

**BEYOND REPRESENTATION: THE ETHICS AND AESTHETICS OF  
CHANGE IN TURKISH GERMAN CINEMA AFTER REUNIFICATION**

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis explores recent Turkish-German film through a radically post-representational vision of aesthetics and ethics. Post-representationalism as a methodology involves confronting conventional cognitive and hermeneutic approaches to film, and going beyond representational schemes and national paradigms for a closer engagement with the aesthetic. This thesis puts emphasis on tropes such as movement, gesture, process and becoming through an engagement with the writings of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari as an alternative to the theoretical models that dominate the scholarship on migrant and diasporic cinemas which place emphasis on dualisms and notions such as cultural and national identity. It attempts to broaden the discussions on post-Reunification Turkish German cinema by exploring a wide range of works including fiction, documentary and artist films dealing with labour migration from Turkey to Germany. The first chapter focuses on Thomas Arslan's *Berlin Trilogy* and Christian Petzold's *Jerichow* (2009) as 'Berlin School' films that convey a distinct aesthetic approach to labour migrants and their second generation offspring in Germany, which tends to focus on questions of work and the changing nature of labour under globalisation. The second chapter looks at documentary films by Thomas Arslan, Aysun Bademsoy, Harun Farocki and Seyhan Derin to re-evaluate the dominance of historical narratives and reassess the documentary form as an archival and creative practice through new political and ethico-aesthetic paradigms. The third chapter investigates social realist genre cinema through Feo Aladağ's *Die Fremde* (2011) and Yüksel Yavuz's *Kleine Freiheit* (2003) to explore whether new encounters with conventional aesthetics that zoom in on gestures and movements can call into question the limitation of linguistic and semiotic terms and categories of analysis. These chapters aim to move beyond representational and definitive frameworks in favour of a creative critical engagement with migrant film as a political vocation, which carries within itself the potential to invent new forms of thought, resistance, movement and people.

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## INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines what came to be known under the heading of Turkish German Cinema from the period following the German Reunification in 1990, with a focus on ethics and aesthetics. Today, Turkish German Cinema broadly refers to a diverse set of films, which deals with the transformations that the labour migration from Turkey to Germany brought about in the last fifty years. The mass migration from Turkey to Germany was initiated with the labour migration agreement which was signed between the two countries in 1961, and within the past few decades, the phenomenon has radically changed the cultural, social, and political spheres in Germany, which in turn produced a growing body of work that is classified under the sub-discipline of Intercultural German studies. The study of film in this category has thus far grown a diverse body of work, which has focused on certain aesthetic, formal, narrative traits and tropes. In their introduction to the first edited collection in the English language to focus solely on Turkish German Cinema, Sabine Hake and Barbara Mennel argue that there has been a shift in focus in the films produced after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. They write,

Turkish German cinema is often associated with a particular sensitivity toward national belonging and ethnic embodiment and an acute awareness of the politics of identity and place. However, this body of work has more recently been associated with attempts to complicate and destabilize discourses – of social realism and fluid attachments in a globalized world. The films made since the 1990s tell stories about the problems of dislocation and integration; yet they also open up new ways of thinking beyond fixed categories of identity and the binary logic of native and foreign, home and abroad, and tradition and modernity. (Hake and Mennel 2013: 1)

As Hake and Mennel argue, this new generation of Turkish German filmmakers such as Seyhan Derin, Aysun Bademsoy, Thomas Arslan, Fatih Akın, Yüksel Yavuz and Hussi Kutlucan have invented new ways to tackle the issues such as

dislocation and integration, which in turn caused film scholars to ‘realign their compass of historical and theoretical analysis’ (Koepnick and Schindler 2007: 8). Within the scholarship on Turkish German film, this change has often been identified and analysed on the level of narrative and representation, through hermeneutic approaches that focus on national, ethnic and sexual identities. In his discussion of Thomas Arslan’s cinema, Marco Abel criticises this tendency to focus on identity and meaning for being reductive, and argues that such representational analyses block productive investigations into the oeuvre of Turkish German filmmakers, which might open them up ‘to contexts that cannot readily be reduced to an identitarian, or representational framework’ (2012: 44). He suggests that an alternative approach could release the political potential of the films by enabling a consideration of how films can creatively ‘constitute Germany anew, as a new people’, ‘without presuming to know already who the Germans and its Others are’ (Abel 2013: 54). In line with Abel’s argument, this thesis will explore Turkish German film after Reunification with a focus on the ethics and aesthetics of change, informed by the writings of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. However, its main purpose diverges from Abel’s: instead of considering a new Germany, and reterritorialising difference within a national context, the emphasis will instead be on movement, the changing nature of labour and migration, and becoming, as tropes which can generate new thought, new subjectivities, resistances, affects and experiences that are necessary for a future politics of possibility, hope and social transformation.

This shift in Turkish German Cinema in the 1990s could be better understood within the wider context of the political and social transformations that globalization has given rise to. Since the end of the Cold War, neoliberalism has rapidly become the dominant world-system. Its destabilising forces such as technological advances, neoliberal economy, deterritorialisation of borders and increased mobility, combined with the effects of the worldwide financial crisis and September 11, 2001 have transformed the social sphere in radical ways. The effects of such destabilising transformations have produced new forms of affects, subjectivities, and precarious living and working conditions that have influenced filmmakers to invent new aesthetic strategies to articulate this change and make

sense of such unforeseen conditions. As Steven Shaviro argues, these changes in technologies and economic relations have brought about ‘new ways of manufacturing and articulating lived experience...that are so new and unfamiliar that we scarcely have the vocabulary to describe them, and yet have become so common, and so ubiquitous, that we tend not even to notice them any longer’ (2010: 2). These new relations are not containable within the confines of binary categories and identities, and the experiences are not reducible to psychological states or emotions, and precisely for that reason they challenge the representational ideal. Shaviro argues that, every emotion carries ‘a certain surplus of affect that escapes confinement’, drawing on Brian Massumi’s distinction of affect and emotion (2010: 4). According to this distinction, affect is ‘primary, non-conscious, asubjective or presubjective, asignifying, unqualified, and intensive’, while emotion is ‘derivative, conscious, qualified, and meaningful’; and existence and experience is always ‘bound up in affective and aesthetic flows that elude cognitive definition and capture’ (Shaviro 2010: 3-5). It is through these affective flows that subjectivity is ‘opened to and constituted through, broader social, political and economic processes’, and therefore such affective processes are precisely the zone where change and potential can be mapped creatively, and not representationally (Shaviro 2010: 4).

In what follows, I will give a brief literature review that provides a map of the existing criticism of contemporary Turkish German Cinema, which has focused mainly on narrative tropes such as integration, entrapment and female victimisation through spatial terms. Since what constitutes the scholarship on the area are mainly journal articles, I will be mapping the discussions through a survey of these articles, a majority of which tend to reduce the aesthetic qualities of the filmic image to psychological states and meaning. The films are often viewed through the frameworks of identity politics, which, as Abel argues, ‘locate a film’s politics and political efficacy in the degree to which a film does justice to the real lives of this or that identity’ (2013: 40). I will briefly discuss the limitations that such representational frameworks entail, the existing discussions that challenge these approaches and then I will explain how a focus on the temporal aspects of film, affect and subjectivity formation, informed by Gilles



Deleuze's film philosophy, and his collaborative explorations of subjectivity formation under capitalism with Félix Guattari, can expand these discussions beyond the representations of ethnic and gender difference. Before I move to a summary of the coming chapters, I will briefly explain the conceptual tools such as affective flows, virtual/actual, and molar/molecular, which will be used throughout the thesis.

### **Turkish German Cinema since the 1990s**

The critical interest in Turkish German Cinema within Anglo-American film scholarship was initiated mainly by Deniz Göktürk's seminal article 'Turkish Delight-German Fright', wherein she discusses that the 1990s saw a shift in Turkish German Cinema. She argues that Turkish German Cinema after Reunification evolved from being a 'Cinema of Duty', towards becoming a cinema that illustrates what she terms the 'pleasures of hybridity' (2001: 131). In this article, Göktürk claims that, whereas the Turkish migrants of the earlier generation were depicted as voiceless, archaic and passive figures in the films of the previous decade such as Helma Sanders-Brahm's *Shirins Hochzeit* (Shirin's Wedding, 1976) and Tevfik Başer's *40 qm Deutschland* (40 Square meters of Germany, 1986), themes of humour and playfulness in the films of the second generation Turkish German filmmakers such as Fatih Akin, Thomas Arslan, Ayşe Polat and Buket Alakuş introduced a new dimension to this cinema of social realist tradition. She critiques the on-going process of stereotyping via narratives of victimisation, alienation and confinement and welcomes this narrative turn as a celebration of hybridity.

Shedding new light on this cinema which had until then been mostly neglected in German and Film studies in the English language, this debate initiated by Göktürk became the dominant theoretical framework, and was further expanded and elaborated by various scholarly articles, mainly focusing on gender relations and the construction of spaces on screen (Eren 2003; Göktürk 2000; Mennel 2002; Naiboglu 2010). Several book chapters and journal articles on the area focus on what Kobena Mercer famously calls the 'burden of representation':

a presumed duty to be representative of a minority culture as a whole, which haunts the discussion on migrant and diasporic cinemas, and which Göktürk affiliates with the Cinema of Duty (Mercer 1990). However Göktürk's problematisation of the earlier depictions of Turkish immigrants in Germany through recurrent themes of entrapment and exclusion emanates from a process of judgment, as she argues that this imagery 'is often grounded in fake compassion, rather than authentic experiences' (2001: 139). This will to authenticity pervasively governs a majority of the scholarly work on the area, which operates by distinguishing the authentic representations from the false representations of the migrant experience. In doing so, such a representational framework effectively assesses the films according to the degree to which the migrant characters perform what Sara Ahmed calls 'the happiness duty' of multiculturalism (2010: 158). As Ahmed argues,

Migrants are under increasing pressure to integrate, where integration is the key term for the promotion of multicultural happiness. Although integration is not defined as "leaving your culture behind" (at least not officially), it is unevenly distributed, as a demand that new, or would-be citizens "embrace" a common culture that is already given (2010: 137-8).

This representational framework considers the narrative shift towards the pleasures of hybridity that is enhanced by happy themes of migration and integration as authentic, while the themes of exclusion are "fake". As Ahmed argues, guided by the duty of happiness, such a representational framework views the 'melancholic migrant' as a figure that haunts contemporary culture, 'as a kind of unnecessary and hurtful remainder of racism' (2010: 148).

In a similar vein, Hito Steyerl criticises the discourses of multiculturalism within the context of artistic and cultural production in Germany, for having been 'traditionally centred on the notions of "enrichment" and "integration"' (2004: 161). She writes,

The question was: does it serve to enrich the experience, pleasure, taste, wealth or gross national product of Germans? In other words:

Is it useful? Simultaneously, the cultural production of minorities was always labelled as lagging behind, unsubtle, unaware of aesthetic theory, spontaneous, warm-hearted, and always on its way towards an unachievable integration into mainstream culture. (Steyerl 2004: 161)

This framework has also been dominant within the criticism and scholarship of Turkish German Cinema, evaluating the films according to how they nurtured the project of integration. In this way, many of the articles have largely focused on films that provide examples of recurring themes of female victimisation and ignored others that failed to provide “useful” knowledge on marginalised migrant experience. The common approach of these studies is that these films were important because they provided information on the slightly more integrated migrant community and their relationship with the indigenous society.

Göktürk further elaborates the narrative shift in the 1990s by focusing on the spaces on screen in her article ‘Turkish Women on German Streets: Closure and Exposure’, wherein she argues that, by moving from confining domestic environments to urban localities, the characters have gained a new dimension (2000). The article explores a number of films from the 1990s such as Thomas Arslan’s *Geschwister* (1996) and Kutluğ Ataman’s *Lola + Bilidikid* (1999). Göktürk views the proliferation of urban and outdoor settings in these films as signalling a new sense of mobility, suggesting a recent cosmopolitan turn in Turkish German Cinema. By opposing the interior settings of the cinema of duty versus the urban locations, Göktürk presupposes both categories as homogenous signifiers of negative or positive moods and psychological states. Rob Burns, subsequently expands Göktürk’s argument in his reading of the urban settings in Thomas Arslan’s Berlin Trilogy as potential markers of social exclusion or mobility (2006). He contends that the urban space implies a move away from ‘the cinema of the affected’ – which is a term he uses to conceptualise the films of the earlier generation that depict ethnic Turkish migrants as stereotypical – towards a more “authentic” representation of hybridity that hints at the possibility of mobility between two mutually exclusive cultures (Burns 2006: 133). As he argues, the cinema of the affected focuses ‘unremittingly on alterity as a

seemingly insoluble problem, on conflict of either an intercultural or intracultural variety' (Burns 2006: 133). He links the success of the new Turkish German directors to their achievements in portraying authentic representations of in-betweenness (Burns 2007).

