds. Sometimes literature is said to even anticipate findings that sociology ascertains much later. A famous case is Weber's famous thesis about the correlation between protestant ethics and capitalism that apparently Thomas Mann had already anticipated in earlier literary work. Another example quoted by the authors is the whole interactionist approach on identity development as developed by Stendhal and later exploited by James, Cooley, Dewey, and Mead. Similarly, Dahrendorf's role concept of identity formation is said to have been anticipated by Musil. In particular, the authors conclude, literature, just as sociology in its more hermeneutic orientation, can help to develop ideal types, in Weber's sense, of social phenomena.

Thus, the authors conclude:

Weber's concept of the Ideal Type serves us especially well because sociology in its objectifying tendency must be in a position to find out more about the subjective meaning of experience also. More in any case than this would be possible on the basis of only singular, more or less random explications of meaning.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> *Literature as Sociology* p. 73 (all translations are mine); see also the discussion of *Alltagssoziologie* and *Ethno-Methodologie* on pp. 75ff.

<sup>28</sup> *Literature as Sociology* p. 71 (my translation).

Against all of this, the sceptic might raise the following objections:

A. Often literary authors fall victim to stereotypes and lag behind the social realities. The authors mention a study by Deegan on the image of the single woman in the US-American novel until 1935 that reveals how writers misrepresent the social realities of their time.<sup>29</sup> This reinforces the need to take into consideration all available independent information in order to be able to rate a literary source in terms of its sociological likeliness. Quantitative sociological studies may help to place the reality presented in literature in a wider context. Thus, the authors conclude:

In as much as social science wants to establish quantitative data and to offer theoretical explanations on a high level through at least law-like generalisations a contribution to the pursuit of sociological knowledge from the field of fiction is not to be expected.<sup>30</sup>

But even in sociology, quantitative analysis is not an aim in itself. At some point we have to read the data, interpret, and evaluate their meaning for us. The subjective meaning of social realities, however, are often well represented in works of fiction.

B. Another objection that could be raised regards the fundamental difference in the notion of truth in both kinds of literature. The way a work of fiction can be called true would be very different from the way sociological literature aims at truth. Moreover, the perspective of the writer of fiction is necessarily distorted by the determinants of his own position in society. As against these worries, the authors remind us that even so called facts and data are artefacts and have to be taken with the proverbial grain of salt. Even sociologists sometimes fall victim to stereotypes and value judgements that affect the way they create data and facts.<sup>31</sup>

C. Since the writing of fiction for intrinsic reasons has to resort to exaggeration and sometimes suppression of facts, *Literature as Sociology* needs to be supplemented by a reflection on the author's reasons behind the employment of such literary means and on how this relates to the expectations and interests prevailing in the society that forms his or her readership. Moreover, not even the realist pretensions of a writer of fiction can be taken face value. They, as all other information, feature as part of the context of aesthetic considerations that also accounts for the omission of certain other information. While granting these as points of caution, the authors also point to the fact that even sociological texts feature such literary qualities that equally need reflection.<sup>32</sup>

The authors go as far as to conclude that:

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<sup>29</sup> Cf. Deegan, Dorothy Yost. *The Stereotype of the Single Woman in American Novels. A Social Study with Implications for the Education of Women*. New York: Octagon Books, 1981.

<sup>30</sup> *Literature as Sociology* p. 71 p. 69 (my translation).

<sup>31</sup> The authors refer to Cicourel's critique of quantitative sociology as an example (cf. Cicourel, Aaron V. *Methode und Messung in der Soziologie*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. their section on 'the textualist challenge', pp. 97f.

“The Study of Migrant Identities through Migrant Literatures.” In: Dorothea Jecht, Shaswati Mazumdar (eds.) *German Studies in India. Aktuelle Beiträge aus der indischen Germanistik / Germanistik in Indien*, Iudicium, Munich, 2005, pp. 81-116

If fiction is to yield a systematic contribution to social science other than serving just the purpose of illustrating social life, we cannot seem to avoid the consequence that we can not subscribe to an essentially realistic epistemology.<sup>33</sup>

A kind of sociology that is mindful of the difficulties entailed in the approach of naïve realism will anyway incline towards an interpretative approach (participatory observation, symbolic interaction, social hermeneutics, or Goffmann’s sociology of encounter, even constructivism). Correspondingly,

If fiction is to be taken seriously for the purpose of social science, then its contribution would be coming most likely from a micro- or meso-sociological perspective where the interest is about human action and interaction between persons in the context of institutions and the life-world.<sup>34</sup>

Constructivism as well as hermeneutics as methodologies are aware of the principled circularity of any knowledge generating process. Even while we are merely observing we react to what seems relevant to us and suppress what appears irrelevant against the backdrop of our own received value judgements and socially determined expectations. Even on the descriptive level pre-theoretical generalisations and categorisations play their role in structuring our observations and influencing our experience. This seems to hold true in common sense as well as in rigorous investigation. Therefore realism can not simply mean representation of reality. In the contrary, those methods should be called successful that help us structure the world. There is no reason to assume that works of fiction could not also contribute to this enterprise.

### 3. An Example

As a sample, I am choosing 50 interviews that were taken by Feridun Zaimoglu of mostly young people in Germany with a Turkish migratory background. 24 of these interviews were taken from male youth in the period between 1994 and 1995 and were published in a booklet titled *Kanak Sprak* in the year 1996.<sup>35</sup> 26 interviews were taken from female youth between 1996 and 1998 and appeared under the title *Koppstoff* in the year 1999.<sup>36</sup> I am looking at these interviews in order to find out about the role that religion plays in the quest for identity of second and third generation youth with Turkish migratory background. Since Zaimoglu has introduced the term ‘kanakster’ to name this group of young people and since this term ever since seems to have taken on a positive meaning, carrying an emancipative message for this group much like African Americans and Homosexuals turned around the derogative meanings of ‘Nigger’ and ‘Gay’ in the US, I have no hesitation in adopting this term as a short hand.

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<sup>33</sup> *Literature as Sociology* pp. 108f. (my translation).

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.* p. 108. (my translation).

