



Portrayal of Turkish–German migratory relations in Turkish films of the 1980s: a call for an alternative reading

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ABSTRACT

Popular imagination of an age-old and very common phenomenon – migration – depends on images and stories in circulation. Mediated images of migration, refugees and diasporas play an important role in ethnic and cultural identification processes. This article explores how Turkey has accounted for its own diasporic subjects through cinematic narratives. Focusing on two salient Turkish examples from the 1980s that contradict the dominant narrative tendencies in Turkish–German/German films of the time, this article aims to present a fresh outlook. It strives to explore how these films question stereotypes and problematize essentialist readings of Turkishness and nationhood via a descriptive-interpretive analysis.

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Introduction

Popular imagination of an age-old and very common phenomenon – migration – depends on the images and stories in circulation. As much of what we know about the world is through media, migration itself can be regarded as a media phenomenon. In this respect, Arjun Appadurai argues that ‘mediascapes provide large and complex repertoires of images, narratives and ethnoscapes to viewers throughout the world.’¹ In other words, mediascapes help to create and then to consolidate transnational imagined communities. Advanced technologies, causing a deeper semantic shift in the traditional understanding of ‘homeland’ as a pristine, nostalgic lost land, and instead re-positioning it as readily available and approachable, have disrupted prevailing fixed formulations. This remarkable transformation allows room for alternative contemporary approaches to the issue. For instance,

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proposing the concept of ‘imaginative’ in place of Anderson’s long-celebrated ‘imagined,’ which relies on certain/presumed circulating narratives, Randall Halle draws attention to the multiplicities and possibilities ingrained in the process of community construction, which should be carefully traced to deconstruct the existing hegemony.² In this context, a wide array of mediated images of migration, refugees and diasporas play an important role in ethnic and cultural identification processes.

Against this backdrop, exploring how Turkey has accounted for its own diasporic subjects, across Europe but mostly in Germany, through cinematic narratives comes to the fore since it could shed light on how Turkey might deal with diasporic communities that are likely to emerge in the country.³ Unlike their Turkish–German counterparts, that have been confined to the ethnic niche at least until the 1990s, most Turkish films about the Turkish diaspora have enjoyed considerable popularity in Turkey. Having been widely circulated via national TV stations as well as in cinemas, these films have been inscribed in the collective memory of the Turkish public.⁴ They have also been widely seen by Turks in Germany, either via Turkish TV channels readily available on satellite and cable, as video/DVD copies or most recently via the Internet. Therefore, these films, in their own right, are significant subject materials to study.

This article focuses on two salient Turkish examples from the 1980s, *Katma Değer Şaban* (*VAT Şaban*) and *Gurbetçi Şaban* (*Guest Worker Şaban*) that undeniably contradict the dominant narrative tendencies easily detectable in Turkish–German and German films at the time. Early diasporic cinema recalls the term ‘cinema of duty.’ The term was conceptualized by Cameron Bailey as

social issue in content, documentary-realist in style, firmly responsible in intention – [the cinema of duty] positions its subjects in direct relation to social crisis, and attempts to articulate problems and solutions to problems within a framework of center and margin, white and non-white communities.⁵

In this regard, early films such as *Shirin’s Wedding* (Sanders-Brahms, 1976), *Yasemin* (Bohm, 1988), *Farewell to False Paradise* (Başer, 1989), *Journey of Hope* (Koller, 1990) and *Farewell Stranger* (Başer, 1991) can be addressed as cinema of duty films that are basically confined to binary systems of signification. These films were also often addressed as ‘narratives of victimhood’ or ‘social problem films’ because:

In a social environment in which Turkish guest workers, along with those from various countries such as Italy, Spain and Yugoslavia, were depicted as isolated, incapable victims who did not own the word so could not speak for themselves or for their people, German filmmakers [*Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Hark Bohm, Helma Sanders-Brahms, Dorris Dörrie, Jan Schütte, Jörg Gfrörer, Michael Lentz and Jeanine Meerapfel to name a few*] provided the first

portrayals of immigrants in Germany. Their films were the means of demonstrating the experiences of foreigners in the host country. They depicted their protagonists as victims of xenophobia and racism, which were the prevailing and heated social issues in Germany at the time due to ever-increasing number of guest workers in the country. Despite his greater attention to the complexities of cultural conflict, generally a similar tendency could be seen in the films of Turkish filmmaker Tevfik Başer, too.⁶

Incompliant with said classifications, the popular mainstream Turkish examples analyzed here on the other hand underscore the overlooked diversity that actually existed in the cinematic expressions and reflections.