Several articles that focus on the portrayal of migrants investigate the authenticity of the traditional narratives, arguing in favour of a more multi-dimensional and mobile depiction of migrant characters. Daniela Berghahn in her article "From Turkish Greengrocer to Drag Queen" follows a line of depictions of Turkish masculinity from the earlier first generation immigrants such as the father figure in *Yasemin* (Hark Bohm, 1988) to the second and third generation cinema's queer characters such as the drag queens in *Lola und Bilidikid*, which she reads as a positive indicator of a new approach that promotes social change (Berghahn 2009). The discussion on this social change that manifests itself through Turkish German Cinema is most often thought through, formulated and characterised via the concepts of "hybridity" and "in-betweenness" and theories on multiculturalism and the transnational. Guido Rings' article 'Blurring or Shifting Boundaries?' encapsulates the prevalent discussion on Turkish-German cinema within this social context, drawing on the writings of German cultural theorists such as Johann Gottfried Herder and Wolfgang Welsch (Rings 2008: 6-38). Through intersectional yet definitive concepts such as "multiculturalism", "monoculturalism" and "transculturalism", he argues that this shift in the narratives and gender depictions could only be considered as change on a superficial level; the conclusions drawn on Fatih Akin's and Thomas Arslan's oeuvre on Turkish-German migrants do not imply an absolute separation from the traditional conceptions of cultural difference (Rings 2008).

Even though Rings pays relatively closer attention to the formal and aesthetic elements of the films that he analyses than the previously mentioned works, the clear-cut categories of culture that he employs to analyse such micro-social and political implications of the films reiterate the dualisms of representationalism. The historical and social framework that he draws – and that is very often drawn in the study of Turkish-German cinema – thus risks reducing the complex and nuanced connections that the images could create to the logic of

identity. Katherine Pratt Ewing's suggestion to abandon such categories of culture in favour of a better understanding of the myriad processes, which both give way to, and which could be traced from the discursive practices is therefore compelling (2006: 268). She argues,

Instead of using concepts such as hyphenated identities and hybridity as analytic tools, I suggest that scholars pay close attention to how and when such popular mythologies are actually deployed and by whom. We must consider the effects of such deployments in specific situations by examining how individuals are often classified and misrecognized, contrasting such misrecognitions with an account of how individuals, no matter where they are socially positioned, operate through multiple, contextualized identities in a wide range of social situations and manage an array of contradictions and inconsistencies in their lives. (Ewing 2006: 268-9)

Ewing's suggestion to move beyond the confines of fixed categories and dualisms draws attention to relations and processes in their generative multiplicity. In this way, Ewing suggests a suspension of the representational approach, which governs the study on the area, highlighting the necessity to acknowledge and trace the intersections, and the pluralism of the forces that operate on different levels simultaneously beyond the object of critique. This move beyond narrative content towards an engagement with the aesthetic elements in the films could be further explored in the discussions of cinematic configurations of space.

### **The Spatial Turn**

The so called "spatial turn" in the growing body of scholarship on Turkish German Cinema opened up new trajectories of argument by diverting the attention from narratives and characters, towards the filmic and aesthetic elements. Joanne Leal and Klaus-Dieter Rossade's account of the spatial turn, explores the move from the interior to urban locations, following Göktürk's dialectical approach that

traces the urban cosmopolitan cityscapes in the films as progress in hybridity-formation (Leal and Rossade 2008: 58-87). Leal and Rossade's introduction sums up the aim and intent of representationalist approaches to space,

Our aim in exploring the relationship between gender, sexuality, ethnicity and the negotiation of urban space in six of Arslan's and Akin's films made between 1996 and 2007 is to identify whether stereotypical representations of ethnically-specific gender relations of the sort found in 1970s cinema have indeed been abandoned in contemporary filmmaking, in favour of more complex and diverse versions of the interaction between male/female identities and ethnicity, or whether, in fact, more recent films produce a new set of stereotypes in this regard (Leal and Rossade 2008: 62).

Despite the complex, distinct and multiple configurations of space in different films, according to this framework, spaces become the ground to judge whether the problematised stereotypical representations of gender and cultural difference has evolved into a legitimate depiction of a more culturally diverse environment. The spaces are assessed according to how their narrative content advocates the 'freedom of movement across national, gender and generational boundaries and the greatest possible freedom of choice in the construction of identity' (Leal and Rossade 2008: 85).

Jessica Gallagher in her spatial analysis of Thomas Arslan's Berlin Trilogy, diverges from this dialectical viewing of the urban space as a novel cosmopolitan environment by pointing out the equally restrictive and claustrophobic environments allocated to the diasporic subjects (2006: 337-52). She argues that the streets and the ethnic suburbs in all three films present no substantial solution to the existential dilemmas of the young, third generation Turks in Germany, as the possibilities that the urban locations offer to its protagonists do not include integration to German society – which can be achieved at an institutional level such as through education (Gallagher 2006: 340). She reads the characters' 'aimless wandering' due to their lack of affiliation with an occupational or an

educational institution, as a drawback from the master narrative of social progress and integration (Gallagher 2006: 340). Despite her use of theory by philosophers such as Gilles Deleuze and Michel de Certeau, Gallagher abstains from an encounter with the space on screen beyond the narrative level and the social context. In this way, she continues the representational tradition that critiques the non-solutions that fail to cater to the mainstream conceptions of happy multiculturalism.

Similarly, Barbara Mennel in her article 'The Politics of Space in the Cinema of Migration' explores spatial configurations in Turkish German Cinema with respect to three films from three different decades: *40 qm Deutschland*, *The Father* (Yılmaz Güney, 1973) and *Crossing the Bridge: The Sound of Istanbul* (Fatih Akin, 2005) (2010: 39-55). However, Mennel views the films within a different context than the previous arguments, detaching them from the strictly representational context of the Turkish German first generation migrant experience. Rather than viewing the interior/exterior locations as a ground for comparison and differentiation of identity categories, she traces the political aesthetic traditions in both Turkish and German cinemas. By following a trajectory of the aesthetics of entrapment within Turkish art-house cinema tradition, exploring *The Father's* similarly claustrophobic cinematic space and the prison environment in Güney's oeuvre, Mennel broadens the discourse of migrant alienation and creates a new cartography of socio-political and aesthetic forces that can deterritorialise existing identitarian structures, thereby allowing new connections to emerge. She then proposes to view the spatial aesthetics and the soundscape of Istanbul in *Crossing the Bridge* in a new transnational context, which deterritorialises the perception of space as a strictly static environment and reveals its multi-layered, complex and processual nature.

Mennel's argument on non-representational cinematic spaces is further expanded by Barbara Kosta in her article 'Transcultural Space and Music', wherein she explores the transnational aesthetics of the film, which she defines as 'an assemblage of sounds and sites that pays tribute to Istanbul as a hybrid space' (2010: 343-344). Kosta provides a detailed analysis of the various sections of the

film in different micro socio-political contexts and highlights the deterritorialising and reterritorialising forces operating beyond the conception and perception of a multidimensional, transnational space. She argues that space both grounds and unsettles identity: 'Space and its myriad manifestations, shape and frame identities and produce affiliations, which are local, national, and transnational' (Kosta 2010: 345). Alongside their territorialised attributes, Kosta argues that 'spaces are not flat, one-dimensional planes, but contain complex and dense systems of overlapping histories and voices' (2010: 345). Kosta's and Mennel's arguments on the cinematic constructions of space therefore open up a new line of argument in this literature by engaging with the durational quality of the medium. By detaching the images from the strictly narrative and social context, they move beyond the identitarian logic, and emphasise the possibility of change that the durational quality of the medium can forge.

Another recent article that suspends representationalism to delineate new maps of thought through building aesthetic connections is Jaimey Fisher's 'Calling All Migrants: Recasting Film Noir With Turkish German Cinema in Christian Petzold's *Jerichow*' (2009: 55-74). In this article, Fisher explores the film within a broader context, locating it within the convergences of multiple traditions such as Film Noir, Berlin School and Turkish German Cinema. Although Fisher employs the recurrent political condemnation of the marginalisation narratives in the so-called *Guestworkerfilms*, his detachment from identitarian logic by engaging with different aesthetic contexts beyond the dualisms such as national/transnational and Turkish/German is suggestive. As a break from the previous discussions of space, Fisher argues that *Jerichow* 'operates at that nexus of a space symptomatic of what some theorists have come to call uneven geographic development and the subjective processing of it' (2009: 61). Although the article focuses on the 'subjective', it traces the pre-subjective forces, namely affect in Petzold's film, as Fisher argues that 'Petzold allows the aesthetic approach and, above all the spaces of his films to be recast by contemporary economic-geographical processes' (2009: 61). In this way, Fisher's argument opens up a fresh avenue to discuss space in film, in temporal terms.



More recently, Abel's work on Thomas Arslan's *Berlin Trilogy* has been particularly poignant and influential for a productive engagement with the political aesthetics in Turkish German Cinema. Abel argues for an alternative approach to representationalism. As he suggests,

it may be necessary to change the terms of the debate altogether, as the debate's very terms are beholden to an identitarian logic, which...Arslan's films simply do not accept as the a priori condition of their production. Arslan's cinema participates less in a cinema of identity, however configured, than it is a cinema that is...interested in participating in the effort to make films for a people that is still missing and thus yet-to-come. Arslan's films, which are supremely cinematic and deserve to be theorized on this level rather than being almost instantly reduced to representationalist assumptions about their context, constitute a 'minor' and thus, *counter-*, cinema – in the sense that the category of the minor is precisely not one expressive of a notion of identity but, instead, is defined by how "minor" aesthetic productions directly intervene on the *political* level by virtue of the redistribution of the sensible they effect. (Abel 2013: 66)

Abel's critique of identitarian approaches, and his alternative non-representational approach calls for a new form of inquiry that asks what film images can *do*, rather than what they mean. His attention to the operation of the cinematic images before settling them in a socio-political context is a liberating and novel attitude in political film analysis. In the context of Berlin School filmmaking, he argues that the films 'invent images of mobility that render visible something that is currently absent in the viewer's real social context', which suggests that these films are not strictly representing an already existing people, their experience or their political agenda, rather they operate in their own right, as autonomous and creative images (Abel 2013: 18). I concur with Abel's suggestion that an attention to cinematic materiality 'as something that is always already constitutive of the process of transformation' can change the terms of the debate altogether, and release the political potential of the films and open them up to future possibilities (Abel 2012:

53). However, I aim to expand this argument in my thesis, and argue that such approaches are not only applicable to films that lend themselves to materialist analyses but are also useful and suggestive in the context of more conventionally and classically organised, social realist films. Therefore, I will use the philosophies of process as a post-representational methodology in my analyses of a wide range of art house, documentary and genre films. In what follows, I will explain the ethics and aesthetics of change informing my research and analyses throughout this thesis.

### **Deleuze's Post-Representational Film Philosophy and the Ethics of Change**

In the last couple of decades, academic and intellectual study of film has increasingly become a philosophical activity. Whereas a majority of earlier film scholarship had utilised linguistic, psychoanalytical and socio-cultural theoretical frameworks, in recent years, contemporary film theory has aligned itself within philosophical terrains like ethics, aesthetics and cognition. A significant corpus in Anglo-American film studies has grown from this encounter by theorists and philosophers such as David Bordwell, Noel Carroll and Stanley Cavell from which, Gilles Deleuze's 'film-philosophy' stands aside, not merely because of a divide between philosophical traditions but for the latter's approach to film that investigates and problematises what a film does, rather than asking what knowledge it provides or what meanings it shelters. In the 1987 lecture "Having an Idea in Cinema"; Deleuze gives a brief account of his view of the relationship between film and philosophy. He argues that both philosophy and cinema are acts of creation but not merely of reflection on something: cinema is the creation of movements/duration whereas philosophy is the creation of concepts (Deleuze 1998: 14-19). For a clearer comprehension of Deleuze's understanding and definition of cinema and what he means by 'blocks of movement/duration', one needs to go back to his Bergsonian ontology of images in his books *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* (2005) and *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* (2005a). However, what this alignment of philosophy and cinema entails in a nutshell is the core of Deleuze's philosophy of difference and post-representational thinking. In the

following pages, I will attempt to give an introduction to Deleuze's post-representational theory of film and demonstrate how the concepts and the methodology he provides in his cinema books and his collaboration with Guattari can be useful in identifying the limitation of identity politics in Turkish-German migrant cinema and work as an alternative method to the theoretical models that dominate the scholarship on migrant and diasporic cinemas.

Theories of representation, which dominate Western understanding of art and human perception, in general can be summarised as theories that rely on a presupposition that there exists a real and actual world that is represented in thought and human perception as a virtual copy. Karen Barad formulates representationalism as 'the belief in the ontological distinction between representations and that which they purport to represent; in particular, that which is represented is held to be independent of all practices of representing' (2007: 28). In representationalism thus dualisms such as the discursive and the material, and subject and object are foundational. According to representational thinking, there are entities that are static and objective and the relations between those entities are determined by those entities. The world that we encounter is a copy of an actual world and our images of thought and artistic activities endeavour to extract or provide recognizable reorganisations of it. This reorganisation operates by producing a copy of the world perceived or experienced in cinema. The copy is valued by the degree of its proximity to the original model. The more loyal to the actual, the more meaning and information it communicates and it is this meaning and information that linguistic, psychoanalytical and cognitive theories pursue, albeit via different methodologies. What these theories have in common is their presupposition that film communicates a knowledge *of something* that needs to be extracted and reflected upon. And human consciousness (the spectator) only has a limited access to the actual world.

