

Bourgeois Ideology and the (Mis)Reading of Günter Wallraff's Ganz Unten

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Günter Wallraff. *Ganz unten*. Cologne: Kiepenheuer and Witsch, 1985. 254 pages.

Günter Wallraff's latest undercover documentary study, *Ganz unten* [*The Bottom of the Heap*],¹ an exposé of the inhuman living and working conditions of Turkish *Gastarbeiter* (guest workers) in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), has made publishing history in that country. A runaway bestseller since its appearance in October 1985, *Ganz unten* has outsold even the world's best-selling book, the Bible, in terms of West German sales per year. To date it has been translated into eighteen languages; the German-language edition alone has sold nearly three million copies.²

Equipped with the papers of Ali Levent Sinirlioglu, a Turkish worker who had been living in the FRG for many years, Wallraff disguised himself to accommodate the average German's stereotype of a Turk and infiltrated West Germany's illegal labor market, which is largely comprised of *Gastarbeiter*. Readers follow Ali as he cleans toilets and

1. Page references to the German edition will be given in parentheses in the text; all translations are my own. In a telephone conversation with a representative from Kiepenheuer and Witsch in July 1988, I learned that although an English translation of the book has been commissioned, it is not yet completed. Nor has the translator suggested a title for the English language edition.

2. This figure was relayed to me by a representative of Kiepenheuer and Witsch in a telephone conversation in July 1988.

cooks at McDonald's, undertakes a variety of dangerous assignments without requisite safety equipment as a subcontracted *Schwarzarbeiter* (illegal laborer) in the Thyssen steelworks, acts as a guinea pig in risky and probably unnecessary drug experiments, serves as chauffeur/bodyguard to the subcontractor "Adler,"³ and procures Turkish colleagues at Adler's behest for a potentially lethal assignment in a nuclear power plant. We also see him off the job: in pubs, at a football game, at a political gathering, and appealing to Catholic clergymen for help (Ali wants to be baptized, to convert to Christianity, so that he can marry a German woman and avoid being sent back to Turkey). What unifies the episodic structure of Wallraff's work is the xenophobia Ali experiences in virtually all his encounters with Germans in the Federal Republic.

Ganz unten illustrates the pitfalls confronting even sympathetic members of a hegemonic culture when they try to (re)present and/or plead a minority cause. In order to test the tolerance of his compatriots, Wallraff consciously pandered to prevalent clichés about foreigners. His Ali is a naive, somewhat slow-witted soul, whose bastardized *Ausländerdeutsch* (foreigner's German) conforms to prejudicial notions that Turks are basically stupid and/or uneducated and cannot speak anything approximating cultivated German. Thus, instead of exposing a system of representations that generate and support negative images of the other, *Ganz unten* helps perpetuate them. By cloning the victim, *Ganz unten* calls for identification with the underdog. In the double sense of *Mitleid*, it allows German readers both to empathize with and feel sorry for the *Gastarbeiter* they are oppressing daily. It thereby arguably permits them to placate their consciences and to feel superior at the same time.⁴

Ganz unten is not only Wallraff's most popular work but also his most controversial. What distinguishes it from his earlier writings is that the book has been attacked by both the right *and* the left. Criticism and legal action from the right was to be expected. As with many of his earlier works, Wallraff courted legal reprisals in securing his data. Despite previous warnings, he again worked with hidden tape recorders

3. "Adler" (Eagle) is the cover name Wallraff invented for the contractor Hans Vogel (Bird). In the following, I use the name "Adler" when referring to the figure in Wallraff's book and "Vogel" when referring to the actual person.

4. In her critique of Wallraff's book, "Ali hinter den Spiegeln" ["Ali Behind the Mirrors"], *Literatur Konkret* (1986): 6-9 (here 9), Aysel özakin, the best-known female Turkish writer in the Federal Republic, ponders "whether pity isn't the most elegant expression of scorn and contempt."

and video cameras and without permission of those being taped and filmed.⁵ The reaction of big industry and those corporations and smaller businessmen affected by the exposé ran true to form: massive protestations of innocence and denunciations of Wallraff,⁶ followed by the inevitable court cases. The first unexpected twist came in the form of acrimonious criticism from Wallraff's former Turkish coworkers, the second in the global denunciation of Wallraff's oeuvre by Hermann L. Gremliza, editor of the leftist Hamburg paper *Konkret*.