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Zaimoglu, Feridun. *Kanak Sprak. 24 Misstöne vom Rande der Gesellschaft*, Hamburg: Rotbuch, fifth edition 2000, henceforth ‘*Kanak Sprak*’.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Zaimoglu, Feridun. *Koppstoff. Kanak Sprak vom Rande der Gesellschaft*, Hamburg: Rotbuch, third edition 2000, henceforth ‘*Koppstoff*’.

### 3.1 The Sample

Zaimoglu calls his interviews ‘position protocols’ (*Positionsprotokolle*, cf. *Koppstoff*: 9). They are actually not interviews in the classical sense of the term, but short statements in the form of a monologue, often triggered by very general questions such as ‘what’s up’ or the like.<sup>37</sup> Of course, these interviews are not statistically representative of the group in question but they offer a qualitatively unique insight into the ongoing identity struggle that kanaksters face in their partly German, partly Turkish environment. Moreover, the statements are partly ‘translated’ from a mixed Turkish-German slang and strongly edited (*nachgedichtet*) by Zaimoglu. Since they are intended as pieces of literary art, they do not purport to be authentic in a literal sense. It is impossible for the reader to know, where the editing process has led to just more density in the original or where Zaimoglu’s own contribution has come in.

Another important piece of contextual information is the fact that these interviews were taken at a time, or shortly thereafter, when many an asylum seeker’s homes had gone up in flames and quite a few ‘foreigners’ (*Ausländer*) had died in xenophobic violence, with neo-nazi mobs serving as willing executioners of a perceived ‘popular will’ that was sponsored by the hate propaganda of the conservative parties and media, with crowds standing by and clapping applause and police giving a free hand to the mobs. Since 1992, near to one hundred people have been burned or beaten to death by right wing extremists, hate crimes, to which the German police and judiciary reacted merely with ambiguous consequences.<sup>38</sup> The *quid bono* was the ruling Christian Conservative and Liberal Parties’ under the chancellorship of Helmut Kohl, who was intent to revise Germany’s liberal asylum law. This may explain some of the extreme anger and frustration that pervades the interviews.

The first thing that strikes the reader is the fact that religion figures nowhere as a central theme in any of the interviews except in two – first, in ‘Im Namen des Allerbarmer,’ statement of alleged 22 years old ‘Islamist’ Yücel (*Kanak Sprak*: 137-41), secondly in ‘Alles in dieser Welt ist vergänglich,’ statement of 22 year old law student Hatice (*Koppstoff*: 67-71). Only these two kanaksters identify themselves primarily as Muslims. Their statements conform to the typical moderate Islamist outlook and therefore contain no surprises. In fact, they come across as rather tame as compared to many other, more radical statements. These radical statements, however, obtain their drive not from religious but from social issues: The ignorance of the German environment, where the kanakster feels ignored and not appreciated, the frustration with a German society that remains a closed shop even for those who do master German language and cultural habits, and, of course, the humiliation suffered by anyone at the bottom end of society with little prospect of upward mobility. This observation corresponds with the general tendency found in recent studies on the state of religiosity among young Muslims in

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<sup>37</sup> ‘was geht ab’, ‘was ist dein Dreh’ (*Kanak Sprak* 91) ‘was geht hier ab bei Dir?’ (*Kanak Sprak* 115).

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Di Lorenzo, Giovanni. ‘Wir können auch anders. Nazis müssten die Demokraten mehr fürchten als Demokraten die Nazis,’ in *DIE ZEIT* No. 8, 17 February 2005, p. 1.



Germany. Faruk Şen observes that at most 15% of Muslims in the age group of 18-29 would call themselves traditionally religious.<sup>39</sup>

It is all the more interesting, however, to look at the way religion features in a number of other interviews. I shall give complete quotations from those places where religion or related matters feature in the annexe to this paper. Given the historical context, the tone that pervades some of these interviews does not surprise. Many of the *kanaksters* express their anger and frustration, some compensate their powerlessness with fantasies of omnipotence (especially Çağil in *Koppstoff* 56ff.). The language of these interviews is most probably not authentic but consciously styled by the author. Zaimoglu created an artificial *kanakster* language, ‘*Kanak Sprach*’, by using elements from various sociolects: the slang of migrant youth, the language of the lower stratum of German society and elements of Nether-German dialect (Plattdeutsch). Through *Kanak Sprach*, Zaimoglu conveys the vitality, and linguistic imaginativeness of migrant youth in Germany. For lack of the correct German word, Feridun’s *kanaksters* often seem to use metaphors that can be very poetic and original. This is to show that Zaimoglu is not interested in shallow documentary realism. He consciously creates a medium of representation for the perceptions that he has obtained in his own interaction with migrant youth in Germany. The resulting ‘position protocols’ are therefore consciously formed texts and not directly representative of reality. In spite of Zaimoglu’s literary interference, the texts offer a qualitatively unique insight into the identity related conflicts migrant youth experiences in contemporary German society. We only have to avoid taking them face value.

In the following, I would like to focus on the role of religion in these identity conflicts. The allegation, especially by conservative intellectuals in Germany, is that religion, especially Islam, represents a major obstacle in the attempt of migrant youth to integrate into German society. Thus, the historian Hans-Ulrich Wehler claimed in a controversial article in the German weekly *DIE ZEIT* that Muslims in Germany were separated from ‘us’ primarily Christian Europeans by an enormous cultural divide. There allegedly do not share in ‘our’ common heritage which is marked by Judaeo-Christian Antiquity, the Renaissance, the Protestant Reformation, the Enlightenment and the Scientific Revolution. Allegedly, in Germany, Muslims as organised in thousands of radical Islamic associations create problems. Everywhere in Europe, according to Wehler, Muslim minorities withdraw into their respective sub-culture and prove incapable of assimilation into mainstream society. Wehler concludes that Germany has a problem – not with foreigners, as is commonly assumed – but exclusively with its Turkish minority.<sup>40</sup>

These allegations rest on two assumptions. The first is that ‘we’, the Germans, in spite of many hundred years of Renaissance, Enlightenment and Scientific Revolution that we share with our European neighbours and that separate us from the Christian Middle Ages, are still overwhelmingly determined by Christianity. The second allegation is that the behaviour of ‘them’, immigrants of mostly Turkish descent, and their Germany born

<sup>39</sup> Şen, Faruk. ‘Entwicklung des Islam in der Migration.’ *Zentrum für Türkeistudien Aktuell* 89 (2004): 3-50, p. 31.

