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UNDERSTANDING GERMAN-TURKISH IDENTITY IN THE CONTEXT OF  
DEUTSCHRAP

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By Alena T. Vu

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for completion  
Of the Bachelor of Arts degree in International Studies  
Croft Institute for International Studies  
Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College  
The University of Mississippi

University, Mississippi  
May 2021

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge everyone who played a role in the process of completing this thesis. First of all, my family, who supported me with love and understanding. Secondly, my mentor and readers, each of whom has provided guidance throughout the research process. Thank you all for your support.

## ABSTRACT

Since its emergence in the 1980s, *Deutschrap* has been used by German-Turkish rap artists as a medium to reflect their views and identity. What is understood as the German-Turkish identity has been put up for debate as to whether it can be labeled as assimilated, integrated or something else entirely. By doing a close reading and analysis of three songs each from German-Turkish rap artists Alpa Gun, Eko Fresh and Mert, it is found that these three artists can be categorized as Ayhan Kaya's *hybrid-*, *boundaries-*, and *flows-* transmigrant identity, respectively. This also shows that the German-Turkish identity is not likely to be integrated or assimilated into the German identity, and should instead be viewed through a transnational lens.

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## **Introduction**

It has been over 30 years since the Berlin Wall was torn down and Germany was reunited. And even after three decades, the question regarding what makes a person German has still been left up for debate. There are the issues regarding identity between West Germans and East Germans and then including the bio-Germans—Germans who are born in Germany and have German ancestry—and passport Germans—Germans who receive citizenship through the procurement of a German passport—years after.<sup>1</sup> This debate regarding identity in Germany has only garnered more attention with the increasing number of migrants coming in, and one of the groups that I wanted to focus on that has been heavily impacted by this debate over German identity are the German-Turks<sup>2</sup>.

Specifically, this thesis concentrates on German-Turkish rap artists because of rap's popularity and importance in German-Turkish communities (Bower 2011). With that in mind, the focus of this thesis will be about how German-Turkish rap artists in Germany reflect on identity in response to racism and xenophobia through their music. I will specifically take a closer look at the artists' experiences and how they express

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<sup>1</sup> The terminology bio-German and passport-German are not normally found in scholarly literature, but it is commonly used in the day-to-day German vernacular. Because of the lack of sources that can be found about these terms, there is no concrete definition other than what can be gleaned from how these terms are used; However, examples of these terms being used can be found in Katrin Bennhold's article *Germany Has Been Unified for 30 Years. Its Identity Still Is Not*, where she interviews minority groups living in Germany.

<sup>2</sup>The logic of this term is different than hyphenated identities in the US, where the "foreign" ethnicity is first followed by the citizenship (e.g. Asian American, African American, etc); The terms referring to German-Turks can be interchangeable in English with Turkish-Germans because this interchangeability is seen in the German language with Deutsch-Türke and Türkisch-Deutsch.

themselves through the analysis of Deutschrap, a subgenre of hip-hop, and the factors that contribute to each artists' self-identification as either German, Turk, German-Turk, or something else entirely. I will be specifically arguing that German-Turkish groups should be categorized as having a transmigrant identity, which "can literally and symbolically travel back and forth between there countries of destination and of origin," as defined by Ayhan Kaya that can be categorized into three groups: *Flows, Boundaries, and Hybrids*. These three groups can be defined as a continuity between culture and civilizations, discontinuity and barriers between cultures and civilizations, and synchronous characteristics between emerging cultures, respectively (Kaya 2007). Unlike the usual method of looking through an economic, educational, social, and political lens, I believe that scholars should take a closer look at the concept of a transmigrant identity as viewed through the lens of pop culture, since it provides another facet of understanding of modern-day German-Turkish identity.

Essentially, this thesis seeks to understand how the social and political environment in Germany affected how German-Turks perceive themselves in regards to the concept of identity and how that has influenced the way they produce their music and their understanding of identity through the medium of Deutschrap. Additionally, it seeks to evaluate whether or not they can be classified overall as transmigrants based on Kaya's three categorizations of a transmigrant identity. Since there are multiple possible ways to answer these questions, the first thing to do will be to examine the history and relation of non-Turkish-Germans and German-Turks. I will also examine the history of Deutschrap as well as what role it played in the development of the German-Turkish identity and

vice-versa. Lastly, I plan to analyze three songs each from three different German-Turkish rap artists.

This analysis section will be composed of three major parts: Part 1 will focus on Alpa Gun and his concept of the Und-Identität (And-Identity), which he develops in a number of his works. I will do a close reading/analysis of the songs *Ausländer (Foreigner) (2007)*, *Immernoch Ausländer (Still a Foreigner (2018))*, and *Ausländer 2020 (2020)* and argue that because of the language used, place and setting, and audience, he identifies himself as being a German-Turk who is neither German nor Turkish but as combination of both cultures that can be defined as a 'hybrid'- transmigrant identity. He does this by portraying the synchronization of his German and Turkish identity into one by using the word 'And-' in his 'Und-Identität.'

Part 2 will look at Eko Fresh and his songs: *Straßendeutsch/Türken slang (Street German/ Turkish Slang) (2011)*, *Quotentürke (Token Turk) (2013)*, and *Aber (But) (2018)*. It will show how through the portrayal of his identity, usage of music audio, and the tone he takes regarding the topic of race and identity, he categorizes himself as a distinct German-Turk identity that is established through an emotional connecting that can be categorized as a 'boundaries'- transmigrant identity. He does this by differentiating himself from being either German or Turkish, and sets himself apart from the two by emphasizing his statement of being a German-Turk.

Part 3 will analyze Mert and his fluid identity as a German-Turk that travels between the different cultures of Germany and Turkey. I will be examining his three-part *Ausländer* series, which will introduce the concept of Mert's transmigrant German-Turkish identity by his usage of Kanak-Sprak, Turkish audio and visual



representation throughout all three songs, and the repetitive call backs to the previous songs while also introducing new elements to the continuing songs to emphasize his statement on identity, which is a “flow”- transmigrant German-Turk that has passage between the cultures and civilizations of being German or Turkish.

These three artists are well-known in both Germany and Turkey, and they have voiced their concerns on topics such as racial injustice or systematic oppression through their lyrics and songwriting, which, when consumed by the public, offers a broader insight into German-Turkish identity. The chosen songs are also relevant while they encourage the listeners of these songs to draw a parallel between the artists’ sentiments of their own identities with the listeners own sense of identity as a German-Turk.

## **Background**

According to statistics of the German Population in 2019, it was found that Turks were the largest minority group in Germany. They made up approximately 3.7% of the German population (*WorldAtlas* 2019), and thus they have made an impact on who and what are categorized as German. That is why I am going to examine the history of German-Turks and their involvement in German history by looking at the *Gastarbeiter* (guest workers) and the *Parallelgesellschaften* (parallel societies). I will also be exploring *Deutschraps* and its role in German-Turk society and the development of the youth ethnollect *Kanak-Sprak*. These four points—*Gastarbeiter*, *Parallelgesellschaften*, *Deutschraps*, and *Kanak-Sprak*—are necessary information to know in order to understand the socio-political influences that have shaped what we understand today as the German-Turk in the context of *Deutschraps*.

### **The Gastarbeiter**

After World War II, Germany relied on Turkish labor to fuel what was known as the *Wirtschaftswunder*, the German economic miracle. “Initially called *Fremdarbeiter*, or foreign/alien workers, they were later labeled *Gastarbeiter*, denoting in the German meaning of the term their alien or temporary status (Mueller 2006, 420). The “Recruitment Agreement for Labor” of 1961 had assured that Germany would receive a steady supply of Turkish labor, but by 1973 Germany entered a recession and thus

stopped the importation of immigrant labor (Mueller 2006). Since the Turkish immigrants were viewed as temporary residents, there were no initiatives or proper policy strategies implemented to handle the integration of those who decided to remain in Germany. Those who decided to remain in Germany did so because of political and economic motivation. Along with the guest workers, the growth of the Turkish community was in part due to Turks moving from Turkey to Germany in order to reunite with their family members and German-born members of the community. As of 2002, the Turkish community includes first through third-generation German-Turks, of whom an estimated 500,000 hold a German passport (*The Economist* 2002). This mass increase in the population of a Turkish community within Germany soon created what is known as the *Parallelgesellschaften*, which is the development of another society alongside the German society.

### **The Parallelgesellschaften**

Turkish-Germans have had an unintentional but significant influence on broader German culture, in part due to their social and economic involvement in German society. According to Claus Mueller, “Most German-Turks want economic integration and access to employment, housing, and other social services, and the desire for cultural and social integration is the least of these concerns” (2006, 423). And due to continued discrimination in aspects such as socio-economical and educational institutions, they are somewhat forced to create a society that they would be able to fit in. Ethnic neighborhoods and community-based groups are some networks that reinforce this ‘foreign’ stigma of being Turkish” (Mueller 2006). A more Turkish dominant society is

then formed and thus develops alongside German society instead of being integrated into it. These are called *Parallelgesellschaften*. “This isolation prompts Germans to assume that Turkish immigrants cannot or do not want to integrate” (Chin and Fehrenbach, 12, as cited by Nummi). As of January 2009, the Turkish newspaper *Hurriyet* reported that a new study conducted showed Turks to be the “least integrated immigrant group in Germany” (Rottmann 2014, 152). Therefore, this growing, parallel Turkish society creating its own socio-cultural scene in German-Turkish rap was not surprising.