In what follows, I will first briefly explain Turkish–German migratory relations to provide a background for the film analysis. I will then present a comparative depiction of the 1980s and contemporary Turkey in order to explicate why the films from the 1980s were chosen for the analysis. Finally, I will move on to the discussion of the films through a descriptive-interpretive analysis, and complete the article with concluding remarks.

A brief history of Turkish–German migratory relations⁷

After Turkey and West Germany signed the treaty for labor export in 1961,⁷ Turks were invited to West Germany as ‘guest workers.’⁸ Contrary to general belief, ‘in the initial years, more than 60 percent of Turkish workers in West Germany were from İstanbul and Ankara; and 33.3 percent of these migrants had graduated from secondary school or higher education in Turkey.’⁹ Alongside this, the fact that they were expected to stay only temporarily kept the degree of opposition to this labor migration low in West Germany during the 1960s.¹⁰ However, the demographic structure of the Turkish immigrants in West Germany changed dramatically in the following years. People who were suffering from poverty, unemployment and hard living conditions particularly in rural Anatolia took the West German recruitment policy as a lucrative opportunity to begin a new life. They were not qualified or even educated but matched the expectations of the West German state which needed labor to mitigate shortages in various industries. This labor migration, involving mostly men, continued until 1973, when West Germany announced a recruitment stop. It was followed by the subsequent arrival of their families until the 1980s owing to the legal adjustments of West German laws, which improved workers’ legal status and made family reunifications possible.¹¹ After the interruption caused by the West German government’s promotion of return migration at the beginning of the 1980s, new waves of immigration occurred in the late 1980s – mainly consisting of Kurds fleeing due to intensified oppression in the eastern and southern parts of Turkey – and in the early 1990s following the unification of Germany. And most recently, as a result of the prolonged state of emergency in Turkey,¹² an increasing

number of people has sought ways to take refuge in Germany. Evidently, migration patterns and motivations have changed; the early labor migration which was collective in character turned into chain migration which is mostly individual and characterized by family reunifications, political exiles and bride/groom imports.

In brief, these people started mostly as guest workers, became legal claimants for citizenship over time, and have partaken in political, social and cultural movements and organizations of the host society.¹³ It should be stressed that the Turkish community in Germany by no means constitutes a single, homogenous entity. In contrast, heterogeneity seems to be the defining feature of this community. We are talking of a 'complex or segmented diaspora,' to adopt Pnina Werbner's definition,¹⁴ which is not only ethnically, but also linguistically, religiously and politically diverse.¹⁵ This heterogeneity notwithstanding, these diasporic subjects invest back in their country of origin, act as representatives abroad, and even shape the domestic politics in Turkey since their right to vote remains.¹⁶ As 'strategically vital political assets,' to adopt Steven Vertovec's definition,¹⁷ they also have a significant role to play in international affairs. Especially during the recent period characterized by the feud between Turkish President R. T. Erdoğan and German Chancellor Angela Merkel, the Turkish diaspora in Germany has functioned as a leverage for Turkey since 'German Turks are called not to vote for mainstream German parties that are against Turkey's membership to the EU [European Union], to hold rallies, etc.'¹⁸ In return, Germany declared Turkey *an unsafe country to visit*, which might substantially hit the Turkish tourism since Germany has been the most significant partner of Turkey for trades and tourism. Moreover, German officials even started discussing whether they should suspend the right to double citizenship for people from Turkey.

The 1980s and contemporary Turkey

Benim memurum isini bilir-My bureaucrats know how to make every situation beneficial. (Turgut Özal, Turkish Prime Minister (1983–1989))

The two films analyzed here were made in the 1980s. The fact that contemporary Turkey, led by the conservative Islamic-oriented Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP) government, has striking similarities to that of the 1980s renders this particular period and chosen films interesting and significant. The 1980s in Turkish history is regarded as the Özal period due to his remarkable influence on various aspects of social and economic life. Apart from the discernible party ideology based on the Turkish-Islamic synthesis and the neo-liberal economic strategy as common denominators, there are some other similitudes between the Motherland Party (*Anavatan Partisi*, ANAP)-Özal and AKP-Erdoğan

periods: Both leaders became prime ministers following somewhat instable times (politically and/or economically), stayed in power for several electoral periods, and then became presidents of the country. Moreover, like Erdogan, Özal is known as the leader who initiated the so-called 'solution period' regarding the long-lasting conflict between Kurds and Turks. Moreover, both parties developed an idealistic 'peaceful relationship with the neighbors' policy with a particular emphasis on economic strategic partnerships, aiming at leadership in the Middle East. Yet, they both acted rather pragmatic as exemplified by their attitudes regarding the invasion of Iraq by the US army in 1991 and in 2003 or concerning the ongoing war in Syria.¹⁹