Deleuze rejects these mind/object, perceiver/world dualisms that representational thinking accommodates. He adopts the Bergsonian view that everything is image. For Henri Bergson, the mind cannot create an image of the world as a whole, when it is itself an image among others. The world and objects

are nothing but images and there does not exist another world beyond those images. As Deleuze argues,

There are images; things are themselves images, because images aren't in our brain. The brain's just one image among others. Images are constantly acting and reacting on each other, producing and consuming. There's no difference at all between images, things, and motion. (1995: 42)

Rather than viewing images as a symbolic depiction of the world, Deleuze argues that the world itself is an image and this image is in a constant state of flux. In this way, film viewing, as well as perception itself, is an act of direct connection with the world rather than a mental encounter with its virtual copy. The cinematic image is not constituted by meaning or impression; one needs to view it as an assemblage of forces that enters into new assemblages. The images or images of thought do not stem from a singular, static essence; they emanate from an infinite number of forces and the cinematic image is one ground that allows us to enter into new assemblages of thought by asking what these forces or processes are.

Within film culture, psychoanalytical, linguistic and cognitive paradigms operate via presuppositions of the existence of a meaning, information or a fixed, universal mechanism to process this information. Despite the two volumes of a critique of psychoanalysis co-written with Guattari, Deleuze mentions psychoanalysis only briefly in his cinema books, which was still one of the two theoretical paradigms that governed film scholarship at the time. He criticises psychoanalytical theory's central paradigm that reduces the whole narrative to one sole object: the primitive scene (2005a: 36). Psychoanalysis and early feminist film theory that follows its "the gaze as masculine" paradigm, assumes that the camera presents a humanised perception that the spectator is invited to identify with and this identification designates the cinematic experience of the viewer. In this way, like the linguistic theory that excavates the film in search of a meaning, psychoanalytical and representationalist film theories offer a closed pattern that

assigns a single perspective that dutifully represents the world as real and communicates the knowledge of it.

Phenomenology provides a useful path to understand post-representational film theory. The phenomenological perspective rejects the Cartesian mind/body dualism and locates thought as “already in this world”; thought is triggered by man’s contact with this world. In this way, phenomenology brought a new perspective on film scholarship with the idea of an “embodied spectatorship”, arguing that film viewing is not solely a mental process. Vivian Sobchack, in her seminal article ‘What my fingers knew’ defines film spectatorship as a material, sensory and affective experience (2004: 53-84). Although this characterisation offered a new insight into film experience, phenomenology does not offer an altogether post-representational perspective as it places human thought and consciousness at the centre of the material world. As such, human consciousness gave meaning to the world and enlightened the objects, the world required the mind to exist as Husserl famously put it; all consciousness was a consciousness of something. The material world was real, yet it existed solely because of, and for human consciousness. Deleuze’s film philosophy offers a rupture from the previous representational paradigms by moving beyond phenomenology’s human-centred disposition of consciousness. Inheriting Bergson’s materialist ontology of the image, Deleuze writes in *Cinema I*,

the eye is in things, in luminous images themselves. Photography, if there is photography, is already snapped, already shot, in the interior of things and for all the points of space... This breaks with the whole philosophical tradition which placed light on the side of spirit and made consciousness a beam of light which drew things out of their native darkness (2005: 62-63).

This rupture from the human-centred subject/object divide characterises Deleuze’s philosophy of pure materialism and immanence. Both subject and object are images; both belong to the same ontological level as the image and neither of them has a more privileged access to reality. As Bergson writes in *Matter and*

*Memory*, ‘questions relating to subject and object, to their distinction and their union should be put in terms of time rather than of space’ (2004: 77). Time is not a linear concept that is subordinate to or only accessible through an immobile space, but it is understood as duration which is an amalgamation of past, present and future and which gives us the basic reality that is movement. Everything is in flow in reality, in the non-human perception of time that is independent from space and thus what gives access to this reality is movement itself. In this way, the cinematic image becomes nothing less than reality as it ‘extracts pure movement from bodies and moving things’ and thus film spectatorship is a first hand encounter with reality as image, that is movement, rather than a replication of it (Deleuze 2005a: 24).

Deleuze, in his two volumes on cinema, characterises two major categories of film: the movement-image, that is the pre-World War II films in which the narrative flows in an action-reaction schema and the post-war time-image in which the causal relationship between action and reaction is broken and movement is subordinated to time. Both images have various sub-categories and Deleuze provides a vast number of film examples to elaborate the concepts of cinema and illustrate the forces that operate within the processes of film viewing. As he asserts in the 1987 lecture, he creates and invents concepts in order to employ an ontology of cinema that, instead of designating a singular line of thought, presents a number of possibilities of interpretation which is modifiable according to the relational dynamics that can not be exhaustible by either poles of the viewing process, because neither of the poles pre-exist these relations. To sum up, cinema is a process of material becoming and both the viewer and the film positioned in either poles of the subject/object binary cannot be distinguished in the plane of immanence, as “what they are” cannot be distinguished from “what they do”. Deleuze’s film philosophy hence rejects a fixed model of life which is only accessible through a virtual copy; rather it offers thinking on a plane where the actual and the virtual, the past, the present and the future, the current and the yet-to-come all co-exist.

The concept of affect is thus useful in exploring how the actual and the virtual planes get entangled and thus to define an ethics of change. Affect is the anchor that brings materiality and discourse. Drawing on Baruch Spinoza's definition affect is the body's capacity to change, – to affect and be affected – Brian Massumi distinguishes affect from emotion (2002: 23-45). In Massumi's definition, an emotion is

a subjective content, the sociolinguistic fixing of the quality of an experience which is from that point onward defined as personal. Emotion is qualified intensity, the conventional, consensual point of insertion of intensity into semantically and semiotically formed progressions, into narrativizable action-reaction circuits, into function and meaning. It is intensity owned and recognized. (2002: 28)

Affect, on the other hand, is pre-subjective and unqualified, and it is thus not 'ownable or recognizable and is thus resistant to critique' (Massumi 2002: 28). Therefore to theorise and explain change, transformation and movement as a pursuit of ethics, it is necessary to draw attention to what is abstract and virtual beyond the concrete categories, individual bodies, constituted subjects and representational vocabularies. An ethics of change in film, thus, goes beyond an analysis of narrative, individual bodies and territories, through an engagement with the aesthetic and temporal qualities on the level of the virtual. Such an analysis does not altogether abandon categories and structures of the social, and constituted subjects and bodies, but instead aims to explore how the relations that constitute subjects and bodies emerge through a process of transformation, that always aims at a potential to be otherwise. As Massumi argues, the body is immediately 'abstract as it is concrete; its activity and expressivity extend, as on their underside, into an incorporeal, yet perfectly real, dimension of pressing potential' (2002: 31). A post-representational approach to migrant and diasporic cinema would thus necessarily engage with temporal aspects to explore the transformation of the social sphere beyond dualist structures and identities. As Shaviro argues, 'the only way to explore categories like "capital" and "the social"',

and I would add subjectivity and identity, is precisely by ‘mapping the many ways in which these categories function, the processes through which they get constructed, and the encounters in the course of which they transform, and are in turn transformed by, the other forces they come into contact with’ (2010: 154).

The pre-personal and affective aspects of film can enable a divergence of thought and it is crucial to understand how this process operates. Notwithstanding the highly political nature of cinematic production and its dependence on capital as an industrial art form, it is of major importance to discover how conventional and nonconventional film forms and narratives can both, if not equally, help us resist, or at least loosen the mechanisms of control that encourage mass-thinking.

### **Politics of Post-Representationalism in Migrant and Transnational Cinemas**

Deleuzian film scholarship in English, despite its ever-growing corpus in the last two decades is not one of the prevailing theoretical paradigms within the study of Migrant and Transnational Cinemas. This can be due to a number of reasons. Firstly, Deleuze’s volumes on cinema focus predominantly on the aesthetic constituents of the film as creative work of art and not as an object of knowledge. Yet this does not convey an approach to film with apolitical aspirations: on the contrary, Deleuze abstains from incorporating cinema as a universal language that relies on signs and symbols of recognition. Film is an entity that lives, and evolves and not a text that merely serves the instrumentality of modern-global discourses - even well meaning, nevertheless strategic ones like hybridity and multiculturalism.

A majority of culture-based approaches to cinema relies on a politics of representation as an intentional choice to define what constitutes a legitimate representation. Within this discourse, there is a process of instrumental judgment involved that operates via determining good and bad representations according to how they illustrate relations between social groups that pre-exist those relations. According to this approach, transnational films are designated to represent



marginalised social groups dutifully and therefore they need to follow certain norms. As Abel defines representational film approaches,

That these existing studies of images ultimately are about judgment is, however no accident, for the purpose of such representational studies is ultimately always platonic in nature. Their goal is precisely to distinguish between good (just) and bad (unjust) copies and maintain the ability to judge bad images as a necessary and effective means to curb them and their alleged negative effects [behavioural or ideological] (2007: xii).

A representational approach hence does not allow film to transform or modify categories but only to designate patterns of interpretation, which politically assert their rightfulness. In this way theory is employed to regulate thought and control possible responses to images as it imagines a transcendent truth that is embedded in film.

Ian Buchanan argues that a majority of cultural studies assumes a ready-made, fixed object of study and theory is ‘something one simply applies’ (1999: 103). Deleuze rejects this instrumental rationale of cultural studies by asserting that relations are external to their terms, and Buchanan suggests that this determination constitutes the ‘condition of possibility for a solution to the empiricist problem of how a subject transcending the given can be constituted in the given’ (Buchanan 1999: 105). For Deleuze, the subject transforms itself and it is capable of becoming endlessly and thus it transcends the given. This allows the theory to define subjectivity as a process, and study what a subject does and how it becomes rather than what it is. The subject is not a mere residue of society’s codifications, it constantly becomes different and thus, the Deleuzian theory of subjectivity considers the subject as a process of constant de- and re-territorialisation. And it is crucial for cultural studies to create new concepts to examine these dynamic processes of becoming a subject. Thus, Buchanan argues, what seems like a sociological problem is a philosophical one: a theory of culture should provide and create concepts to study these subjectivities.

As John Mullarkey argues, there are various ways to mobilise Deleuzian theory for film criticism, one needs to ‘re-invent one’s own Deleuzian film philosophy’, and indeed many different aspects of Deleuze’s oeuvre have been utilised within various inter-disciplinary terrains of film scholarship (2009: 106). In this section, I will look into examples in which scholars have productively employed Deleuzian theory in the context of transnational, migrant and diasporic cinemas, exploring some of the key Deleuzian concepts that are central to this study such as affect, deterritorialisation, and molar/molecular subjectivity, in order to identify their political implications in forming new connections within the study of migrant cinema.

David N. Rodowick’s *Gilles Deleuze’s Time Machine* (1997), despite being one of the earliest studies that explore Gilles Deleuze’s film philosophy in English, still continues to be one of the most extensive works to combine detailed analyses of Deleuzian film concepts and address their usefulness in film criticism within a broad scope of genres and traditions – including the context of postcolonial/minor cinema. As Rodowick argues in his introduction, ‘Deleuze’s philosophy of difference may provide one of the most interesting and progressive challenges to the kind of identity politics that has dominated contemporary cultural studies’ (1997: xiv). Indeed, one of many contributions Rodowick has made to film criticism in the book is his analysis of *Borom Sarret* (Ousmane Sembene, 1963), wherein he traces the relational forces that destabilise any one possibility of identification with a unified character, rather than excavating for the signifiers of a marginalised cultural identity in its main character as the narrator. He locates the emergence of the ‘unthought’, the virtual, ‘undefined possibility of a new beginning’ through the unconventional, divergent aesthetics of what otherwise would constitute a “bad” representation of the actual postcolonial history (1997: 166-7). His analysis creates channels between the actual images of the past and the virtual images of the future of possibilities, which challenges traditional discourses in the study of political cinema that seeks out definitive categories, identification and stability. Rodowick explains the affective qualities of the cinematic space in the following quote:

the concept of becoming-other exemplifies best the relation of the body to thought as presented in minor cinema. The relationship of body to thought is a complex one that is analogous to that of space to time. The body is intimately linked to the materiality of perception: it anchors perception in space and grounds the horizons and perspectives from which space is apprehended. (1997: 168).

Throughout the chapter that includes this passage, Rodowick intricately explains the relationship between the materiality of the body and the abstract thought that emerges through the cinematic image – which realigns itself with Deleuze’s meditations on the relationship between the concepts formulated elsewhere as the visible and the articulable, or matter and language.

The second monograph that provides a useful example to this study is Laura U. Marks’ *The Skin of the Film* (2000), wherein Marks explores the role of senses in understanding the politics of representation and memory in postcolonial/diasporic/migrant films – what she terms as ‘intercultural cinema’. Marks uses Deleuze’s cinema books to identify the political implications of the multisensory experience of the cinema of minorities. She demonstrates an accentuated attention to the affective qualities of the cinematic experience in various films that employ experimentation in their aesthetics to invent new ways of engaging politics with images. Marks traces the memory that the cinematic experience evokes through engaging with different senses and in this way she creates maps of multiple trajectories of meaning that change through history, thereby highlighting the durational quality of memory as generative and the past as not static and intact.