### **Deutschrapp and Its Role in German-Turkish Society**

Deutschrapp emerged out of the American hip-hop scene in the 1980s. “Early manifestations of rap in Germany were heavily influenced by the U.S. hip-hop culture” (Bower 2011, 377). Not only did it influence German rap, but this influence trickled down to affect German-Turkish musicians as well. “All German-Turk musicians [Ickstadt] talked to emphasized the importance that African-American music had for them” (Ickstadt 1999, 574). According to Sabine von Dirke in her essay “Hip-Hop Made in Germany: From Old School to the Kanaksta Movement,” there are three stages to the evolution of Hip-Hop: Old School, New School, and the Kanaksta Movement (Dirke 2004):

The Old School, that is, the pioneers of hip-hop active since the early 1980s developed a vague idea of a transnational hip-hop community [that was strongly influenced by U.S. rap]. The New School, which emerged almost concurrently with unification...[began to differentiate itself from U.S. style rap.]...Finally, the second and third generation of immigrants adopted rap music in order to forge an

alternative identity in opposition and outside of the confines of ethnicity, race, and nationality (Dirke 2004, 98).

Deutschrapp has become an influential part of German culture.

Bower defines two styles of Deutschrapp: conscious rap and gangsta rap (Bower 2011). Conscious rap can be considered as a type of rap that is ‘politically’ motivated and speaks up against injustices. Gangsta rap on the other hand plays with the idea of being a minority, even if one is not. Nowadays, conscious rap is emerging more in the Deutschrapp scene, and it firmly shapes German youth culture<sup>3</sup>, which goes as far back as the creation of cultural centers in the 1970s and 1980s in both West and East Germany. These spaces were called *Spiel- und Freiräume* (Play-and Free Rooms) and were places “in which youth groups could meet, form social relations and perform cultural activities and practices” (Goeschel *et al.*, 1995, as cited by Hoyler and Mager 2005, 242). In the context of German-Turkish society and spaces, these community centers, more specifically the spaces in West Germany, were central to the emergence of the Kanaksta Movement, which brought the topic of identity politics to the forefront. These community centers also provided a place for the development of the German-Turkish youth ethnolect *Kanak-Sprak*.

### **The Term Kanake and Kanak-Sprak**

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<sup>3</sup> Because of its mainstream popularity among youth culture, Deutschrapp has influenced the culture of Germany, and thus influences minority identity. Cinar explores this through an analysis of the band Cartel. “Members Alper and Kerim assert that rap music allows them to express their anger against Germans who treat Turks as inferiors”. German-Turkish rap group Cartel’s song “Sen Turksun” or “You Are a Turk” is a prime example of Deutschrapp’s influence on minority groups. “The song presents the “Turk” as the marginalized subject, the “foreigner” who needs to reassert his presence in Germany on his own terms...-the Turk of Cartel is not a foreigner, he belongs to Germany although not to Germanness” (Cinar 1999, 43-44).

Originally, Old School German hip-hop artists mostly rapped in English during the late 80s and early 90s. Eventually, German rap artists started to include German in their works as well as English, which then in turn created what we now know as Deutschrap<sup>4</sup>. In light of the ‘authentic’ image that Hip-Hop promoted, minority groups began to integrate their own language and culture into the genre. This ethnonational differentiation was marketed by minority groups who used other languages, which was mostly, but not always, Turkish (von Dirke 2004). This was not surprising, due to the fact that U.S. gangsta rap and Deutschrap have similar issues regarding the use of racial slurs because of the denigration implicit in criticizing those for circumstances such as their appearance, which are outside of their control. “The word *Kanake*<sup>5</sup> is a highly derogatory term that has been used since roughly the 1970s to refer to visibly non-German foreigners or presumed foreigners, especially Turks” (Loentz 2006, 33). Although it is still considered an offensive term, Tom Cheesman wrote that it has been appropriated as a group self-ascription that combats the hate speech it is associated with (2004, 85). “The word Kanak transformed from a swear word to a name that is carried now ‘with proud defiance’ by the children and grandchildren of the first-generation migrants” (Özbek 2017). At some point in 1995, German-Turkish author Feridun Zaimoglu<sup>6</sup> introduced the concept of the ethnolect *Kanak-Sprak*, which were spoken by those who considered themselves as *Kanaken*. “By the late 1990s the ethnolect became part of mainstream German pop culture,” and thus this ethnolect that is a combination of the Turkish and German language spoken by German-Turkish second and third-generation immigrants

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<sup>4</sup> The term “Deutsch Rap” started appearing around the year 1991 under the music industry’s commodification strategies, which led to the differentiation of popular music and youth culture along national or ethnic lines (Hoyler and Mager 2005).

<sup>5</sup> The term *Kanake* can also be spelled in the following ways: *Kanak*, *Kanacke*.

<sup>6</sup> Feridun Zaimoğlu attempts to express the authentic, tough and subversive power of slang language spoken by Turkish male youths in Germany in his first book “Kanak Sprak.”

entered the youth culture of Germans without an immigrant background (Loentz 2006; 34).

By examining the history of the *Gastarbeiter*, *Parallelgesellschaften*, *Deutschrapp*, and *Kanak-Sprak*, I will now be able to take a closer look at the songs of the artists Alpa Gun, Eko Fresh, and Mert. I will be able to verify if the concept of a transmigrant identity can be associated with these German-Turkish rappers or not with a better understanding of the backgrounds they came from.

## **Literature Review**

In recent years, scholars have researched German-Turkish identity through the lens of German-Turks through economic, educational, and political data, but do not devote as much attention to the cultural aspects of identity as they do the others (Rottmann 2014; Schüller 2015) There are scholars that do take a broad look at German-Turkish identity through the lens of pop culture but do not expand any further than how pop culture has influenced German-Turkish identity rather than how German-Turks have influenced pop culture through their understanding of their own identity (Bower 2011; Ickstadt 1999; Simpson 2005), specifically in the context of *Deutschrap* (German rap). A vast majority of the works of literature on German-Turkish identity mainly discuss two themes: Authenticity as a factor in considering identity and a transnational field where German-Turks are forced to create their own space. There appears to be a lack of works of literature that elaborates on how to characterize German-Turkish identity as well within these themes, but Ayhan Kaya manages to introduce and further define the transmigrant identity, which I will use as a framework in order to examine German-Turkish identity through the context of contemporary hip-hop music.

One of the keys to *Deutschrap*'s popularity in youth culture has been the marketing of minority identities as 'authentic.' Kembrew Mcleod argues that this theme of authenticity can allow "a better understanding of how a culture in danger of



assimilation actively attempts to preserve its identity” (1999, 134-135). Authenticity in rap is simultaneously a construct and a requirement for being taken seriously, and by cultivating and critiquing stereotypical images [German-Turkish rappers] ensure that those images continue to dominate the public consciousness (Bower 2011, 380). When the images and messages of racism and xenophobia and the experiences that these German-Turkish rappers continue to persevere through public consciousness, it only serves to solidify their place and personal expression of their identities as a German-Turk. Kathrin Bower argues that the perseverance of maintaining authenticity as a German-Turk actually shapes the identity into becoming the ‘new German’ identity, and voicing similar sentiments, Patricia Anne Simpson states that under the influence of Hip-Hop, contemporary German music is reconstructing what it means to be German as well. While other scholars argue that because rap pop culture builds around a concept of authenticity that almost always involves the representation of social and political realities of being a marginalized ‘minority’ (Seeliger 2018), German-Turks are preserving their minority culture and identity in Germany (Ibid; Mcleod 1999). Based on the understanding of *Parallelgesellschaften*, Turkish minorities in German society are marginalized by the larger society and separated by differences in socioeconomic status and education (Mueller 2006). It is not that difficult to preserve one's identity when there are not many proper policies being implemented to either integrate or assimilate an ethnic group. This situation only serves to further encourage German-Turks to promote themselves as something other than German or even Turkish.

In preserving their Turkish roots, Ayhan Kaya claims that most German-Turks have become transmigrants, “who can literally and symbolically travel back and forth

between their countries of destination and of origin...[They are] molded by social, cultural, economic, and political imperatives of both countries, [and] they have adopted a rather more vibrant set of identities” (Kaya 2007, 483). Kaya considers the German-Turkish identity to be subject to “flows, boundaries, and hybrids.” These are the three different classifications of a transmigrant identity: “*Flows* refer to continuity and passage between cultures and civilizations; *boundaries* denote discontinuity and obstacles between cultures and civilizations; and *hybrids* address the syncretic character of emerging cultures” (Ibid, 498). Unlike Bower and Simpson, Kaya takes into account the possibility that what is considered the German-Turkish identity is not exclusive to being either assimilated or integrated into the German identity. There is a transnational social field that fosters anxieties about their Germanness or Turkishness (Rottmann 2014). The German-Turkish identity is thus forced into creating its own space because non-Turkish-Germans do not consider them as being ‘German’ enough and non-foreign-Turks believe that they have lost their Turkishness.