As observed in contemporary Turkey, economic policies employed by Turgut Özal's right-wing government in the early 1980s were also in line with the liberalization and deregulation policies prevailing all around the world at the time. Özal single-handedly orchestrated Turkey's transformation into a neo-liberal economy while at the same time paving the way for a neo-conservative society. In Turkey, which had experienced three coup d'états in consecutive decades,²⁰ his powerful leadership was very welcome at the time. It was seen as rather instrumental for Turkey's recovery from a long-lasting economic crisis. He was considered a reformist in the economic sense, and yet, more an authoritarian in the social sense.²¹ When it came to the freedom of press, the right to information and freedom of speech, Özal's government was known for its infamous policies of oppression, predicating its actions on the restrictive 1982 Constitution. Witnessing such transformations, an expanding Turkish middle-class was emerging as the locomotive power of the new consumerist era.

Expectedly, all these changes in the economic, political and social scene had an impact on the cultural domain. The film industry was rapidly shrinking, following the collapse of Yeşilçam,²² while television was becoming the biggest actor on the scene along with VHS technology. Issues of urbanization, migration to big cities and to European countries, unemployment, poverty, social injustice and inequalities were among common themes of films that were made in this period. In addition, coup-torn Turkish intellectuals' plight, presented as problems of alienation, isolation, disconnection and so on, was addressed in many films. These were the years when a cinematic persona, which was hugely popular and deeply ingrained in people's minds, came to the fore: Şaban, performed by one of the greatest actors in Turkish history, Kemal Sunal (originally İnek Şaban as seen in *Hababam Sınıfı* series, followed by many variations).²³

What makes Şaban such a powerful figure is the fact that he is the everyday man; he is the unnamed hero representing millions of ordinary Turkish citizens. He is an innocent, ignorant and a very cowardly Anatolian villager who manages to survive in a big city. His unique wide grin, his naivety juxtaposed with failed attempts at using guile renders him as recognizable, identifiable

and almost immediately very likeable. Reminiscent of Chaplin's Little Tramp, quizzical at times, it is impossible not to laugh at his struggle in somewhat estranged environments and situations. Through triggering laughter, he draws attention to the failures of the system. As pointed out by a famous comedy writer Muzaffer İzgü, humor and comedy, particularly in the Turkish context, cannot be divorced from class relations.²⁴ Accordingly, narratives revolving around Şaban underline this specific aspect. The tension that creates the comedy is almost always class-bound, deeming these films inevitably political. The transformation Şaban goes over time through a corpus of films from being the gullible, childlike immigrant in the city to the opportunist new ruler of the metropolis mirrors the social transformation the Turkish common man has gone through.

One cannot help but compare Şaban with his most controversial contemporary descendent Recep İvedik, performed by comedian Şahan Gökbağar. Like Şaban, Recep stands for the millions. The difference though, when Şaban still has the potential to do good, guided by moral values as nurtured in rural Anatolia, Recep seems to have left them behind, having grown up in the city. 'Recep seems more like the disobedient son of Şaban'.²⁵ He is the commonly otherized and ignored child of perverted modernization, urbanization, free market economy and material culture in Turkey, leading him to proudly introduce himself as the 'aggressive psychopath with an inferiority complex'.²⁶ Therefore, as the psychologically wounded selfish materialist consumerist, Recep does not care about others' needs, plights, rights or values; he is the man of his own codes like Şaban, yet, unlike Şaban, he does not have the potential to become a Robin Hood nor does he wish to do so. As much as Recep İvedik is regarded as the epitome of contemporary/new Turkey, Şaban can be considered as the product of the socio-political transformations that occurred during the 1970s and 1980s.

Aligned with the zeitgeist, Şaban acts like the bureaucrats Özal proudly refers to in the abovementioned quote. Deftly depiction of such shift is what adds a strong critical value to an otherwise benign character portrayal. Kemal Sunal himself describes Şaban in his masters' thesis as an anarchist, crusading against the establishment, be it feudalism, technocracy or Yeşilçam.²⁷ Şaban's disruptive power comes from the fact that he is irreverent, he does not seek or need to conform or belong.