Despite the book's inherent shortcomings,⁷ the real failure of *Ganz unten* is the absence of a self-reflexive praxis in its reception: the failure of critics to foreground and debate the most essential issues it raises. Much of the criticism from both the right and the left, particularly from Gremliza, is self-serving and petty. What has been lost in the crossfire of the book's reception is an analysis of its most damning indictment: the parallels it evokes between contemporary hostility toward Turks and National Socialist anti-Semitism. The topic has been assiduously avoided in the right's criticisms of the book. Nor has it surfaced in a meaningful way in the lengthy and often vitriolic debates on the left. What made headlines instead were the unhygienic working

5. In trials initiated in response to other Wallraff exposés, the journalist had been reprimanded for secret tapings. He had repeatedly avoided being sentenced for this offense by convincing the court that it was more important to make information obtained in this illegal fashion public knowledge than it was to protect the privacy of those being taped. (Cf. *Der Spiegel* 21 October 1985: 57). In addition to the book *Ganz unten*, there is a cinematic version of Ali's story. For reasons of space, I will not deal with the film *Ganz unten* in this essay.

6. Since the beginning of his career Wallraff has been engaged in ongoing battles with industrialists and government officials/agencies who have been the butt of his criticism. In addition to attempts to gag him, there have been organized smear campaigns mounted against him. To cite but one example: as early as 1973 the Cologne Institute of German Industry, in response to the Wallraff/Englemann interviews *Ihr da oben — Wir da unten* [*You Up There — We Down Here*], printed an *ad hominem* polemic against Wallraff; the pamphlet, *Dichtung als Waffe im Klassenkampf* [*Literature as Weapon in the Class Struggle*], accused the journalist of "sociopolitical instigation," and was distributed free of charge to businessmen, bookstores, and newspapers. See Klaus L. Bergahn, "Dokumentarische Literatur," in *Neues Handbuch der Literaturwissenschaft*, vol. 22, *Literatur nach 1945 II: Themen und Genres*, ed. Jost Hermand (Wiesbaden: Athenaion, 1979), esp. 235-39, for a discussion of Wallraff's bouts with big industry.

7. There are unquestionably criticisms that can and should be levied against Wallraff's book. My main complaint concerns the author's failure to analyze the material he had amassed and presented. The book suffers from the lack of a rigorous and truly radical social critique, from Wallraff's failure to get to the root of the ills he had unearthed. Certainly the criticisms of his Turkish coworkers warrant attention, as does the reception of the book by Turks living in the FRG.

conditions at McDonald's and in particular the potentially lethal working conditions at Thyssen, as well as the massive tax evasions and exploitation of workers on the part of the Duisberg subcontractor Vogel (alias "Adler").

While it is certainly important that public attention be drawn to the inhuman and illegal conditions under which many foreigners are forced to work in West Germany, the public reception of *Ganz unten* as a work in the muckraker tradition tends to obscure the more fundamental social malaise it uncovers: the insidious correlation between present-day xenophobia, anti-Semitism, and racism in the Federal Republic. Ultimately, *Ganz unten* has more in common with John Howard Griffin's *Black Like Me* (1960), the account by a white man in blackface of how it feels to be black in the Deep South, than it does with the books of such muckrakers as Upton Sinclair or Lincoln Stephens. By dwelling on the flamboyant transgressions of Adler/Vogel, the critics' reception of *Ganz unten* has deflected attention from the everyday manifestations of fascistic behavior in Germany. By indulging Hermann Gremliza's cult of personality, critics have focused too much on Wallraff and his enemies. In so doing, they discuss symptoms rather than analyze causes.

