

Adam DOMALEWSKI

Towards a Multicultural Community. The Accommodation of Ethnic and Religious Minorities in the 'Migrant Comedy' Genre

Abstract: The article deals with the phenomenon of migrant comedy films, framing the genre as part of the larger body of diasporic cinema. The author's definition of migrant comedy conceives it as a very specific genre typically set in immigrant milieus, whose main themes revolve around successful social and moral accommodation of diasporic characters to the shared (in most cases western, liberal) practices and values of the receiving majority. Migrant comedies exploit dichotomous divisions and stereotypes based on pronounced cultural differences to characterize their protagonists as members of specific ethnicities. In the article, migrant comedy genre's reliance on stereotypes is discussed in greater detail as is its multicultural ideology. In the second part of the article, the proposed genre framework is used to interrogate two films: *All Three of Us (Nous trois ou rien*, dir. by Kheiron, 2015) and *A Spicy Kraut (Einmal Hans mit scharfer Soße*, dir. by Buket Alakuş, 2013).

Keywords: Migrations in motion pictures, Comedy films, Romantic comedy films, Stereotypes in motion pictures, Multiculturalism, Motion pictures and transnationalism.

The list of European comedy films set within the milieu of ethnic, national and religious minorities is long and could reasonably be expected to expand with each year. In his study of French diasporic cinema, Will Higbee contends that:

Comedy – the popular French genre, *par excellence* – has also emerged as a genre of choice, particularly amongst Algerian émigré directors (see, for example, the work of

Adam DOMALEWSKI

Adam Mickiewicz University
domalewski.adam@gmail.com

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Abdelkrim Bahloul, Merzak Allouache and above all Mahmoud Zemmouri), as well as amongst Maghrebi-French directors such as Malik Chibane and Djamel Bensalah. All of these directors use a consensual approach to the genre, employing comedy as a means of drawing attention to the ridiculous nature of many prejudices and stereotypes held against the North African immigrant population by certain sections of French society, while relishing the opportunities offered by the comedic mode to subvert received opinions through laughter. (27)

Naturally, comedy is not an exclusively French genre, nor are émigrés and diasporic filmmakers the only ones to take advantage of this particular mode of storytelling. Higbee also points out that comedy “has been employed by a variety of directors across French cinema since at least the mid-1980s” and has explored “issues of immigration, integration, multiculturalism and difference” (37), although diasporic/immigrant directors held a much different view of the genre than their majority-ethnic French counterparts. Similar examples of comedies – high- and low-brow, popular and otherwise – portraying aforementioned minorities, can be found in (Turkish-)German, (Asian-)British or Swedish cinema. However, a more exhaustive, comprehensive study of the phenomenon, which I have come to call “migrant comedy,” has yet to be published.

In the context of diasporic cinema, films such as *Almanya – Willkommen in Deutschland* (*Almanya: Welcome to Germany*, dir. by Yasemin Şamdereli, 2011), *Qu'est-ce qu'on a fait au Bon Dieu?* (*Serial (Bad) Weddings*, dir. by Philippe de Chauveron, 2014), or *Bend It Like Beckham* (dir. by Gurinder Chadha, 2002) have been the subject of (often brilliant) analysis but drawing up a more detailed genre breakdown for these pictures usually fell outside the scope of the authors' interest. As a result, most either simply refer to them as comedies (Higbee; Ballesteros) or use a variety of terms and genre designations,¹ sometimes interchangeably within the same study, including: “culture clash” (Hagener 118; Berghahn, *Families* 155) and “multicultural” (Berghahn, “Coming of Age” 253) comedies, “ethnic” (Moine 45; Stewart 287; Berghahn, *Families* 5, 41), “integration” (Berghahn, *Families* 41, 69) and “multi-ethnic” comedies (Tarr 324), even “diasporic wedding films” (Berghahn, *Families* 152–85). The latter term was examined in the course of an extensive argument made by Daniela Berghahn, for whom the diasporic wedding film is a hybrid genre:

“I propose that diasporic wedding films fuse the conventions of romantic comedy with family melodrama, adding the allure of exotic wedding rituals, a heavy dose of heart-warming family feeling and some Bollywood-style song and dance numbers, thrown in for good measure.” (*Families*, 14)