Şaban is fraught with subversive potential for other reasons as well, especially when thought along the lines of dominantly heteronormative practices of nationhood construction: He is not the textbook hero with masculine attributes that would make him the perfectly desired candidate for nation-making. Instead, he is fragile, dubious, timid and even noticeably feminine at times. Suitably he occasionally crosses the lines of masculine-feminine axis and finds himself in transgender positions as epitomized by his other famous persona, Şabaniye (*Şabaniye*, 1984). His slender, almost androgynous,

physical appearance reinforces this impression. Therefore, advocating him as the protagonist in mainstream narratives catered to the entire Turkish audience audaciously undermines the preeminent governing imagery that promotes Turkishness as inherently masculine; brave, strong, macho, heroic, honest, hard-working – even barbaric would pass here since it connotes physical strength and manliness.²⁸

Challenging narratives: *Katma Değer Şaban* and *Gurbetçi Şaban*

In 1985, when the new tax system KDV(VAT) was introduced under Özal – and affected the poor the most – Kemal Sunal acted as Şaban in two major comedy films both directed by a famous Yeşilçam actor Kartal Tibet and written by a veteran scriptwriter Osman F. Seden: *Katma Değer Şaban* and *Gurbetçi Şaban*. The former tells the story of a young Turkish–German returning to Turkey in order to help his father clear his name, and the latter narrates the story of a single young Turkish man migrating to West Germany with the expectation that he could make lots of money. These two films alone complicate the issue of migratory routes, underlining that it has never been a unilateral experience but rather a bilateral, even multilateral one. Both films examine heated socio-economic issues of the time; poverty, unemployment, unequal distribution of wealth, unjust tax system and inflation in Turkey, and the ill-treatment of Turkish guest workers in Germany.

Katma Değer Şaban begins with an image of a trading company with many trucks that deliver goods internationally; an indication of Turkey's changing economic positioning with the adoption of open market neo-liberal policies. This at the same time implies the interconnectedness of the global capitalism as well as underlying various aspects of a more dynamic Turkish-European relations, going beyond the point where Turkey is merely seen as an immigrant/guest worker-sending country. It should also be noted here that the 1980s were the period during which Turkey tried to reinvigorate its affiliation with the European Community.²⁹ In this respect, this film, together with *Gurbetçi Şaban*, seems to put the emphasis on the intrinsic economic relations between Turkey and Germany rather than focusing on the traditional 'culture clash theme' dominant in the abovementioned German and Turkish–German narratives at the time.

Turkish guest workers used to be depicted as vulnerable victims in early German and Turkish–German films such as *Lowest of the Low* (Gfrörer, 1986) and *40 Square Meters of Germany* (Başer, 1986). 'This shared attitude addressing the plight of guest workers can be regarded as a socially critical approach in the sense that they focus on the hard working and living conditions of guest workers.'³⁰ However, as argued by many scholars in the field such as Deniz Göktürk,³¹ these films also 'served to consolidate the

stereotypical representation of Turks, leading to a homogenizing monologic tendency which lacks dialogue, and thus, cannot enunciate the diversity of diasporic experience.³² It was characteristic of the films made in this early period that they told the stories of often wretched and helpless female protagonists. Correspondingly, the image of Turkish women, who were doubly alienated, deprived of any agency and awaiting rescue from their oppressive, patriarchal Turkish families by a German hero, kept circulating. Similarly, Turkish men were often depicted as powerless in the workplace and vulnerable in the public sphere, so as the subordinates of the German society. All in all, these films were the representatives of what Rob Burns calls 'cinema of the affected,' 'both with their thematic emphases and recurrent imagery centered on the trope of incarceration.'³³ Overall, the painful experiences of Turkish guest workers, oppressed women, and a stark culture clash were central to these early films.

Contradicting its counterparts made in Germany, *Gurbetçi Şaban* plays with stereotypes, challenges prejudices, introducing a sense of humor, playfulness and irony. Departing from her antecedents like Turna in *40 Square Meters of Germany* or Elif in *Farewell to False Paradise*, the lead female Bahar (Müge Akyamaç) in *Gurbetçi Şaban* is a clever, confident and an outgoing character. Due to the fact that she has an advantageous position compared to Şaban since she already has a work permit, she can act very independently. She enjoys her life in Germany, exploring the beautiful cityscape, blending in the public life, drinking beer, and pursues a relationship with Şaban.

A year before Günter Wallraff acted as a Turk in *Lowest of the Low*, we see German characters who look like a Turk or Germans actually performed by Turkish actors in *Gurbetçi Şaban*. This excessive mimicry (either intended or merely as a result of logistic necessities) takes further the subversive potential of the act of mimesis as discussed by Homi K. Bhabha in the postcolonial context.³⁴ Mimicry with its dualism containing both obedience and disobedience, thus resistance, is appropriated here as a weapon of mockery, of parody. Creating elements of comedy with their broken Turkish, Germans try hard to speak Turkish in the film, although it is to be able to abuse oblivious guest workers. Likewise, Turks try to abuse the welfare system by milking the child benefit scheme. Similarly, Şaban's existence in the supposedly alien German household does not come across as much disorientating as we would be accustomed to; instead, he blends in well with his opportunist attitude, directness and honesty. Undermining prevailing narratives of plight and self-pity, a sense of 'encountering the new' is emphasized here, which consists of both amazement, fascination, and fear.