The most sobering revelation of *Ganz unten* is its documentation of the contiguity of contemporary anti-Turkish sentiments and the anti-Semitism of the Third Reich. Time and again, Wallraff produces examples in which Turks are compared to Jews and in which the Nazi solution to the Jewish question is invoked as an antidote to current "problems" with foreigners. From the outset Wallraff explicitly establishes the connection between anti-Turkish sentiments and (neo)Nazism. Thus, at the summer 1983 soccer match between Turkey and the Federal Republic, Ali is harassed by a group of young people who throw cigarettes into his hair, pour beer over his head, and, yelling "Sieg heil," demand that "Turks get out of our country" (22). This incident is significant because it reveals a tendency, even among Germans too young to have personally experienced Nazism, to invoke Hitler's authority when expressing their xenophobic demands. In other words, it shows that contemporary xenophobia draws on structures of perception and value developed in the Third Reich. The situation is even worse at a construction site in Düsseldorf. The following toilet graffiti, recorded verbatim by Wallraff, underscore the convergence of contemporary racism and xenophobia and their Nazi antecedents:

Better to have 1000 rats in bed then one Turk in the cellar
 String up all Turks and all German girls that have anything to do
 with them
 Shitty Turks [*Scheißtürken*] can't hang high enough, I hate them all
 Turkish pig, I'll knock you all off [*knall euch all ab*]
 I'm glad to be a German
 Germany for the Germans.
 Better to be an SS swine than a Turkish swine
 There was never a better German than Adolf Hitler (107)

These unsettling manifestations of the overlap between anti-Turkish racism and nostalgia for the good old days of Adolf Hitler are not confined to toilet graffiti. Wallraff relates numerous incidents in which Germans, invoking Hitler, aggressively provoke their Turkish coworkers. The most sinister of these are the *Türkenwitze* that directly link contemporary anti-Turkish racism to the Holocaust. What distinguishes these Turkish jokes from generic ethnic jokes is the direct connection they draw between Turks living in the FRG today and Jews living, i.e., dying, in Nazi Germany. Thus the response to the question: "What's the difference between Jews and Turks?" is "The Jews have already been killed!" Or: "How many Turks fit into a VW?" Answer: "Twenty thousand — two in the front, two in the back and the rest in the ash-tray" (111). The fact that Ali's coworkers readily have these jokes at their disposal indicates that *Türkenwitze* are common currency in the FRG. The fact that such "jokes" are possible in Germany today is a further indication that the country that masterminded the systematic extermination of European Jewry has still not come to terms with its National Socialist past.

Nowhere in the extensive critical literature on *Ganz unten* to which I had access did I find any reference to the startling parallels between the sentiments of Germans toward Turks living in the FRG today and the hostility of Germans toward Jews in the Third Reich. Critics often do mention racism when discussing the book, but always in passing and in very general terms. Given the context and virulence of the remarks documented in Wallraff's book, to speak of xenophobia is, in my opinion, to trivialize the current racist climate in the FRG to such a degree that one cannot speak merely of sins of omission. The failure of the critics to address the most broadly relevant and volatile aspect of *Ganz unten* is tantamount to a sin of commission. This glaring avoidance by critics of both the right and the left is obviously related to Germany's

recent, still unresolved past. In *Erinnerungsarbeit: Zur Psychoanalyse der Unfähigkeit zu trauern* [Work of Memory: On the Psychology of the Inability to Mourn], her recent sequel to *The Inability to Mourn*, Margarethe Mitscherlich concludes that, as of 1987, the Federal Republic had still not succeeded in coming to terms emotionally with its Nazi past.⁸ The reception of *Ganz unten*, which blocks memories of this past, lends credence to Mitscherlich's claim.

The initial response to *Ganz unten* by the liberal and leftist press, its valorization of Wallraff as the champion of the exploited and oppressed, tended to obscure the more fundamental issues of individual responsibility and culpability. This reading, consonant with Wallraff's own self-image as social reformer, as "undercover communist," was enhanced by the crackdown on subcontractors (notably Vogel and his associate Remmert) that followed immediately after the book's publication, by the attempts of the right to discredit him, and by the battery of lawsuits filed against Wallraff, of which those initiated by Vogel and Thyssen were the most sensational. Wallraff's Robin Hood image was further enhanced by the fact that he systematically won these cases.