Berghahn identifies *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* (dir. by Joel Zwick, 2002) as the film that first established the generic paradigm for diasporic wedding films, combining a romantic comedy plot with themes and structures characteristic of so-called wedding films,

which evolved rapidly following the staggering success of *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (dir. by Mike Newell, 1994) in the mid-1990s (Berghahn, *Families* 163). However, the cited definition also simultaneously assumes that merging romcom tropes with the narrative conventions of family melodrama results in a hybrid genre that Berghahn calls “ethnic romantic comedies” (*Families* 165), a term the author, somewhat confusingly, tends to use interchangeably with “diasporic wedding films.” In my view, it would be useful to set ethnic romantic comedies apart from family melodramas and tragicomedies such as *East Is East* (dir. by Damien O’Donnell, 1999), *Ae Fond Kiss ...* (dir. by Ken Loach, 2004) or *Brick Lane* (dir. by Sarah Gavron, 2007), but also to recognize differences between migrant comedies and romantic or coming-of-age plots in comedies set in multicultural spaces and featuring multi-ethnic characters (examples of the latter include movies such as *Kebab Connection* (dir. by Anno Saul, 2004), *Il reste du jambon? (Bacon on the Side*, dir. by Anne Depétrini, 2010) or *Salami Aleikum* (dir. by Ali Samadi Ahadi, 2009). In my opinion, migrant comedy is a very specific genre that can be identified by theme, structure, type of humour and characters. While it shares, of course, some similarities with both romantic comedy and family melodrama (brilliantly detailed by Berghahn in her examination of diasporic wedding films), I argue that, when carefully defined, migrant comedy should be considered a separate comedy genre with its own distinct tropes.

Drawing on Rick Altman’s model, which sees the film genre as having “both a common topic (...) and a common structure, a common way of configuring that topic” (23), my definition conceives the migrant comedy as a genre typically set in immigrant milieus, whose main themes revolve around successful social and moral accommodation of diasporic characters to the shared (in most cases western, liberal) practices and values of the receiving majority. Migrant comedies exploit dichotomous divisions and stereotypes based on pronounced cultural differences to characterize their protagonists as members of specific ethnicities. As such, they follow the general pattern of genre films, which Altman describes as follows: “Constantly opposing cultural values to counter-cultural values, genre films regularly depend on dual protagonists and *dualistic* structures (producing what I have called dual-focus texts)” (24). Scholars writing extensively on immigrant cinema were quick to identify that fact, one example being Higbee, who asserted that: “In Roschdy Zem’s romantic comedy *Mauvaise foi* (2007), for example, the families of a Maghrebi-French musician and his Jewish (French) fiancée are initially divided along religious lines – though no scenes appear in the film to show the families as either devout or even practicing Muslims or Jews” (163), a remark later mirrored by Isolina Ballesteros’ findings about “depictions of the family as a privileged locus for referring microcosmically to society at large” (21) being a key trope of migrant comedy. Ballesteros also argues that “diaspora filmmakers’ comedies provide an entertaining as well as engaging look at cultural and generational collisions” (22), both of which are crucial for the genre in question, particularly its structure and type of humour.

Typically, the humour in migrant comedies derives from the desire to reconcile conflicting requirements imposed by separate cultural formations or appears as a result of their inevitable collision. To do so, migrant comedies often use a pair of young characters bound by a strong emotional connection but hailing from different, often hostile, religious, ethnic or racial communities. This is exactly the point that brings migrant comedy close to the classic romantic comedy formula, which should come as no surprise given that the genre's tropes are often a combination of motifs from related, older comedy genres, e.g. slapstick and screwball comedy (*Kebab Connection*), romcoms such as *Salami Aleikum* or *Evet, ich will!* (dir. by Sinan Akkus, 2008) or coming-of-age dramedies, for instance *Bend It Like Beckham* or *Vingar av glas* (*Wings of Glass*, dir. by Reza Bagher, 2000). What seems really problematic here, however, is not the blending of different types of mood and sources of humour within one movie, but rather the migrant comedy genre's reliance on stereotypes. Isolina Ballesteros offers an accurate breakdown of the issue: "The comedic genre, for all its popularity and precisely because of its comic, and at times simplifying, relief, may also prove problematic insofar as it may tend to exacerbate stereotypes even while claiming to denounce them through humor and caricature" (21). In her study of French, low-brow, ethnic comedies, such as *Neuilly Yo Mama!* (*Neuilly sa mère!*, dir. by Gabriel Julien-Laferrière, 2009) and crime comedy *Beur sur la ville* (dir. by Djamel Bensalah, 2011), which she bitterly calls a "burqa-farce," Michelle Stewart offers an instructive and interesting glimpse into the ambiguous issue:

"Given that the film's comedy depends almost entirely upon widely circulating stereotypes about Maghrebi-French and other ethnic minorities, it might be puzzling to some to learn that the film benefitted from a government film fund meant to promote diversity, the *'Images de la diversité'* ('Images of Diversity') fund." (282)

Stewart's essay raises a number of questions about cultural diversity and the politics of representation, such as what should the mission of such funds be² and what impact on the audience do films like the above-mentioned titles – rife with stereotypes, but still imbued with the authority of a diasporic filmmaker – have. "Does the production of middlebrow and lowbrow films, in addition to serious art films, spur meaningful debate regarding equality of access and cultural recognition?" (289). Alas, the essay does not suggest any definitive answers, also on account of the fact that the French government's cultural politics often takes a rather schizophrenic view of its own goals and means (284–5). As the author puts it, "it remains ambiguous whether the performance of these stereotypes '*for laughs*' merely recycles them, caricatures them, or perhaps both at once" (286–7). This, in turn, leads us to the conclusion that both the filmmakers' and audiences' sensibilities are an important factor in evaluating the quality of humour in migrant comedies³. It is beyond doubt, however, that socially conscious and highbrow migrant comedy can be a powerful influence, "employing

comedy as a means of drawing attention to the ridiculous nature of many prejudices and stereotypes (...) while relishing the opportunities offered by the comedic mode to subvert received opinions through laughter” (Higbee 27).

While European diasporic cinema features a number of approaches to portraying the collision and conflict of value systems and cultural traditions, I argue that migrant comedies resolve their primary conflicts through reconciliation and cheerful overcoming. As such, on the persuasive level, these comedies assert that social integration of various minorities is possible, in nearly all possible circumstances. As I already mentioned, the main theme of migrant comedies is the successful, social and moral accommodation⁴ of diasporic characters into the shared practices and values of receiving majority. Politically speaking, this accommodation seems to indicate that multiculturalism may just as well be indispensable; in other words, the politics of these comedies paints an optimistic vision of multicultural integration.⁵ This particular argument seems to find corroboration in the remarkable studies compiled by Daniela Berghahn and Isolina Ballesteros that I already cited above.⁶ Two passages from Berghahn warrant particular attention. In one, she contends: “Ethnic comedies revolve around the dialectical tension between similarity and difference and make a case for the rapprochement of ethnic minority and majority cultures, for tolerance and mutual understanding” (*Families* 41). Elsewhere, the scholar asserts: “Put bluntly, while social realist dramas tend to emphasise what makes the diasporic family different from ‘us’, comedies explore what makes them similar” (*Families* 27). Brent Peterson offers a similar understanding of the function of the diasporic series *Türkisch für Anfänger* (*Turkish for Beginners*, 2006-2008), from German TV broadcaster ARD, his interpretation, however, frames it more as teaching cosmopolitanism.⁷ Anyway, the common denominator of the aforementioned arguments is that migrant comedies recognize the hybrid diasporic identity as a full-fledged identity model that does not threaten but instead co-creates a cohesive community and cosmopolitan society.⁸ That is also why I call the genre “migrant” rather than “immigrant comedy” – because these films are concerned with the whole of society, rather than just its diasporic side, as they try to depict how migration affects identities, customs and practices.⁹

