

TURKISH GIRLS, ALLAH'S DAUGHTERS, AND THE CONTEMPORARY GERMAN SUBJECT: ITINERARY OF A FIGURE¹

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ABSTRACT

This essay considers the very recent emergence of the category of 'Muslim' in German public discourse and through it examines current German self-understandings. In contemporary Germany, the notion of a resident 'Muslim' minority has been primarily created by relabelling and recasting immigrants from Turkey, the country's largest minority. I argue that the rearticulation of longstanding storylines about abused women of Turkish background – increasingly presented as 'Muslim' – serves as a key point of transfer in this shift from ethnonational to religious framings. Analysing exemplary media sources as well as the sociologist Necla Kelek's influential non-fiction book *Die fremde Braut* (2005), I point to the crucial and multilayered work done by gender in this shift as well as its large-scale implications for reimagining Germany and Europe.

INTRODUCTION

What does it mean to tell the same stories under different labels? Since the 1970s, when women from Turkey began to live in Germany in substantial numbers as a result of labour migration and family unification, stories have been circulating about them in the German public sphere. More often than not, these stories have cast the women as foreign, deficient, and, most often, as pitiable victims of domestic abuse. The figure of the 'geschundene Sulaika', as Karin Yeşilada calls her, has been produced and reproduced in fiction and non-fiction books, films and TV shows, and newspaper and magazine reports throughout the last three decades.² The suffering of this figure has been time and again presented as caused by 'Turkish culture', which in turn was equated with backwardness and violent patriarchy. In just the last few years, however, the figure of the abused young woman has begun to be recast in German public discourse. Instead of being presented as a 'Turkish woman' who suffers from the rules of her 'culture,' she is now

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² Karin Yeşilada, 'Die geschundene Sulaika. Das Eigenbild der Türkin in der deutschsprachigen Literatur türkischer Autorinnen', in *Interkulturelle Konfigurationen: Zur deutschsprachigen Erzählliteratur von Autoren nichtdeutscher Herkunft*, ed. Mary Howard, Munich 1997, pp. 95–114. Yeşilada focuses on literary representations, yet her concept can be usefully expanded to other genres and media.

interpellated as a 'Muslim woman' and is said to suffer from the tenets of her 'religion,' that is, Islam.³

The new emphasis on religion in these stories of female victimhood mirrors the increased focus on religion, and especially Islam, in larger social and political contexts both in Germany and around the globe. Since around 2000, religion has supplemented, if not overtaken, ethnonational origin as the heretofore dominant axis of difference and group identity in German discourses.⁴ The first ever high-level government initiative on the integration of resident minorities in Germany thus took the form of the so-called 'Islamkonferenz'. The series of meetings that went by this name was organised by the Christian Democratic Interior Minister Wolfgang Schäuble between 2006 and 2009 and included government officials on the one side and 'Muslim' invitees on the other. This institutional framing effectively designated 'Islam' and 'Muslims' as primary subject categories and objects of state interest. Yet the majority of the 'Muslim' representatives were of Turkish origin, that is, they hailed from the group that has constituted Germany's largest resident ethnic minority since the early 1970s and on whose presence there has never been a similar event held by the government. In other words, the 'Muslims' of the current German imagination have largely been created out of whole cloth by relabelling immigrants from Turkey. The same individuals long treated as ethnonational Others have thus become embodiments of a differently underwritten Otherness. As a Turkish-German man put it to a journalist, 'Wissen Sie [...], vor 40 Jahren waren wir Ausländer, vor 20 Jahren waren wir Migranten, und heute sind wir plötzlich Moslems – dabei sind wir immer dieselben geblieben.'⁵ Though observed by various commentators,⁶ the implications of this relabelling and reimagination, both for the individuals and for German majority society, are not yet well understood.

³ With the term 'interpellation' I draw on the French Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser who uses it to describe the process by which the subject is constituted by being hailed or addressed by the state. See Louis Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses: Notes towards an Investigation', in *Lenin and Philosophy and other Essays*, London 1971, pp. 127–86. I use Althusser's concept to trace the constitution of differentiated subject positions through forms of address in media and other discourses. In another essay, where I also comment on the recent shift from 'Turkish' to 'Muslim', I elaborate on the importance of address in the production of minority subjects in contemporary Germany. See Yasemin Yıldız, 'Immer noch keine Adresse in Deutschland? Adressierung als politische Strategie', in *Kritik des Okzidentalismus: Transdisziplinäre Beiträge zu (Neo-)Orientalismus und Geschlecht*, ed. Gabriele Dietze, Claudia Brunner and Edith Wenzel, Bielefeld 2009, pp. 83–99.

⁴ For this date, see Riem Spielhaus, 'Religion und Identität: Vom deutschen Versuch, "Ausländer" fu "Muslimen" fu machen', *Internationale Politik*, March 2006, 28–36.

⁵ Ali Gülceek, quoted in Claudia Dantschke, 'Islam und Islamismus in Deutschland. Strömungen und Strategien', in *Macht-Religion-Politik: Zur Renaissance religiöser Praktiken und Mentalitäten*, ed. Margarete Jäger and Jürgen Link, Münster 2006, pp. 161–86 (p. 161).

⁶ Besides Spielhaus and Dantschke, see for example Anna Korteweg and Gökçe Yurdakul, 'Islam, Gender, and Immigrant Integration: Boundary Drawing in Discourses on Honour Killing in the Netherlands and Germany', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 2008, 1–21. For further first-person accounts of this experience, see for example Perihan Cepne in Kerstin E. Finkelstein, *Wir haben Erfolg: 30 muslimische Frauen in Deutschland*, Cologne 2008, p. 56.