David Martin-Jones’ *Deleuze, Cinema and National Identity* (2006) explores a wide range of films from different periods and contexts: from mainstream Hollywood such as *Saving Private Ryan* (Steven Spielberg, 1998) to less mainstream works such as *Peppermint Candy* (Chang-dong Lee, 2000). In this study, Martin-Jones aims to analyse films that employ a non-linear structure

of narrative time, and how this fragmentation in the narrative has implications for the “official” narratives of national history and the construction of national identity. Martin-Jones grounds his argument mainly on Deleuze’s designation of how a non-linear and fragmented narration of time can challenge mainstream narratives and the distortion of the action-reaction schema of classical cinema can offer new ways to think through identities. He argues that, whereas the disruption of the narrative flow in film deterritorialises national identity, a linear flow of time that consists of a succession of moments in a rational schema reterritorialises the official national categorisations. Martin-Jones’ use of the Deleuzian image categories foregrounds how the temporal aspects of film can offer a site of resistance to the official histories, and thus can creatively map history as an open ontology, and not as a fact to be understood. Subsequently, in *Deleuze and World Cinemas* (2011), Martin-Jones expands his focus further to various international contexts, pointing to ‘the different models of time that can potentially be found in world cinemas, models which mean that the images on display should not necessarily be considered movement- or time-images, but something else altogether’ (2011: 19). In line with this argument, I will address the temporal aspects of the films through, but also beyond the categories of images that Deleuze describes in the cinema books, with the aim to analyse transformation and change ‘in terms of affect’ as a way of mapping, instead of classifying them as image types (Shaviro 2010: 3).

The final monograph, which has been influential for this project is Patricia Pisters’ *The Matrix of Visual Culture* (2003), which discusses Deleuze’s film theory, providing perspectives for analysing film in a cultural context. Pisters uses Deleuzian concepts such as affect, line of flight, molar/molecular, deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation in order to open up new lines to think through films from a very wide range of cultural, social and aesthetic contexts, without making a distinction between mainstream films and more evidently political art cinema. Particularly useful for my analysis is her investigation of the affective qualities that are territorialised into forms of subjectivities. Pisters argues,

In an immanent philosophy, the subject is in constant formation, always changing through multiple encounters. It is a concept of the subject that is much less sure that can create unwanted uncertainties but perhaps also unexpected possibilities' (2003: 22).

The processes of subjectivity formation thus have critical implications for the study of migrant and diasporic cinemas. Of key benefit to this project for the methodological insight it provides is the second chapter "Material Aspects of Subjectivity", wherein Pisters explores the position of the body in relation to thought and examines the implications of the affective flows on the evolving of the bodies on screen (2003: 45-76). In this chapter, Pisters builds a compelling argument by drawing attention to the materiality of the body in the study of subjectivity throughout her analyses of *In a Year of Thirteen Moons* (Rainer Werner Fassbinder, 1978) and *Touki-Bouki* (Djibril Diop Mambety, 1973). In these analyses, Pisters employs the Deleuzian concepts of affective flows, virtual/actual spheres, molar/molecular lines and deterritorialising/reterritorialising forces to demonstrate how such concepts can be useful to address the peripheral aspects of movement and qualitative change, which provides useful insight for the study of migrant cinema.

### **Summary of Chapters**

This thesis explores three different modes of filmmaking addressed over three main chapters: the Berlin School Cinema, Documentary Film and Social Realist Genre Cinema. The main concerns in choosing the films under discussion, is to be able to map how an alternative, non-identity-oriented approach to migrant filmmaking can be employed in a variety of modes and contexts. The first chapter looks at the contemporary filmmaking movement known as the "Berlin School", which is seen as an heir to the New German Cinema of the 1970s for its auteurist tendencies, its political-realist attitude and innovative aesthetics. The chapter looks at four different films: Thomas Arslan's *Geschwister* (Brothers and Sisters, 1997), *Dealer* (1999), *Der schöne Tag* (A Fine Day, 2001), and Christian

Petzold's *Jerichow* (2009). The experimental and innovative aesthetics of realism manifest in these films have been argued to have political implications. Through an investigation of subjectivity formation and intensification of the aesthetic field in the films, I will address the ethics of transformation and change that is foregrounded as a political strategy that resists identitarian conclusions.

The second chapter looks at five documentary films that explore the issue of migration from Turkey to Germany. Here, I develop further the argument that post-representationalism operates as a political strategy in investigating Aysun Bademsoy's *Am rand der Städte* (On the Outskirts, 2006) and *Ehre* (Honour, 2010). These discussions are supplemented by an interview I conducted with Bademsoy in March 2013 in Berlin, presented in the Appendix. I will explore the observational documentary aesthetics to look at how Bademsoy conveys speech and image creatively in a materialist form of filmmaking. The third film under discussion *Aufstellung* (In/Formation, 2005) is a video installation by the artist-filmmaker Harun Farocki, which provides a visual archaeology of migration, combining images taken from official history and language books from the Federal Republic of Germany. In this discussion, I employ the Guattarian concept of diagrams to investigate how new linkages and connections made through rapid montage reorganise histories of migration in an essentially a-cinematic form. The final two films in this chapter are investigated in the thematic context of the return to the homeland. Thomas Arslan's *Aus der Ferne* (From Far Away, 2006) and Seyhan Derin's *Ben Annemin Kızıyım* (I'm my mother's daughter, 1996) utilise subjective documentary strategies in distinct ways, to explore their homeland, with a subtle focus on the changing nature of labour, which is often undermined within the discussions of Turkish German Cinema. With an exception of *Ben Annemin Kızıyım*, the films under discussion in this chapter have often been omitted from the scholarly debates on Turkish German Cinema, which could be linked to the representationalist attitude that tends to focus on "useful" information, while discounting the potential new and alternative connections.

The final chapter looks at two narrative films of the social realist genre. The first film to be discussed in this chapter is Feo Aladağ's *Die Fremde* (When

we leave, 2010), which has been heavily criticised for its stereotypical representations of female subordination within migrant communities, while also being exceptionally successful in terms of distribution and audience numbers. As an alternative approach, I look at the operation of clichés as a potential site of resistance to representational paradigms and conclusions. While on a hermeneutical level the film perpetuates the mainstream narratives of honour crimes, I argue that a post-representational viewing informed by Deleuze's arguments in *Cinema 2*, can challenge such dismissive arguments. The final film, Yüksel Yavuz's *Kleine Freiheit* (A little bit of Freedom, 2003) is investigated within the context of recent social realist filmmaking in Europe, focusing on queer subjectivity formation as a potential form of resistance to representational identity politics.

This thesis crosses over the disciplines of Turkish German Cinema, migrant and diasporic cinema and Deleuzian film studies, amongst various others. It aims to convey, how convergences between these fields and methodologies can productively bring about new post-representationalist strategies that can contribute to each field, as well as providing fresh insights into the scholarship on Turkish German Cinema.

## CHAPTER ONE

### The Berlin School Fiction Film

Thomas Arslan's three consecutive films known as the *Berlin Trilogy* – *Geschwister* (Brothers and Sisters, 1997), *Dealer* (1999) and *Der schöne Tag* (A Fine Day, 2001) – and Christian Petzold's *Jerichow* (2009) have primarily been located within two separate categories of contemporary German filmmaking: The Berlin School and Turkish German Cinema. In what follows, I will explore these four films in temporal terms: the general focus on Arslan's Berlin Trilogy will be on subjectivity formation, and in *Jerichow*, I will investigate how the film depicts the changing nature of labour and its effects on subjectivity formation in terms of affect.

The term Berlin School has been used by film critics to delineate a group of filmmakers, who pioneered an emerging cinema that was seen as an alternative to the ostensibly apolitical and highly dramatised mainstream cinema of post-reunification Germany, which Eric Rentschler has famously defined as the 'Cinema of Consensus' (2000: 264). Rentschler argues that with the sudden death of Rainer Werner Fassbinder in 1982, the art-house movement that came to be known as New German Cinema of the 1970s came to an end, and German national cinema fell into a dark period of bland filmmaking of few political concerns and low critical voices. Subsidised by the Christian Democratic Union government, directors such as Doris Dörrie, Dominik Graf, Sönke Wortmann and Detlev Buck made commercial success at the German box office as the linear, harmless, and sterile narratives they presented on the screen appealed to the generic home audience while receiving little recognition outside (Rentschler 2000). The Cinema of Consensus carried the continuity characteristics of classical cinema, and as such it suggested a fundamental break from the previous decade's New German Cinema. David Coury evokes David Bordwell's characterisation of classical cinema when he suggests that these films share common structural traits such as 'causality, linear narrative, closure and the most necessary element of all,



a happy end' (1997: 356). As such, they also display some of the main qualities of what Gilles Deleuze categorised as the movement-image – the classical cinema's narrative structure where the movement on screen matches the characters' actions through a linear and causal progression. Apolitical on the surface, these easy-watching, humorous films follow an operational logic that flows through clichés, the recognizable, sensory-motor images that hide what Deleuze defines as the entirety of the image – the falseness of its constructed narrative "truth" – and almost by definition organise the image according to a larger majoritarian political agenda (Deleuze 2005a: 19).

This critique of the mainstream German Cinema may be extended into the second decade of post-Wall Germany, but with notable developments. The past decade has seen a major boost in the international reception of German films. *Die fetten Jahre sind vorbei* (The Edukators, 2004) by Hans Weingartner, *Gegen die Wand* (2004) and *Auf der anderen Seite* (2007) by Fatih Akin won multiple awards in major film festivals around the world, but what initiated the so called 'Renaissance' of German Cinema was the success garnered by German films at the Academy Awards and the American Box Office (Schick 2010: 143). *Nirgendwo in Afrika* (Nowhere in Africa, 2001) by Caroline Link and *Das Leben der Anderen* (The Lives of Others, 2006) by Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck won the best foreign language film Oscars at the Academy Awards. Two Hollywood style dramas about National Socialism, *Der Untergang* (Downfall, 2004) by Oliver Hirschbiegel and *Sophie Scholl – die letzten Tage* (Sophie Scholl: The final days, 2005) by Marc Rothemund were nominated for Academy Awards and made considerable success in the German Box Office. Along with the Ostalgie comedy/drama *Good Bye Lenin!* (Wolfgang Becker, 2003), this new generation of films signalled a divergence from the previous decade's mainstream German Cinema by dealing with the nation's past and by doing so, acquiring international acclaim. However, film critics have argued against this retrospective wave in German mainstream cinema for being heavily conditioned for the audiences outside, confirming the national stereotypes and reinforcing official history narratives. Marco Abel argues that the international success of these films dealing with Germany's past is not coincidental, since they 'almost pathologically

corroborate the ideologically convenient belief perpetuated outside Germany's borders that this nation is still almost exclusively reducible to its totalitarian past(s)' (2008). Whereas the focus on coming to terms with the nation's traumatic and totalitarian pasts was a novel attitude that signalled a development from the apolitical Cinema of Consensus of the 1990s, as Abel contends, the politics of the cinematic narration and aesthetics remained 'remarkably conservative' and the films lacked an 'esthetic adventurousness' (2008). In a similar vein, German film critic Georg Seeßlen criticises the classical narration that mainstream German Cinema has espoused, defining it as a 'Narrative Machine' (2007). He argues that major German film production companies and producers such as Degeto Film or Bernd Eichinger have created a plethora of images that no longer have any singularity, and regardless of their narratives, they employ remarkably similar aesthetic and thematic strategies (2007). It is important to note that the machine, in the sense that Seeßlen uses the term, suggests a very different concept from Deleuze and Guattari's understanding of machines and the machinic, which will be explored in detail later. In Deleuze's designation of the movement-image, a 'machine assemblage' is a set of images that act and react on each other and thus constitute a narrative of truth, and machines do not necessarily hold a negative connotation of totalitarian formation (Deleuze 2005: 61). According to Seeßlen's argument, the recent Berlin School films put the mass-production logic of the narrative machine into crisis by breaking the organisation of this production line of a certain narrative structure and inventing a new kind of image, which he calls the 'Anti-Narrative Machine' (2007).