The misreading of *Ganz unten* and its emergence as a *cause scandaleuse* is in large part attributable to the bourgeois ideology of its critics on both the right and the left and their complicity in unwittingly producing representations with a racist slant. This ideology is clearly operable in *Spiegel* magazine's 21 October 1985 preview of the book. Identifying xenophobia as a pervasive problem encountered by Ali, the article goes on to summarize Wallraff's exposé of working conditions, concentrating on "Adler" and the situation at Thyssen. Instead of editorializing on the book's content and its implications for West German society, *Spiegel* chose to comment on Wallraff's *modus operandi*. By pointing to possible legal repercussions arising from the journalist's unorthodox methods of gathering information, it distanced itself from Wallraff's undertaking. The focus of its discussion of Wallraff's previous works was the question of their legality. Reviewing court cases in which the journalist had been embroiled, the magazine pointed out that in the past Wallraff had successfully circumvented the prohibition against secret taping by proving that the information he had obtained

8. Alexander and Margarethe Mitscherlich, *The Inability to Mourn: Principles of Collective Behavior*, trans. Beverly R. Placzek (New York: Grove Press, 1975). Margarethe Mitscherlich, *Erinnerungsarbeit: Zur Psychoanalyse der Unfähigkeit zu trauern* [Work of Memory: On the Psychology of the Inability to Mourn] (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 1987).

by illegal means was sufficiently important to the public to warrant overriding civil libertarian issues such as the right to privacy.

While *Spiegel* did correctly identify what was to become the central issue of the Vogel-Wallraff controversy and the centerpiece of the entrepreneur's case against the journalist, it is revealing that the article chose to foreground Wallraff's illegal information-gathering techniques rather than condemn Vogel's illegal and immoral business dealings. Indeed, it went so far as to call Wallraff an "agent provocateur," faulting him for ensnaring Vogel by staging the nuclear power plant scam.⁹ By directing attention away from Adler's infringement on human life to Wallraff's infringement of civil liberties, it substituted broadly defined, unreflected notions of civil liberties, ethical conduct, and economic liberalism for a self-reflexive and critical examination and persecution of oppressive ideologies and violations of basic civil rights of marginal groups.

A further indication of *Spiegel*'s complicity in the prevailing ideology of the Federal Republic is articulated in its ethnocentric opening paragraph: "The man, one thinks immediately, comes from the Middle East. His hair is black and oily, his eyes glitter darkly. His jacket and pants reveal him to be a foreigner, as does his name: Ali Levent Sinirlioglu." This description of Ali reproduces common stereotypes of Turks: not only is their hair black, it is oily as well. Moreover, their black eyes "glitter." With what? With lust, passion, hatred? As can readily be seen from this description, *Spiegel*, instead of questioning and undermining the clichés perpetuated in Wallraff's impersonation of Ali, reinforces and rigidifies them in enduring forms.

In addition to such criticism from *Spiegel*, Wallraff had to contend with criticism from his own camp as well. At the height of his victories against the right, his former coworkers Uwe Herzog, Taner Aday, and Ali Levent Sinirlioglu publicly denounced him. In what was to be the

9. In order to determine the extent of Vogel's greed and cynical disregard for the lives of Turkish *Gastarbeiter*, Wallraff invented the all-time illegal laborer deal. The contractor was led to believe that he would receive handsome remuneration for delivering foreign workers who were ostensibly to be sent to repair a pipe in a crippled nuclear reactor. Adler was informed of extraordinarily high, potentially lethal, levels of radiation in the area to which the workers were to be sent. Appealing to his entrepreneurial instincts, Wallraff's partners offered Adler "black," i.e., undeclared and hence tax-exempt, money in exchange for workers and his silence. In order further to vouchsafe this silence, workers who carried out the task were to be immediately shipped off to Turkey before effects of radioactive contamination manifested themselves.

first of a series of allegations of its kind, Herzog criticized Wallraff for taking credit for material which he had not written himself.¹⁰ Herzog claimed he himself had penned 28 of *Ganz unten*'s 254 pages. Clearly subscribing to bourgeois notions of individual authorship, Herzog went on to allege that there was virtually no passage in the book that he could attribute solely to Wallraff. Wallraff's Turkish coworkers, Aday and Sinirlioglu, corroborated Herzog's allegations of theft of intellectual property, insofar as they too maintained that the journalist had ascribed experiences to Ali/Wallraff that others had had. According to Sinirlioglu, Wallraff presented several incidents as Ali's that he (Sinirlioglu) had himself experienced while posing as Ali's brother and substituting as Adler's chauffeur.