In response to this sort of rejection from both parties, some German-Turkish rappers would focus their efforts on highlighting racial and ethnic diversity in order to promote tolerance.<sup>7</sup> An aspect of German-Turkish identity that has received particular scholarly attention is the youth ethnolect *Kanak-Sprak*. The speakers of this ethnolect “employ it to express belonging to a particular ethnic group or subculture...(Loentz 2006, 37)” Elizabeth Loentz finds that in her research, Germany “is failing to develop a viable alternative for a rising generation of young Germans who are trying to find their own

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<sup>7</sup> It should be known that “the research on ethnic identity has so far focused on...-first-generation immigrants” (Schueller 2015, 966). Research about economic behavior, job search and occupation prestige, income, and other socio-economic outcomes have been found to be influential factors in what is considered the German-Turkish ethnic identity.

place and assert a new German identity within their newly minted multicultural ‘country of immigration’” (Ibid, 62). Hence the development of *Kanak-Sprak* in second- and third-generation Turkish migrants, in order for them to assert their own identity. The development of this youth ethnolect supports Kaya’s argument that most German-Turks can be labeled as being transmigrant due to their ability to maintain the synchronous characteristics of both the German and Turkish language.

The issue of developing a place for new generation of young Germans falls back to the question of identity; and while *Deutschrak* has allowed German-Turks to mold the image of their own identity and proudly display it, non-Turkish-German artists have also received the same benefit where they “achieve mainstream success with a Nazified image, [which appears as] a doubly marginalized German (an underclass white non-immigrant German living in poor, primarily minority neighborhood), ...-[with] a display of German Pride that relies heavily on National Socialist imagery” (Loentz 2006, 62). These two images counter each other and consequently make it difficult for German-Turks to be integrated or assimilated into the German identity. It only serves to promote German-Turkish distinctiveness and provides a reason to why German-Turks could be categorized as a boundaries-transmigrant.

These social and political realities create what Heinz Ickstadt calls a ‘bi-cultural existence.’ Looking specifically at the second and third generation of German-Turkish rappers, he finds that there are similarities between U.S. hip-hop and German hip-hop. In assuming the role of Germany’s “blacks,” German-Turks provide a measure of their own cultural alienation by vocalizing their own difference from a dominant and hostile German culture (Ickstadt 1999). Although Ickstadt’s work may be the least recent of all

the other scholarly works I have looked at, he brings up the key term of a transnational/transcultural “youth culture.” Though mostly focusing much like how Kaya would describe her hybrid transmigrant identity on the concept of a ‘bi-culture’—one where “this new generation of hyphenated citizens knows at least two cultures,” Ickstadt makes a point that they are able to create this space to express their identities freely. “As one young German-Turk woman said, this sitting between two cultural chairs does not necessarily imply falling into empty cultural space but is a challenge to find a third chair to sit upon comfortably (Ickstadt 1999, 578). This ‘third chair’ that is mentioned is what I believe to be the subtle understanding that there is a place where the German-Turkish identity can freely choose to remove themselves from the context of Germanness or Turkishness. They have their own space where they have the option to associate themselves with the other parties as well.

It should be understood that identity is not something that is set in stone. On the contrary, it is ever-changing. In the case of the German-Turkish identities and the German identity, the spaces in which they reside—and are molded by—could still be changed where they become integrated or assimilated; however, it appears that identity is influenced by social, political, economic, and cultural spheres of life. That is why I would like to take an in-depth look at how German-Turkish rappers portray themselves currently at least and verify whether their identities can be classified as assimilated, integrated, or one of the three categories of transmigrant by examining the German-Turkish rappers Alpa Gun, Eko Fresh, and Mert’s published songs and analyze what factors contribute to my theory that they are transmigrant German-Turks.

## **Section 1 - Alpa Gun**

Having a hybrid-transmigrant identity means that one has synchronous characteristics between emerging cultures. In this case, the hybrid identity would be the coexistence of German and Turkish culture. The German-Turkish rapper Alper Sendilmen<sup>8</sup>, better known as Alpa Gun, exerts this stance by creating his own term—the Und-Identität (And-Identity)—which can be seen in the three songs with similar titles and themes that he wrote at three different points in time. These three songs include the word *Ausländer* (Foreigner) in their titles and show how his identity as a German-Turk evolves and eventually finalizes as the Und-Identität. In all three songs, Alpa Gun attempts to form a connection of understanding between non-Turkish-Germans and German-Turks. This attempt at building a bridge between the two identities is also his way of creating his own identity, which he defines as a balanced state between being German and Turkish. Alpa Gun's concept of his personal identity is that he is neither German nor Turkish. The Und-Identität that he is advocating for is one that is the hybrid of the two cultures, which in turn can be classified as a hybrid-transmigrant identity because of his assertion of his And-Identity that is the simultaneous, coexistence of the German and Turkish part of his German-Turkish identity.

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<sup>8</sup> A Berlin-born hardcore rapper of Turkish descent, Alpa Gun is affiliated with the Aggro Berlin collective as part of their Sektenmuzik subsidiary label. Born in the Schöneberg district of Berlin on July 4, 1980, he got signed to Berlin label Sektenmuzik (Sect Music) and since then a member of rap group Die Sekte (The Sect). He began collaborating with the notorious Aggro Berlin collective in 2005. He made his full-length solo debut with *Geladen und Entichert* (2007), released by Sektenmusik; the *Ausländer* maxi-single accompanied the album's release.

Alpa Gun is an appropriate sample for this thesis since he wrote three songs with a similar name and nature: *Ausländer* (2007), *Immernoch Ausländer (Still a Foreigner)* (2018), and *Ausländer 2020* (2020). And to understand how the German-Turk Identity or in this case, Alpa Gun's Und-Identität has developed over the years, it is necessary to closely examine these songs and determine what reoccurring factors contributed to Alpa Gun's Und-Identität. By specifically doing a close reading of the lyrics, I have found that language usage, place/setting, and who he is addressing in the three songs played an important role in Alpa Gun's identification as a hybrid-transmigrant German-Turk - his Und-Identität.

The first and most obvious factor in Alpa Gun's development towards his Und-Identität is his use of language. By use of language, I do not mean only his usage of the Turkish and/or German language, but also the tone and message he delivers in each song.

From *Ausländer* (2007), *Immernoch Ausländer* (2018), and *Ausländer 2020* (2020), Alpa Gun gradually becomes more comfortable with his identity as a hybrid-transmigrant. In *Ausländer* (2007), Alpa Gun uses only one Turkish word throughout the entire song. That word is *canım* (my dear), which I will come back to later in this section. One would assume because he is becoming more comfortable in expressing himself that his usage of Kanak-Sprak, which is simply the combined usage of German and Turkish vernacular, would increase with his next song *Immernoch Ausländer* (2018), but that is not the case. Even though he only uses one Turkish word in this song as well, the context of this song actually begins to include more references to other

German-Turks and Turkish figures such as Mesut Özil— a German professional football player—and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan— the 12th President of Turkey.

“Und da diesen Kontext, das  
alles einfach auf Mesut Özil zu reduzier'n, das ist so'n bisschen  
Richtung Doppelmoral und auch leider 'n bisschen heuchlerisch.  
...-Und ohne Grund gucken die Bull'n sich meinen Perso an  
Weil sie seh'n, ich bin ein Türke, so wie Erdoğan  
(And since this context of  
simply reducing everything to Mesut Özil, that's a bit in the  
direction of double standards and unfortunately a bit hypocritical.  
...-And for no reason the cops look at my ID card  
Because they see I'm a Turk, just like Erdoğan)”

Alpa Gun specifically mentions Mesut Özil and Erdoğan together, due to their friendly relations. When this song was published in 2018, Özil and Erdoğan's “ meeting in the run-up to the 2018 World Cup caused widespread controversy and prompted serious criticism from officials at the German football association (DFB)” (*Binge* 2018). “After being named German National Teams' player of the year five times and winning the World Cup with Germany in 2014 Özil has opted not to play whilst his Turkish ancestry is used as political ammunition and excuse for Germany's collectively below-par performance at the 2018 World Cup in Russia” (*Ibid*). Now why would Özil be criticized for being Turkish, and how does his meeting with Erdoğan play a part in this sudden

criticism?

The seemingly close relationship between the two appears only to be controversial due to Erdoğan—who was elected in August 2014. Erdogan's policies during the course of his political career have been highly criticized. “For example, he was rebuked by German politicians for criticizing the central European country's immigration policies and stating that the children of Turkish immigrants born in Germany should learn Turkish before they learn German. Furthermore, human rights campaigners have been critical of Erdogan's government over the alleged systematic arrests of journalists, civil rights activists and political opponents” (*Goal* 2019). Since Erdoğan is the Turkish President, his actions were associated with the country and those with Turkish ancestry, including Özil and Alpa Gun.

By using Özil and Erdoğan's relationship as an example of the hypocritical nature of non-Turkish-Germans, Alpa Gun states that the non-Turkish-Germans only claim German-Turks as a German, only when it is beneficial to them and vice-versa. By comparing himself to Özil and Erdoğan, two controversial and unpopular symbols of Turkey in the German imaginary, it can be seen that Alpa Gun acknowledges the rejection of the German part of his identity by the non-Turkish-Germans.