In this essay, stories about abused young women in Germany serve as a point of departure for tracing this shift and its implications. Such gendered stories, appearing in numerous media settings and channels, authored by men and women, minorities and majority, are significant sites of discursive negotiation. They do not simply constitute a sideshow to the main programme, but, as I argue, occupy a privileged, facilitating role in the shift. Their gendered aspect in fact does much work in the discourse, both ideologically and affectively. Although seemingly referring to actual women and their lives, the figures that these stories create are ultimately made up of generic features and stock characteristics that show only slight variation. This essay therefore focuses on the creation and employment of an artificial, yet affectively charged figure through these stories rather than on actual women's lives or even on counter figures.⁷

Analysis of two high-profile articles in the newsweekly *Der Spiegel*, from 1990 and 2004 respectively, helps to focus on the (re)production of the figure in question. Telling very similar stories, yet using different labels, the two *Spiegel* articles illustrate the shift from 'Turkish' to 'Muslim' in an exemplary fashion, while revealing the nature of continuities and differences. Among the noticeable changes in the recent discourse is the active participation of women of 'Turkish' or 'Muslim' background in these debates. The lawyer Seyran Ateş and the sociologist Necla Kelek, who both participate in the 'Islamkonferenz' and are often referred to as 'Islamkritikerinnen', are the two best-known such public figures. In the final part of the essay, I turn to Kelek's bestselling 2005 book *Die fremde Braut* as a text that significantly helped propel and legitimise the shift.⁸ Considering Kelek's book more closely helps us to see what is at stake in the current use of the abused young woman figure and in the present discursive transformation, namely not just the shaping of minority subjects – however interpellated they may be by this discourse – but of ethnic German majority subjects as well. Following the itinerary of the female victim figure that these texts generate ultimately reveals an unexpected and ambivalent rearticulation of self and other in the production of a contemporary 'German subject' set in a larger European and global context.

The particular texts discussed in this essay may at first sight appear disparate and fleeting, yet they are in fact called upon time and again in significant moments of discursive interventions. A 2005 publication on Turkish membership in the EU by the UK-based think tank The Foreign Policy

⁷ A consideration of counter figures could find much rich material in Emine Sevgi Özdamar's writing, as noted by Moray McGowan, 'Turkish-German Fiction Since the Mid-1990s', in *Contemporary German Fiction: Writing in the Berlin Republic*, ed. Stuart Taberner, Cambridge 2007, p. 199. That German literature of Turkish migration is in no way limited to the depiction of 'figures', however, is productively shown by Leslie A. Adelson, *The Turkish Turn in Contemporary German Literature: A New Critical Grammar of Migration*, New York 2005.

⁸ Necla Kelek, *Die fremde Braut: Ein Bericht aus dem Inneren des türkischen Lebens in Deutschland*, 4th edn., Munich 2006.

Centre – founded by Tony Blair –, for instance, features an article whose primary material is predominantly culled from the texts under discussion here, namely the 1990 *Spiegel* article and Necla Kelek's book.⁹ It is thus worth approaching the current shift by examining these particular publications.

PRODUCING CULTURAL DIFFERENCE VIA GENDER: 'TURKISH WOMEN'

In the autumn of 1990, shortly after German reunification, *Der Spiegel* published a sixteen-page, illustrated article with the title 'Knüppel im Kreuz, Kind im Bauch'.¹⁰ The article was already controversial at the time of its publication, when Turkish-German feminists demonstrated against it in Hamburg and a flood of letters to the magazine took a critical stance. Since then, this article has been a frequent reference point in critical discussions of media representations of minority women, but *Der Spiegel* has also continued to include it in its occasionally published topical 'dossiers'.¹¹

Under the rubric 'Ausländer', the article develops a stark narrative about young women from Turkey living in Germany. Mixing crime reports, anecdotal evidence, voices of 'Türkenexperten', excursions into aspects of Turkish history and a brief discussion of the Koran, it describes these women's lives as marked by violence, abuse, social control and discrimination. The article, which paradigmatically starts with a dead girl – passers-by discover the corpse of a sixteen-year-old girl killed by her brother for eloping with her boyfriend – presents all the young women it introduces as incapable of changing or escaping their conditions. An extract illustrates the article's objectifying tone that belies a thin veneer of concern:

Das Leid vieler Türkinnen, deren wallende Gewänder und altweiberhafte Kopftücher oft genug Anlaß zu Spott und Häme bieten, ist kein Thema für Gewerkschaften oder Parteien – es wird verdrängt. Türkinnen sind keine Wählerinnen, sie sind das allerletzte.

Auf der Straße die ständige Diskriminierung durch offene oder versteckte Ausländerfeindlichkeit, drinnen in den eigenen vier Wänden die Hilflosigkeit gegen die Gewalt der Männer – wohl kaum eine

⁹ See Sarah Schaefer, 'Germany: A Case Study of Failed Integration?', in *Turks in Europe: Why are we Afraid?*, London 2005, pp. 1–18. Schaefer's essay is one of two pieces in the publication discussing the sources of resistance to Turkish membership and suggesting ways to counter these.

¹⁰ *Der Spiegel*, 44, 1990, 98–114.

¹¹ For critical references see for example Helma Lutz, 'Rassismus und Sexismus, Unterschiede und Gemeinsamkeiten', in *Ein Herrenvolk von Untertanen: Rassismus-Nationalismus-Sexismus*, ed. Andreas Foitzik *et al.*, Duisburg 1992; Margarete Jäger, 'Diskursive Effekte der Kopftuchdebatte im deutschen Einwanderungsdiskurs', in *Macht-Religion-Politik: Zur Renaissance religiöser Praktiken und Mentalitäten*, ed. Margarete Jäger and Jürgen Link, Münster 2006, pp. 187–208; Schahrzad Farrokhzad, 'Exotin, Unterdrückte und Fundamentalistin – Konstruktionen der "fremden Frau" in deutschen Medien', in *Massenmedien, Migration und Integration: Herausforderungen für Journalismus und politische Bildung*, ed. Christoph Butterwege and Gudrun Hentges, Wiesbaden, 2006 (2nd rev. edn), pp. 55–86.