Şaban in *Gurbetçi Şaban* is the owner of the 'voyeuristic ethnographic gaze,'³⁵ enjoying his excursion. Even though his aim is to find a job, he wanders around Cologne's streets like a true 'flâneur,' making observations,

collecting experiences despite the fact that he feels threatened by the presence of the police at times. This certainly is not a contradiction though. Because Charles Baudelaire's famous fictional character, the figure of *flâneur*, as subsequently developed by Walter Benjamin, has always attracted attention as a rebellious figure since 'the idleness of the *flâneur* is a demonstration against the division of labor.'³⁶ Endorsing his status as a *flâneur*, he refuses to work at the exploitative factory at a later scene (reminding Chaplin's *Modern Times*), and instead merges into the city again, re-writing its history. He literally re-writes it when Hitler's portrait in the factory is replaced with the Turkish Republic's founder Atatürk's, and Germans are forced to *heil* him instead, towards the end of the film. Or when the former factory owner Hans (Ferhan Tanseli) and his family members start working as servants at Şaban's house. Or when Germany is depicted as a 'country of immigration' harboring Algerians, Greeks as well as Turks living among Germans, well before the German state officially came to terms with the new social phenomenon.³⁷ Şaban's possession of the pleasure of the gaze from the outset hints at the forthcoming challenges to presumed German superiority and dominance over Turks in the film. Such examples make it possible to argue that Turkish accounts of migration and Turkish diasporic community in Germany present a different approach compared to the 'cinema of duty' films made in Germany at the time.

The father-son relationship in *Katma Değer Şaban*, Şaban's efforts to be affirmed by his father to be precise, can be read as an allegory of the relationship between Turks and *gurbetçi/Almanci*³⁸ Turkish-Germans who suffered from rejection in both countries. In spite of their sentimental and strong bonds to the homeland, which have resulted in annual visits to and continual investment in Turkey, these 'alien' subjects constantly need to make an effort to prove their 'Turkishness' (and also their manliness as seen in this film). So does Şaban throughout the film. An insult for Turkish traditional values and national sensitivities, Şaban, the effeminate man in pop-punk style with multi-colored hair, fashioning leather outfits and an earring, causes embarrassment and disappointment for his father. Nevertheless, disassociating from the victimhood discourses common in early diasporic cinema, Şaban is allowed to get his dad's and the community's blessing in this film. This means reconciliation; the possibility of co-habitation despite differences. This can also be read as a tactical attempt by the filmmaker to re-write national and cultural identities, diverging from essentialist formulations.

What gives these films their parodic and disruptive qualities is the almost impossible emergence of a hero in the given circumstances. These impossible heroes, these ordinary men, appropriate tactics as part of daily life practices against almost always hegemonic and structured strategies of power, as conceptualized by Michel de Certeau. 'I call strategy the calculus of force-relationships which becomes possible when a subject of will and power (a proprietor,

an enterprise, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated from an environment ... Political, economic and scientific rationality has been constructed on this strategic model.³⁹ Tactics, on the other hand, tend to be unstructured, random, and thus, subversive. Tactics do not strive to create an order, but disrupt the existing one. Tactics can at the same time be interpreted as alternative ways of deconstructing the code, and therefore, of creating different ways of social relations in the sense Jean Baudrillard theorizes as 'symbolic disorder.'⁴⁰ Accordingly, 'any kind of social practice or language which does not rely on the distinctions made by the code is revolutionary. Connections between people which do not depend on their social status, solidarity across social borders, are revolutionary.'⁴¹ In this respect, not only the protagonists in these films deploy tactics as a form of resistance, but also the scriptwriter Osman Seden and the director Kartal Tibet provide tactical narratives by creating a strong parody that utilizes the well-known persona of Şaban.

The Anatolian rock/Turkish punk synthesis frequently heard in *Katma Değer Şaban* alone can be interpreted as a very tactical move aiming at disrupting traditional monologic readings of culture and identity. This peculiar compound can be read along two different strands: First, within the larger context of the film that satirizes the socio-political transformation Turkey is going through, it is clearly a sign of corruption because İstanbul's punk appreciation is presented in relation with the discernible class distinction: Those who are familiar with or fascinated by Şaban's music are the wealthy whereas the working class is strongly pro-traditional folkloric music. Alternatively, Şaban's music, combined with his clothing style and his vernacular language, underlines a strong synthesis, even a unique entity, which exemplifies Homi K. Bhabha's theorization of 'third space.' The hybrid third space, challenging fixed meanings, allows for multiplicity. This ultimately renders the co-existence of disparate elements conceivable, challenging our sense of fixed identities. The possibility of co-existence and the 'emergence of something new' is further reinforced when Şaban convinces people to mix folkloric music with punk/rock themes and instruments, which results in a more productive and enjoyable piece. So he is not only the outcome of the 'contact zone'⁴² as experienced in Germany with regards to the diasporic context, but also the harbinger of a possible intersection within the Turkish society, whereby established, restrictive understandings of culture and identity meet or even produce new ones.