Along with Christian Petzold and Angela Schanelec, Thomas Arslan is considered as one of the first generation Berlin School filmmakers, all three of whom were graduates of the Deutsche Film und Fernsehakademie Berlin and had been taught by acclaimed experimental filmmakers such as Harun Farocki and Hartmut Bitomsky. The legitimacy of the umbrella term "Berlin School" has often been questioned, and although there has never been a manifesto nor any declaration from the filmmakers of a movement as such, the common aesthetics employed by a contemporary group of filmmakers going against the grain of conventional narrative cinema did exhibit a novel kind of political sensibility and

signal the emergence of a new cinema which Marco Abel defines as a ‘counter-cinema’ (Abel 2008). As Abel observes, Berlin School films are mainly characterised by,

long takes, long shots, clinically precise framing, a certain deliberateness of pacing, sparse usage of non-diegetic music, poetic use of diegetic sound, and, frequently, the reliance on unknown or even non-professional actors who appear to be chosen for who they ‘are’ rather than for whom they could be. (2013: 15)

Thomas Arslan’s *Berlin Trilogy* exemplifies the archetypal Berlin School film according to these qualities noted by Abel. The first film of the trilogy, *Geschwister* is amongst the earliest Berlin School films – the second after Angela Schanelec’s *Das Glück meiner Schwester* (1995) according to a list gathered by the second generation Berlin School filmmaker Christoph Hochhäusler on his blog.<sup>1</sup> It is also one of the first Turkish German films made after the fall of the Berlin Wall that heralded the departure from the *Gastarbeiterkino* (Guestworker Cinema) of the previous two decades, which Deniz Göktürk famously labelled as the ‘Cinema of Duty’ (2001: 131). Göktürk contends that *Geschwister*,

signals a new mode of depicting immigrants and their hybrid offspring by following their diverging pathways through their neighbourhood, letting them drift along casually observing their encounters in various ‘contact zones’ such as the family dinner table, the working place, the boxing studio, the nightclub, and primarily the street. (2000: 65)

In addition to its positioning within the category of the Berlin School, Arslan’s *Berlin Trilogy* can also be situated in a group of trailblazing films within Turkish-German Cinema. However, rather than depicting the ‘pleasures of hybridity’ that the new generation Turkish-Germans enjoy as championed by Göktürk, Arslan’s exploration of the daily lives of migrants in Germany exhibited a new kind of aesthetic sensibility that eschews the previous interpretative paradigms, a majority

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<sup>1</sup> See <<http://parallelfilm.blogspot.co.uk/>> Accessed May 2014.

of which focus largely on narrative as content and remain oblivious to the formal constituents of the films.

In a similar way to Berlin School, critics considered Turkish German Cinema of the 1990s to be an alternative to the commercially driven, apolitical film culture that was predominant at the time, yet not for its aesthetic experimentalism but for its direct addressing of the political issues in Germany. Sabine Hake argues that Turkish German films ‘have contributed to the repoliticization of cinema around issues of identity and their relationship to practices of exclusion and discrimination’ (2008: 219). The topics of exclusion, alienation, discrimination and identity politics have been predominant within the scholarship on Turkish German Cinema, yet the work on Thomas Arslan’s *Berlin Trilogy* in this context still remains relatively limited, since it does not lend itself to this kind of representational analysis.

### 1. 1. An Ethics of Individuation: *Geschwister* (1997)

The first film of Thomas Arslan’s Berlin Trilogy, *Geschwister* is also considered to be one of the first Berlin School films. *Geschwister* was seen as inaugurating a new wave of Turkish German Cinema by critics, depicting a younger generation through more complex narratives that appeal to a diverse set of discussions than the much-condemned stereotypic films of the previous decade. However, rather than exuding a positive attitude and celebrating the ‘pleasures of hybridity’, *Geschwister* was considered a pessimistic depiction that did not offer much thematic novelty, albeit aesthetically challenging the conventions of the Cinema of Duty. Randall Halle argues that the films of the new generation Turkish German immigrants paved a way out of the conventional themes of migrant alienation, yet Arslan’s *Berlin Trilogy* does not fully contribute to this new trend, as the films are marked by a pessimism, deriving ‘from the impossibility of integration of the exhabitant, the incommensurability of Germany and Almanyia’ (2008: 156). All three films depict the uneventful everyday lives of third generation migrants in Berlin, following the characters’ daily routines extensively without much dramatisation. Halle’s critique of the films as

‘pessimistic’ remains at a representational level, which ultimately reduces the films to a discourse, the validity of which relies on how distinguished it is from previous discourses. The three films with their undramatic narratives and durational aesthetics can resist such representational judgment, as when seen closely, the crises of the characters do not emanate solely from an experience of cultural difference, and *Geschwister* provides an extended look into the milieu where their subjectivities are produced at a micropolitical level. This section will explore how Arslan’s processes of subjectivity formation offer a different kind of viewing and interpretation – an ethical engagement with the film that does not assume pre-defined characters separately from their milieu, but observes carefully their individuation, which is always already multitudinous as a process. I will use Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of *micropolitical* that they develop in *A Thousand Plateaus* in order to explore the minimal processes that expose the multiple, paradoxical and contingent dynamics that constitute the mundane reality of Arslan’s characters (2008: 229-255).

*Geschwister* centres on the daily experiences and mundane activities of three siblings: Erol (Tamer Yiğit), Ahmed (Savaş Yurderi) and Leyla (Serpil Turhan). The siblings are born to a Turkish father and a German mother and live in Kreuzberg, a neighbourhood in Berlin that is predominantly inhabited by Turkish immigrants. The film opens with a close-up of Ahmed’s head in profile. The image then cuts to fragmented shots exploring the bedroom that Ahmed shares with his brother Erol, the oldest of the three siblings. The film starts with what appears to be a random day in their life, as the father and Leyla get ready to go to work and Ahmed to school. The camera follows Ahmed’s trip to school as he walks towards the metro station, stops by a kiosk to buy snacks and meets his girlfriend outside the school building. In the next sequence we are introduced to the oldest of the siblings, Erol, as he starts the day rather unwillingly and performs his morning routine by lifting weights. He receives a letter calling him to do his military service in Turkey as a requirement for having attained a Turkish passport. Unemployed and uninspired by his life in Germany and the harassment he receives from his creditors, Erol is willing to go to Turkey, which is a decision

welcomed by his father but vetoed by his mother and Ahmed. We then meet Leyla, the youngest of the siblings, who is training to be a seamstress. Leyla spends time with her friend Sevim (Mariam Al Awad) as Erol and Ahmed loiter in the streets of Kreuzberg, meet Erol's friends from the Turkish community and go to a pool club where they are searched by the German Police for no apparent reason. Enraged by the mistreatment they receive from the German Police, Erol and his friends chase right-wing German youths and Ahmed refrains from participating in the fight. Erol confronts Ahmed for not being proud of his Turkish identity and for looking down on the Turkish community. Burdened by existential discontent, Erol compares himself to Ahmed, who enjoys better prospects in society, studying to obtain his *Abitur*<sup>2</sup>. Meanwhile Leyla meets Cem, another young Turkish-German who asks her to go to Hamburg with him, but Leyla cannot get her father's permission. The film ends with Erol's trip to the airport to go to Turkey, followed by a close-up of Ahmed's profile and Leyla walking in the Berlin streets with Sevim.

Kreuzberg streets are in the centre of the cinematic topography and as will become more apparent through the following Berlin Trilogy films, the urban space depicted in the film does not merely provide a background to the movement on screen. In that, the movement and narrative do not flow through the character's actions on screen but through the forces that affect and act on them. The Deleuzian cinematic subject, as opposed to the psychological subject of the earlier discourses on German-Turkish cinema is not a closed, delineated self to be looked at, but rather a process wherein the virtual becomes actual, therefore it needs to be discussed in terms of temporality. As Felicity Colman explains, 'thinking of time as duration, and duration as a topological process, is the way to approach the idea of space in Deleuze's cine-system' (2011: 168). From the very early sequences of the film, the streets are crucial to the cinematic topography: while displaying the influence of Turkish language on the visual urban environment and therefore losing their German attributes, they are reterritorialised within Berlin's urban

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<sup>2</sup> German Equivalent of High School Diploma.

space with a new envisioning of spatiality. It is important to note that Deleuze's concept of deterritorialisation here does not suggest a complete disintegration of state territoriality - instead, the Berlin streets are embedded within the new constellations of today's global capitalism. They are visualised with a new system of codes. When Ahmed leaves the apartment in the morning, he walks alongside walls of a row of apartment buildings covered with graffiti and poster remains that do not permit any readability. However this does not suggest a complete dismantling of the visual codes of a nation state milieu – the name of the station reads as 'Kottbusser Tor', the main U-Bahn station located in central Kreuzberg. The locations are precise in contrast to their designation as any-space-whatever's or non-spaces as argued by critics (Gallagher 2006; Schick 2011). They do not insinuate anonymity and leave their coordinates: on the contrary, they are all the more connected as they reveal those connections and the in-between journeys that through this reterritorialisation create new maps, new meanings and new visibilities that are ripe with affective potentials. In his book on Michel Foucault, Deleuze distinguishes two different planes constituting forms of knowledge: the visible and the articulable, things and words (2010: 41). Visibilities are the formations located on a virtual plane and they have the potential to be actualised by the statements that ascribe meanings to them by accommodating them in language. This process of knowledge formation operates through de- and reterritorialisations, constant organisation of potentials and reorganisation of thought. Understood in this way, the cinematic topography of *Geschwister* reorganises the Berlin cityscape by a reformulation of the visibilities and statements. Ahmed overhears a Turkish conversation spoken on the metro; at the kiosk on his way out, a man buys a Turkish newspaper speaking Turkish with the person at the counter. The newspaper stall is full of Turkish newspapers yet Ahmed prefers to speak German while making his purchase.



**Figure 1 - Erol running from his creditors**

Similarly, as Erol leaves the house following his discussion with his mother over doing his military service in Turkey, he is thrown into the busy streets of Kreuzberg that are suffused with signs of Turkish companies, banks and major businesses [Fig.1]. The German capital has a remarkably de-nationalised commercial layout and this suggests a primarily capital oriented reorganisation of spatiality, and requires a rethinking of the political geography of the still ‘young’ state of reunified Germany. At this point it is certainly necessary to rethink the relation between the visible and the articulable spheres: the statements of Türk Hava Yolları (Turkish Airlines), T.C. Ziraat Bankası (Turkish Agricultural Bank) and Egebank suggest that the state owned enterprises and banks of Turkey are undoing the former national codes in the new global geopolitical layout of Germany via the deterritorialising forces of capitalism, only to reterritorialise them in the new codes of the market economy producing new social relations and subjectivities. This multinational neoliberal market layout contrasts with Erol as an individual running through the streets of Berlin, looking for shortcuts and



alleyways to escape his creditors. In an extended take, Erol runs around in the streets of Kreuzberg, and the frame cuts to the next scene before Erol reaches a destination, he stops and looks around agitated. The urban space is unrelentingly invaded with economic markers and Erol is agitated with monetary concerns. Erol owes money to multiple creditors; and unlike the other members of his family, he is unemployed and does not have an ordered life.

In his book *The Making of the Indebted Man*, Maurizio Lazzarato explores how the concept of debt in general, and the debtor-creditor relationship in particular intensify the ‘mechanisms of exploitation and domination at every level of society’ (2011: 7) In what he calls the ‘debt economy’ of the neoliberal condition, a new subjectivity is produced – this new notion of economy combines both ‘work on the self’ and productive labour, and as such ‘covers both economic production and the production of subjectivity’ and produces a new sense of ethics (2011: 11). As Lazzarato explains,

Credit entails the creditor’s “moral judgment” of debtor, that is, a “subjective” measure of value. But not only are the skills and know-how of the worker evaluated, so too are the poor man’s actions in society (social “virtues,” “conduct,” “reputation”), that is, his lifestyle, his social behaviour, his values, his very *existence*. It is through debt that capital is able to appropriate not only the physical and intellectual abilities the poor man employs in his labour, but also his social and existential forces. (2011: 59)

Although the debt economy was not as intensified at the time Arslan made his film, the film provides a very nuanced insight into the interpellary aspects of debt (in Althusserian sense) and how it affects the precarious. Erol is a precarious and marginalised immigrant in the increasingly global market society, and when others seem to enjoy the prospects that globalisation offers, his worth is devalued. The film explores how this sense of poor economic worth infiltrates his subjectivity, and in turn what he invests his desire in, getting increasingly estranged in a capital oriented and globalised urban setting that offers few prospects to the precarious.

Jessica Gallagher reads Erol's marginalised position and his relation to the urban environment as a step-back to the so-called *Gastarbeiterkino* (2006: 339). She argues that in the film,

the characters are largely restricted to the "ethnic" suburbs of the city, where the streets are staged as sites of imminent conflict circumscribed by mechanisms of territorial control, the question arises as to whether the spatial offerings in the film are as liberating as some have suggested. (2006: 343)

Gallagher argues that the theme of ethnic conflict determines the film's narrative, and drawing from Michel De Certeau, she argues that the characters' walking around the city suggests a 'constant tension between self-definition and alienation' (2006: 339). Gallagher's account of the political implications of urban space in *Geschwister* presupposes the macrotheory of ethnic conflict as the definitive context that establishes the topology of the film. Abstracted from the aesthetic processes that constitute spaces and subjectivities in the film, this argument reduces the characters to ethnically marked identities that are trapped in Kreuzberg as a 'marginalised suburb', the only way out of which is, as hinted by Gallagher, the way that Ahmed pursues through education (2006: 342). In her spatial analysis of the film, Gallagher posits schooling as the normative and right way to pursue social mobility for the second generation migrant, and she echoes Barbara Mennel's gender oriented account of the spatial limitations that are implied in the film. Mennel in her article "Bruce Lee in Kreuzberg and Scarface in Altona" concludes her analysis of *Geschwister* with a critique of the masculine oriented "ghettocentric" narrative of the film, which she argues, '...implies that Erol has left for Turkey and that Ahmed will have the potential to depart from Kreuzberg with a high school degree, but that Leyla will remain in Kreuzberg as a seamstress' (2002: 146). The spatial analyses of both Gallagher and Mennel locate the rigid, molar skeleton of the film's narrative: in Gallagher's case the ethnicised narrative lines and in Mennel's, the gendered lines. These discussions of the film tend to rely on a process of judgment that subjugates the image to a text, a political discourse that delineates the meaning of urban space. This spatial

analysis reduces the spaces of the film to metaphors or psychological states: the streets as the “outdoors” do not offer liberation from the confinement of the internal spaces of the immigrant homes of the Cinema of Duty, since they are still heavily segmented with ethnic lines. In order to move beyond a representational account of the film and to explore the ethics and politics of the image, I will look into the molecular vectors that constitute subjectivity. I use Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of micropolitics as a methodology, and other concepts such as the molar and the molecular needs to be explained before moving onto the analysis of *Geschwister*.