Bevölkerungsgruppe fristet in der Bundesrepublik ein beklagenswerteres Dasein als die türkischen Frauen und Mädchen. Sie werden terrorisiert und geschlagen, sie leben in ständiger Angst vor gewalttätigen Ehemännern, Brüdern oder männlichen Anverwandten, die totale Macht haben über alles, was in der Familie Rösche trägt.¹²

Describing the women in a judgmental manner as unattractive and partly to blame for the 'mockery' they receive, the article openly channels a discriminatory gaze and language that renders the women as scum ('das allerletzte'). Though it acknowledges discrimination, nowhere does the article call for its closer examination or suggest that it should be challenged. The discriminating agent remains obscure, while the article identifies male relatives as the only true aggressors. The women, on the other hand, are reduced to multiply signifying ciphers: they are objects of the magazine's preoccupation with their clothing, they serve as affective knots of anxiety and terror, and, most insistently, function as a condensed locus of complete powerlessness.

As noted, this article is by no means the first or only one of its kind. Already the first significant representations of immigrant women from Turkey stylise them as passive, helpless victims of inescapable violence. In Helma Sanders-Brahms's 1975 made-for-TV film *Shirins Hochzeit*, the protagonist is an immigrant to Germany who ends up as a prostitute to male guest workers before being shot by a pimp. Andrea Baumgartner-Karabak and Gisela Landesberger's influential social reportage *Die verkaufte Bräute: Türkische Frauen zwischen Kreuzberg und Anatolien* (1978), which was reprinted nine times by the 1990s, describes Turkish immigrant women as powerless spouses who have no say in any aspect of their lives.¹³ Saliha Scheinhardt's much read testimonial-like fictional works from the early 1980s, such as *Drei Zypressen* (1984), buttress this image in stories about young women's endless abuse and victimisation by their male relatives, which they are not able to escape.¹⁴ In these and similar films and texts, the women are primarily identified as 'Turkish,' even when the texts represent Islam as a significant dimension of their lives.¹⁵

¹² *Der Spiegel*, 44, 1990, 99.

¹³ Andrea Baumgartner-Karabak and Gisela Landesberger, *Die verkaufte Bräute: Türkische Frauen zwischen Kreuzberg und Anatolien*, Frankfurt a.M. 1978. On this book, see Rita Chin, *The Guest Worker Question in Postwar Germany*, Cambridge 2007, and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim, 'Türkische Bräute und die Migrationsdebatte in Deutschland', *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, 1–2, 2006.

¹⁴ Saliha Scheinhardt, *Drei Zypressen*, Berlin 1984. As Chin shows, however, even Scheinhardt's texts can be read as more nuanced than generally assumed. Chin also demonstrates, though, that the German reception consistently overlooked those nuances in favour of the most extreme reading. For a discussion of Scheinhardt's later work and its different outlook, see Valerie Weinstein, 'Narrative Orientierungslosigkeit and New Orientations in Saliha Scheinhardt's *Die Stadt und das Mädchen*', *Seminar*, 43/1 (2007), 49–70.

¹⁵ In Turkish-German literature, Islam has primarily figured as part of the cultural backdrop but not as a major concern in itself, notes Georg Stoll, 'Immigrant Muslim Writers in Germany', in *The*

Given these predecessors, the 1990 *Spiegel* article appeared at a point when the presence of migrants from Turkey was longstanding and storylines about young women as the most victimised, most discriminated against, and most powerless had been well established. What did this article then contribute to the public discourse? As the article creates the abused woman figure, it is noticeable how central the designation 'Turkish' is for it. Although the article also uses the qualifier 'Kurdish' at times, it treats the two designations as essentially interchangeable. The murder victim Fikriye Mecitoğlu, for instance, is referred to as a 'Turk' at one point and as a 'Kurd' at another without any elaboration.¹⁶ Mostly, though, the article interpellates the women and their communities as 'Turkish' over and over again. The captions to nine of the twelve accompanying images illustrate this point most succinctly: 'Türkische Koranschülerinnen (in München)', 'Türkisches Mordopfer Fikriye Mecitoglu, Familie (in München)', 'Türkische Traditionstrachten', 'Türkische Arbeiterin', 'Türke, Türkin im Film', 'Türkische Landarbeiterinnen', 'Türkische Hochzeit', and 'Türkische Schneiderlehrlinge'. Another image entitled 'Hassparole in Berlin' shows a large graffiti that reads 'Türken raus', as a man, appearing to be Turkish, passes by with his little daughter. As this enumeration indicates, the designation 'Turkish' appears all important to the article and to its argument, as it locates the ethnicised young women in contexts of tradition, family, labour, and, most of all, abject violence. The image titled 'Turkish man and woman in the cinema', for instance, shows a scene from Tevfik Başer's 1986 film *40 m² Deutschland* in which the husband is anally raping his wife. The continuation of the caption reads: 'Wir kennen es nicht anders', taking the words of the Turkish-German film director out of context.

As the insistent repetition indicates, 'Turkish' is employed as the category that frames and explains the images and stories. It serves as the key term that seems to determine all actions described in the article. Strikingly from today's perspective, even the first image that shows a mosque scene and clearly refers to the Koran does not speak of the depicted women as 'Muslims' but rather as 'Turkish Koran students'. In this image as well as in the main text, Islam thus does appear, but as a subcategory of Turkish. The lives of the young women depicted become indicators for the allegedly essential nature of 'Turkishness'. That is, the stories about women are a means of producing what 'Turkishness' means in the first place. This overemphasis on, or rather production of, 'Turkishness' in 1990 is of course a curious matter three decades after the start of migration and at the very moment when Germany itself is being reshaped following unification. What this emphasis

Postcolonial Crescent: Islam's Impact on Contemporary Literature, ed. John C. Howley, New York 1998, pp. 266–83.