However, in *Ausländer* (2007), Alpa Gun does not reject his Germanness and instead declares that he is a ‘part of the German people.’

“Ich bin ein Ausländer doch für euch bin ich Kanacke,

*canim*

Trotzdem bin ich hier und leb' unter der deutschen Flagge



...-Ihr sollt nur wissen, wir sind auch ein Teil vom deutschen Volk

(I am a foreigner but for you I am a Kanacke,

*my dear*

Nevertheless I am here and live under the German flag

...-You should just know we're part of the German people).

In his 2007 song, Alpa Gun mostly emphasizes his connection with his German side, but there is still a subtle and underlying understanding that he will not be completely German because of non-Turkish-Germans perceiving him as a Kanacke. He raps that he is a foreigner in these lines, but the usage of the word *doch* (but) implies that the statement "I am a Kanacke" has a deeper and personal meaning for him as a person who is German-Turkish. Despite that, he does not delve into these sentiments further for this series until the release of his 2018 song.

*Immernoch Ausländer (2018)* shows a minor change in how Alpa Gun is presenting his identity. Instead of trying to promote himself just as a part of the German people, he tries to reference the Turkish part of his identity and combine it with his German one. In the bridge of the song, there is an audio recording of a woman that begins at 1:34 in the music video.

“Ich bin sehr gerne Deutsche, ich bin auch sehr gerne  
Türkin. Und ich bin auch nicht entweder oder, ich bin  
keine Entweder-Oder-Identität, sondern ich bin eine  
Und-Identität. Ich bin Deutsche und Türkin.

(I'm very happy to be German, I'm also very happy  
to be Turkish. And I am not either or, I am  
not an Either/Or-Identity, but I am an  
And-Identity. I am German and Turkish.)”

This is the first instance where Alpa Gun references his Und-Identität. His use of another voice other than his own, actually emphasizes the point he is trying to make in his songs. Although he is not the one exclaiming that he is German and Turkish, the speaking voice of a woman referencing his Und-Identität draws the listeners' attention and makes them focus on the message more than if they were to simply hear from Alpa Gun's expected voice. This audio recording clearly defines what the Und-Identität means for Alpa Gun as it draws a distinction between being an 'Either/Or-Identity' and highlights the 'And-' aspect of his identity. The 'And-' part of his identity can be interpreted as being a hybrid-like identity, specifically a hybrid-transmigrant identity because the word 'And-' insinuates a co-existence of two things, in this case being German and Turkish. Alpa Gun prides himself in being German and proceeds to allude to his Turkish side more as well in *Immernoch Ausländer*. Other than the noticeable increase of Kanak-Sprak, his Und-Identität or hybrid-transmigrant German-Turk identity is fully realized in his most recent song *Ausländer 2020* and can be especially seen in the verse: “Wir sind der Halbmond und Stern mitten in / der deutschen Flagge / Immer noch Ausländer, *Moruk*, ich bin / Deutsch-Kanake” (We are the crescent moon and star in the middle / of the German flag / Still foreigners, *Brother*, / I am / German-Kanake). The image of the crescent moon and star is one that can be clearly seen on the Turkish flag.

With the combination of this image and the German flag together, it is a physical and symbolic representation of his hybrid-transmigrant German-Turk identity. Just like how each flag is unique to their respective countries, the crescent moon and star in the middle of the German flag is unique to German-Turks. Unlike the allusions about other German-Turks or prejudice acts referenced towards them, the combination of the German and Turkish flag is a tangible symbol that Alpa Gun uses to indicate his hybrid identity. Therefore, Alpa Gun is implying that he believes that being a Deutsch-Kanake (German-Kanake), which is another way to call his Und-Identität, is its own unique identity. Being Deutsch-Kanake means that he is a combination of the two identities, but is not exclusive to Turkish nor German much like how Kaya defines being a hybrid-transmigrant as a synchronous relationship between two cultures.

Thus, Alpa Gun's use of language is not the only factor that supports his Und-Identität. Place and setting heavily influence his work and himself as an individual as well. For instance, the way Alpa Gun discusses the importance of Berlin in *Ausländer* (2007) shows how large of a role it has played in shaping his hybrid-transmigrant identity.

“Ich bin ein Ausländer, *canim*, wir haben's hier nicht leicht gehabt  
Die Straße im Ghetto hat noch niemanden reich gemacht  
Ich bin ein Ausländer, doch Berlin ist mein zu Hause  
Meine Heimat, meine Stadt hier kriegst du auch mal auf die Schnauze  
...-Doch in mein Bezirk sind wir wie eine Familie  
Ich wohne gerne in Schöneberg, weil ich hier alle Liebe

Ich kann nicht Weg hier, weil ich die Gegend brauche  
Guck Berlin ist meine Heimat  
Berlin ist unser zu Hause  
(I am a foreigner, *my dear*, we haven't had an easy time here  
The street in the ghetto has made nobody rich  
I am a foreigner, but Berlin is my home  
My home, my town here you can even get beat in the face  
...-But in my district we are like a family  
I like to live in Schöneberg because I love everything here  
I can't leave because I need this neighborhood  
Look Berlin is my home  
Berlin is our home)"

Alpa constantly references how Berlin is his home, specifically his district in Schöneberg where he implies that he either lives in or near the ghetto. Areas such as these play important roles as “homebases and nodes of cultural production” that influence modern-day hip-hop (Hoyler and Mager 2005). I want to focus on the key phrase “homebases and nodes of cultural production” because this would also imply that his district or simply just being born and raised in Berlin is what he uses to define the German part of his German-Turkish identity. By shifting from the first person singular “Berlin ist meine Heimat” (Berlin is my home) to the plural “Berlin ist unser zu Hause” (Berlin is our home), Alpa Gun emphasizes the German in his German-Turk while attempting to build a connection between himself and non-Turkish-Germans. This

attempt at building a common ground between German-Turks and non-Turkish-Germans is continued throughout the rest of the song with the reiteration of this verse of "Berlin is still my home" in *Immernoch Ausländer* (2018) .

Not only does Alpa Gun use the city of Berlin to support his stance of being German, he also mentions the setting of Germany 30 years ago in *Ausländer* (2007). "Es hat sich viel geändert - es ist nicht mehr / wie vor 30 Jahren / Damals hielten wir noch mehr zusammen / und waren nur gegen Nazis (A lot has changed - it is not / like 30 years ago / Back then we stuck together more / and were only against the Nazis). Although he simply references Nazis, the fact that he mentions that it was 30 years ago from the point this song was released in 2007 means that he is specifically referencing neo-Nazis. The country has changed, yet there are still those who promote the Nazi ideology. Alpa Gun's reference to the presence of Neo-Nazism during this time insinuates that he has lost a sense of solidarity with his non-Turkish-German brothers and sisters who were the 'we' that were against the Nazis with him, which then provides another reason for him to accentuate his hybrid-transmigrant identity as a German-Turk. Alpa Gun's music is reconstructing what it means to be German, and "this recoding begins as a response to the violence...-and racism...-in Germany (Simpson 2005, 52). Even though Alpa Gun is promoting his Germanness more in *Ausländer* (2007), this recoding of Germanness is actually his way of building towards his Und-Identity. This is a subconscious thought in his mind about his identity as a German-Turk which steadily gains momentum in its expression in *Immernoch Ausländer* (2018) and culminates in *Ausländer 2020*. Instead of mentioning only Berlin as his home, he includes the Turkish city Gaziantep, or Antep for

short, as his home as well in *Ausländer 2020 (2020)*. “Berlin ist meine Heimat, Antep ist mein *Memleket*” (Berlin is my home, Antep is my *Hometown*).

He does not repeatedly rap about how just Berlin is his ‘Heimat’(Home) anymore. He includes Antep, a Turkish city in the southeastern Anatolia Region, and raps that it is his ‘*Memleket*,’ which is Turkish for hometown. These two phrases are in apposition of one another, which emphasizes the point that Alpa Gun wants us to read these lines as parallels to each other. This formatting of his lyrics provides an additive quality in his language. Yet again, this is Alpa Gun’s way of declaring that he has a strong connection to Berlin, his German home, and Antep, his Turkish home. His usage of location reinforces his Und-Identität. He is a member of both groups, but one is not above the other (Deorah 2020, 39). These two cultures coexist as one unique identity for him, meaning that there is no clear cut line between being German or German-Turk.

It goes without saying that there are other factors that can be found in these songs that contribute to Alpa Gun’s understanding of himself as German-Turk, and the last factor I will be going into is the audience—who Alpa Gun is directing his songs at. He refers to the audience as *canim* (my dear), *canê* (soul), and *Moruk* (brother) in *Ausländer (2007)*, *Immernoch Ausländer (2018)*, and *Ausländer 2020 (2020)*, respectively.

With the change in how Alpa Gun addresses his audience, he also shows how his own sense of identity as a German-Turk has developed into what is now known as his Und-Identität. In order to connect how these words relate to Alpa Gun’s identity, I will be going into details about the meaning behind these references in the order in which the songs were chronologically released.