<sup>40</sup> Vgl. Hans-Ulrich Wehler: ‘Das Türkenproblem.’ *Die Zeit* Nr. 38 vom 19. September 2002, sowie derselbe ‘Muslime sind nicht integrierbar.’ *Die Tageszeitung* Nr. 6849 vom 10. September 2002, S. 6.

children and grandchildren, allegedly, is overwhelmingly determined by ‘their’ religion, Islam.

The first assumption is clearly wrong. The overwhelming majority of the German population cannot, since long, be called religious. One third of the population of nearly 83 million does no longer even formally belong to any church. And even those who are still registered as Catholics or Protestants, for the most part, do not practice their religion.<sup>41</sup> But even the second assumption is doubtful. The following examples may serve to substantiate this doubt and to falsify the assumption that Germans and foreigners of Turkish descent could not integrate into one society because of their respective religions.

Firstly, the text samples illustrate what independent studies have confirmed like the one carried out recently by the Essen based Centre for Turkish Studies: Great religiosity and traditionalism are typically a feature of the elder generation of immigrants.<sup>42</sup> Thus, at most 15 per cent of the 18 to 29 year olds would call themselves traditional and religious. The 18 year old packer Bujuk Ibo, for example, regrets that ‘our old fathers play cards in the pubs or bear beards and go to the mosque while our mothers become fat and work on the food’<sup>43</sup> – only to add what really matters, namely not religion but ‘how to bring my skin into a safe harbour.’ Here, religion doesn’t help: ‘from the old guys you only get advice and a lot of hot air. But hot air doesn’t fill your stomach.’<sup>44</sup>

This young man is determined to escape a social ghetto where a false step can easily mean falling prey to crime and drugs. The elders are of not much help to him with their advice, which is tailored to a completely different life-world and cultural sphere. Religion and tradition may serve their function in the village community back home in Anatolia. In the German context, this bundle of religious convictions and customs, which are not always necessarily prescribed by religion, but which have taken on a quasi religious valence would have to be untied. The religious core would have to be adapted to the new conditions and separated from peripheral old customs that are neither prescribed by religion nor adequate in the European context. Yet, whosoever finds himself entangled in a struggle for subsistence will have neither the peace nor the necessary education for this intellectual enterprise.

Moreover, many youngsters of Turkish descent not only seem to be convinced of the inadequacy of traditional religious behavioural norms in the changed context of the recipient country. They can make out the quietism in the traditionally religious way of life of their parent’s and grand-parent’s generation that only serves to underline their help-

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<sup>41</sup> According to my estimates, the part of the German population still practicing Christianity in one or the other form should not number more than a few millions (17% of those formally belonging to the Catholic and 4% of those formally belonging to the Protestant Church). Cf. Dusche, Michael: ‘Religious Minorities in Germany.’ In: Satish Saberwal & Mushirul Hassan (eds.) *Assertive Religious Identities: India and Europe*, Manohar, New Delhi, 2006, pp. 415-437.

<sup>42</sup> Vgl. Faruk Şen: ‘Entwicklung des Islam in der Migration.’ *Zentrum für Türkeistudien Aktuell* 89 (2004): 3-50.

<sup>43</sup> *Kanak Sprak* 44f. (my translation. German original cf. annexe).

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.* (my translation. German original cf. annexe).

lessness in the face of the circumstances of their new life in Germany. Mehmet, a 29-year-old poet remarks coolly and critically:

The old ones have resigned to the fate that they believe to have discovered in old verses and traditions. They bow their little vulture heads over the old scripture for the plagued creature looks for the final and plausible word, the ultimate prophecy, in a root that is not its own. I can see them kneeling down before a God who spoke in the desert all the time. I know that they are in dire need of this God, otherwise they would crumble like rigid pillars of salt that you can topple with hardly any effort.<sup>45</sup>

The withdrawal from the German society into a lost tradition is often accompanied by a crude assertion of that tradition *vis à vis* the younger generation, irrespective of its unsuitability in the changed cultural context. Especially young women of Turkish descent are concerned here. They are being used as flag posts for the banner of cultural identity and are supposed to live by rules of cultural and religious chastity that most traditionalist men would never apply to themselves. Often the women have to make good for what the men lack in propriety and decency and they can be sure of their verdict if they don't. Thus bartender Banu, a 33 year old woman remarks full of resignation but critically:

For them, I am one who wanders from the straight and narrow. Does that mean that they are on the right path? That is not for sure. That only God can tell and He will decide only later.<sup>46</sup>

She utterly rejects the claim of the Turkish males to sit in judgement over her doings and omissions and she reminds them that according to their own belief, Islam, only God is authorised to ultimately judge a person. She demands that the judgemental Turkish male should become aware of his hypocrisy.

in Nilgün, a 17-year-old pupil, has made a clear decision for herself:

And I am supposed to be fire-wood with which God fans the hell-fire just because I am wearing jeans? Once, I gave a veiled neighbour a piece of my mind. She immediately went and told. My mom sided with her straight away. She was our neighbour, after all, and elder than me. I should have been more respectful. This makes me sick. It is all false and phoney ... At home, I am playing the good girl, go to school, do my homework, on marriages being nice with everybody. There I am in their damn pretentious world. But when I am with my friends, my life looks differently. Then, I am Nilla and we do what we feel like, far away from our origin.<sup>47</sup>

She has decided in favour of the recipient country and against her parent's origins. Apparently she is being supported therein by her school mates and peer group.

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<sup>45</sup> *Kanak Sprak* 110. (my translation. German original cf. annexe).

<sup>46</sup> *Koppstoff* 55 (my translation. German original cf. annexe).

<sup>47</sup> *Koppstoff* 127 (my translation. German original cf. annexe).