¹⁶ Despite the quasi-synonymous use, this reference could be read as a manifestation of beginning German public awareness of Kurdish specificity in the late 1980s.

aims to ward off and actively disable is any potential claim to belonging to Germany. Nowhere in the article is there any possibility of a Turkish-German or even just German identity and belonging envisioned for the men or the women in question. As the article does not offer any remedies for the situation of the female figures it describes or make any other political or social demands, one has to conclude that this gendered story primarily functions to foreclose the notion that 'Turkish' people might have a place in the new Germany at this historically critical moment.

Speaking about the 1980s, the historian Rita Chin observes that 'the treatment of women [...] became the primary litmus test to determine whether foreigners – and especially Turks – possessed the capacity to function effectively within a Western liberal-democratic society' (143). This function of gender as a 'litmus test' was by no means new then. As scholars such as Leila Ahmed and Meyda Yeğenoğlu have shown, a predominantly Christian Europe has long pointed to the inferior position of 'Oriental women' in Muslim societies as a way of asserting its own civilisational superiority.¹⁷ That is, gender has long intersected with civilisational and cultural discourses. The 1990 *Spiegel* story makes use of this conjunction by focusing on gender as a means to produce the category of 'Turkish' and assert its unalterable alienness.

PRODUCING CIVILISATIONAL DIFFERENCE VIA GENDER: 'MUSLIM WOMEN'

This abused young woman figure continues to be reproduced in current media discourses, yet under new signs, as the equally much discussed 2004 *Spiegel* cover story with the title 'Allahs rechtlose Töchter: Muslimische Frauen in Deutschland' indicates.¹⁸ The cover image shows the dark silhouette of a slender young woman moving in an unidentified public space in a long skirt, tight fitting top, and a bowed head in headscarf. The picture reveals an attractive figure in profile, but does not show the young woman's face. Identifying her as 'Allah's daughter' puts her squarely in a Muslim religious context, while conflating religious, familial, and patriarchal authority. The magazine's table of contents underscores the foregrounding of religion as the determining category in its subjects' lives: 'Entrechtete Frauen: Mitten in Deutschland werden Musliminnen gefangen gehalten, misshandelt und zwangsverheiratet', one of the main articles announces. The image captions, too, now refer to 'Musliminnen auf dem Münchner Fernsehturm' or to a 'Muslimisches Paar (in Hamburg)'. Throughout the text, stories of violence and abuse by the family are told in terms similar to the 1990 article. With one significant exception to which I return below,

¹⁷ Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate*, New Haven 1992; Meyda Yeğenoğlu, *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism*, Cambridge 1998.

¹⁸ *Der Spiegel*, 47, 2004, 60–88.

the focus in 2004, as in the earlier article, is again entirely on young women from Turkey. Every single name mentioned – such as Yasemin, Ülkü, Arzu – is identifiably Turkish. Instead of framing the stories purely in ethnonational and cultural terms, as had been the case before, however, this newer article uses ‘religion’ as the supreme explanatory category for the essential nature of these subjects and their described behaviours. ‘Religion’, though, neither refers to theological issues nor to ritual practices in this context. Rather, it functions as a category of identity to which the described practices are now ascribed. An image captioned ‘Liberale Musliminnen in einer Berliner Beratungsstelle’ that carries no hints of any religious identification or activity on the part of the women underscores the identity-conferring nature of this designation.¹⁹

Although ‘Turkish’ continues to be referenced in the article and in some captions, it is now relegated to being a subcategory of ‘Muslim’. That is, ‘Turkish’ and ‘Muslim’ have changed places. What this means is that ‘Muslim’ has not fully replaced ‘Turkish’, but rather overlaps with it as it becomes dominant.²⁰ A graphic from the 2004 *Spiegel* article illustrates this point visually through its colour coding: a disc-shaped figure lists the number of ‘Turks’ in Germany and of family immigration from Turkey, both differentiated by gender (62). The crescent moon and star underneath clearly reference the Turkish national flag, yet in contrast to the red colour of that flag, a green tint on the left appears to be encroaching on it. Green, in this context, of course, functions to signify Islam. The image thus presents the gradual transformation of a national reference point into a religious one in the German imagination.

The current presumption of Islam as the crucial reference point in stories of abused young women even holds when the stories themselves make no such argument. Among the cluster of recent bestselling testimonials which are presumed to tell ‘Leidensgeschichten muslimischer Frauen’, for example, one regularly finds the title *Erstickt an euren Lügen: Eine Türkin in Deutschland erzählt*, which is written by the pseudonymous author ‘Inci Y.’ in collaboration with a male German journalist.²¹ Though repeatedly referred to as an example of a woman’s suffering from Muslim conventions,²² the book itself never once makes such a claim or mentions any religious

¹⁹ For a similar identitarian use of the category, see also Kerstin Finkelstein’s book (note 6 above) which features short portraits of women of Turkish, Arabic, and Bosnian background in Germany. None of the women define themselves primarily as Muslim, however.

²⁰ Korteweg and Yurdakul’s quantitative analysis of German newspaper reports on so-called honour killings shows the same development. The social scientists identify a new focus on religious difference in addition to the heretofore dominant ethnonational form of group difference in German public discourse (p. 17).

²¹ Inci Y. (with Jochen Faust), *Erstickt an Euren Lügen: Eine Türkin in Deutschland erzählt*, Munich 2005.