The revelations of Wallraff's coworkers are important in that they have set the record straight. We now know that the text of *Ganz unten* is not the work of a single author, Günter Wallraff, but a collective effort. To dwell on Wallraff's lapses, however, to speculate on his motives for concealing the input of others, is fruitless. Surely the issue isn't who suffered this humiliation, Wallraff or Sinirlioglu, but that Adler behaved in such a deplorable fashion. Nor, in my opinion, does the fact that Wallraff himself did not write every word of *Ganz unten* detract from the content of the book or minimize Wallraff's achievements.

Obviously Hermann L. Gremliza does not share this view. His denunciation of Wallraff centered squarely on issues of originality and notions of individual authorship. Fanning the fires of anti-Wallraff sentiment, Gremliza awarded the journalist his self-sponsored Karl Kraus prize in October 1987. According to Gremliza, the purpose of this prize is to help rid the world of bad writing: the stipulation it carries is that its recipients promise to stop writing. In Wallraff's case this stipulation had, according to Gremliza, already been met. At the 1987 Karl Kraus award ceremony Gremliza dropped his bombshell: that the author Günter Wallraff in effect did not exist, that he, Gremliza, had written the entire text of *Der Aufmacher* [*Front-Page Story*], Wallraff's exposé of the sensationalist *Bild-Zeitung*,¹¹ and that large portions of other texts

10. See *Der Spiegel* 15 June 1987: 182, 185.

11. Given the tone of moral indignation that permeates the Karl Kraus speech, one wonders why Gremliza agreed to write *Der Aufmacher* in the first place. And why, having written it, he elected to reveal his authorship precisely when he did. The timing of Gremliza's confession lends credence to the theory that he was motivated by revenge and jealousy, that he was angered by Wallraff's decision to give *Spiegel* instead of *Konkret* exclusive republication coverage rights for *Ganz unten*, and that he was envious of

attributed to Wallraff had been written by ghostwriters as well. Moreover, he maintained that what Wallraff himself had penned was, in the main, a stylistic abomination.¹²

In contrast to the “socialist” intellectual Gremliza, Wallraff’s Turkish coworkers obviously recognized that a discussion of *Ganz unten* framed in terms of bourgeois notions of authorship misses the mark. At no time did either Aday or Sinirlioglu question the validity of the *Ganz unten* project. In their view it was a significant and meaningful undertaking that fulfilled its goal by bringing the deplorable situation of *Gastarbeiter* into the consciousness of the West German public. It is noteworthy that of Wallraff’s critics, these Turkish workers are the only ones who have a different notion of what constitutes “valid” writing. Aday and Sinirlioglu confined their criticisms to Wallraff’s behavior *after* the completion of the book. What they took issue with was a phenomenon they called “Wallraff & Co” (“*Firma Wallraff*”), that is, the institutionalization and commercialization of the journalist and his enterprise. In their opinion, success had spoiled Günter Wallraff. He had, they maintained, lost sight of any reformist/socialist impulses that might have once motivated him. In their view, Wallraff was marketing himself and *Ganz unten* in the same crassly capitalist fashion against which he had polemicized in his book. Moreover, he was guilty of exploiting his Turkish coworkers: both Aday and Sinirlioglu maintained that the journalist had paid his German coworkers, specifically Herzog, better than he had their Turkish counterparts.¹³ Once *Ganz unten* attained its extraordinary best-seller status, they argued, Wallraff cast aside the solidarity he had demanded during the project, conveniently forgetting those who had helped make it possible. In short, it seemed to them that Wallraff had learned from those whom he had readily condemned: the entrepreneurs and “slave-dealers.”