At times, criticism of the origins can turn into outright contempt. Then, for lack of alternatives, the process of identity formation remains fully within the context of the recipient society. Consequently today, many Turkish-Germans think about themselves, and often judge themselves, similarly to the German environment. Thus, Kadir, a 32-year-old sociologist, remarks slightly contemptuously:

And they lean back, self-righteously, they who clean themselves with their left hand after defecation as the prophet told. They are nibblers hunched over hard-bound holy books in which cryptic characters appear like baked together chiselled inscriptions in stone of the Song of Songs of the raging one ... and some let the wife follow behind in a distance of seven steps, the pasta-mom, the blown-up honeycake-mumi who chastely covers her bareness for the satisfaction of man ... They are children of a faulty orthodoxy and they live without real participation. They wait for the mysterious sign that signals them to strike their tents and return home.<sup>48</sup>

Herein, something of an over-identification shines through, an adoption of the perspective of the German other onto the community of Turkish-Germans. The same stereotypes that mark the perception of the average German with respect to the immigrant community dominates the own perspective, for example the subjugation of the ‘big fat Turkish mummy’ by her patriarch.

Generally, identification with the requirements of an environment that does not reward this with due recognition leads to confusion and loss of self, which is striking in the case of Zeyneb, a 28-year-old female tailor:

In the ghetto, heaven and hell are related whores. They both woo the souls. Heaven and hell are confused in the district because they have to seize the body fist. They are ghosts and thoughts and they collide with the living. In the street, heaven and hell move around in human form, they eat and drink, and yet we recognise them. Sometimes, I believe that God, yes even He, is locked into the Turkish district ... Don’t have any dream, have beaten it to death. This I mean as I say it. Dream is absolute and turns into many rats that search for man made things or for food that was kept in the pantry. The people of rats has love for us, it found pleasure in us just as the locked-in God here. And I keep rats out just as dreams. If one asks for more one calls the plague into the house.<sup>49</sup>

Ayşe, a 27-year-old prostitute, displays an extreme form of surrender, just as Derwisch (*Kanak Sprak* 57), a 33-year-old patient in a psychiatric clinic. Ayşe only spreads her legs. She feels as ‘the Aysche-whore in this country of rats, with or without headscarf.’<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> *Kanak Sprak* 102f. (my translation. German original cf. annexe).

<sup>49</sup> *Koppstoff* 82f. (my translation. German original cf. annexe).

<sup>50</sup> *Koppstoff* 112. (my translation. German original cf. annexe).

Hatice, by contrast, seems to have found a much healthier way of adapting to German circumstances and yet maintain a consistent identity that includes parts of her origin. She is rather successful in this as is proved by the fact that she has made it into a law course of the university. She states:

I am seldom asked why I wear a headscarf because most people believe to know it already. But how can they? Nobody is in any position to know what is on my mind except when I tell him. I cover my head as devout Muslim women do. This is important for me because with it I profess Islam and obey its rules and laws.<sup>51</sup>

Her confidence seems to stem from her religiosity. The standpoint of religion gives her a double advantage both over the community of her origin as well as over the German society. She is of the opinion that freedom of religion is hampered in Germany. Sometimes permission for the running of halal slaughterhouses is not granted by German officials. Still there are discussions about the call for prayer via loud speaker. She says:

My religion is the most important thing in my life. All in this world is transitory: money, power, beauty. What counts is faith. That is the only thing for which we are held accountable at some point of time.

At the same time, she respects the friends who do not cover themselves even though she thinks that it is advantageous for a woman to cover herself:

When a woman is covered, men know immediately that she is a believer and they respect her faith. She can behave much more confidently ... Unfortunately, there are many Muslims living in Germany who want to be like Germans. They forget their own culture and religion. They will find back to the right way insha'allah.<sup>52</sup>

Here, religion is no longer a vehicle for the suppression of the woman and the headscarf no longer a sign of her subjugation. Instead, thanks to her subjective anchoring in religion she can demand recognition not only from the Turkish but also from the German side who normally respects the open confession of her belief. She can look forward to a healthy self esteem and a potential upwards movement in the society, which already in this stage will give her a strong position in her own family.

Nilüfer, a 36-year-old social worker in a house of refuge for abused girls (*Mädchenhaus*) has a much harder stand than Hatice. Her colleagues apparently have established views on what is to be thought of the Muslim head scarf and they do not accept Nilüfer's divergent point of view. They talk about their educational mission and they teach her their taboos: “Headscarf is shit, Turkish men are shit ... I know many with headscarves and that is six inches of ornamental cloth around a real head, you know, a bright mind always glows, they are much freer than these crotchety fairies...”<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> *Koppstoff* 70f. (my translation. German original cf. annexe).

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.* (my translation. German original cf. annexe).

<sup>53</sup> *Koppstoff* 101 (my translation. German original cf. annexe).

In the name of liberation from paternalism, these social workers seem to subject their protégés to the paternalism of liberation. They are not prepared to accept that liberty can also mean that a woman chooses a faith and tradition that, in the eyes of the social workers, entails suppression. Here the border line between non-tolerance of intolerance and intolerance itself becomes blurred. Even the liberty to wear a headscarf is protected by the liberal regime of the German society, no matter how the headscarf as a symbol is interpreted. As long as the wearing of a headscarf does not infringe on the basic rights of a third individual – and it is simply non-conceivable how this should be possible – it must be tolerated even if one does not personally agree with the motives one suspects behind such an act.

In the face of such intolerance one should not be surprised at some Turkish-Germans who react with obduracy and obstinacy. Thus, the 22-year-old car mechanic Harkan protests:

I am a free person, a serf only before God the Lord and otherwise owe nothing to any of the blond-pigs and if I was driven to the north then due to money for which I paid with my sweat. For this freedom I am prepared even to broom the dirt of any of these locals and that is faultlessly and legally a service.<sup>54</sup>

While Harkan is still in congruence with the value of honest labour as shared by Turks and Germans, Yücil, a 22-year-old youth whom Zaimoglu calls ‘the Islamist’, is moving a step further into isolation:

I avoid the society of faith-mockers and ... take it upon me that they call me an odd and a fanatic because I don't care for their appreciation.<sup>55</sup>

Whatever has moved this young man to cut off the dialogue with his recipient country, he will not find a solution for his identity problem in this direction. Nobody can sustain an identity for a long time solely on solipsistic premises. Every individual and even every group of individuals needs a dialogical other to form and uphold an identity.