²² See for example Sybille Stillhart, ‘Musliminnen proben den Aufstand’, *Tages-Anzeiger*, 21 September 2005, 12; Sybille Thelen, ‘Die Betroffenen melden sich zu Wort: Verborgene Zeichen der Integration: Muslimische Frauen erzählen, wie schwierig es ist, ein selbstbestimmtes Leben zu

motivations on the part of the woman's tormentors. Instead, the author describes, for example, how her overbearing, violent mother pressured her into a marriage with an equally unwilling young man in order to facilitate the mother's ongoing adulterous affair with the future father-in-law. Although clearly marked as operating with the category 'Turkish' – while telling a highly idiosyncratic story of sexual transgressions –, the reception of this book takes part in the newly emerging narrative that prefers to imagine 'Islam' as the reference point. A publication documenting an explicit self-identification as Muslim, such as pop singer Hülya Kandemir's memoir *Himmelstochter*, on the other hand, does not receive the same attention and is not part of the spectrum depicting 'Muslim women', because it is not a story of victimisation.²³

Despite this transformation in process, the 2004 *Spiegel* article is remarkable for the repetitions of tropes from the earlier piece, as the same sets of acts, attitudes, and references recur. Both articles describe young women in similar terms as controlled, violently abused, and terrorised by their families, and as having no possible way of charting their own path. According to the subheading of the 1990 article they have 'keine Chance', in the 2004 subheading they are 'ohne Chance'. Like its 1990 counterpart, the 2004 article cites Başer's 1986 movie *40 m² Deutschland* as evidence.²⁴ Like the article from 1990, the 2004 one styles itself as taking up a topic that has supposedly been invisible to majority German society until now. In 1990, the article states that the young women's fate is 'kein Thema', while the 2004 article states that it is 'kaum thematisiert', despite the fact that, as indicated, this topic has been treated repeatedly since the late 1970s. By this wilful amnesia about previous reporting the articles present themselves as daringly 'unveiling' a heretofore invisible or hidden topic over and over again.

Both *Spiegel* articles thus reproduce the same narratives about gender relations, but under different labels. In this mixture of continuity and change, gender functions as the element that persists, ensuring continuity through the familiar figures and plots that are reproduced in the gendered stories. In this manner, the gendered story functions as the medium that facilitates radical discursive change without an obvious rupture. For the later article never acknowledges its own changed terms but rather treats 'Muslim' as if it were a self-evident and always-already existing label. Because in both cases the chosen category – Turkish or Muslim – in conjunction with gender

führen', *Stuttgarter Zeitung*, 25 June 2005, 47. For a somewhat critical account that nevertheless refers to 'Muslims,' see Hilal Sezgin, 'Aus dem Jungfrauenkäfig: Tragische Geschichten junger Muslimas sind ein neuer Trend auf dem neuen Buchmarkt', *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 24 May 2005, 19.

²³ Hülya Kandemir, *Himmelstochter: Mein Weg vom Popstar zu Allah*, Zürich 2005.

²⁴ The same movie still of the rape scene also serves as illustration for a 2008 *Spiegel* interview with Seyran Ateş, underscoring the continued symbolic use made of this film and its dubious status as quasi-documentary evidence. See 'Er wollte die Zwölfjährige', *Der Spiegel*, 2, 2008, 88. See also Rita Chin on the function of this film in German discourses of the 1980s.

functions similarly to provide a totalised explanatory framework for the alleged impossibility of 'integrating' the same group of supposed Others, it is easy to overlook the fact that the categories do significantly different kinds of work.

MAKING SENSE OF THE SHIFT: FROM NATIONAL
TO TRANSNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

What, then, is the different work that these categories perform? The Islamic Studies scholar Riem Spielhaus dates the shift from 'Turkish' to 'Muslim' as the predominant discursive category in German public debates to the turn of the millennium and links it to the change of German citizenship law that was enacted in 2000. The controversial law changed citizenship from the principle of *ius sanguinis*, that is, from a biological definition of citizenship, to one that includes facets of *ius solis*, the territorial principle that considers the place of birth in granting citizenship. Spielhaus argues: 'Als die ehemaligen Türken nun nicht mehr der Staatsangehörigkeit nach als anders kategorisiert werden konnten, gewannen Zuschreibungen aufgrund religiöser Zugehörigkeit an Bedeutung. Die öffentliche Meinung reagierte auf die Bewusstwerdung der Permanenz islamischen Lebens in Europa mit einer Wahrnehmungsverschiebung: vom "Ausländer" zum "Muslim"' (p. 30). As noted, the 'Islamkonferenz' had helped to institutionalise the latter category by 2006.

While determining the initial date of this shift is helpful, it does not yet explain sufficiently, however, why it was specifically religious identification that took over the differentiating function and what the implications of that new form of differentiation are. In order to answer this question, it is necessary to consider the larger geopolitical context of this shift. The emphasis on religion, which is at the same time treated as civilisational difference, is a characteristic of post-cold-war global political changes. This emphasis was fostered by those who adhered to Samuel Huntington's 'clash of civilizations' thesis as an explanatory model.²⁵ It was also fostered by religious extremists, such as fundamentalist Christians or radical Islamists.²⁶ The undeniable 'renaissance of religious practices and mentalities', as Margaret Jäger and Jürgen Link call it, has to be understood against the backdrop of weakened political alternatives on the left and as part of the reshaping of the geopolitical order and not as a process that is self-evident or self-perpetuating.

What this observation also means is that changes in the German context cannot be adequately understood without a grasp of accelerating transnational dynamics. The shift from 'Turkish' to 'Muslim' that the gendered

²⁵ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, New York 1996.