Meanwhile, the second distinctive element of the migrant comedy’s texture and ideology is the reaffirmation of the primary role of the family (and, more broadly, of the minority community), which is uniquely capable of surviving all turbulence and absorbing various deviations from the traditional cultural habitus. Daniela Berghahn offers identical conclusions with regard to diasporic wedding films, emphasizing “the centrality of the family, constructed as a social and moral institution” (*Families* 161) and contending that “a happy ending *without* the family’s approval would be inconceivable” (165) in the case of young transgressive couples. In my view, however, there is a bigger difference between migrant comedies (or diasporic wedding films) and family melodrama and I also believe that

migrant comedy does not view traditional values as incontestably as Berghahn's findings do.¹⁰ Instead, they are conceived as flexible, westernized, secularized and softened. This common feature of diaspora filmmakers' comedies (and migrant comedies as well) was too described, exhaustively and accurately, by Isolina Ballesteros:

Through the use of common slapstick conventions, self-caricature, and the parodic blending of immigration-related themes with disparate subjects and genres, these films minimize tragedy, focusing instead on the absurdities that sometimes result from immigrant families' efforts to juggle tradition, history, and the desire for acceptance and assimilation fostered by the demands of global popular culture. (22)

Films such as *Serial (Bad) Weddings* and *Salami Aleikum* are both good examples of this kind of flexibility. In Philippe de Chauveron's comedy, the typical happy end trope – the wedding of a couple coming from feuding families, in this case interracial – confirms the (temporary) overcoming of racial prejudice. Notably, while the picture consistently addresses racial stereotypes and portrays them as universal (and, consequently, nonthreatening), gender roles and stereotypes remain unquestioned, leading Raphaëlle Moine to argue that “the whole affair is resolved via a climactic moment of patriarchal reconciliation between Monsieur Verneuil and Monsieur Koffi, which offers (...) the burlesque spectacle of male drunkenness against a background of masculine camaraderie” (48). An even more popular variant of the same favorable transformation of a diasporic character's attitudes is intergenerational, with *Salami Aleikum* being one example. Alexandra Ludewig describes the changes taking place in two families with East German and Iranian backgrounds as follows: “It is the offspring of both families who instigate the departure from a diasporic mentality which feeds off the invention of a glorified past. Ana's and Mohsen's emancipation – achieved by refusing to adopt this old-style mentality – serves as a vehicle for change” (96). In migrant comedies, it is usually the representatives of the youngest generation that introduce and demand changes in mentality.

I am convinced that the proposed framework for the migrant comedy genre could be used for further analysis of a number of films. It also offers a range of analytical tools to distinguish migrant comedies from other types of movies (also within the comedy genre) set in migrant and diasporic minorities. It should also be noted that under this framework, a lot of films, e.g. *East Is East*, *Bend It Like Beckham* or *Brick Lane*, could never be considered migrant comedies because of the family breakdowns they feature, the lack of reconciliation or happy endings, or on account of the unresolved social divisions fueled by ethnic, religious and cultural differences and borders. It is an interesting issue, although somewhat outside the scope of this essay, that migrant comedies (and, more broadly, all diasporic cinema) are mostly produced in Western Europe. Of course, this is partly due to historical and economic ramifications, including Western colonialism and post-war postcolonial migrations from countries of the global South. I predict that in the coming years the subject of migration

will play an increasingly important role in Central and East European filmmaking, mostly on account of the economic prosperity of the region, as well as recent political shifts (along with the rising threat of anti-immigrant, dehumanizing rhetoric) and migratory movements in, through and from these areas. The question of whether migrant comedies will keep their typical features in the reshuffled geopolitical context remains open.

One model example of the migrant comedy genre produced in recent years in Europe includes *All Three of Us* (*Nous trois ou rien*, 2015), the directorial and screenwriting debut of French comedian Kheiron. The autobiographical comedy tells the story of Kheiron's family, which fled political persecution in Iran and settled in France in early 1980s, and features the director in the lead role of his own father, Hibat Tabib. Divided into three parts, the film spans the family's history from the outbreak of political turmoil in Iran, during which Hibat and his brother spend a few years in prison, through the Tabib's dramatic flight from the country, up to their arrival and settling in France. In the first half of the film, the conflict is political in nature – with the Tabib family, imbued with ideas of personal freedom and equality, on one side, and the state police apparatus in an undemocratic country on the other. But as the film moves into its second half, problems stemming from the family's immigrant condition and issues plaguing the multicultural French society begin to take center stage.