All three words are Turkish and the audience that he explicitly addresses as ‘ihr’ (their/you) are the non-Turkish-Germans. The three songs of Alpa Gun represent a seeping sense of resignation that the racism and xenophobia by non-Turkish-Germans will not change, and thus results in an assertion of the Turkishness in his German-Turkish identity. Even so, this assertion of Turkishness specifically towards non-Turkish-Germans by Alpa Gun is not an aggressive one that denies Germanness either. The words *canim*, *canê*, and *Moruk* could be considered as terms of endearment.

The term *canim* used in *Ausländer* means ‘my darling/my dear.’ The times where Alpa Gun uses that term are when he is explaining how he is considered a ‘foreigner’ or declaring that he is Kanake. “Ich bin ein Ausländer doch für euch bin ich Kanacke, *canim*” (I am a foreigner but for you I am Kanacke, my darling). In this verse, Alpa Gun knows that he is considered a foreigner; nevertheless, he wants to emphasize to the non-Turkish-Germans that for them specifically, he is a Kanake — a German with Turkish ancestry.

Calling a person ‘my darling’ has a tone of ironic endearment to it that sets Alpa Gun apart from being German. He has affection towards being German and of course wants the audience to understand that because he is Kanake, by definition, he is also still a member of German society, yet non-Turkish-Germans do not accept him as a part of Germany. This message that he believes that he belongs to German society is also present in the next song *Immernoch Ausländer* (2018).

“Immer noch Ausländer, *canê*, wir haben's hier nicht leicht gehabt  
Ich liebe Deutschland, für mich gibt es kein'n Ersatz

Immer noch Ausländer, Berlin noch immer mein Zuhause  
Meine Heimat, meine Stadt und was ich brauche, *canê*  
Immer noch ein Ausländer und für euch immer noch Kanake, *canê*  
(Still foreigners, *soul*, we haven't had it easy here  
I love Germany, there is no substitute for me  
Still a foreigner, Berlin is still my home  
My homeland, my city and what I need, *soul*  
Still a foreigner and for you still Kanake, *soul*)”

Being roughly translated into ‘soul’, *canê* provides an even stronger association with his identity as a German-Turk. He feels that there is a stronger bond between being Turkish and German. He constantly reiterates how Germany is his home as well, and the Turkish word *canê* is also referring to the country as well as the people for Alpa Gun. He is “still a foreigner and ...-still Kanake,” and he ‘needs’ his home, much like how he and every other person needs their soul. Compared to *canim* as a term of address, *canê* hints at a more intimate relationship between Alpa Gun and his audience. Referring to his audience as ‘soul’ also provides an image that every single person is a unique individual, which plays on how Alpa Gun believes that his concept of the Und-Identität is a unique hybrid-transmigrant identity as well, compared to being either Turkish or German.

Finally, Alpa Gun’s understanding of his Und-Identität, being a combination of the Turkish and German parts of his identity culminates in *Ausländer 2020* when he refers to the audience as *Moruk*.



Translated into English, the Turkish word *Moruk* means something like ‘age,’ ‘colleague,’ or ‘brother.’ In this context, Alpa Gun is referring to his non-Turkish-German audience as ‘brother.’ Calling the audience a brother establishes a kinship between the two parties. Kinship means that they have something in common, yet once again also implies that they are their own unique individual. This time Alpa Gun raps, “Immer noch Ausländer, *Moruk*, ich bin Deutsch-Kanake (Still a foreigner, brother, I am German-Kanak). It is understood that for the non-Turkish-Germans, nothing has changed. Alpa Gun is still considered a foreigner. As we have seen though, even if the perspectives of the non-Turkish-Germans have yet to change, how Alpa Gun identifies himself has. Instead of referring to himself simply as ‘Kanake,’ he thoroughly realizes that he is ‘Deutsch-Kanake,’ a hybrid identity that is neither German nor Turkish but what is known as his Und-Identität.

Alpa Gun’s three songs can be considered as an anthology of the development or eventual self-realization of his identity as a hybrid- transmigrant German-Turk. Although there are several other ways he shows how he claims the distinct German-Turk identity we can look at, the three characteristics of *Ausländer* (2007), *Immernoch Ausländer* (2018), and *Ausländer 2020* (2020) that support his argument best are language use, place and setting, and the audience of the songs. These factors show that Alpa Gun takes parts of his German identity and his Turkish identity and combines them into an ‘And-Identity.’ This ‘And-’ implies that Alpa Gun’s identity fits into the definition of Kaya’s hybrid-transmigrant identity.

## **Section 2 - Eko Fresh**

\_\_\_\_\_ Ekrem Bora<sup>9</sup>, better known by his stage name Eko Fresh, is a German rapper of Turkish and Kurdish descent. A majority of Eko Fresh's songs take a political standpoint. His songs tend to exemplify an ironic, yet political, satire; however, over the years, Eko Fresh has changed how he is expressing himself through his rap songs and appears to become more earnest about his position in regards to the relationship of non-Turkish-Germans, Turks, and German-Turks.

By speaking out against the racism and xenophobia of non-Turkish-Germans and Turks, Eko Fresh makes an indirect statement about his identity as a boundaries-transmigrant German-Turk, which as defined by Kaya is an identity that either discontinues the relations between both cultures and civilizations or creates a barrier between them. Much like Alpa Gun, Eko Fresh takes on the stance that being German-Turk is an identity that is not simply being either Turkish or German. However, instead of taking the position that he is German and Turkish, he defines himself as neither German nor Turkish. He sets a boundary and presents himself as being a distinct identity: German-Turk, which differs from Alpa Gun, who instead attempts to integrate himself into both German and Turkish culture, rather than distinguishing himself as new one. He makes a point to clarify and emphasize that his identity as a German-Turk is valid

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<sup>9</sup> He was born on September 3, 1983 in Cologne, Germany and grew up in Mönchengladbach, raised by his single mother, a postal worker. He began rapping at age 14 and eventually dropped out of school in tenth grade. Afterwards, he started working in a shoe store to make ends meet. While working his retail gig, Bora met Kool Savas, who agreed to produce his 2001 Royal Bunker debut EP, *Jetzt kommen wir auf die Sachen*.

because neither the Turks nor Germans will ever truly understand the experiences that only German-Turks have. Eko Fresh brings about this concept of his boundaries-transmigrant German-Turk identity through the portrayal of his identity or self in his music videos, usage of instrumentals, and the tone he takes regarding the topic of race and identity throughout the three songs I will be analyzing:

*Straßendeutsch/Türkenslang (Street German/ Turkish Slang) (2011)*, *Quotentuerke (Token Turk) (2013)*, and *Aber (But) (2018)*.

How Eko Fresh portrays himself is noticeable in each song. Although he is subtle about it in *Quotentürke (2013)* and one would assume that he can be categorized as a flow-transmigrant that can travel between cultures, the other two songs are an outright declaration of his German-Turk identity. In *Quotentuerke*, he recognized that he was simply a ‘Token Turk’ to non-Turkish-Germans because they did not recognize him as German. “Ich weiß, dass es manche neuerdings verwirrte/ Denn der König von Deutschland ist ein Türke” (I know that it has confused some lately/ Because the King of Germany is a Turk). This is a reference to one of his previous songs *König von Deutschland (King of Germany) (2003)*, but it is also a statement in regards to his identity. Because he refers to himself as the King of Germany who is also a Turk, it shows how Eko Fresh considers himself as German-Turk. Portraying himself as both a King and a Token Turk at the same time seems contradictory, seeing as how a King is a position of high status while being a Token Turk is a stereotypical position that categorizes German-Turks as an accessory for non-Turkish-Germans to appear multicultural and non-racist. The term token refers to “someone who meets all of the formal requirements for entrance into a group but does not possess the ‘auxiliary

characteristics' (especially race, sex, and ethnicity) that are expected of people in that position. Consequently, [those in the position of being a Token Turk] are never permitted by [non-Turkish-Germans] to become full members and may even be ejected if they stray too far from the special 'niche' outlined for them" (Zimmer 1988, 65). It is also relevant to note that the German term *Quotentürke* has a bureaucratic connotation to it that the English 'Token Turk' does not exactly convey. The German 'Token Turk' can also be someone who might be employed to fulfill quotas, much like how the *Gastarbeiters* at the time were necessary to fulfill the quota of laborers needed to continue the *Wirtschaftswunder* (German Economic Wonder). Eko Fresh uses two contradictory images here as a way to cultivate and critique the stereotypical image placed upon German-Turks in order to simultaneously assert belonging, otherness, and power (Bower 2011). He is at once a 'German King' and a 'Token Turk,' and this contradiction gives him a way to represent the contradiction he himself feels. An assertion of otherness heavily extends towards Eko Fresh's self-identification as Kaya's boundaries-transmigrant German-Turk and removes him from being classified as either the hybrid- or flow-transmigrant, which by definition requires a togetherness rather than an otherness.

Eko Fresh's method of portraying himself as a German-Turk does not remain the same throughout all three songs. He performs a sort of recoding of German-Turkish identity by non-Turkish-Germans in *Quotentuerke* (2013) and *Aber* (2018), and he teaches the ethnolect of his generation in *Straßendeutsch/Türkenslang* (2011).