26-year-old Faruk expresses this problem of identity formation in an almost poetical manner:

I am asking myself, how could I find salvation and a niche filled with God. I am asking myself, how could I save myself from the attack of the Fiend who haunts you in the night and scratches at the window panes. I am asking myself, how can I move hand over hand up to a place where things are not so razor-sharp. I am asking myself, where is the mild hand that snuggles itself into my hand. I am asking myself, where is the woman with whom there is good to tangle, up to whose soft skin one can cuddle. I am asking myself when I can finally stop old baring of teeth cause I'm not from the animal kingdom and want to have my peace in the realm

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<sup>54</sup> *Kanak Sprak* 86 (my translation. German original cf. annexe).

<sup>55</sup> *Kanak Sprak* 138ff. (my translation. German original cf. annexe).

of humanity. And, brother, I believe whoever knows the answer to all these questions is probably a goddamn wise man.<sup>56</sup>

Faruk longs for a dignified life and despises the violence that seems necessary for the survival in the under world on which his life seems to border. He longs for love and affection, humaneness and refuge, in faith even. He is driven by the fear of the devil, the fear of the brutality of fellow human beings, of hostility and humiliation. In brief, he longs for material as well as spiritual security. He knows no true escape but he bears with this tension and does not allow himself to be driven to premature conclusions that would drive him into resignation and isolation.

Leyla, a 31-year-old sales-person in the insurance business, has no illusions about the kind of salvation that modern consumerist society has to offer:

Salvation has an infinite lot to do with throwing-in and with devouring, with procuring and with paying the full price. Whether you get your package of hyper-karma from some psycho-sect or butter your eyes with melted stuff, the money bill wanders from hand to hand. Salvation is as near as a bundle of money bills.<sup>57</sup>

Since long, even religion has become a commodity, salvation a marketable good, and drugs such as heroin offer instant-salvation. 19-year-old Küçük Recai has just given himself up to the needle. The junky stammers in delirium:

There is no oh-come-and-ease-my-despair-God, no palely rosy sky, no stupid-bow-wow-bingo-bingo-host-of-angels, no pose of pain hitting the mark.<sup>58</sup>

Ercan, 24-year-old gigolo, is a curious character. He speaks of an encounter with a female client, which serves to demonstrate that not only Turkish-Germans have difficulties in reconciling their collective past with the demands of modern life, but also German-Germans:

The lady has bought you for the whole night, your prick she bought, and that is my bonus, because a piece of skin is missing, and I let hell yodel with my prick ... and as she bows over my firm glen she says: ‘You, my beautiful Jew’, and when I tell her that I’m only a simple Turk the lady upon my soul gets angry and says not to spoil it and keep my mouth shut and let her do what she wants and that, brother, was over my head ... when she tells me that a Jew means more pleasure to her than anybody else, well, she was screaming in the midst of the action like a mad woman, like: ‘A Jew is fucking me’ or ‘I have a Jewish dick in my pussy’, which turned her on considerably ... for a good bye she says: ‘My naughty Jewish dickey.’ I retreat and on my way wonder by myself what such a Christian lady can stammer while the whole world knows that the old Alemanne was the highest ranking among the barbarians whet it came to chopping up the Jews and driving

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<sup>56</sup> *Kanak Sprak* 77 (my translation. German original cf. annexe).

<sup>57</sup> *Koppstoff* 64. (my translation. German original cf. annexe).

<sup>58</sup> *Kanak Sprak* 104. (my translation. German original cf. annexe).

gas into their lungs ... from dead bodies a substance leaks into the location and the first of all substances is the rage over being eliminated and not being able to participate in the nice breathing-in and breathing-out, and here the country is soaked up to its last spot with dead Jewish-innocent-flesh which these swines have killed and brushed away. Thus the buried flesh gets its revenge and goes lumpy as a spirit and lumps up many spirits among the living who are going nuts.<sup>59</sup>

It turns out that Europe is not only to be identified with the Christian occident, the renaissance, and the enlightenment, but also with the inquisition, witch hunts, and the holocaust. Turkish-Germans are bearing their share of these aspects of their recipient society's past. Why exclude them from the brighter features of the European past. Why shouldn't they claim European values as their own just as 'we' which to share in the human heritage whether it is from across time or across horizons of culture.

In the end one can say that the sample texts confirm more or less the expectations that one could have developed on the basis of independent research from the social sciences. Let me name a few:

- In most of the cases, religion is not the main issue in the quest for identity with young people with a migratory background in Germany or it is only one among many themes in their struggle to maintain a balance between their origins as represented by parents, extended family and the community at large on one hand, and the German society on the other.
- Only in two of the statements, religions features as a main subject. At the same time, the two examples symbolise two trends among Muslim youth in Germany. Firstly, the tendency of re-Islamisation and ideological seclusion from both, the community of origin and from the recipient society. Secondly and contrary to the first trend, there is also a trend towards public display of religiosity that nevertheless is being experienced as personal and does not raise any anti-liberal or doctrinal claims. While the first tendency seems to lead to a dead end and to possible conflict with the host society, the second trend seems to signify a chance for Muslim youth in Germany as well as for the society at large (more about this further down).

Since the examples taken from Zaimoglu do not seem to conflict with independent evidence taken from the field of social science, we can proceed to more far-reaching questions, i.e.:

1. How does Zaimoglu underline his intentions by the selection of samples and by way of literary form (Nachdichtung).
2. How much is Zaimoglu influenced by marketing strategies (pop literature)? o what degree is the image of Muslim youth that he draws influenced (and falsified) by such marketing strategies?
3. To what extent does Zaimoglu use the mask of the *kanakster* in order to transport his own agenda and how does his agenda differ from that of those youngsters.

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<sup>59</sup> *Kanak Sprach* 70ff. (my translation. German original cf. annexe).