²⁶ On Islamists' investment in a civilisational divide, see Samir Amin, 'Political Islam in the Service of Imperialism', in *The World We Wish To See: Revolutionary Objectives in the Twenty-First Century*, New York 2008, pp. 83–105.

stories help to facilitate – and yet obscure – in fact has multiple transnational dimensions and effects. Those who are interpellated via religion are no longer conceived in ethnonational terms, but in transnational-civilisational ones. The national designation functions to refer subjects to a particular, clearly delineated national territory – in this case the Republic of Turkey – and suggests that they belong there. The transnational designation, in contrast, has a ‘de-limiting’ function, that is, it suggests an existence not contained or containable within national boundaries.

The de-limiting function of ‘Muslim’ becomes clear when we consider what this designation enables. The subjects who are constituted in this transnational manner are suddenly situated in a new network of discursive associations invoked by the category ‘Muslim’ in the ‘West’. Today, these include September 11, the social order of the Taliban, the murder of the Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh, or the controversy over the Danish caricatures of Mohammed. Such associations would not have been possible if these same subjects were simply interpellated as ‘Turks’. As ‘Muslims’, though, they can be imagined as being part of a much larger and much more globally extended community than before. Without a change in actual numbers, this indexical function alone multiplies their size in the dominant social imaginary.²⁷ The change is not just numerical, however, but also affective. The associated events named above as the ones most readily linked to the category of ‘Muslim’ in contemporary Germany and other ‘Western’ countries, mark large-scale, hard-to-control incidents of violence and are taken to be indicative of the threat posed by ‘Muslims’. However unfair, ‘Muslim’ thus functions discursively as a source of anxiety. It is worth recalling that no such affect was attached to the 1990 article, which suggested horror, aversion and objectifying pity about the Other’s practices, but no sense of threat to the Self. In the present German context, then, the same subjects, by changed interpellation alone, come to stand for a group that is imagined as much bigger, more widespread, and more threatening to dominant society than before. Thus, the shift from ‘Turkish’ to ‘Muslim’ does not just ensure the continued telling of the same old stories under new headings, but also enables the telling of new stories and the creation of new discursive places and networks.

The 2004 *Spiegel* cover story demonstrates this transnationalising dimension of ‘Muslim’ quite clearly. Whereas the 1990 article strictly stayed within the Turkish-German national contexts without any reference to other countries, the more recent publication begins by describing scenes from Ayaan Hirsi Ali and Theo van Gogh’s controversial short film *Submission* (2004). That film, consisting of women’s monologues about domestic violence,

²⁷ The case of German converts to Islam, who suddenly became a flashpoint of anxiety around 2005, is an even more extreme example of disproportion. See Esra Özyürek, ‘Convert Alert: German Muslims and Turkish Christians as Threats to Security in the New Europe’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 51/1 (2009), 91–116.

is set in a fictitious Muslim realm called 'Islamistan' that does not correspond to any national territory but is meant to conjure up an encompassing transnational sphere. The first page of the *Spiegel* article features a film still from *Submission* – also reproduced in many other subsequent German publications – showing the back of a woman inscribed with Arabic script and with red markings suggesting that she has been whipped. This sexualised image of violence is set next to a picture of a timid dark-haired young woman in a short skirt as illustration of the brief story of 'Yasemin'. The continuity established between these two female figures whose bodies are revealed but whose faces remain obscured is based on the implication that they are both 'Muslims' and therefore victims of the same Islamic rules. These are not both 'Turkish girls' but they are both 'Allah's daughters', according to the article.

Through *Submission*, an imagined larger Muslim world finds entry into the German discourse on abused women, but also a more European context beyond Germany takes shape, altering the dominant subject in new ways. Published shortly after the brutal murder of van Gogh in Amsterdam, the article turns to the social unrest that followed his death in the Netherlands, before it goes on to focus on the fates of 'Muslim women' in Germany, its cover subject. It is no coincidence that the van Gogh murder plays such an important role at the outset of this article. Reverberating far beyond the Netherlands, this event has had a great ripple effect on public discourse in many parts of Europe. The *Spiegel* article marks this change thus:

Es ist auf einmal alles so nah gerückt. Viel zu lange hat sich der Westen sicher gewöhnt. Verschleierte Frauen, Zwangsehen, Unterdrückung und Ehrenmorde? So etwas gibt es nur weit weg, jenseits der Zivilisation und Demokratie, irgendwo im Orient. Bekommen blickt Deutschland auf die kulturelle Implosion im Nachbarland, wo sich die lang gehütete Konsensgesellschaft in ihre Bestandteile zerlegt.²⁸

The notion that 'everything has moved so close' expresses a new spatial and cultural relationality that is described as disorienting. At the same time, the article once again performs amnesia, if not outright denial, by claiming that such phenomena as 'veiled women' have been considered to exist only far away until 'now' in late 2004. Strikingly, though, the sense of threat to the 'West' that seems to emanate from this situation is not linked to the murder of van Gogh, but rather to 'forced marriages' and 'honour killings' whose targets are 'Muslim' women. In other words, what threatens the West are the things that had been construed as threatening and terrorising the 'Turkish', now 'Muslim' woman. In the process, the abused woman figure, rather than a white European man such as van Gogh, rhetorically becomes

²⁸ *Der Spiegel*, 47, 2004, 62.

the site of identification through whom anxiety is expressed. Whereas this figure – always associated with the interior, the domestic, and the private sphere as women structurally have been – used to represent the interior of the Other, it is now a stand-in for the interior of the Self, an interior threatened by ‘implosion’, that is, internal combustion, rather than ‘explosion’, as the article reveals.