This is quite visionary to the credit of the filmmaker and the scriptwriter since Turkish music in Germany at the time was more accurately described as 'ethnic,' composed of the genres such as folk, arabesque, fantasy and pop, at the time. Especially when considered that fusion genres such as oriental hip hop, alaturca mb, RnBesk etc. have only been a recent phenomenon in the context of hybrid music scene in Germany,⁴³ the way Tibet and Seden play

with the persona of Şaban, assigning him a unique cultural identity, proves to be challenging and disruptive.

Both *Katma Değer Şaban* and *Gurbetçi Şaban* weave a narrative of parody. As Linda Hutcheon states, parody is intrinsically political: "Through a double process of installing and ironizing, parody signals how present representations come from past ones and what ideological consequences derive from both continuity and difference ... Such an ironic stance on representation, genre, and ideology serves to politicize representation."⁴⁴ Aytemiz argues, parodic style operates in two different levels in Hutcheon's conceptualization: (a) Recognition of similarity and sameness; and (b) Recognition of difference.⁴⁵ "The element of excess creates an element of satire ... The audience recognizes what is being performed and laughs at the exaggerated performance."⁴⁶ What is epitomized with Şaban is an aesthetics of excess. The exaggerated Turk-punk synthesis, his expressive rock songs performed in minstrel style in every possible inappropriate occasion, his peculiar vernacular language, daring vibrant colors of his clothes, slap-stick acts while introducing himself as Şaban Bond etc. all contribute to a witty and yet unsettling interpretation of identity and the social condition in *Katma Değer Şaban*. Repeated portrayals of Şaban against the *gecekondu* (slums/shantytown) backdrop of İstanbul is itself parodic.⁴⁷ So is his depiction as a person who has unlikely qualities of rural Anatolian naivety alongside an urban Western rationality in both films; he is this peculiar person who makes the most of his unique position.

He is not either/or, he is not neither/nor; he is, in compliance with the persona of Şaban, a possibility for multiplicity, heterogeneity, resisting easy categorizations. Şaban as constructed in these two films stands for inter/connectedness, inter/dependence, dis/continuity and dis/unity rather than categorical differentiation or association. This is valid not only for the comprehension of Turkish diaspora in Germany but also of the layered relations between Turkish and German societies and cultures. These films, via their self-reflexive and self-deprecating attitudes at times, also offer ways to conceive dialogue and reconciliation, overcoming seemingly incompatible divisions; not only between Turkey and Germany but also within the heterogeneous Turkish community itself.

Concluding remarks: a call for an alternative reading

In light of the analysis above, it seems plausible to claim that these films express the possibility of a renewed 'habitus.' In his attempt to understand human actions and to redefine society/social system on the basis of power relations, shaped by economic, social and cultural condition, Pierre Bourdieu developed the concept of 'habitus.'⁴⁸ The concept of 'habitus' appears to have been interpreted in various ways in the literature.⁴⁹ What is intriguing and proves to be useful for this study is the suggested dynamism in the concept,

allowing room for transformation. Bourdieu describes habitus not only as a ‘structured structure’ but also as a ‘structuring structure,’⁵⁰ meaning individuals are shaped by the society through internalization of systematic categorizations, however, they also have the potential to change it. ‘Because different conditions of existence produce different habitus,’⁵¹ the moments and spaces these different habitus come into contact with each other have the potential to create an alternative agency, as likewise exemplified via the theorization of ‘third space’ and ‘the contact zone’ in diverse contexts. In accordance with this, Şaban, as constructed in the films analyzed here – as a character who constantly cuts across national, social, cultural distinctions – and the social encounters he experiences epitomize this very possibility. And these films, as tactical narratives, indicate the need to call for an alternative/renewed reading in terms of the historicizations and classifications of Turkish diasporic experience and its cinematic accounts in the scholarly domain.