Aday went on to dispel another aspect of the Wallraff myth: his image as someone dedicated to the integration of Turks into German society. The media had given wide coverage to the fact that the journalist was donating a portion of his royalties from *Ganz unten* to establish a “center for solidarity” for Turks in Duisburg. Aday, who was to head

Wallraff’s success. All of Gremliza’s actions bespeak a bourgeois ethos of individualism and cult of personality at variance with the socialist ideology he purports to espouse.

12. See *Konkret* (November 1987): 41-48 for a complete transcript of Gremliza’s 1987 Karl Kraus Prize Speech.

13. See *Der Spiegel* 15 June 1987: 188-97.

the center, revealed this project to be a sham. According to him, Wallraff had never so much as visited the center and had failed to put sufficient money at Aday's disposal to run such an organization. The center had, in essence, been defunct from its creation. Although it still existed physically, it had neither personnel nor members. It was simply a front, enabling Wallraff to present himself in a favorable light.¹⁴

Whatever motives one may attribute to Sinirlioglu's and Aday's public airing of their dissatisfaction with Wallraff,¹⁵ their entry into the Wallraff controversy unequivocally unmasked as false one stereotype informing Wallraff's portrayal of Ali as an ignorant, illiterate Turkish worker. In what is surely one of the more interesting ironies of the Wallraff debate, Ali Levent Sinirlioglu, the model for Wallraff's Ali, emerged to denounce Wallraff in eloquent, articulate German, thereby putting the lie to Wallraff's *Ausländerdeutsch*.

In addition to Aday's and Sinirlioglu's suspicions about the self-aggrandizing motives underlying his benevolence, Wallraff was also criticized for the neighborhood renovation project he had undertaken. According to reports in *Spiegel*¹⁶ and elsewhere, the journalist had earmarked millions of marks from *Ganz unten* royalties for the rehabilitation of a working-class neighborhood in Duisburg that housed many Turkish *Gastarbeiter*. Yet this project was initiated without consulting either the Turks or the Germans living there. As the *Spiegel* article makes clear, the presumably well-intended project brought many inequities in its wake. Thus, a German woman who had been born in one of the buildings on the block designated for rehabilitation was to be evicted from her home of over fifty years: Wallraff wanted to tear down her building to build a cafe intended to improve social interaction between Germans and Turks. Caught up in his grandiose scheme for German-Turkish integration, Wallraff overlooked the interests of individual members of the Duisberg community. He clearly failed to consider the personal and financial implications of the planned renovation for the neighborhood. Those whose apartments were to be modernized would have to vacate their living space for up to a year. Moreover, once they returned, it was not clear that they would be able to afford the increase in rent that would often accompany such renovation.

14. *Der Spiegel* 15 June 1987: 197-200.

15. Unlike Gremliza, Aday and Sinirlioglu do not seem motivated by jealousy but rather by a sense of betrayal of what they had considered their common cause.

16. See *Der Spiegel* 15 June 1987: 185-88.

The Duisburg renovation project left Wallraff open to charges of paternalism and ethnocentrism. This was not the only time his behavior was interpreted in such a fashion. Wolfgang Braun even went so far as to accuse Wallraff of “inverted racism.” According to Braun, in presenting the Turks in *Ganz unten* as he had, namely as poor, ignorant, helpless, and pitiful, Wallraff had unwittingly sung once again “the song of the great white man and his elevated culture.”¹⁷ Braun also pointed out another disturbing dimension of the reception of *Ganz unten*, namely its popularity among Turkish right extremists. In his view *Ganz unten* was being used by this faction to intensify Turkish animosity toward Germans. Thus the book, far from helping to improve Turkish-German relations, was aggravating the already strained relations between these two groups.¹⁸

Insofar as Wallraff was operating from a privileged position, a position that allowed him to determine which facets of *Gastarbeiters'* lives he would depict, and insofar as he (mis)used this position to create a homogeneous image of *the Turk*, these criticisms have validity. Clearly not all Turks living in the Federal Republic are poor, exploited, semi-literate workers. Yet *Ganz unten* no doubt helped to reify the image of the Turkish *Gastarbeiter* as one who does the Germans' dirty work¹⁹ and, in so doing, disregarded economic factors that contribute to the rise in xenophobia.²⁰ It is moreover true that Wallraff's stance toward his project, his self-understanding as enlightened social reformer, often manifests itself in a tone of self-righteous indignation, missionary zeal, and a patronizing attitude toward the less fortunate workers he chose to depict.

