

Almanya – Willkommen in Deutschland (2011): Discussion Questions

The Use of Stereotype in the Film

The film often plays with stereotypes. Which stereotypes about Germans appear in Hüseyin's nightmare about receiving a German passport? Why do you think these feature in his dream?

What does the Yilmaz family imagine Germany will be like before they leave Turkey for the first time? What are their ideas about Germany at this point based on?

How does the family deal with the challenges they encounter in the process of migration to Germany? How does the film represent these challenges?

How are the Germans whom the family first encounter portrayed in the flashback sequences?

Are the stereotypes about Germans and Germany played with in the film familiar to you? Are any surprising to you? How do you think they might be received by audiences in Germany?

Male *Gastarbeiter* have often been presented as 'lonely, exploited creatures who are not fully individualised' in films (Wright 149), and female migrants of the first generation have often been portrayed as oppressed women, held back by their husbands and their culture. How is the relationship between Hüseyin and Fatma portrayed? How would you describe these two characters? Does their portrayal conform to or undermine stereotypical views of *Gastarbeiter*?

The film closes with a quotation from Max Frisch: 'Wir riefen Arbeitskräfte, es kamen Menschen.' How does the content of the film and the portrayal of Turkish-German characters in it relate to this quotation?

The Yilmaz Family

Why is the family's story told by Canan, the granddaughter, rather than by the grandparents themselves? What effect might this have on the way the story is told?

Which kinds of welcome are offered to Hüseyin and the family in the flashback scenes? How does this compare to the welcome offered to Armando Rodriguez, the one millionth *Gastarbeiter*?

Do the family experience or witness discrimination in the present-day scenes of the film? What form does this discrimination take? What effect does it have on the family member?

What is it that prompts Cenk to ask whether the family is Turkish or German? Think about his day at school prior to this scene.

The film includes not only flashbacks but also dreams and nightmares. Why do you think these elements are included? What do they tell us, that the waking lives of the characters cannot?

Daniela Berghahn sees *Almanya* as a road trip movie, a genre in which characters often try to 'find themselves'. What do each of the family members discover about themselves over the course of the present-day journey to Turkey? In what ways do they change or develop?

Canan's boyfriend is English, rather than Turkish or German. How do you think he came to be in Germany? What role does his Englishness play in the film's portrayal of transnational families and migration?

Comedy and Comparisons

Almanya has been compared to German films like *Good Bye Lenin!* and British films like *Bend It Like Beckham*. Which aesthetic or content-related similarities are there between these three films? In what way are they different? Are there other films which you could compare *Almanya* to? You might like to think about the use of music, colour, documentary footage and voice over.

Although there is lots of humour in the film, there is also tragedy. Is this film really a comedy?

One criticism of *Bend it Like Beckham* has been that its focus on comedy and ‘happy multiculturalism’ obscures the real difficulties faced by first and second generation British Asians, such as everyday racism and discrimination. Could you make the same argument about *Almanya*? Would you agree or disagree that comedy is a good form for talking about migration and postmigrant life?

How has post-war migration to Germany compared to post-war migration to the UK? Do first generation migrants and their children or grandchildren face similar or different problems? Is migration represented similarly or differently in the media and in films/television of each country?

In the final scene of *Almanya*, Canan quotes a famous Indian English-language postcolonial writer, Salman Rushdie. Why do you think this particular writer is quoted at such a key point? What effect does this have on the film’s message?

The fact that some episodes from the film are based on experiences from the writer and directors’ own lives is often highlighted in reviews of this film. Is a director or writer’s biography important for understanding a film? Why do you think attention is often paid to the biography of directors of films which address questions of migration, integration and race?

Further Useful Online Resources

‘50 Jahre Migration aus der Türkei’: an excellent German-language fact sheet on Turkish labour migration to Germany put together by DOMiD (the Documentation Centre and Museum for Migration to Germany). It can be downloaded from:

http://www.mais.nrw.de/08_PDF/003_Integration/domid_mais_praese_v7.pdf

A video-recording of an interview with Yasemin Şamdereli:

http://www.vierundzwanzig.de/drehbuch/almanya_willkommen_in_deutschland_interview_mit_ya_semin_samdereli

An audio file of Daniela Berghahn’s introduction to the film at a showing in London and her interview with the Şamdereli sisters can be found here:

<http://www.farflungfamilies.net/podcasts/P10>

The Goethe institute in France and Denmark, as well as Kinofenster, an online portal for film education, have put together exercises related to the film. These are mainly in German:

http://www.goethe.de/ins/fr/pro/cineallemand/pdfcineallemand5/DidaktisierungsvorschlagAlmanya_Aufgaben.pdf

<http://www.goethe.de/mmo/priv/8963326-STANDARD.pdf>

<http://www.kinofenster.de/download/monatsausgabe-almanya.pdf>