All in all, rapidly changing socio-political climate in contemporary Turkey deems such an analytical retrospective look even more crucial. Because at this very critical junction, Turkey will have to decide what to do with various diasporic communities within its borders: Will they be constrained within ethnic, space-bound, and thus, archaic interpretations of identity? Or will they be embraced through a prism of layered, complex, multivalent, and thus, a renewed formulation of community? This will at the same time be indicative of Turkey’s new socio-political location in the global context. The fact that Turkish narratives achieved plurality, irony, playfulness and satire even thirty years ago, again during very dark times – following the 1980 coup d’état – might inscribe the much-needed hope in the Turkish intellectuals’ quest of self-reevaluation. These films’ distinct qualities challenging conventional nation-making discourses and rituals might encourage debates to seek a more encompassing formulation of the idea of ‘community,’ nullifying age-old dichotomies such as us versus them.

Note on contributor

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Notes

1. Appadurai, *Modernity*, 35.
2. Halle, *The Europeanization*, 2014.
3. According to a recent report by the European Commission, the current number of refugees in Turkey is over 3.4 million, rendering Turkey the country with the highest number of refugees in the world right now (Avrupa Komisyonu, “Turkiye: Mülteci Krizi”). The issue is further complicated by the fact that “various groups arriving from Syria – Kurds, Assyrians, Turkmens, Armenians, and Yezidis – carry with them varied contentious political histories. Thus, refugees may be initially classified as Syrian, but may then subsequently be grouped as either *friend* or *enemy* along lines of ethnicity and/or religion” (Erder, “Preliminary Thoughts,” 119). This inevitably implies exclusionary practices either during the physical border crossing or across the domains of economic, political, social and cultural interaction in the country. Yet, bound by the legal requirements of 1951 Geneva Convention and a recent deal signed between Turkey and the EU in 2016, most of these refugees are destined to settle in Turkey, regardless of how they are perceived or what they expect. In other words, Turkey, having been considered mostly as a “migrant-sending country”, especially from a European perspective, will soon have to deal with diverse diasporic communities on its soil. See Toğral Koca, “Deconstructing,” and Kaya, “A Tale,” for the legal status of Syrian refugees, and see Dinçer et al., *Turkey* and Erdoğan, “Perceptions,” for their experiences in Turkey. Also, further refer to <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/03/18-eu-turkey-statement/> for the details of the deal, and to <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2016/06/eus-reckless-refugee-returns-to-turkey-illegal/> for a criticism of this deal. Also see Safran, “Diasporas,”; Clifford, “Diasporas,”; Brah, *Cartographies*; Cohen, *Global Diasporas*; Braziel and Manur, “Nation, Migration,”; Ember et al. *Encyclopedia*,; Alonso and Oiarzabal, *Diasporas*; Ziemer and Roberts, *East European*; Başer, *Diasporas and Homeland*; and Carment and Sadjed, *Diasporas as Cultures*, for detailed analyses of the concept of diaspora.
4. Even though it is hard to reach actual audience numbers for the films made before the 1990s in Turkey, the existence of dedicated satellite TV channels such as Sunal TV and Şaban TV that broadcast Kemal Sunal films, including those analyzed here, proves their popularity (See Eyüboğlu, “İnek Şaban.”). Even though the study investigates a different country, one can also refer to Smets et al., “Centre and Periphery,” to understand how Turkish film culture among diasporic Turks has been heavily based on the circulation of VHS, Betamax and later on the DVD copies of Turkish films.
5. Malik, “Beyond the Cinema,” 203–204.
6. Tunç, “Three Generations,” 119.
7. This section of the paper provides a significantly shortened and updated version of a sub-chapter in my Ph.D. dissertation entitled “Diasporic Cinema: Turkish-German Filmmakers with Particular Emphasis on Generational Differences”, 2011, 52–66.
8. Yalçın-Heckman, “Negotiation Identities,” 311.
9. Turkish-German relations predate the signing of this agreement: Turkey and Germany were allies in the First World War, and during the war many young people migrated from the Ottoman Empire to Germany under an “on-the-job training scheme.” Furthermore, in 1933, many German academics