All these have to remain open questions for now. Many can probably not be clarified for principled reasons. Others will continue to preoccupy the research literature on German Migrant Literatures in general and the literature on Zaimoglu in particular. The answer to these questions would of course influence the social- and culture studies way of reading Zaimoglu that is being put forward in this paper. But even at this stage an interesting interim sum can be drawn. I am coming back to Hatice’s example. Hatice was the so called Islamist. No matter whether we are encountering here an authentic example or a fictitious character, whether the statement is truthful or part of a public relations scheme of some Islamist group to which Hatice may be belonging: Through Hatice’s statement a case for a positive role of religion and religiosity can be established. An open profession of their belief can help Muslim youth cope with the challenges of identity formation in an ambiguous environment as the Diaspora situation may be called. The open affirmation of their faith can help them to assert themselves as against the expectations of their community of origin as well as with respect to the German host society that confronts them with its own expectations. It can help them to achieve recognition from both and to gain psychological support for even more autonomy. Hatice obliges the older generation within the migrant community by her appeal to just those religious and cultural values in whose name women of Turkish descent are being suppressed. She thereby gains liberties (i.e. to go out of the house alone, to study and pursue a career) and is able to acquire skills that will enable her to claim even more autonomy. Even to the greater part of the host society she commands respect through the assertion of her religiosity. She thereby demarcates a limit beyond which she is not willing to assimilate into the German society. If German-hood were to be defined culturally or even by reference to (Christian) religion, she would not want to be a part of it.

Needless to say that the interpretation proposed in this paper need not be the only possible one. Its conceivability alone yields an insight that reaches far beyond migrant literature only serving to illustrate social facts and their sociological interpretation along the lines of *Literature as Sociology*. With Hatice, Zaimoglu creates (or highlights) a possible role model for religiously inclined young Muslims in Germany. A greater liberty is to be gained not from hiding one’s religious orientation but from asserting it publicly. A personal profession of belief which is free of any missionary zeal does not normally seem to antagonise but to invites, queries, responses and an open debate. Open profession of belief offers the possibility even for members of the host society to rationally come to terms with their own unwarranted prejudice and intolerance. In an open society this should be possible although this is not to say that such openness is without risk. An invisible religion however would only reconfirm a parochial mentality in a closed society. Religion, it seems, can lead to both: Isolation as in the case of Yücil who stands for a fundamentalist Islam, and integration as exemplified by Hatice whom I take for an example for a liberal Islam as is required in the European context. The fundamentalist, however, can also be interpreted as using religion only to rationalise his failure to come to terms with his life after the fact.

## Annex

Page numbers in brackets refer to ‘*Kanak Sprach*’:

- a) Büjüç Ibo, 18, packer: “...unsere ollen väter zocken in den kneipen, oder tragen’n bart und geh in die moschee, unsre mutter werden fett und basteln an’m essen, und wo sind wir, wenn du schon fragst, die meisten haben den finger um’n abzug und treiben schnee in’n riechkolben und sind dann rambos und quirlen nur scheiße und scheiße und wieder scheiße, bis’n bulle sie aufließt, und du hast deinen verfuckten namen im register, was nich berühmt is, das sag ich dir ... Scheiß drauf! Erste sorge: wo bin ich und wie bring ich meine haut in’n sicheren hafen? ... von’n alten kriegst du rat mit viel luft drin, davon wirst du nicht satt...” (44f).
- b) Dervisch, 33, patient in a mental hospital: “Ich glaub hiphip an den gott, o göttchen, o göttchen...” (56). „Wer gibt dir denn den magen, sag, der erzoberfummelige ogottogott gibt dir das, und du stopfst wie ein schwein unkoscheren dreck da rein, was ER nicht will. ER will es nicht, hörst du. Du mieser!“ (57).
- c) Ercan, 24, gigolo: “Die Lady hat dich für ne ganze nacht gekauft, deinen schwanz hat sie gekauft, und der ist mir mein bonus, weil ja’n hautstück fehlt, und ich laß man damit die hölle jodeln ... und als sie sich halt mir über die pralle eichel beugt, sagt sie: du mein schöner jude, und als ich ihr sag, ich bin nur’n schlichter kümmel, wird die lady potzblitz ärgerlich und sagt, ich soll die man nicht zerstören, lieber’s maul halten und sie man machen lassen, und das, bruder, ging mir über’n verstand ... wo die ihr mitteilt, ’n jude ist mir mehr wollust als irgendwer sonst, na ja, die hat halt auch mitten im ausüben des geschäfts volle kante gebrüllt, von wegen mich fickt’n jude, oder ich ich hab’n judenschwanz in mir inner möse, was die prächtig in fahrt brachte ... sagt die zum abschied: mein schlimmer judenschmiddel, und ich rück denn ab und denk unterwegs, was doch sone christenlady alles zusammenstammelt, wo alle welt doch wissen tut, daß der olle alemanne oberster barbar war beim judenschnitzeln und gas denen ihre lungen treiben ... wo ne leiche liegt, von ihr der substanz anne ort abgibt, und irhe allererste substanz is eben dolle wut übers ausscheiden und nicht mehr teilnehmer sein am schönen luftein- und ausatmen, und hier’s land ist bis zum letzten erdenflecken vollgesogen mit totem judenunschuld-fleisch, das die arschgeigen gekillt haben und schnell man grob innnen graben geschmissen oder zu asche verwandelt und weggefegt. Also rächt sich’s verscharrete fleisch und klumpt als geist und viele geister in den lebenden, wo die man’n sprung wegkriegen...” (70ff.).
- d) Faruk, 26, unemployed: “Ich frag mich, wie nur könnt ich erlösung finden und wie gottgefüllte nische beziehen, ich frag mich, wie könnt ich mich retten vor dem angriff des widersachers, der dich heimsucht in der nacht und an den scheiben kratzt, ich frag mich, wie kann ich mich hochhangeln an nen ort, wo’s nicht so messerscharf zugeht, ich frag mich, wo ist die milde hand, die sich in meine hand vergräbt, ich frag mich, wo ist die frau, mit der gut kirschen essen ist, an deren weiche haut sich schmiegen läßt, ich frag mich, wann ich das olle zähnefletschen endlich lassen kann, weil ich doch nicht aus’m tierreich bin, und meine ruhe haben will im menschenreich. Und, bruder, ich glaube, wer antwort weiß auf all die fragen, der ist wahrlich ein gottverdammter weiser“ (77).
- e) Harkan, 22, car mechanic (journeyman): “Ich bin’n freier, und knecht nur vor gott dem herrn, und sonst keiner blondsau was schuldig, und wenn’s mich ins nordische