“Für Deutsche sind wir Türken

Für Türken sind wir Deutsche  
Deshalb sag' ich euch, was die Wörter so bedeuten  
Wir werden oft als Asoziale betitelt  
Haben unsere eigene Sprache entwickelt  
Nenn es Straßendeutsch oder Türkenslang  
Ich mach' mehr für die Völkerverständigung als ihr  
(For Germans we are Turks  
For Turks we are German  
That's why I'll tell you what the words mean  
We are often called anti-socials  
Developed our own language.  
Call it street German or Turkish slang  
I do more for international understanding than you do)"

Once more, Eko Fresh refers to himself as a boundaries-transmigrant German-Turk by rapping that “For Germans we are Turks, For Turks we are German.” In this situation, the Turks who live or were born in Germany suffer from a kind of homelessness, since they are considered foreigners in both Germany and Turkey. This is yet another boundary that is placed between Eko Fresh and the German and Turkish parts of his identity. Eko Fresh tries to remedy this ‘homelessness’ by teaching non-Turkish-Germans his ‘own language,’ which once more is another factor that shows how Eko Fresh is differentiating himself from Germans and Turks. An interesting thing to make note of in these specific lines is that Eko Fresh does not actually use any

*Kanak-Sprak*. Especially when he references the *Völkerverständigung*<sup>10</sup>, (international understanding) - a specifically German post-war ideal of international understanding, because he is a German-Turk who is promoting this ideal of international understanding. He is the third party that mediates between Germans and Turks.

Another interesting method that Eko Fresh takes to portray himself as a boundaries-transmigrant German-Turk is in his third song *Aber* (2018). This song actually takes a look at three perspectives: that of a German, a Turk, and finally a German-Turk. There are three people present, who each inhabits one of these roles. Patrick Mölleken and Yunus Cumart are both actors who play the roles of the German and the Turk, respectively. Eko Fresh takes on the role of the German-Turk.

“Ich sitze schon mein ganzes Leben zwischen diesen fucking Stühl'n  
Und grade als ich dachte, es wär' alles abgekühlt  
Ich dachte, Brüderschaft, aber es war zu früh  
Ich bin Deutsch-Türke, keiner weiß hier, was ich fühl'  
(I've sat between these fucking chairs my whole life  
And just when I thought, everything had chilled  
I thought, brotherhood, but it was too soon  
I am a German-Turk, no one here knows, how I feel)”

Eko Fresh states that he has been sitting between the chairs that are the Germans and Turks his entire life, meaning he has never been either German or Turkish. He has

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<sup>10</sup> In Germany, the promotion of the idea of international understanding is a recognized charitable purpose (Section 52 (2) sentence 1 no. 13 AO), which is also of tax importance.

always been ‘in the middle’, which means that Eko Fresh clearly sees himself as a German-Turk, and he finally gives his opinion on the conflict between the German and the Turk by identifying himself with neither party but instead distinguishes himself from the two as a new identity: the identity of the German-Turk. Another way that Eko Fresh distinguishes himself from the German and the Turk in the video is when he mentions ‘brotherhood.’ In a familial sense, being brothers means that they can come from the same roots or have a sort of camaraderie in both senses, this relationship requires distinct individuals to form this bond. And that would mean that Eko Fresh would need a boundary from being German or Turkish in order to fulfill his role in his assumed ‘brotherhood.’ This boundary as a German-Turk is reinforced in the music video as well by showing Eko sitting between the German and Turkish rappers.

The visuals of the three chairs for each identity emphasizes the betweenness he grew up in. Being between the two cultures does not mean that he is a part of both cultures like Alpa Gun. Instead, this understanding of his existence in the German-Turkish cultural state of in-betweenness provides him personal freedom from German and Turkish norms (Ickstadt 1999) that can also be understood that his cultural state of in-betweenness presents another boundary from German and Turkish identities. He states that he plainly and simply grew up between both worlds (German and Turkish), and raps “Seht es ein, denn Identifikation / Ist nur ein Gefühl wie 'ne Handyvibration” (See it, because Identification / is just a feeling like a mobile phone vibration) meaning that he believes that one is not defined by anything other than what one believes themselves to be. His comparison of identification and a mobile phone alludes that the concept of a German-Turkish identity needs to take a modern approach. It also sets a boundary

between what was understood as a German-Turkish identity in the past with what is understood as a German-Turkish identity today.

Another way that Eko Fresh aligns himself with Kaya's boundaries-transmigrant German-Turk identity is through the instrumentals of each song. There are noticeable differences in the music between the songs *Straßendeutsch/Türkenslang* (2011) and *Quotentürke* (2013), and *Aber* (2018). In *Straßendeutsch/Türkenslang* (2011) and *Quotentürke* (2013), the music has a bağlama or saz, a Turkish string instrument, playing with basic rap beats. One would assume that because the music sounds Turkish, it would mean that Eko Fresh is leaning towards his Turkish identity; however, that is not the case because he is still rapping in the German language. With these two factors combined, he combines his German and Turkish identities together. This combination can be mistaken as him aligning with the concept of the hybrid-transmigrant identity, but in fact, it still sets a border between being a German or Turk because language and music are two different factors.

*Aber* (2018) is a bit different from the previous songs though because it does not include the saz. Instead, when transitioning from the German, to the Turkish, and to the German-Turkish perspective in this song, the audio makes a shift in tone when it reaches Eko Fresh's part. Unlike the crass beats that can be heard with the other two perspectives, his part of the song to all its intents and purposes changes completely. Instead of having a high-pitched rhythm like the other two rappers, Eko Fresh's part changes with a melodic chime going through the chromatic scale into a smooth bass. Eko Fresh's beats being different from the other two is a subtle expression of how he believes that the German-Turk identity is unquestionably independent from the German and Turkish



identity. Much like Eko Fresh, these rhythms may take some of its traits from the two, but even so, it distinguishes itself as its own identity.

Finally, the third method that Eko Fresh uses to support his identification as a German-Turk is how the tone of his songs transition from being ironic to serious.

In *Quotentürke* (2013), Eko understood that the topic of racism and xenophobia are extremely serious, but he ironically takes on an image that heavily stereotypes German-Turks as to “[complicate any mere] sociological notion of spatial hierarchies, [which]...-poses questions about...-difference (Cheesman 2004, 88).

Although one would assume that Eko Fresh’s portrayal of this song would not be taken earnestly because of its satirical nature, it garners more attention to the serious theme of racial prejudice by catching listeners off-guard. He is calling attention towards the issues faced by German-Turks such as himself because he is a “Quotentürke, Quotentürke, oh, Quotentürke! Ganz egal, wie sehr ich mich auch änder'. Ich bleib' immer dieser scheiß Ausländer.” (Token Turk, Token Turk, oh Token Turk! No matter how much I change, I’ll always stay as the fucking foreigner). There is a prominent difference that he is attempting to highlight, yet he understands that this will not change the stereotypical image that is placed upon him by non-Turkish-Germans because that would “disrupt the state-sanctioned dialogue between ‘Germans’ and ‘Turks’ (Cheesman 2004; 83).

Another way that his tone changes is that in *Straßendeutsch/Türkenslang*, Eko Fresh takes a more serious yet gentle tone while trying to establish a better understanding between non-Turkish-Germans and German-Turks through the education of Kanak-Sprak. “Because minority Germans’ use of the term *Kanake* as a self-ascription

destigmatized the slur and lifted the taboo against its use, and minority artists' use of the ethnolect...-in their own work was likewise interpreted as tacit permission for non-minorities to do the same...(Loentz 2006; 44). With non-Turkish-Germans freely using Kanak-Sprak, Eko felt like it would be best that they, non-Turkish-Germans, should understand and know the proper meanings behind the Kanakisch terms they use.

“Straßendeutsch, Fadenkreuz, Hiermit ist dein Leid beendet” (Street German, crosshairs, Here is the end of your suffering). According to Eko, the non-Turkish-Germans who speak *Straßendeutsch* or *Türkenslang*<sup>11</sup> were in the ‘crosshairs’ of not truly understanding the German-Turkish ethnolect of Kanak-Sprak, and so with his help, he ends their ‘suffering’ of lack of understanding. This can also be taken as a threat by him towards non-Turkish-Germans because of their lack of acceptance of German-Turks as a part of German society. Eko Fresh ends non-Turkish-Germans’ ‘suffering’ by removing himself from the German narrative and placing himself in the German-Turkish one instead.

Over the course of the first two songs, Eko tries his best to keep a positive sounding tone; nevertheless, he realizes that his attempts at changing the perspectives of non-Turkish-Germans is a difficult task. They will not recognize him as a German-Turk and only acknowledge him as a ‘Token Turk.’ In *Aber (2018)*, Eko alludes towards his song *Quotentürke (2013)*. “Auf einmal ist der Quotentürke gar nicht mehr so lustig” (Suddenly the Token Turk isn’t funny anymore). This is a key turning point in Eko’s transition to a more serious tone. His retrospective analysis on the reception of such implies a change in his intention; he acknowledges the shift in his understanding of how members of his own culture accept — or don’t accept — someone as German-Turkish.

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<sup>11</sup> *Straßendeutsch* and *Türkenslang* are other names that can be used to refer to Kanak-Sprak.