- opposing Hitler found refuge in Turkey since the government at the time offered political asylum and work. See Akgündüz, “Migration to,” and Horrocks and Kolinsky, “Migrants or.”
10. Akgündüz, “Migration to,” 113.
 11. Münz and Ulrich, “Germany,” and Mani, *Cosmopolitical Claims*, 2007.
 12. Münz and Ulrich, “Germany,” 6.
 13. Following the failed coup d’etat in July 2016, the Turkish government announced a state of emergency, which was in effect for two years.
 14. Tunç, “Three Generations,” 117.
 15. Werbner, “Theorising Complex,” 900.
 16. The main ethnic groups are Turks and Kurds. Some of them are Sunni Muslims while others are Alevis, who constitute a religious minority group in Turkey. Moreover, some Turks and Kurds are leftists whereas some are on the right wing of the political spectrum. Currently, the most defining difference appears to be the political orientation in the sense that whether individuals are AKP supporters or not. People even further diversify based on which city in Turkey they come from.
 17. The latter particularly has caused problems in the context of Turkish domestic affairs since those who live in Turkey increasingly verbalize their discontent for diasporic Turks who are exempted from the atrocities in Turkey (especially due to the political turmoil in the aftermath of the attempted coup d’etat in 2016), and yet, have a say in Turkish politics, implying how fragile is these diasporic subjects’ perceived sense of belonging and identity in the country of origin.
 18. Vertovec, “The Political.”
 19. Paul and Schmidt, *Turkey’s Relations*.
 20. See Şenbaş, *Türkiye’nin Kuzey Irak*, for a detailed analysis of Turkey’s diplomatic positioning with regard to Iraq. Also refer to Aras, “Turkish-Syrian Relations,” for an analysis of the shift in Turkey’s Syrian policy.
 21. The 1960 leftist military coup; the military memorandum in 1971, which is better known as *12 Mart Muhtırası*; and the 1980 military coup.
 22. See Buğra, *Kapitalizm*, for a detailed discussion of social policies during the Özal years.
 23. Turkey’s prolific film industry, which was predominantly famous for its melodramas.
 24. Şaban Darsübekoğlu a.k.a. İnek Şaban is a fictional literary character created by author Rıfat Ilgaz first in the periodic *Dolmuş* and then in the novel series *Hababam Sınıfı* (1957–1987).
 25. İzgü, “Gülmecenin İşlevi,” 74.
 26. Yıldız, “Şaban ve Recep.”
 27. Ibid.
 28. Sunal, “TV ve Sinemada.”
 29. One should certainly allude to the long-lasting *zenne* (male belly dancer) tradition in the Turkish culture here. They have a place in the Turkish folkloric tradition, and yet, *zennes* would never be chosen to represent the everyday Turkish man, let alone be heroes of conventional popular narratives. In fact, a recent critically acclaimed Turkish film, based on a true story, titled *Zenne*, (Caner Alper and Mehmet Binay, 2011) was excluded from screening in several film festivals in Turkey due to various reasons. See Başıyğit, *Türkiye’deki Film*, for details of covert censorship mechanisms in Turkey.

30. This is another intriguing similarity between the two periods for the AKP government put an extra emphasis on the advancement of the relationship with the EU, particularly during their first electoral period. See Karabulut, "Anavatan Partisi, "; Ertosun, "Dış Politikada, "; and Daban, "Turgut Özal," for detailed analyses of Turkish-EEC relations during the Özal period.
31. Tunç, "Three Generations," 119.
32. Göktürk, "Turkish Women."
33. Tunç, "Three Generations," 119.
34. Burns, "Turkish-German Cinema," 128.
35. Bhabha, *The Location*.
36. See Göktürk, "Turkish Women," for the employment of the term "voyeuristic ethnographic gaze" in the context of Turkish-German cinema.
37. Benjamin, *The Arcades*, 427.
38. Germany is still among the countries with exclusive citizenship regimes that ask for the renunciation of the former citizenship. "It is a characteristic of Germany as a self-declared non-immigration country that the naturalization of foreign immigrants and their children is still the exception, not the rule" (Münz and Ulrich, "Germany," 48). Only through the introduction of a new Immigration Act in 2005 was Germany officially recognized as a country of immigration.
39. The term "*Almancı*", formed by adding the suffix *-cı* to the Turkish word for German, linguistically means they fancy Germany and German culture. Thus, Turkish immigrants have been humiliated by being addressed as "*Almancı*" in Turkey.
40. de Certeau, *The Practice*, 17.
41. Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange*.
42. Robinson, *Jean Baudrillard*.
43. Mary L. Pratt explains "the contact zone" as "the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality and intractable conflict" (*Imperial Eyes*, 6). "It can be a dangerous place, where people are easily misunderstood and hurt. It can also be a place of mutual understanding, new wisdom, and the wonder that comes when people learn from each other" (Watkins, "The art of," 1).
44. Güney et al., "Diasporic Music."
45. Hutcheon, *The Politics*, 89.
46. Aytemiz, "Thoughts on," 43.
47. *Ibid.*, 43.
48. One should of course be attentive to the fact that use of city landscape is inevitable, even prerequisite, here, since the original comical tensions for the character Şaban, who is an Anatolian migrant in the city, are derived from familiar dichotomies such as urban-rural, modern-tradition, technology-nature, evil-good and so on.
49. Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social*.
50. See Asimaki and Koustourakis, "Habitus," for a discussion of the contested use of the term in various fields.
51. Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social*, 170.
52. *Ibid.*, 170.

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