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari define the concept of micropolitics as opposed to politics as understood in its traditional sense, which they define as a ‘molar organisation’ (2008: 237). They argue that every being, such as a group or individual, is segmented by rigid lines that divide them in a linear fashion, such as the binary of sexes, social classes, and other classifications and categories produced by institutions such as the school, the family, the army, the workshop. These coding lines are molar lines, and their function is to organise, divide and distribute positions, ranks and identities – in relation to film, Patricia Pisters discusses these molar lines as the ‘political, historical, sociologic segments that are virtually present in the different filmic universes’ (2003: 58). Yet, there is another line of segmentarity that presents a different level of sensibility that is crucial to the cinematic perception, the molecular lines. The molecular line is still a line of organisation and it is immanent to the molar level, yet it corresponds to a micro level of perception: they are ‘unconscious micropercepts, unconscious affects, fine segmentations that grasp or experience different things, are distributed and operate differently’ (Deleuze and Guattari 2008: 235). The molecular exists simultaneously with the molar while operating at a different level within the molar organisation, and it is necessary to identify and to map out the molecular lines that operate within a molar political entity in less easily recognisable ways, which in relation to film requires a different kind of engagement. This methodology of mapping the micro-processes of becoming is characterised as micropolitics (Deleuze and Guattari 2008: 230-55). For Deleuze and Guattari, every body (individual and social; human and non-human; physical

and mental) is an assemblage of forces that are organised at both molar and molecular levels and the endeavour of micropolitics is a pursuit of ethics, in that, rather than analysing the state of affairs and the psychological self as an end product, it aims to delineate the multiple, contingent and complex processes that create subjectivities. In so doing, it allows new connections to occur by mapping out the ways in which these processes link to and detach from each other, in constant flux. It is a productive process rather than a mere analytical method and it aims to express and proliferate new modes of existence. It ‘undertakes not to represent, interpret, or symbolize, but only to make maps and draw lines, marking their mixtures as well as their distinctions’ (Deleuze and Guattari 2008: 250).

*Geschwister* follows the becomings of its three main characters throughout their daily encounters and like the subsequent films of the *Berlin Trilogy*; the narrative of the film escapes potential dramatic tensions. The crises of the characters, though only subtle, revolve around one major dramatic question: Will Erol decide to go to do his military service in Turkey? The closing of the film persistently rejects building into this dramatic tension as his father drives Erol to the airport, accompanied by his whole family. The next sequence shows Ahmed and Leyla separately, as they both stay in Kreuzberg: first a close-up of Ahmed’s head, identical to the opening shot of the film, followed by Leyla and Sevim walking on the streets in a light hearted fashion. Barbara Mennel suggests that this choice of framing Berlin for the closing shot of the film rather than depicting Erol’s arrival in Turkey is a choice of privileging location over narration, yet the framing of both Ahmed and Leyla suggest a repetition through difference. By locating Ahmed and Leyla to their habitual surroundings – the frames that they have previously been presented in – the film rejects the linear perception of time by visualising instead the characters’ repetition of the “self as other”, and in this way resists to employ a conventional drama of progress. Both Ahmed and Leyla have been transforming throughout the film in very subtle tones, yet the closing frames that they are separately depicted in suggest a certain cycle of repetition: the film has followed them through a section in their life and seemingly it went back to the start. The closing of the film suggests an openness to the film, there is no conclusion yet the characters have become-other in time. The images suggest that

nothing has changed in Ahmed and Sevim's lives, yet the temporal quality of the medium resists this conclusion. In this way the film has given us the images of their processual subjectivity. As Deleuze writes in relation to the time-image; '[T]he point is that the elements themselves are constantly changing with the relations of time into which they enter, and the terms with their connections... "I is another" has replaced Ego=Ego' (2005a: 129). Time is no longer subordinate to movement and the repetition in the image is not a flashback, since the movement is in time itself.

This is not to say that *Geschwister* can easily be classified as a time-image. Time follows a seemingly linear pattern yet this is not to privilege movement over time. The camera follows three characters closely throughout the film and lingers on their encounters and minimal actions to explore their affects and the affects that act upon them. Affects, in Deleuze's sense of the word, are distinct from feelings and emotions as they are of singular, yet non-localizable character; they are not located on or within the subjects themselves. As he argues, 'affects aren't feelings; they are becomings that spill over beyond whoever lives through them' (1995: 137). Deleuze, drawing on Spinoza, characterises subjectivity as formed by a subject's capacity to affect and be affected. What causes a subject to act upon the world is an assemblage of desires and beliefs, and these desires and beliefs are in constant formation by external influences that affect and constantly transform the subject. There are many moments in the film where the camera captures or simply lingers upon the pure potentials that the characters' encounters and the screen situations produce. The non-localisable character of these affects as the not-yet-emotions constitute a complex character formation process in the film as the seemingly trivial situations do not constitute a linear and rational chain of motivations as pursued by traditional narrative structures of the classical cinema. Erol's first walking sequence ends without a narrative conclusion, as he simply pauses without arriving at a certain destination, as does his trip to Turkey at the closing of the film. He simply stops and looks around with a lack of obvious motivation or direction. After his row with his friends over calling him a 'bastard' for not being an ethnically 'pure Turk', he walks away, the camera follows him from behind for a while, until he leans against a wall facing the camera. He has a

brief encounter with another passer-by who stops to ask for a lighter from Erol, thanks him and walks away. Erol is disinterested, the encounter captured does not get localised on Erol as a feeling as it merely expresses a potential, rather than an action or an event. The affection-image does not extend into an action-image but rather stays as intensity or a sensation. While Ahmed and Leyla are located in less problematic positions within their urban milieu, Erol is at the centre of the film, his presence exuding a constant angst, signalling a potential crisis situation. He is on the verge of making a dramatic change in his life; his walks, trips and conversations are always open-ended; they express a constant becoming, a process rather than a destination to arrive at, always under construction. In this way, despite his male-centric environment, his interest in Bruce Lee and martial arts, bodybuilding and his macho outlook, Erol defies being codified as a stereotypical Turkish male. He is not located in opposition to a Turkish (or Muslim) female, he does not perform definite acts, but merely asks questions, as he repeats three times during his conversation with Ahmed about his decision to do his military service in Turkey: “What am I doing here?”

### **Ethics versus Morality**

These non-signifying, expressive, open-ended situations as affection-images constitute the dimension of the film where the ethical questions are posed. Drawing on Nietzsche, Deleuze characterises ethics as a system of evaluation that is strictly opposed to morality as a system of judgment. As he writes in *Cinema 2*,

it is not a matter of judging life in the name of a higher authority which would be the good, the true; it is a matter, on the contrary, of evaluating every being, every action and passion, even every value, in relation to life which they involve. Affect as immanent evaluation, instead of judgement as transcendent value: ‘I love or I hate’ instead of ‘I judge’.  
(Deleuze 2005a: 136)

Deleuze defines morality as a set of laws that judges actions, intentions and thoughts by positioning them in relation to universal, transcendental values, whereas ethics as a 'set of optional rules that assess(sic) what we do, what we say, in relation to the ways of existing involved' (1995: 100). Drawing on the Nietzschean notion of modes of existence (Nietzsche suggests using the terms noble and base against good and bad), Deleuze argues that it is according to one's mode of existence that one evaluates one's actions or intentions. Bringing a Nietzschean overthrow of morality together with Spinoza's ethics, Deleuze proposes what he calls an 'ethics of immanence' in lieu of a system of judgement that defines the outlines of representational thinking. As Daniel W. Smith explains, according to an ethics of immanence, 'modes are no longer "judged" in terms of their degree of proximity to or distance from an external principle, but are "evaluated" in terms of the manner by which they "occupy" their existence: the intensity of their power, the "tenor" of life' (2012: 176). For Deleuze, an ethics of immanence is a productive process as opposed to the system of morality that governs the formed subject of late capitalism. *A Thousand Plateaus* provides a clinical and critical account of this majoritarian subject whose possibilities of becoming are blocked by a paternal law according to psychoanalysis: a subject whose desire is perpetually forwarded to what it lacks (Lorraine 2011: 154). This leads Deleuze and Guattari to pose the primary question of the ethics of immanence: if this system of morality and transcendence hunts down and represses desire and the possibilities of becoming, how does the desiring subject desire its own repression? Deleuze and Guattari introduce this fundamental question of ethics and politics in *Anti-Oedipus*, and express why it is necessary to understand the micro processes that operate through the modern capitalist society's modes of existence in these terms, which they describe as the goal of schizoanalysis: 'to analyze the specific nature of the libidinal investments in the economic and political spheres, and thereby to show how, in the subject who desires, desire can be made to desire its own repression' (2004: 115). How do people invest in a system that controls and represses them and limits their actions and their capacity to act? This is the fundamental question at the heart of political philosophy as Deleuze and Guattari argue, 'why do men fight for their servitude as though it were their salvation?' (2004: 31). It is important to note here that

desire for Deleuze, is never an individual, conscious choice but is an assemblage of the drives and impulses that are ‘always assembled or arranged’ by different social formations, ‘in different ways, in different individuals, in different cultures, in different eras’ (Smith 2012: 180-81). Nor does it emerge from a lack, because what the subject desires is ‘a social formation, and in this sense desire is always *positive*’ (Smith 2012: 186). Desire is not separable from these complex processes that ‘necessarily tie into molecular levels, from microformations already shaping postures, attitudes, perceptions, expectations, semiotic systems, etc.’ (Deleuze and Guattari 2008: 237). To understand these processes, an analysis of the micropolitics of society and social formations is strictly necessary, since it is precisely at this molecular level where the desiring production happens and where the changes, cracks and fissures can be mapped, which remain imperceptible at a molar level.

Cinema can thus be a powerful tool of inquiry into the ethics and politics of the modes of existence and living, with its particular facility to suspend and distort the normatively successive chain of perception-affection-action and thus provide gaps to create new linkings between the processes of desire production and subjectivity formation. *Geschwister* can be viewed as an illustration of Berlin as an urban site where different subjects are produced and where they are undergoing these micro-processes of change. The camera focuses on desire production at a molecular level and in this case, the molecular level is the banality of everyday existence.

The lives of the three siblings of *Geschwister* are too ordinary to assemble dramatic screen situations as young Berliners apart from their multi-ethnic identities, and thus the issues of ethnic identity, culture and racism constitute the molar ground of the film. Erol’s decision to obtain a Turkish passport and to do his military service hints at a dialectical process of identity construction in relation to Ahmed’s indifference to his ethnic identity. Erol repeatedly challenges Ahmed’s apathy to his Turkish roots: his lack of interest in their family in Turkey, his refusal to speak Turkish and to participate in the conversations with Erol’s Turkish German friends. Erol compares himself to Ahmed’s much more privileged position in society and questions what went wrong for himself. The



molar skeleton of the film solidifies during the police raid sequence: the undercover police officers aggressively search Turkish-German youths at the social club and wrongly accuse one of them of carrying illegal drugs. The milieu of post-Reunification Germany is still a hostile environment for the underprivileged precarious youth from ethnic backgrounds. One of Erol's friends asks the question: "How can you still want to be a cop in Germany?" The molecular line appears through this conversation and explores the investment of desire of the underprivileged ethnicised individual. How do the underprivileged, 'the most excluded members of society invest with passion in the system that oppresses them' (Deleuze and Guattari 2004: 380)? When Erol shares his frustration with Ahmed, Ahmed in turn suggests that Erol should get a job. Erol scolds: "Do you want me to cut Kebabs?" The only way to be acceptable as an immigrant or ethnically marked citizen in the neoliberal milieu of post-Wall German society is to upgrade your means of labour and as the subjects of this society, the first requirement is to invest your desire in this new relation of production. Capitalism leads desire to desire its own repression under the disguise of liberty, which comes only through the fake promise of economic freedom and status. As Deleuze and Guattari argue, 'repressing desire, not only for others but in oneself, being the cop for others and for oneself – that is what arouses, and it is not ideology, it is economy' (2004: 380).

This molecular line of the economic imperative to invest in capitalist production follows the most mundane, everyday existence of the siblings to constitute a social cartography: the family, the workshop, the school. Erol, as an excluded member of this social field is constantly agitated, the members of his family and his friends repeatedly remind him that he needed an education – that he failed to be properly "schooled" in order to become a legitimate subject of the German society. The film opens with each family members' start to the day: the mother and the father go to work, Leyla goes to the seamstress workshop, Ahmed goes to school whereas Erol goes to the streets – without a specific destination. The father of the family as a taxi driver is under constant financial pressure and debt. He is often shown budgeting; his life is under threat as he talks of his colleagues getting attacked while on duty. This is the segmented society of the

twentieth century, the society of control that Deleuze opposes to the previous forms of power structure, the discipline societies of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that Foucault had critiqued in detail where power was centralised and exerted upon a mass.