This allusion to his song *Quotentürke* (2013), in which he laments over how he is inescapably reduced to his roots, shows that Eko's tone on this topic has changed to being serious and direct. His change in tone also implies that he is setting a boundary between his political beliefs and non-Turkish-Germans' political beliefs. Originally in the song *Quotentürke* (2013), he plays on the stereotypes placed on Turks by non-Turkish-Germans in order to have a subtle acknowledgment to the prejudice and xenophobia faced by German-Turks; However, with the appearance of this latest song, he realizes that he cannot stand by and make subtle commentary through satire anymore. He has to take an earnest position on a topic such as this. In the following lines after, he lists examples of topics that are considered 'German vs. Turkish,' and repeats the phrase "Als gäb' es nur den Wahl zwischen...(As if there were only the choice between...)" He is making a statement that there is more than just a choice between either this or that, or German or Turkish. He understands for himself that he does not need to make a choice between either German or Turkish, and this serious and direct tone he uses in this song shows how significant it is for him to set a boundary from being German or Turkish. He identifies as a boundaries-transmigrant German-Turk, which is neither German nor Turkish as Kaya would describe. The concept of the German-Turk identity is seen overall in this song, due to the fact that Eko Fresh is able to write a song in both the non-Turkish-German and Turkish perspectives. This proves that he is in tune with both arguments, and when he presents himself as the German-Turk, it is his way of accepting that he is neither one or the other but a whole different *Gefühl* (feeling).

After looking at these three songs, Eko Fresh can be classified as a boundaries-transmigrant German-Turk. He is able to make this point by how he portrays

himself, how he utilizes musical audios, and the tone he takes throughout his three songs. He sets a boundary in each of these factors, which allows him to argue that he should be distinguished from what is known as the German and/or Turkish identity.

### **Section 3 - Mert**

In this analysis section, I will be looking at the German-Turkish rapper Mert's three part Ausländer series. Since Mert's three songs were published in different years, one would assume that the main themes of each song, much like Alpa Gun's and Eko Fresh's songs, would change as well; however, the prevailing message throughout the three songs are that Mert considers himself as a foreigner, or more specifically a Turk who belongs to Germany but not to Germanness itself.

This theme in his three songs gives the sense that Mert is emphasizing a flow-transmigrant German-Turkish identity. His identity is a 'flow' in the sense that he can consider himself neither German nor Turkish in an equal amount. Unlike Alpa Gun, Mert does not have a synchronous emergence of the characteristics of both cultures, and unlike Eko Fresh, he does not establish a barrier between both cultures. Instead, Mert is able to have continuous passage between the cultures and physical countries of Germany and Turkey, leaning more towards the Turkish side at this point in time. This idea can be applicable to Mert's songs just by referencing each of the songs' titles.

The representation of his own identity contrasts from Alpa Gun and Eko Fresh's messages, which are hybrid- and boundaries- transmigrant identity of being German-Turkish, respectively. Mert accomplishes this flow- transmigrant German-Turkish identity by his usage of Kanak-Sprak, Turkish audio and visual representation in his music videos throughout all three songs, and the repetitive call

backs to the previous songs while also introducing new elements to the continuing songs to emphasize his identification with the Turkish part of his German-Turkish identity.

Mert, real name Mert Ekşi,<sup>12</sup> debuted in 2015 with his song *Ausländer*. Like Alpa Gun, Mert produced his own version of an *Ausländer* series, and his debut song, *Ausländer (2015)*, was the first of the series. This first song depicts the stereotypical life of a German-Turkish family in a deliberately comical and exaggerated way. This was his way to emphasize how non-Turkish-Germans perceived German-Turks.

Though his song is mostly sung in German, his usage of Kanak-Sprak and general choices of Turkish words like *lan* (dude), *Cekirdek* (core), *Mercimek* (lentil soup), *Terlik* (slipper), and the repetitiveness of referring to himself as an *Ausländer* or *Kanak* only serves to solidify his flow-transmigrant identity that shows how he is leaning more towards the Turkish part of his identity. He even raps a situation that can be seen in a stereotypical German-Turkish family.

“Ich bin ein Ausländer, ey, Bruder, tank mal ein'n Zehner  
Kanaks sind mit jedem verwandt und verschwägert  
Dreißig Cousengs passen rein in ein'n Benz  
Du musst jeden umarm'n, obwohl du kein'n davon kennst (hö?)  
Schon als Kinder klauten wir Yu-Gi-Oh!-Karten  
Zu 'nem Ausländer darfst du niemals „Hurensohn“ sagen (was, *lan*?)  
Sie lernten auf den Bergen Munition laden  
'Ne Kanakenmutter kann dich mit 'nem *Terlik* totschiagen

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<sup>12</sup> Also known as Mert Abi, he is a German rapper and former YouTuber with second-generation Turkish roots from Bad Pyrmont, Germany that was born on March 5, 1996.

Von Baba reicht schon ein böser Blick  
Du darfst ihn nicht stören, wenn er Döner isst  
Yeah, er hat zwar keine Muskelarme  
Aber voll die Brustbehaarung, heh  
Eltern sagen immer, wir sollten die Schule machen  
Und angeblich waren alle beide gut in Mathe (blablabla)  
(I'm a foreigner, ey, brother, tank up a ten  
Kanakas are related to everyone and are related by marriage  
Thirty cousins fit into a Benz  
You have to hug everyone, even though you don't know any of them (ho?)  
Even as children we stole Yu-Gi-Oh! Cards  
Furthermore foreigners should never say "son of a bitch" (was, bro?)  
They learned to load ammunition on the mountains  
A kanaken mother can kill you with a slipper  
An evil look is enough from Baba  
You should not disturb him, when he's eating a doner kebab  
Yeah, he doesn't have any muscle arms though  
But his chest hair is full, heh  
Parents always say, we should go to school  
And supposedly both of them were good at math (blablabla))"

Much like the reclamation of the term Kanak, Mert's portrayal of the stereotypical German-Turk is his way of destigmatizing this image that non-Turkish-Germans had built

up over the years. This action is similar to the purposes of *Kanakcomedy*<sup>13</sup> described by Elizabeth Loentz.

According to Loentz “the political incorrectness of *Kanakcomedy* purports to reflect a normalization of relations between Germany and its minorities...- Despite this subversive potential, [it] calls attention...to the distinctions that threatened to become blurred or erased by political reform” (Loentz 47). Mert continues this trend of playing on German-Turkish stereotypes and increases his usage of Kanak-Sprak in *Ausländer 2* (2017) and *Ausländer 2020* (2020) as well. Mert truly emphasizes the Turkish part of his identity by only referencing generic, yet personal Turkish experiences. “Like most rap, [Mert’s] work risks affirming stereotyped images of a minority (by generation and lifestyle) within a minority (by ethno-national difference)” (Cheesman 83). Mert intertwines the generational differences between children and their parental figures. It shows that Mert’s connection to his parent’s version of being Turkish actually contrasted from his perspective. This generational difference is also pertinent to the usage of Kanak-Sprak.

As I have mentioned before, Kanak-Sprak is a stylized language that has developed and mainly used by second- and third-generation immigrants. This creates a point of understanding in Mert’s German-Turkish identity that he is still influenced by his German side, even if he tends to lean more towards his Turkish side. As defined by Kaya, Mert is able to traverse or flow between relating to the German part and Turkish part of his German-Turkish identity. It is implied that the older Turkish migrant members of his

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<sup>13</sup> *Kanakcomedy* is a genre in mainstream German pop culture that features caricatured portrayals of foreigners and minorities, speaking *Kanakisch*, a stereotyped form of the actual ethnolect spoken by some Turkish-Germans of the second and third immigrant generation (Loentz 2006, 34).



family or in general were raised differently from the younger generation. While the first generation grew up in Turkey learning how to ‘load ammunitions in the mountains’, how to be tough with a *Terlik* or slipper, and enjoy Turkish dishes like doner kebabs, Mert’s generation ‘stole’/played with Yu-Gi-Oh! Cards and rode in a Benz - a German luxury vehicle. Much like how Eko Fresh plays on non-Turkish-Germans’ racist stereotypes about Turks, Mert takes a similar approach in order to call attention to the stereotypes placed on Turkish migrants, so that German-Turks’ racial issues would not be overlooked. He may be describing himself as a foreigner, but his lyrical wording shows that he is not just Turkish but a German-Turk.

Another call-out to Mert’s Turkish identity is his constant usage of Turkish rhythms, instrumentals, and/or audio/visual presentations of Turkish imagery in all three of his rap songs. This instrumentation includes flutes, tambourine, drums, and violins being used in the songs. The music has more Turkish influences when transitioning from *Ausländer (2015)* to *Ausländer 2 (2017)* and finally to *Ausländer 2020 (2020)*. Not only do the instrumentals in the three songs give off more of a Turkish theme, in *Ausländer 2020 (2020)*, the only music video that was available to be seen in the United States, showed visuals of the Turkish flag, Turkish markets and restaurants, and Turkish people as well. As seen in how these songs are titled, Mert considers himself a foreigner. By calling himself a foreigner, he plays on these stereotypes that most non-Turkish-Germans give him. This line is repeated in both *Ausländer (2015)* and *Ausländer 2 (2017)* as a part of the hooks.