The film's main theme, the glorification of family and collective values, is readily apparent. Unflagging mutual support and always being there for one another turn out to be the bedrock of the Tabib family throughout its history, the wellspring of its strength and success – first ensuring the family's survival under an authoritarian regime and later facilitating its successful assimilation into the multicultural French society. Even the film's very title implies that particular meaning. The Tabibs bear some resemblance to Marjane Satrapi's family from her renowned comic book *Persepolis* and its animated film adaptation (dir. by Vincent Paronnaud and Marjane Satrapi, 2007), with both families made up primarily of liberal, secularized, leftist dissidents. To paint a picture of the political situation in Iran prior to the Islamic Revolution, the film uses a comedic montage of scenes featuring the Shah in grotesque poses, followed by Hibat and his brother Aziz destroying pictures of the monarch, a feat which lands them both a ten-year prison sentence. Behind bars, Hibat is subject to further repressions after he refuses to eat a piece of birthday cake in the honor of Shah. Although rife with depictions of dramatic events, *Nous trois ou rien* takes the edge off potentially graphic scenes using a number of distancing techniques and the absurdity of the overall situation. First, the film uses a voice-over and first-person narration that present the events from a safe, contemporary time perspective. Second, the comic situations balance out otherwise graphic scenes (and as a comedian, Kheiron has a good sense of humour and comedic timing, and manages to populate the film with a bevy of jokes and gags). Third, the director uses a loose approach to editing, with plenty of cross-cuts, jump cuts and dissolves, which ultimately softens some of the more distressing visuals. For example, scenes portraying Hibat's physical degradation and

exhaustion in prison are part of a montage sequence that reduces their time on screen and sets them against non-diegetic music. Finally, Hibat's desolation in confinement is alleviated by the appearance of imaginary characters – his siblings and friends who provide him much-needed support. All this brings to mind Daniela Berghahn's comments on *Almanya – Willkommen in Deutschland*, where, Berghahn argues, "magical [realism] touch of Cenk's imagination transcends borders and boundaries" and "fuses what is separate in terms of time and space" (*Families* 72). In similar fashion, in Kheiron's migrant comedy the magical realism testifies to the spiritual strength and persistence of Hibat.

Characteristic features of the migrant comedy genre become even more apparent in the third act of the film. While *Nous trois ou rien* has neither a romcom subplot nor does it feature characters coming from clashing backgrounds falling in love, a central role in the story is played by a cultural centre the Tabibs run, as it becomes a stage for the various migrant comedy genre tropes to play out on. The comic relief, provided primarily by immigrants of various age, gender, and backgrounds, is driven by the clash of different lifestyles, customs, traditions, and opinions on the most important spheres of social life, such as communication, sexuality, marriage, cooking, or music. Two older immigrant women, Mamadou and Rachida, are a particularly prolific source of that sort of amusement. The former lives in a polygamous marriage, whereas the latter is full of inhibitions, particularly when it comes to sexuality, and is always worried about her adolescent daughter's chastity. Hibat and his wife Fereshteh help the visitors navigate these cultural differences and are quite successful in bringing them closer to the French liberal model and Western morals. As is typical for migrant comedy, even serious conflicts and problems (like young men's conflicts with the police, their accusations of racial prejudice, unemployment and poverty) are tempered and alleviated. Hibat's charisma, charm and hard work, along with the support of his equally talented and nice wife, help him overcome initial difficulties. It is, however, somewhat striking how Hibat's family seems to handle adjustment to the new French reality from their very arrival in the country. Although they have to learn the language and improve their financial situation (while Hibat graduates from law school), they do not feel alienated. On the contrary, they help others, less educated, overcome their problems. Thus, *Nous trois ou rien* is an optimistic tale about the benefits of multicultural integration, the power of immigrants, and their ability to create a multi-ethnic community.