In the twentieth century capitalist societies, these different segmentations of the social field are producing similar libidinal investments in individuals, but are organised differently within the molar and molecular spheres. In this way, Erol's decision to go to Turkey to do his military service is another form of libidinal investment in repression – excluded from the Post-Fordist, free market economy of Western neoliberalism with no education and no prospects of employability, Erol invests his desire in a different, more rigid form of repressive organisation. The film follows this desire production at a molecular level, the streets that Erol walks along without a certain aim apart from being in constant motion, are another form of segmentation, that are parts of the same whole. This is where the ethical dimension of the film presents itself: segmented lives of the same milieu caught up in different assemblages, productive of different desires as parts of the same whole.

## **1. 2. Differential Subjectivities: *Dealer* (1999)**

As the second film of Arslan's Berlin Trilogy, *Dealer* (1999) reached a relatively wider audience than his previous film *Geschwister*, owing partly to its success at the Berlinale in 1999. Another prominent film that explores Turkish-Germans living in Berlin, Kutluğ Ataman's *Lola und Bilidikid* (1999) was noted as the audience's favourite at the Panorama section of the festival that year (1999). In the Forum section, Thomas Arslan won the Prize of the Ecumenical Jury and the FIPRESCI (Federation of International Film Critics) Prize for his film's 'respectful portrayal of alienated characters and for treating a conventional yet difficult subject in a visually arresting and vivid manner' (1999a). As the official FIPRESCI statement suggests, Arslan's film focuses on a marginalised character within a narrative that is overwrought with clichés, yet its stylistic approach and observant fresh look at the subject was seen as a welcome contribution to German

cinema. *Dealer*'s narrative does not present a follow up to *Geschwister* and the film diverges aesthetically from the previous film in the trilogy, as noted by many critics such as Dönmez-Colin in terms of a difference between their foci on interiority and exteriority. She argues that the former film in the trilogy exhibits a 'documentary style', whereas the latter describes a 'mental condition, the inner world of the protagonist' (Dönmez-Colin 2008). Dönmez-Colin deduces this turn towards interiority from an interview on *Dealer* in which Arslan explains,

I do not seek to have a singular style that I can apply wholesale to each work. I seek to try things out and let the form develop itself from the material. What I wanted to do in *Dealer*, was not to represent a social milieu, but instead describe the mental condition that it produces. (1998)<sup>3</sup>

In this interview that is included in the film's promotional booklet produced by Peripherfilm, Thomas Arslan explains that his concern was mainly to depict the subjectivity that is constructed by, with and within a social milieu, rather than to represent the Turkish German petty criminal community in Berlin as a pre-existing milieu. Understood in this way, the exterior location / interior subject are not mutually exclusive milieus that can be explored via a choice of subjective / objective narrative techniques. In this section, I will explore character subjectivity and Berlin as the site where it is produced in *Dealer*, both as multidimensional fields that are immanent to each other. I will look into the processes of subjectivity formation in the film as an ethical pursuit, and investigate the ways in which these processes can be understood in relation to *Geschwister*, looking into the continuities and breaks in narrative and aesthetic elements employed in both films. I will be using the concepts and ideas that Deleuze delivers in the "Powers of the False" chapter in *Cinema 2* in order to identify and think through the repetitions and divergences that emerge in the aesthetic, formal and narrative layers in relation to *Geschwister*. I will examine how the territories of family,

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<sup>3</sup> For the original interview, see Seidel, Gisela (1999) "Interview mit Thomas Arslan." *Der schöne Tag – ein Film von Thomas Arslan*. Available At: <<http://www.peripherfilm.de/derschoenetag/dst2.htm>> Accessed May 2014.

labour and work environments, meld into the cinematic milieu through a system of percepts and affects that create normative and non-normative subjectivities.

*Dealer* opens with a medium shot of a closed curtain at dawn. The camera then pans quickly towards Can (Tamer Yiğit), the male protagonist of the film. Can is wide awake, looking towards the daybreak outside the window as his wife Jale (Idil Uner) and their three year old daughter Meral are sleeping peacefully next to him, cuddled up in each other's arms. Can gets up and sits on the side of the bed and the camera lands on his profile in a medium shot as he continues to watch the day outside the window, deep in thought. In the next sequence, we learn that Can is a petty drug dealer operating in Kreuzberg with three other dealers of Turkish origin. The group's boss Hakan (Hussi Kutlucan) tends to trust Can more than his other men and promises to buy a bar for him to manage as Can gets more and more agitated about the prospects of being arrested. On one side, Jale urges Can to quit dealing drugs and look for a job and on the other, an undercover police officer Erdal (Birol Ünel) keeps him under constant surveillance and tries to encourage him to testify against his boss Hakan. Can's father who owns a fabric shop asks Can to take over his business but determined to take on the bar job, Can refuses. Jale leaves Can and with Meral, she moves in with her friend Eva (Angela Schanelec). Hakan gets alarmed by Can's encounters with Erdal and threatens to give the management of the bar to someone else, no sooner than which he gets murdered by his Turkish creditors. Shocked and dismayed by Hakan's death before his eyes, Can goes to his childhood friend Metin (Erhan Emre) and asks for employment at his uncle's restaurant. Can starts to work as a kitchen porter, yet gets immediately discontented with the work and the salary he receives. With Jale refusing to come back despite his efforts and his fellow dealers' abasing comments, Can decides to give up the restaurant job and sell the drugs that were left from Hakan. In what he plans to be his last dealing job, Can gets caught by Erdal and receives four years prison sentence after which he will face deportation to Turkey. Can asks Jale to wait for him until his release but Jale refuses. The film closes with a series of shots of the locations that Can inhabited through the course of the film, now all empty and static.

What struck many critics in *Dealer* as signalling a relationship of succession to the previous film in the trilogy is the decision to cast Tamer Yiğit for the role of Can. The Turkish born German actor also plays Erol, a similarly agitated petty criminal in *Geschwister*. Rob Burns sees Arslan's choice to cast Yiğit for both characters as a potential continuity in the narrative. He argues that Can 'could be seen as a projection of what might have become of Erol, had he not chosen to leave Berlin' (2007: 17). In a similar vein, Jessica Gallagher points out that Can is an extension of Erol and argues that 'as a low-level drug runner openly involved in serious criminality, [Can] is distanced even further from mainstream society' (2006: 344). Although there is an openly intended continuity between the two characters, seeking for character linearity in studies of Turkish German Cinema has been a discursive instrument to condemn stereotypes. Gallagher in the same article explores the character of Jale as a continuation of the oppressed Turkish female stereotype and argues that the character 'continues, like her predecessors from the 1970s and 1980s to be restricted to interior/enclosed spaces' (348). Gallagher takes a representational approach when she interprets the repeated elements in the category of Turkish-German cinema as 'bad' copies of an existing reality, a Turkish German community that exists otherwise. This representational approach reduces the characters to identities and judges them in relation to an ideally more integrated Turkish German identity and thus operates as a moralistic framework of thinking. This section tries to understand how these repeating elements in the construction of the cinematic space and characters can be viewed and understood in terms of ethics and thus aims to move towards an affirmative understanding of the cinematic creation of the new and away from a framework of signification and identities.

In the aforementioned interview by Gabriela Seidel quoted by Dönmez-Colin, Thomas Arslan talks about the stereotypical Turkish German imagery constructed in the German mass media and cinema and thus comments on his way of working through this imagery,

If it is already no longer possible to avoid clichés altogether, one can perhaps attempt to pass beyond them, that is to say, to try and use such

images as the point of departure in order gradually to dismantle them in such a way that something else becomes visible. (Burns 2007: 17)

In this statement, Arslan refers to his choice to focus on Kreuzberg as Berlin's predominantly Turkish petty crime neighbourhood. Fixing attention on the petty crime environment that was captured in *Geschwister* as the milieu for Erol's portion of the story, Arslan argues that the character stereotypes and recurrent images of the Turkish criminal cannot be altogether discarded. It is necessary to work through these cliché images, to handle them with care and to repeat them until the forces and the processes of transformation become visible. Arslan's remark on cliché resonates with Gilles Deleuze's understanding of the concept as he explains in *Cinema 2*. Deleuze characterises cliché as a sensory-motor image that camouflages or hides the forces and linkages that create the cinematic image. As he argues, drawing on Bergson:

we do not perceive the thing or the image in its entirety, we always perceive less of it, we perceive only what we are interested in perceiving, or rather what it is in our interest to perceive, by the virtue of our economic interests, ideological beliefs and psychological demands. We therefore normally perceive only clichés. (Deleuze 2005a: 19-20)

It is necessary to explore clichés in Deleuze's sense of the term to identify how can one work through clichés that hide the entirety of the image. Clichés might be characters, neighbourhoods, milieus but also gestures, utterances, sound effects, colour and lighting – simply a technique or a quality can operate as a cliché. The film starts introducing the protagonist Can at work, dealing drugs beyond frosted glass. The camera then pans aside to reveal the two sides of the business, yet the faces of the characters are barely recognisable due to the low-key lighting, the characters are not emphasised, they appear as two dark silhouettes over a background that reveals a mundane daytime view of a Kreuzberg street. The sparse use of lighting that increases high contrast in this sequence does not function the same way as the chiaroscuro that is a prominent aesthetic technique

used in German expressionist cinema. Contrast through high key/low key lighting traditionally creates an illusion of movement and highlights the two extremes of the good/evil binary that accentuates the recurring theme of the genre – the contrasting doppelgängers. Unlike this, the low key lighting in *Dealer* functions to impair the vision that focuses on action – contrary to a genre cliché, the criminal action that takes place on screen does not intend to create a sensation of peril that aims to trigger suspense. As Deleuze argues, to go beyond cliché,

sometimes it is necessary to restore the lost parts, to rediscover everything that cannot be seen in the image, everything that has been removed to make it “interesting”. But sometimes, on the contrary, it is necessary to make holes, to introduce voids and white spaces, to rarefy the image, by suppressing many things that have been added to make us believe that we were seeing everything. It is necessary to make a division or make emptiness in order to find the whole again. (2005a: 20-21)

Arslan revisits the stereotypical Turkish criminal imagery in Germany to introduce a gap in the cinematic structure by rarefying the image that frames mundane views of Kreuzberg streets in order to make sensible the forces that operate in Germany’s post-Reunification, advanced neoliberal capitalism – forces that are otherwise imperceptible to natural senses.

To provide an understanding of what these forces are in Deleuzian terms, it is worthwhile to go back to the “Powers of the False” chapter in *Cinema 2*. In the first volume of the cinema books, Deleuze wrote that he aims to conceive of movement and image independently from what they are to become, i.e. bodies, qualities, actions (2005: 59-60). He starts off his ontology of cinema with an explanation of the methodology of viewing cinematic images just as images: before language or natural perception distinguishes bodies as nouns, qualities as adjectives and actions as verbs (2005: 60). Therefore, it is important to note that in a Bergsonian vein, Deleuze aims to think matter and movement as immanent, before they settle into the actions *of* bodies, *of* screen characters or any

conceivable centre point but just as actions or qualities, not yet pertaining to bodies. The organic regime of judgment that Deleuze critiques throughout the “Powers of the False” chapter hinders viewing the image as a whole, but instead, in order to operate as a system of judgment and distinguish good from evil, it has to attribute every quality to a character, an object or a centre of action. On the other hand, the crystalline regime frees the image from this system of values, via ‘powers of the false’, a new system of images that gives autonomy to the qualities and forces by rarefying the image and decentring the viewer’s attention. The lack of score and the impaired vision that diffuses the focus off the characters deprive the image of the elements that allow a conventional attention economy that suspense/gangster film employs via a model of detached spectatorship. With Can’s voice-over commentary that starts to narrate the image on screen, this process of detachment comes to a halt. Can narrates the mundane reality of his everyday routine with rules and principles that regulate it: ‘around mid-day my workday begins, I had a rule: never to use the drugs myself that I am selling’. With the protagonist taking on the task of voice-over narration, the attention on what goes on in the screen gets arrested by a subjective insert that simply introduces the banal work routine rather than a sensational criminal story that conventionally allows a detachment from the image. In this way Can, understood as an extension of Erol, ceases to be a ‘self’ to be looked at and analysed and becomes a dynamic subject, a becoming-in-time – the voice-over commentary puts the detached process of judgment in crisis by diffusing perception and thereby creating mobility. The voiceover narration does not necessarily signal a subjective viewpoint presented on screen or require identification with the protagonist, rather it makes explicit one layer of many folded selves that continue to become and unfold in the course of the film, and becomes sparser as the film progresses. The voiceover narration abandons the image in sequences where the frame focuses on Can merely watching what is unfolding before his eyes. In one sequence where Can’s fellow dealers beat his former childhood friend, now customer Zeki (Baki Davrak), the image cuts to Can watching the scene in a car, not showing any reaction to the event. Can becomes a detached spectator watching passively the violence that is unfolding before him. Without the guidance of Can’s narration, the viewer watches him watching his former friend



being beaten behind the glass window of the car, displaying a spectatorial detachment. Zeki is no longer Can's friend but merely a business customer and Can has detached himself from the violence of the image he is watching, he is separated from his power of acting upon what he sees.