The vicious murder of the 23-year-old Turkish-German Hatun Sürücü by her brothers in 2005 in Berlin, which was quickly termed an ‘honour killing’, was treated by many German media outlets and commentators as the occasion to turn accusatory attention to Germany’s own ‘Muslim’ immigrants soon after the death of Theo van Gogh.²⁹ One such commentator wrote: ‘Hatun wurde zwangsverheiratet, geschlagen, eingesperrt und zum Schluss ermordet. Alles unter Berufung auf die Tradition und den Koran. Hatun wollte leben wie eine Deutsche. Das wurde ihr zum Verhängnis. Die Schüsse in ihren Kopf galten unserer Gesellschaft’ (Kelek, p. 11). In this final formulation – the shots to her head were meant for our society – the victimised young woman unequivocally becomes the stand-in for a fatally threatened German society. This female figure is no longer simply the other of German society, a foreign, pitiable victim as in 1990, but its threatened embodiment. The litmus test has been turned around: the fate of the woman can be the fate of a liberal society if that society does not correct itself, according to the author of this passage, Necla Kelek.

NEW SUBJECTS

The sociologist Necla Kelek’s book *Die fremde Braut: Ein Bericht aus dem Inneren des türkischen Lebens in Deutschland*, from whose 2006 paperback preface I just quoted, appeared in early 2005, in the wake of the van Gogh and Sürücü murders. Marketed as a study of arranged and forced marriage among contemporary Turkish-German families and promoted by people like the then Interior Minister Otto Schily as a means of understanding the Turkish community in Germany, it quickly became a bestseller and made its media-savvy author into one of Germany’s most prominent pundits.³⁰ Contrary to what one would expect from the title and the manner in which the book has been invoked in public discourse, however, it is neither a ‘study’ nor a ‘report’ but rather a hodgepodge of polemic, autobiography, pseudo-history, and Orientalist tales about beauty and slavery in the Ottoman harem into which the stories of a few Turkish women who married Turkish-German men are inserted towards the end.³¹ Invocations of

²⁹ For a comparative study of media reports on ‘honour killings’ in Germany and the Netherlands see Korteweg and Yurdakul (note 6 above).

³⁰ Otto Schily, ‘Alarmierender Einblick’, *Der Spiegel*, 4, 2005, 59–60.

³¹ See also Tom Cheesman, *Novels of Turkish German Settlement: Cosmopolite Fictions*, Rochester 2007, pp. 112–17 on *Die fremde Braut* as ‘melodramatic social critique’.

religion play an important role in the manner in which Kelek characterises 'Turkish life in Germany', thus situating her text as a transitional one in the shift from 'Turkish' to 'Muslim'. In fact, she frequently uses the label 'Turkish-Islamic', a hyphenation that points to a transnationalisation leading in the opposite direction from 'Turkish-German'.

In the construction of the abused young woman figure, Kelek uses many of the same tropes about utter powerlessness and lack of agency as *Der Spiegel* and other publications do. What marks her employment of this figure, though, is its use as a vehicle in rearticulating the majority subject and in making demands about the proper contours of liberal society, not just a minority community. Kelek's own very first example helps to delineate her argumentative move:

Zeynep ist 28 Jahre und hat drei Kinder. Sie lebt seit 12 Jahren in der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg, versorgt den Haushalt ihrer Großfamilie und spricht kein Wort Deutsch. Sie verlässt die Wohnung nur zum Koranunterricht. Sie ist eine 'Import-Gelin', eine Importbraut, eine moderne Sklavin. Wie für Tausende anderer türkischer Frauen, die von ihren Familien nach Deutschland 'vermittelt' wurden, gelten für Zeynep die demokratischen Grundrechte faktisch nicht. Sie kennt sie nicht und es ist niemand da, der sich für ihr Schicksal interessiert. Die türkisch-islamische Gemeinde schweigt betreten, redet von kulturellen Traditionen, versteckt die Frauen unter Kopftüchern und grenzt sich von der deutschen Gesellschaft ab [...] Dabei [...] findet [sie] Verständnis bei den liberalen Deutschen, die im Zweifelsfalle eher bereit sind, ihre Verfassung zu ignorieren, als sich Ausländerfeindlichkeit vorwerfen zu lassen. Ich möchte, dass dieser Zustand beendet wird und auch in Deutschland die Menschenrechte ohne Ausnahme gelten.³²

The passage describes 'Zeynep' with bare-bones biographical data, namely first name, age, number of children, German place of residence, and a few details indicating her restricted life in the service of her family. She does not have a prehistory or individual characteristics, and even her marital relationship – that is, her husband – does not exist. Using a charged formulation, Kelek instead simply labels her a 'modern-day slave'.³³ The end point of this initial sketch of Zeynep's story, however, is the status of German laws. As the repeated references to laws and the constitution indicate – note that these references change rather arbitrarily from 'demokratische Grundrechte' to the 'Verfassung' to 'Menschenrechte', all

³² Kelek, *Die fremde Braut*, p. 26.

³³ When Kelek tells Zeynep's story more fully later in the book (pp. 188–96), it actually turns out to be quite different from this initial characterisation; it is a story of emancipation rather than enslavement. Kelek herself describes how Zeynep's newfound religious belief led to such a process: 'Er hat sie aus ihrer sozialen Isolation befreit. Aus der Putzfrau der Familie ist eine moralische Autorität geworden' (p. 196). Yet the author never addresses the incongruousness between characterising the same person as 'modern-day slave' on one page and as 'moral authority' on another.

of which seem interchangeable to Kelek, although they do not refer to the same rights – Kelek's concern is with the limit to the reach of the law. The 'Turkish-Muslim' woman's life is ultimately a problem because it marks a point where according to Kelek German law cannot assert itself. This setup leads to her actual target, the segment of ethnic German majority subjects whom Kelek conjures as either too naïve or too cowed by anxieties about their self-image to honour their constitution – and note that the emphasis here is on the constitution, not on the woman.