The most perplexing and recurring issue in migrant (and other types of) comedies, namely the usage of prejudices and stereotypes in a comedic tone, extends far beyond purely ethnic, cultural and religious discourses. Raphaëlle Moine indicates that these social factors should be taken into consideration together with other important categories, especially class and gender. The author also examines, using three high-profile French comedies as example, how "The promotion of alterity and diversity involves extremely ambiguous strategies of figuration/denunciation of stereotypes which promote a form of utopian fraternity that

disguises class relationships (in *Bienvenue chez les Ch'tis*) or denies them (in *Intouchables*)” (47). The structure of *Nous trois ou rien* is similarly problematic. Although Fereshteh gains an important role in the narrative as the lead female character, her determination and strength are designed to be played for comedic effect. Her proactive attitude, which seems to go against prevalent gender stereotypes, is a significant source of humour in Kheiron’s comedic strategy. Perhaps even more ambiguous are the relationships between the Tabibs and other diasporic characters who frequent the cultural centre. Rather than portraying them as peers, the film sees Hibat and Fereshteh as their pedagogues. They tell them how to live and what to think, they solve their problems and educate them. In this paradoxical arrangement, the Tabibs seem to represent the French majority. Their depiction does not designate them as diaspora members as their cultural heritage seems to be purely external, mostly located in the interior of their house, in the form of rugs or traditional dishes. This opposition between the Tabib family and the rest of immigrants clearly paints the former as the good, model newcomers to France. Nevertheless, successful social and moral accommodation to the practices and values of the modern French cosmopolitan society remains the main goal for all characters in *Nous trois ou rien*. Finally, to avoid harmful stereotyping, sources of various diasporic traditions and customs remain unclear in the narration. Any mention of origin, religion or social status is avoided and otherness remains an unspecified difference. As a result, the film is mostly stripped of any discussion of questions of class, ethnicity or belief. At the cultural centre, social inequality and different religious and ethnic traditions are reduced to harmless and extrinsic eccentricities, like the desire to have five wives.

Einmal Hans mit scharfer Soße (*A Spicy Kraut*, dir. by Buket Alakuş, 2013) is another, albeit lesser-known example of the migrant comedy genre. The film, carrying clear romcom connotations, tells the story of Hatice, a Turkish-German woman living in Hamburg and working as a journalist. The fact that Hatice is neither married nor engaged despite being in her thirties becomes a problem for her father, Ismail, when Fatma, his younger daughter, announces her intention to marry. Ismail, using the authority vested in his position, declares that the family will abide by tradition and that the younger daughter cannot marry before her elder sister is at least engaged. Fatma, meanwhile, is pregnant by her boyfriend, but hides this fact from her father and begs her sister to find a fiancé, even a fake one. Because she has just recently broken up with her boyfriend, Stefan, Hatice tries to find someone to play her fiancé during the obligatory visit with her family. This, of course, leads to disaster (when Erik, her friend, assumes the role) and a series of misunderstandings when Hatice finally finds the right man, Hans. Of particular importance here is the fact that the happy ending in *Einmal Hans mit scharfer Soße* does not involve the formation of a new heterosexual couple (as a romcom usually requires), but rather leads to a reconciliation between Hatice and Ismail, with the father finally letting his daughter go to chart her own path. Once again, the diasporic family proves itself capable of surviving all turmoil and upheaval.

In comparison to other diasporic dramas about arranged and forced marriages, Hatice's situation seems far less complicated and severe. She can decide for herself about her emotional relationships and no one can coerce her into doing something against her will (as illustrated by the funny sequence in the car with her father). On top of that, she is an adult woman living alone and earning a living. Buket Alakuş' film offers a vision of secularized Islam and a westernized Turkish family, whose members only have to realize the changes that have taken place in their cultural habitus. All of them, including Ismail, have in fact a double German-Turkish identity. The hybridization becomes obvious in the happy ending of the film, which offers peaceful resolution of all previous conflicts, with German passports for Ismail and his wife Emine becoming a symbolic confirmation of this process – mirroring another Turkish-German migrant comedy mentioned above, *Almanya: Willkommen in Deutschland*. The hybrid identity of Hatice is itself comically represented in the form of a miniature Anatolian village, complete with a handful of locals that appears in her flat. These loud people, dressed in traditional peasant garb and talking in Turkish, serve as a kind of choir that advises her on difficult moral decisions, e.g. when she brings home a newly met man. They address her directly and have a very judgmental, critical view of her. Hatice banishes them at some point in her life, but finally invites the Anatolian village back into her home, a move that symbolizes her reconciliation with herself and her hybrid Turkish-German identity.