- was getrieben hat, dann isstes mit schweiß erkauftes geld, dafür tu ich auch der einheimischen dreck kehren, und das ist denn einwandfrei und legal dienstleistung“ (86).
- f) Kadir, 32, sociologist: “Und sie lehnen sich selbstgerecht zurück, sie, die nach der defäkation sich mit der linken hand waschen, und nicht mit der rechten, wie es der prophet geheißen. Sie sind mümmeler über gebundenen heiligen büchern, in denen kryptische lettern zum hohelied des zürnenden zusammengebacken wie in stein gemeißelte inschriften anmuten ... Und einige lassen das weib in einem abstand von sieben schritten folgen, die teigwarenmamma, die aufgeblähte honigkuchenmutter, die ihre blößen züchtig bedeckt zum wohlgefallen des mannes ... Sie sind kinder einer fehlerhaften orthodoxie und sie leben ausgerechnet ohne rechte beteiligung, sie warten auf das mystische zeichen, das ihnen anzeigt, ihre zelte abzurechen und heimzukehren“ (102f.).
- g) Kücük Recai, 19, junky, just after a shot of heroin: “Es gibt kein o-komm-mir-not-lindern-gott, keinen blaßrosa himmel, keine blödwauwauende bingo-bingoengelsschar, keine schmerzpose, die’s trifft“ (104).
- h) Memet, 29, poet: “Wir sind bastarde, freund, das heißt, daß wir gedanken und empfindungen haben, für die wir nichts können, so was wie ausgeknobelte kreaturen ohne sinn und rechtem verstand, die gerne eine gebrauchsanweisung hätten, oder einen heiligen katechismus, um dieses dumpfbrüten, das uns beherrscht, abzuschütteln“ (110). “Die alten haben sich in ein fatum ergeben, das sie in versen und überlieferungen entdeckt zu haben glauben, sie beugen ihre verrunzelten kleinen geierköpfe über die alte schrift, denn die bedrängte kreatur sucht das finale und plausible wort, die letztendliche weissagung, in einer wurzel, die nicht die ihre ist. Ich sehe sie niederknien vor eine gott, der immerfort in der wüste sprach. Ich weiß, daß sie diesen ihren gott bitternötig haben, sonst würden sie zerbröckeln wie starre salzsäulen, die man einfach umwirft.
- i) Tarkan, 28, garbage collector: “Wenn ich den ollen bimbam hör, was da dir’n privaten himmel stark bewölkt, s’geläut wie so’n fetter becher, aus dem der verdammte sirup tropft und dir’s hirn dumm verklebt, werd ich’n haßbimbo, der mit’m karabiner die kackglocke runterballert, so’n richtiger muselman wird ich, obwohl mir die bärtigen auf die eier gehn, die mit ihrem rosenkranzschickschnack und arsch hochrecken, weil’s nem jehova günstig scheint“ (123).
- j) Yücel, 22, islamist: “Der anfechtungen sind viele hier in der ungläubigen land. Die jugend wird geführt in lästerung durch baalhörige unterteufel, die gier und lust erwecken, gier nach hab und noch mehr hab, und lust auf nacktes frauenfleisch, das entblößt und aller hüllen beraubt keinen gedanken oder freien willen habend darf, wie ein haus mit einer rundherumfassade und einem blütenweißen anstrich, geht man aber hinein, ist das haus entkernt, und es wohnt keine menschenseele, dafür ist es vom erbauer nicht erdacht worden, aber nur für den einzigen zweck, daß man blicke wirft und bestaunt. So ist die frau im westen allein eine blickfischerin, ein blicknetz mit tausend zugeworfenen leblosen zappelnden augen, und so lernt sie, daß es gut sei und nicht anders zu machen, ihren körper anzubieten, denn das gesetz schreibt vor, daß nacktheit sich auf jeden fall bezahlt macht, es ist nämlich so eine art nackte gewalt ... Es herrscht bürgerkrieg zwischen mann und frau, und ich sehe, daß sie sich betrügen und hintergehen, schlagen und belügen, verkaufen und verraten ... Ich habe nirgendwo soviel niedertracht auf einem haufen gesehen wie in der tausendfach bekannten und tausendmal verratenen liebe zwischen mann und

frau hier im westen. Gott sei mein zeuge und erhöre mich. Und in diesem kalten nest wachsen die kinder auf, und verlieren ihr urvertrauen, weil sie ganz klar durchschauen, daß die eltern philister und pharisäer sind, heuchler ersten grades, verderber der kinder lämmerseele, prediger der ordnung und zuger ekligsten drecks ... die tödlichste waffe des gläubigen gegen baals tempel und das sündige system ist radikale und fundamentale ablehnung all dessen, was krieg führt wider gott, die völlige nichtbeteiligung, und so sollen sie uns hassen als fundamentalisten, das ist eine auszeichnung, das ist uns ganz recht ... Ich, der ich mich seinem worte ergeben, esse koscheres geschächtetes fleisch, halte von mir fern alkohol, glücksspiel, zhins und zinseszins, unzüchtige berührung mit einer nicht vom herrn zugesprochenen frau, ich vermeide die gesellschaft der glaubensspötter und baalanwinsler, ich suche nicht auf jene tempel, in denen sie ihrer sexualnot genügen, und ich nehme es auf mich, daß sie mich einen wunderlichen oder fanatischen nennen, weil mir an ihrer wertschätzung nicht gelegen ist“ (138ff.)