That her primary concern does not lie with the abused women but with the integrity of German state and society is underscored by the development of Kelek's text, which uses novelistic techniques and dialogue. In the very next paragraph after the one just cited Kelek describes herself as sitting in a mosque across from '25 Kopftuch tragenden Frauen' (p. 26). They might include 'Zeynep', of whom she said that she is only allowed to leave the house in order to visit Koran courses such as this one. Yet the question that Kelek asks of these women is not 'How is your life?' or 'Do you know about your rights?'. Instead of inquiring about the women's lives or empowering them to act on their own behalf, she asks them 'Was tun wir Türken für Deutschland?' (*ibid.*). The observation about Zeynep's situation as 'modern-day slave' thus leads into the question of the service that 'Turks' might render to Germany. Not the women's life stories, their empowerment, stands in the centre, but the empowerment of Germany. In the responses that Kelek reports, the women reject the question and its premise. As one puts it, 'Was soll das denn heißen? Ich habe dreißig Jahre lang hier gearbeitet, das dürfte doch wohl reichen!' (pp. 26–7). Without engaging with their substantial objections in any way, Kelek simply dismisses the women as uncomprehending, childish and hysterical.³⁴ In contrast to the sympathy, pity, and outrage that the voiceless figure of 'Zeynep' elicits, these outspoken women are presented in a manner that stokes resentment for their supposed ingratitude on the part of majority readers.

In both cases, however, the female figures are foils for the reproach of left-liberal German subjects. Following the mosque scene, Kelek identifies those segments of German society she sees at fault more explicitly. The list includes a female German teacher who approvingly speaks of a female student happy in her newfound belief in Islam; a male government official of the SPD-governed city of Hamburg who wants to allow veiled women to become teachers; other female feminist government officials who according to Kelek do not act against 'modern-day slavery'; and judges who allow for cultural defences in the case of murder. The selection of these figures indicates the social and political strata that Kelek has in her sight, namely feminists, social democrats, and liberals, who occupy positions as representatives of the state (teachers, judges, government officials). In each case,

³⁴ In Kelek's formulations the women look at her 'verständnislos' and 'ganz beleidigt'. About their voices she says 'Die Stimmen der Frauen vor mir überschlagen sich' (pp. 26–7).

Kelek alleges that these individuals do not assert German law sufficiently, so that the German state loses ground. It is this alleged refusal to uphold the principles of the state that once again constitutes the problem for her, rather than any potential injustice done to the women in question.³⁵

The polemical tone in the depiction of these Germans serves to invite the affective disidentification with them and their positions. The affective charge brought to the scene via the stories of 'modern-day slaves' thus turns against some majority subjects, while summoning the need for other, tougher, more clearly bounded, assertive subjects. Kelek's affective project thus is aimed at shaping a different 'liberal' self-understanding away from entanglement with ethnic, cultural, and religious difference.

Kelek's rhetoric targets left-liberals, yet also seeks credibility by using formulations and tropes that are drawn from that political register and value system. Despite all the references to the legal field, the laws she cites are never very specific; they are almost always from the 'Grundgesetz', such as article 1: 'Die Würde des Menschen ist unantastbar.' These are legal expressions that are commonly known to an educated public. Thus Kelek appears to be moving in a legal discourse, when in fact she uses legal references in a non-technical, popular register. Still, her deployments of law help locate her in the debates about the shape of Germanness in the 'Berlin Republic' – that is, reunified Germany – and its larger situatedness. As Stuart Taberner notes, 'an interpretation of German normality as an adherence to western values in a continuation of the Federal Republic's painful process of overcoming Nazism became the established paradigm in domestic and foreign policy' in the Berlin Republic.³⁶ If, as he further states, 'the internalisation of principles of good governance, equality before the law, human rights and multiculturalism (increasingly)' were 'felt to define the new Germany' under the Red-Green coalition, Kelek's discourse marks a desire for a partial overturning of this paradigm. She uses the consensus concerning equality and human rights in an attempt to overturn a supposed emerging consensus about multiculturalism. With this move, Kelek follows in the footsteps of such thinkers as Susan Moller Okin who asserted that 'multiculturalism was bad for women'.³⁷

The insistence on German state institutions and laws notwithstanding, Kelek's narrative ultimately moves to take on a European scale. As for *Der*

³⁵ In the process, Kelek does not allow for racist or culturalist motives in the actions of these majority subjects – such as possibly in the case of 'cultural defences'. The problem is thus not always that the actions she dismisses should be defended but rather that the basic motivations she ascribes to these figures are highly debatable.

³⁶ Stuart Taberner, 'Introduction', in *Recasting German Identity: Culture, Politics, and Literature in the Berlin Republic*, ed. Stuart Taberner and Frank Finlay, Rochester, NY 2002, pp. 1–15 (p. 2).

³⁷ Susan Moller Okin, 'Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?' in *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women? By Susan Moller Okin with respondents*, ed. Joshua Cohen, Matthew Howard and Martha C. Nussbaum, Princeton 1999, pp. 9–24. Okin's arguments in turn firmly and strikingly continue a colonial narrative that first emerged in debates about the veil in British-colonised Egypt in the late nineteenth century. On those debates see the landmark study by Leila Ahmed (note 17 above), pp. 144–86.

Spiegel, the Netherlands offers the occasion for Kelek to fully transnationalise her story. Invoking the image of flood control barriers in low-lying lands – a major feat of Dutch engineering – Kelek concludes: ‘Mir scheint das ein passendes Bild für die Verteidigung der Demokratie und der Menschenrechte in Europa zu sein. Wir verteidigen damit unser Leben gegen den Tod’ (p. 17). In this apocalyptic image, the particular fate of the young women, Turkish or Muslim, has entirely disappeared. Instead, the life of ‘democracy’, ‘human rights’, and ‘Europe’ itself is at stake. What this disappearance underscores is that the ‘abused young Muslim woman’ no longer simply represents the Other of this new Europe, but now at times functions as a stand-in for the Self and its anxieties. Today’s gendered stories are thus also stories about German and increasingly European anxieties over their own integrity and survival in an age of overwhelming, uncontrollable forces.