On the other hand, the charges of paternalism and ethnocentrism

17. Wolfgang Braun, “Der entscheidende Kritikpunkt an Wallraff: Umgedrehter Rassismus” [“The Essential Criticism of Wallraff: Inverted Racism”], *Die Brücke* 38 (1987): 10-11.

18. Braun 11.

19. See Gino Ghiellino, “Die Ausländerfeindlichkeit braucht keine Nazivergangenheit” [“Xenophobia Doesn't Need a Nazi Past”], *Kürbiskern* 1 (1983): 81-89. As Ghiellino points out, uniformly to categorize *Gastarbeiter* as unskilled laborers is to deny the fact that many are skilled workers and that they are as capable of being trained as the Germans. Clearly this is the image that informs Wallraff's representation of *Gastarbeiter* in *Ganz unten* and that the book perpetuates.

20. As Donata Elschenbroich argues in her review of *Ganz unten*, “Die festgeschriebenen Opfer” [“The Inscribed Victims”], *Plasterstrand* (February 1986): 46-47, racism and xenophobia are essentially problems of economic competition. In her view only when a marginal group becomes an economic threat to the dominant group do hostility and xenophobia arise. This, she contends, is the case in West Germany.

that were brought to bear against Wallraff were for the most part made by individuals who, in relation to the Turkish workers peopling Wallraff's study, were themselves privileged. One of the ironies of the *Ganz unten* debate is that the book gained a wide working-class readership.²¹ Yet Wallraff, instead of being credited with having tried to create a proletarian public sphere, was chastised by members of the middle class and the intelligentsia for restricting his presentation of *Gastarbeiter* to the working class.

This is particularly true of the non-working-class Turks living in the Federal Republic who have obviously internalized many of the values of the hegemonic culture. Perhaps the most obvious example is that of the well-known writer Aysel Özakin. As the opening paragraphs of her critique of *Ganz unten* show,²² she is offended by the thought that Germans will equate all Turks with the ubiquitous image of the sad, dejected Ali staring out from posters of *Ganz unten* throughout the Federal Republic. Özakin, who eschews all labels, does not want to be associated with any group: she wants to be considered in her own right, as a free-thinking, independent, autonomous artist. Like so many of Wallraff's critics, she too is suffused with the ethos of bourgeois individualism. Her ideology precludes any ethnic or class identification.

Clearly, not all Turks living in West Germany resemble Ali. Nonetheless, the fact remains that there *are* many poor, uneducated or undereducated Turks in the Federal Republic who are in dire economic straits and for whom ethnic and class identification is not only possible but necessary.²³ Here again, an individualist reading of *Ganz unten* misses the mark.

Ironically, precisely where a discussion framed in individualist terms would have been appropriate, namely in assessing individual responsibility and culpability for racist behavior, it remained outstanding. The critical misreading of *Ganz unten* is pervasive.

21. *Süddeutsche Zeitung* 3 November 1986: 3.

22. Özakin 9.

23. See Jakob Sonnenschein, "Unterwegs mit Günter Wallraff" ["On the Road with Günter Wallraff"], *Tageszeitung* 5 December 1985. Sonnenschein, who accompanied Wallraff on speaking tours after the publication of *Ganz unten*, tells of the many men and women who made their way to the microphone to express their thanks, to embrace Wallraff, to give him gifts. Their response indicates that some members of Germany's Turkish population felt that the journalist was their spokesperson. Sonnenschein's reports corroborate the contention that, for these *Gastarbeiter* at any rate, Wallraff's book managed to create something approximating a proletarian public sphere.

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