“Wir sind Ausländer, ihr könnt uns alle in ein'n Topf werfen

Wir bereiten Kopfschmerzen, ich weiß  
Doch wir sind Ausländer, wer weiß, wie lange wir euch noch nerven  
Wir bereiten Kopfschmerzen und wir sind dreist, Digga  
(We are foreigners, you can lump us all together  
We give headaches, I know  
But we are foreigners, who knows how long we'll annoy you  
We give headaches and we are unapologetic, Digga)''

According to Mert, this means German-Turks will always be considered foreigners and will not know how long they will bother the non-Turkish-Germans because that is all dependent on the non-Turkish-Germans themselves, not that of the German-Turks. His usage of the word 'We' implies that he is siding with being a foreigner and is directing his statement towards non-Turkish-Germans. The use of 'ihr' (you guys/their) and 'euch' (you) also suggest that Mert is identifying more as a foreigner than German, especially since he is speaking on behalf of foreigners and by addressing non-Turkish-Germans as a 'you guys/you' instead of as a 'we'. He is creating a distinction between himself, a foreigner, and the non-Turkish-Germans. This line is not aggressive though, and Mert is not trying to fully deny the German part of his identity. He refers to the non-Turkish-Germans as 'Digga.' Digga is a common slang used by Germans when addressing a friend, like "mate", "dude" or "bro". This shows that Mert understands the concerns of his Turkish and German side and proves how he flows between the two sides of his identity. He is still more concerned with his Turkish identity

though, since that is the side that he feels deserves more recognition due to the negative stereotypes placed upon Turkish people.

“Heh? Bin ich jetzt kriminell?  
Schwarze Haare, dicke Karre und ich liebe Geld  
Stolz in der Brust, Respekt ein Muss  
Ein Wort über Mama und es fällt ein Schuss  
Ich bin ein Ausländer, trage Nike und kein Lagerfeld  
(Heh? Am I a criminal now?  
Black hair, fat car and I love money  
Pride in the chest, respect a must  
A word about Mama and a shot is fired  
I am a foreigner, wear Nike and no Lagerfeld)”

This acknowledgment of being a foreigner, a criminal “opens for [German-Turks] a wide margin of role play: of acknowledging and, at the same time, making fun of the fantasies Germans have about Turks, by playing the role of the ‘bad, bad Turk,’ (Ickstadt 1999, 572). Mert declares that German-Turks may be headaches for the non-Turkish-Germans; however, he is unapologetic about being a nuisance. Instead of feeling insulted like the non-Turkish-Germans wanted, he turned this image into that of a “proud, if ironic, self-identification (Ibid). In this instance, Mert declares how proud he is and to be given respect is an obvious course of action. He does not condone the insults directed at the Turkish people, and in this instance states how he does not wear Lagerfeld,

a German cologne, which references fashion designer Karl Lagerfeld who courted controversy with Islamophobic statements. “In 2017, Lagerfeld had no issue stating that Syrian and Muslim migrants weren’t welcome in Europe and pushed a both Islamophobic and frankly anti-Semitic idea that, ‘One cannot— even if there are decades between them — kill millions of Jews so you can bring millions of their worst enemies in their place’” (Lagerfeld as cited by Entertainment Desk). Mert is proud of being a German-Turk and subtly but not entirely rejects Germanness in preference of his Turkish side.

A listener can gauge that Mert’s German-Turkish identity leans more towards his Turkish side, but even so, it does not remain as just Turkish. As a flow- transmigrant German-Turk, his identity can traverse between the two cultures; therefore, he is not always biased towards the Turkish side of his identity. In *Ausländer 2020 (2020)*, Mert collaborated with rapper Alpa Gun, which shows Mert’s flow-transmigrant German-Turkish identity can travel to being in a hybrid-transmigrant state of identity like Alpa Gun’s. Even so Mert’s part in this song flows more towards his Turkishness. He raps preferences for Turkish-related topics over German-related topics. “Sucuk mit Ei und ein Çay vor / 'ner Parliament / Mahmut und Hasan und nicht / Joko und Klaas” (Sucuk with an egg and an Çay /and a hit of Parliament / Mahmut and Hasan and not / Joko and Klaas). Having sucuk with an egg and an Çay, a type of Turkish sausage with eggs with Turkish black tea, and then proceeding to smoke a Parliament<sup>14</sup> brand cigarette, is the most Turkish activity one can do. He even prefers Mahmut and Hasan over Joko and Klass, the latter being a famous duo that hosts popular reality series *Das Duell um die Welt*.

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<sup>14</sup>Parliament is a very well known and widespread cigarette brand in Turkey.

Compared to the subtle references towards his Germanness in the *Ausländer* (2015) and *Ausländer 2020*, there is only one instance where Mert refers back to his German identity, and that was in *Ausländer 2* (2017), where he reiterated his foreignness.

“ Ich bin ein Ausländer, ey, Bruder, leih mal ein'n Zehner  
Ich geb' dir zurück, *vallah*, gleich oder später  
Trau keinem Kanak, denn auf Ausländer ist kein Verlass  
Wir sind für euch Kanaken, sogar mit 'nem deutschen Reisepass  
Aber kein Problem, da sind wir dran gewöhnt  
(I'm a foreigner, ey, Brother let me borrow a ten  
I'll give you it back, *vallah* (*yeah/ by jove*), sooner or later  
Trust no Kanak, because you can't count on foreigners  
We are Kanaks for you, even with a German Passport  
But no problem, we're used to it)”

In these lines, Mert gives evidence that he is German, but even so, these lines actually show a balance of being German-Turk instead. In the first two lines he talks as if he is Turkish, and then in the next line he goes “Trust no Kanak...” as if he is a German talking. It is like he is having a conversation with his two sides. Yet because these lines were stated by him, it only provides more support for his identity of being a flow-transmigrant German-Turk. He does not combine his identities like Alpa Gun, and he does not draw a line between the identities like Eko Fresh. He can cover the entire spectrum between being German or Turkish or German-Turk.

It is seen here that Mert's identity is molded by the treatment by non-Turkish-Germans towards him and other German-Turks. In short, after looking at Mert and his *Ausländer* series. Mert's identity is that of a Kaya's flow- transmigrant German-Turk, who's personal image transitions between both identities, leaning more towards his Turkish identity. This can be seen through the usage of Kanak-Sprak through the songs, the increase in foreign sounding instrumentals and Turkish related visuals applied to each music video, and how he takes on the stereotypical roles of being a German-Turk in order to ironically make a political statement.

## **Conclusion**

Though the artists may have similar experiences of racism and xenophobia, it appears that how they represent themselves as a transmigrant German-Turk vary. What I have found interesting through the analysis through these artists' songs is that each of their narratives did not take the side of their German counterparts for a majority of the time. These three artists are prominent in both Germany and Turkey and have voiced their concerns on issues such as racial injustice and systematic oppression through their works. The following songs were chosen due to their relevance among the involved groups' contemporary rhetoric regarding German-Turkish identity. As such, Alpa Gun, Eko Fresh, and Mert all produced and published songs that showed that they allied with the Turkish part of their identity, due to issues regarding racial prejudice.

My analyses showed that all three could be categorized as having a transmigrant identity. The type of transmigrant each artist is, are slightly different. They all can be classified as a transmigrant German-Turk, but as defined by Kaya, Alpa Gun, Eko Fresh, and Mert are hybrid-, boundaries-, and flow- transmigrant German-Turks, respectively. The results showed that Alpa Gun was a hybrid-transmigrant German-Turk due to his concept of the Und-Identität, which combines both his German and Turkish identities instead of separating them into an Either/Or-Identity. Eko Fresh had a boundary-transmigrant German-Turkish identity, which can be seen through how he sets himself apart from the German and Turkish identity, especially when looking at the visuals of the

three chairs in *Aber* (2018). Finally, Mert categorized himself as a flow- transmigrant German-Turk identity that fluctuated between being more or less German or Turkish, but leaned more towards his Turkish side this time around.

With regards to how these three artists determine their own sense of identity in Germany, the German-Turkish identity is not likely to be integrated or assimilated into the German identity. As Ickstadt stated, it is unknown where or how the identity of Germans and German-Turks in Germany will turn out, with these results though, these artists can be put under the umbrella of having a transmigrant identity. “The habitats of meaning of German Turkish transmigrants are shaped by social, cultural, economic, and political imperatives of both countries in a way that equips them with a rather more vibrant set of identities—more cosmopolitan, more syncretic, more rhizomatic, and more transnation” (Kaya 2007, 498). Future German-Turkish identities can then be assumed to be categorized as either hybrid-, boundaries-, and flow-transmigrant.



APPENDIX: PLAYLIST

<i>Title</i>	<i>Artist(s)</i>	<i>Album</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Length (mm:ss)</i>
Ausländer	Alpa Gun	Geladen und Entsichert	2007	4:08
Ausländer	Mert	Ausländer	2015	2:35
Ausländer 2	Mert	Kunde ist König	2017	2:57
Ausländer 2020	Mert, Alpa Gun	Kunde ist König 2	2020	2:58
Aber	Eko Fresh	Legende (Best of)	2018	5:19
Immernoch Ausländer	Alpa Gun	Ehrensache Reloaded	2018	4:28
Quotentürke	Eko Fresh	Eksodus	2013	3:11
Straßendeutsch/Tü rkenslang	Eko Fresh	Ekrem	2011	3:37

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