The following page numbers refer to ‘Koppstoff’:

- k) Nesrin, 24, rapper and street fighter: “was Deutschlandhaus ist: n Space der Masken, wo jeder Arsch den Magic Drop sucht, den seligen Knockout oder aber n ranzigsten Bock zum Sühneschächten, damit das viele Blut irgend ne billige Kleinkacksünde reinwäscht” (14).
- l) Banu, 33, bar-girl: “Für sie bin ich eine, die vom Weg abgekommen ist. Heißt das jetzt, daß sie auf dem richtigen sind? Das weiß man nicht. Das weiß nur Gott, und der wird später entscheiden“ (55).
- m) Leyla, 31, insurance sales woman: “Sich erlösen hat unendlich viel mit einwerfen und fressen zu tun, mit beschaffen und den vollen Preis bezahlen. Ob du bei einer Psychosekte dein Päckchen Hyperkarma abholst oder Geschmolzenes in die Adern butterst: Der Geldschein wandert von Hand zu Hand. Die Erlösung ist so nah wie das Bündel Geldnoten“ (64).
- n) Hatice, 22, law student: “Ich werde selten gefragt, warum ich ein Kopftuch trage, weil die meisten Leute glauben, es schon zu wissen. Dabei können sie es gar nicht. Niemand kann wissen, was in meinem Kopf vorgeht, es sei denn, ich habe es ihm erzählt. Ich bedecke meinen Kopf, wie gläubige, muslimische Frauen es tun. Es ist wichtig für mich, weil ich mich damit zum Islam bekenne und mich seinen Regeln und Gesetzen beuge“ (67). “...die freie Religionsausübung ist in Deutschland nicht gewährleistet. Noch immer gibt es Schwierigkeiten, eine Genehmigung für islamische Schlachthöfe zu bekommen ... [gibt es] Diskussion um den Ezan, den Gebetsruf ... über Lautsprecher“ (69). “...meine Religion ist das Wichtigste in meinem Leben. Alles in dieser Welt ist vergänglich: Geld, Macht, Schönheit. Was zählt, ist der Glaube. Das ist das einzige, weswegen wir irgendwann zur Rechenschaft gezogen werden ... Ich habe auch Freundinnen, die sich nicht bedecken. Ich respektiere ihre Entscheidung, [aber es hat] Vorteile, sich zu bedecken ... Wenn eine Frau ... bedeckt ist, wissen die Männer sofort, daß sie eine Gläubige ist, und haben Respekt vor ihr und ihrem Glauben. Sie kann sich viel selbstbewußter verhalten ... Leider gibt es sehr viele in Deutschland lebende Moslems, die so sein möchten wie Deutsche. Dabei vergessen sie ihre eigene Kultur und Religion. Insha'allah finden sie zum rechten Weg zurück“ (70f.).

- o) Zeyneb, 28, tailor: “Die Alten wollen sich unter einer Moscheekuppel versammeln, an den Pfosten sitzen, die zum Himmel führen. Wir aber sind frei von Leidklage. Im Ghetto sind Himmel und Hölle verwandte Huren. Und sie buhlen um die Seelen. Himmel und Hölle sind verwirrt im Bezirk, weil sie ja den Körper greifen müssen als erstes. Sie sind Geister und Gedanken und prallen gegen die Lebenden. Auf der Straße bewegen sich Himmel und Hölle in Menschengestalt, essen und trinken, und doch erkennen wir sie. Manchmal glaube ich, daß Gott, ja sogar er, eingesperrt ist im Türkenbezirk ... Hab keinen Traum, hab ihn mausetot geschlagen. Das meine ich Wort für Wort, wie ich es sage. Traum ist total und wird zu vielen Ratten, die von Menschenhand Gemachtes oder in die Kammer gestellte Speise suchen. Das Rattenvolk besitzt Liebe zu uns, es hat an uns Gefallen gefunden wie der hier eingesperrte Gott. Und ich lasse Ratten wie Traum draußen. Wenn man mehr will, ruft man die Plage ins Haus“ (82f.).
- p) Nilüfer, 36, warden in a home for young women: “Im Mädchenhaus haben diese Pseudoweiber von Erziehungsauftrag geschwätzt und mir als Erzieherin groß beigebracht, was Sündentabu ist: Kopftuch ist kaka, Türkenmann ist kaka, und das ‘-Innen’ wegzulassen ist oberkaka. Ich kenne sehr viele mit Kpftuch, und das ist denn eine Handbreit Schmuckstoff um einen wirklichen Kopf, verstehst du, ein heller Geist glüht immer, die sind viel freier als diese verbiesterten Zierfee, die eine Macht nach der anderen jagen und die Mächtigkeitssumme hochstapeln zum wissenden Urdeutsch, und verhandelt wird in zwei Klassen: Befreites Gebiet sie und belagerte Wesen wir“ (100). “Das ganze Land stinkt zum Himmel it seinem Recht uns seiner Freiheit. Aber dann das Maul bis zum Arsch aufreißen: Ihr Türken habt den Aberglauben, du Türkenfrau müssen schmeißen weg Kaka-Kopftuch, Türke wehe du werden frech, Türke du nix Hirn, ich dir zeigen wie gehen das , Türke du verziehen dich ab nach Anatolia, wenn du hier nix anpassen, ist unser land. Anpassen heißt was? Zum Vasallen des Urdeutsch mutieren! Klotten vom Leib reißen, damit sie mit Stinkefingern fummeln und grabbeln am Türkleib“ (101).
- q) Ayşe, 27, prostitute: “...ich mach die Beine breit in diesem Ratten-Land, ich bin die Aysche-Nutte in diesem Ratten-Land, mit oder ohne *Koppstoff*“ (112).
- r) Nilgün, 17, high school student: “Und ich soll Höllenholz sein, womit Gott das Feuer anfacht, weil ich Jeans trage. Einmal habe ich einer verschleierte Nachbarin die Meinung gesagt. Sie hat mich gleich verpetzt. Meine Mutter hat sofort zu ihr gehalten. Schließlich sei sie unsere Nachbarin und älter als ich. Ich hätte respektvoll sein müssen. Das kotzt mich so an. Alles ist falsch, alles verlogen ... Zu Hause mach ich das Bravtöchterlein, gehe zur Schule, mache Hausarbeit, auf Hochzeiten schön Heiteitei mit allem. Da bin ich in ihrer scheißverlogenen Welt. Aber wenn ich bei meinen Freundinnen bin, sieht mein Leben anders aus. Da bin ich die Nilla. Wir machen, wozu wir Lust haben, weit weg von unserem Ursprung“ (127).