While not a classic romcom or diasporic wedding film, *Einmal Hans mit scharfer Soße* clearly proves that a closer interrogation of the category of migrant comedy may yield really interesting results. I believe that the proposed genre framework may be successfully employed to analyze the narratives, style, and ideology of individual migrant comedies. It seems that contemporary comedies about diasporas (and presumably other minorities) have a lot in common, regardless of who the subject is and where they come from.

End Notes

1. Some of these terms, i.e. “multicultural comedy” and “culture clash comedy”, have been first coined by the press (Berghahn, “Coming of Age” 253).
2. Stewart brings up the words of Alexandre Michelin, the president of the *Images de la diversité* committee, who said that “the mission of a fund such as *Images de la diversité* is to help combat the sensationalistic media discourse of Samuel Huntington's thesis that equates diversity with war” (285).
3. A similar sentiment is brought up by Ballesteros: “In the context of comedy, authorship becomes a crucial factor in establishing the often-thin line between homogenizing and even exoticizing the immigrant subject and ridiculing immigrants' behaviors and traditions, which are depicted through the authority conferred to directors who themselves belong to the diasporic or immigrant group that they depict” (21).
4. I use the term ‘accommodation’ as understood by Tariq Modood in his book on multiculturalism: “I shall here mean by multiculturalism the political accommodation of minorities formed by

- immigration to western countries from outside the prosperous West” (5). The author further explains that: “multiculturalism or the accommodation of minorities is different from integration because it recognizes groups, not just individuals, at the level of: identities, associations, belonging, including diasporic connections; behaviour, culture, religious practice, etc.; and political mobilization. It appreciates that groups vary in all kinds of ways and so will become part of the social landscape in different ways. This means that they cannot necessarily be accommodated according to a single plan and will in different ways change the society into which they are integrated” (46).
5. Naturally, integration as a political concept has often been criticized because of the inequalities it implies. Petersen, for example, writes that “the term ‘integration’ dominates the discourse surrounding migrants and migration, even though ‘assimilation’ is a more accurate description of what is demanded” (97).
 6. Ballesteros writes that though “comedies may risk trivializing the complexity of the issues at stake, they may also inadvertently provide such audiences with positive outcomes and utopian resolutions to racism, and advocate the miscegenation of Europe’s racial identities” (22).
 7. “While there are certainly lessons that Turks living in Germany can learn from the program, not the least of which is seeing themselves depicted positively, I contend that *TfB* (*Türkisch für Anfänger*) functions mainly to teach cosmopolitanism to Germans. After all, who are the beginners in the title if not the Germans and German-speaking members of other minority communities who can experience vicariously what it means to be Turkish in contemporary Germany?” (Peterson 96). He further explains that: “Shifting to a model of cosmopolitanism suggests the existence in Germany of sensibilities that are neither strictly German nor any other national designator connected to German by a hyphen. Cosmopolitanism implies an extension of the concept of Germanness ‘in light of migration, mobility, nomadism, and hybridity’” (98).
 8. Altman writes that, according to the ritual approach to genre theory, genres “function to justify and organize a virtually timeless society” (27).
 9. Compare with Modood’s comments on multiculturalism: “Multicultural accommodation works simultaneously on two levels: creating new forms of belonging to citizenship and country, and helping sustain origins and diaspora. The result – without which multiculturalism would not be a form of integration – is the formation of hyphenated identities such as Jewish-American or British-Muslim (even if the hyphenated nature of the latter is still evolving and contested)” (45).
 10. “The ethnic romcom achieves this [reintegration of family] through reappraising cultural traditions and norms hitherto regarded as incontestable truth” (*Families* 165).

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