In the "Powers of the False" chapter, Deleuze gives a Nietzschean account of the crystalline regime of Orson Welles' cinema as opposed to the organic regime of classical narration that operates via processes of judgment. By 'substituting affect for judgment' in Nietzschean terms, Deleuze argues that going beyond the judgment of good and evil must be distinguished from an idea of good and bad. The 'good' of the crystalline narration is

ascending life, the kind which knows how to transform itself, to metamorphose itself according to the forces it encounters, and which forms a constantly larger force with them, always increasing the power to live, always opening new 'possibilities'. Of course there is no more truth in one life than in the other; there is only becoming, and becoming is the power of the false of life, the will to power. (Deleuze 2005a: 137)

This Nietzschean substitution of affect for judgment becomes manifest in Arslan's cinema as the criminal character starts narrating his work routine: a typical business day for a dealer has a start and an end and its rules and principles – it is introduced as mundanely performed as any other wage labour. The work entails a simple exchange of drugs for money: the drugs have commodity value, the commodity production entails human labour throughout which Can himself performs, as the film follows the Can's pre-dealing process first thing in the morning after Jale decides to leave the apartment that they share. Can wakes up, walks around the apartment with a look of emotional distress on his face, walks into the bathroom and takes out his stash from under the sink. He then sits on the couch in the living room and the image cuts into a close up of Can's hands as he carefully chops up the pressed cocaine tablets into fine powder and packs them up in tiny envelopes neatly and skilfully [Fig. 2]. This extended sequence is one of

the few moments in the film where the image takes an object in focus rather than a character and therefore presents a graphic materiality. Unlike the commodity production sequence in *Geschwister*, where the camera lingers on the sewing machine operators at the factory where Leyla is training to be a seamstress, the camera's focusing on what is being produced via the protagonist's labour in *Dealer* presents a materialist mode of observation. Leyla's labour sequence in *Geschwister* materialises the process of labour by filming the main character placed – cinematically speaking – non-hierarchically amongst the other workers, performing a repetitious action, symptomatic of Marx' notion of *Entfremdung* – the worker semi-aware of the repetitious ritual they perform and completely alienated from the labour process and thus the end product.

Arslan moves this consciousness of matter and its production process one step further in *Dealer*. In the sequence that follows Can's pre-dealing preparations and the second warning he gets from Erdal while waiting for his customers, Can goes to Eva's house to see his daughter Meral. The image cuts to a close up of Can's hand leaving a pile of banknotes on the kitchen table next to coffee cups. This series of sequences present a materialist vision of an illegal, thus non-normative process of commodification and exchange and 'makes explicit the world-historical transformation of the status of objects in industrialization' to borrow Jonathan Beller's words on Dziga Vertov's cinema (2006: 46). In his book *The Cinematic Mode of Production*, Beller provides a compelling argument on the role of cinema and other screen forms in today's capitalist societies. Beller argues that cinema does not merely represent the capitalist social space but is itself a capitalist form of exchange and a site of production. We perform labour while looking at images for 'looking has been posited as labour by capital' (Beller 2006: 7). Cinema itself has become a production site in post-industrial societies and the attention of spectators provides surplus value in the dominant system of exploitation. Attention becomes an economy whereby the spectators become workers as value is extracted from the act of looking under new forms of capitalist exploitation. Beller writes about an alienation of vision that takes place in this process of exploitation, since the visual zone has transformed from being an 'unalienated creative practice to one of alienated labor' as a result of capital

accumulation (2006: 7). The visual domain thus becomes a marketplace wherein cinematic images tend to exhibit the same properties as object-commodities (Beller 2006: 47). They come to abstract themselves from the process of labour that lies behind their becoming-image process – the process of their construction evaporates through their circulation as film images. Beller writes,

The separation and expropriation of labor from the labourer, the alienation of labor, is a precursor to the separation and expropriation of vision from the spectator. ...Given that the expropriation of the visual is leading to a generalized expropriation of attention, and that this attention is becoming productive of value for capital, the flexibilized, scaled back, postmodernized equivalent reads, the attention theory of value is the riddle of postglobal capitalism properly posed, and has a germinal contribution to make to counter-hegemonic struggle. (2006: 7-8)

In the first chapter of the book, Beller gives a materialist account of Dziga Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929) as an example of a potential resistance against the totalitarian image-system of capitalism. Beller argues that Vertov, by giving a self-reflexive portrait of cinema and its ability not just to represent but tap into the circulation of commodities, challenges this expropriation of the visual and the evaporation of the production process – i.e. the workers, the objects and the subjectivities abstracted in search for the perfect image-commodity: the image that has more exchange-value and thus the image that brings the most surplus. This is how the commercial cinema aspires to organise and reorganise desire in service to capital accumulation: by dematerialising the commodity and the production process - by 'elevating commodity production to the visual realm', as Beller puts it, 'cinema extracts human labour and pays in fun (know-how, anesthesia, acquired stupidity, fashionability, enjoy(n)ment)' (2006: 13). Yet it is also through cinema that one can 'trace the trajectory of the capitalized image and the introjection of its logic into the sensorium' by rethinking the visual realm and the reorganisation of our relation to it, according to the metamorphosing flows and forms of capital (Beller 2006: 26).

In a very suggestive chapter on *The Counter-Cinema of the Berlin School*, Marco Abel discusses Thomas Arslan's post-representational attitude in terms of affect, and defines it as a 'materialist cinema' (2013: 63). He writes,

Arslan's cinema is thus a materialist cinema – and transformation, potential, in other words affect, is the ultimate condition of matter... (it) instills in us this very strangeness immanent to the ontological condition of matter: that is, in and as our sensation, in and as the condition for our transformed capacity to sense and perceive. (Abel 2013: 63)

This statement on the ethics of materialism, affect and transformation in *Dealer* can be further expanded to explore the way Arslan employs materialist aesthetic sensibility in mapping the changing nature of labour and commodification in the globalised new environment of post-Wall Germany.



**Figure 2 - Materiality of labour**

*Dealer* is about work and the complexities of performing labour in an advanced capitalist society, the multiple dilemmas of transforming one's

subjectivity, position in society, identity and class while searching to establish agency and authority amidst slippery and overwhelming patterns of capitalist exploitation. Thus an analysis that merely focuses on representations of ethnic difference and questions of identity remains at a superficial level, discounts the economy of the cinematic images and fails to ask necessary questions that the film itself poses via a novel aesthetic attitude.

Can enters the soundscape of the film via his first piece of voice-over narration: “I wanted to change my life, but I did not know how.” The film then follows Can’s struggle to change his non-normative, criminalised lifestyle and his attempt to change. This is where Deleuze’s idea of substitution of judgment for affect is useful to view Can’s search for transformation along the lines of what Deleuze calls ‘the innocence of becoming’ (2005a: 137). Deleuze distinguishes the good and evil from the good and bad – the good in life is ‘outpouring, ascending life, the kind which knows how to transform itself, to metamorphose itself according to the forces it encounters, and which forms a constantly larger force with them, always increasing the power to live, always opening new “possibilities”’ (2005a: 137). It is useful and necessary to explore the topology of the film as it provides the terms to describe and understand the new meanings that occur through the creation of new connections between the film’s human and non-human elements.

Critics have seen the topology in *Dealer* as a limited urban space that entraps and imprisons the protagonist. Rob Burns, drawing on Moritz Dehn’s review of the film, argues that Can has always already been a ‘prisoner of his own indecisiveness’, long before he goes to prison at the end of the film (Dehn 1999; Burns 2007a: 373). Burns extends this argument by drawing an opposition between the mobility of the siblings in *Geschwister* and the stasis of the characters in *Dealer*, who he argues, ‘appear almost incapacitated by their environment’, enhanced by the long takes (2007a: 373). In a similar vein, Gallagher argues that the spaces that are attributed to the characters in *Dealer* are even more restricted and disconnected than those in *Geschwister* and as in *Geschwister*, she continues to characterise them as *any-space-whatevers* (2006: 345). Drawing on Laura

Marks' Deleuzian account of the characters in ethnic narratives as extensions of the 'seers' of the post-war European Cinema, she argues that these urban spaces become 'symptomatic of the impact of migration on many Western metropolises' (2006: 345). This argument reduces *Dealer* to an ethnically defined narrative and as a representationalist take, recapitulates the 'top-down approach of the macroperspective of theory' (Semetsky 2003: 213). *Dealer* is set in an area of Berlin that is mainly populated by the Turkish community and the characters are mainly of Turkish origin with only a few exceptions. Yet this multiplicity of characters defies a certain categorisation of ethnic social identity: from the larger petty criminal community that the protagonist is a part of, to the undercover police officer Erdal, from Can's mother as the mentally destabilised first generation immigrant housewife to Jale as a self-sustaining, independent and active second generation woman, and from the law student Metin to Zeki, who prostitutes himself for drug money. It is necessary and vital to move towards an ethical understanding of subjectivity in film, away from the judgmental approach that condemns the protagonist for being 'merely a passive [victim] of [his] social circumstances' (Burns 2007a: 373).

Thinking Arslan's materialist or post-representational attitude in line with Harun Farocki can be useful. In his documentary *Arbeiter verlassen die Fabrik* (Workers Leaving the Factory, 1995) and his accompanying text to the film, Farocki raises similar questions about the materiality of the image and its implications on questions of labour. Arslan was a student of Farocki at dffb, and in this way the influence of Farocki's political documentaries and his theoretical writings on cinema on Arslan can be identified. Arslan worked with Farocki in his film *Die Umschulung* (1994) as a cinematographer, and the two directors have worked with several crewmembers in common such as Bettina Blickwede, who has worked as the editor with Arslan throughout his career. Comprising fully of found footage, *Arbeiter verlassen die Fabrik* traces workers at the factory as a motif throughout the history of cinema, starting with the Lumière Brothers' *La sortie des usines Lumières* (1895). Farocki's follow up to tracing cine-historical motifs were hands (*Der Ausdruck der Hände*, 1997) and prisons (*Gefängnisbilder*, 2000) and both in *Geschwister* and *Dealer*, Arslan has integrated these motifs in a

possible dialogue with Farocki's iconographic work. In this series of documentaries, Farocki carefully examines and illustrates how factories, hands and prisons have stopped – or they never have been – referring to a transcendental reality. The cinematic motifs of factories, hands and prisons have always been autonomous images; they have never been reducible to hands, factories and prisons as signifiers or historical concepts. Thus Farocki explores how cinematic ontology defies representational process of signification and transcendental truths. Farocki writes in "Workers leaving the Factory",

The first camera in the history of cinema was pointed at a factory, but a century later it can be said that film is seldom drawn to the factory and even repelled by it. Films about work or workers have not emerged as one of the main film genres, and the space in front of the factory has remained on the side lines. Most narrative films take place in that part of life where work has been left behind. Everything which makes the industrial form of production superior to others – the division of labour that breaks down the production process into minute stages, the constant repetition, a degree of organisation which demands few decisions of the individual and which leaves him little room to manoeuvre – all this makes it hard to demonstrate the vicissitudes of the workplace. (2004: 238)

Both in *Geschwister* and *Dealer*, Arslan explores individuals and their relation to work, both normative and non-normative workspace, and the absence of work by tracing subjectivities and how these spaces and subjectivities are constructed immanently within an aesthetic of affective flows. For an ethical engagement with the film, it is necessary to look into the multiple connections on screen that incapacitate Can, and therefore ask how his thinking can be separated from his mode of existence and how these forces connect assemblages that hinder the possibilities of his transformation (Rodowick 2010: 97). To do this, Deleuze's understanding of the subjectivity as becoming is useful – Becoming, as the principle that Rodowick describes as 'the principle of time as force, and time is

the expressive form of change: the fact that the universe never stops moving, changing, and evolving, and that no static picture could ever be adequate to this flux of universal self-differentiation.’ (2010: 100). Understood as a multitudinous process that is always already multi-layered and collective, looking into Can and Erol as virtual coextensions can be helpful in exploring the conditions that produce meaningful assemblages rather than condemning the similarly marginalised positions they occupy in the two similar milieus.

The characters’ will to power in becoming is explored in a network of multiple characters through everyday interactions and encounters that do not privilege moments: Leyla performing labour in the workshop is equally integral to her becoming as her conversations on love and her potential love encounter with Cem or the moments of conflict with her father. Erol’s negotiations between a mere existence and a legitimate existence tap into Can’s negotiation between different patterns of labour and the malaise that the discordance between his desire and desire of the social field creates. This brings us back to the concept of force that Deleuze discusses in “Powers of the False”. As a critique of the ontological understanding of transcendental truths, values and judgments, Deleuze asks,

What remains? There remain bodies, which are forces, nothing but forces. But force no longer refers to any centre, any more than it confronts a setting or obstacles. It only confronts other forces, that it affects or that affect it. Power (what Nietzsche calls ‘will to power’...) is this power to affect and be affected, this relation between one force and others. (2005a: 135)

Arslan’s characters both in the social field and their individuality fuse into each other as forces. In this affective environment, the characters are no longer persons – as becomings and irreducible multiplicities, they are ‘now valid only as transformations of each other’ (2005a: 140). The two films become an aesthetic field that traces the subjective and affective transformations of the Turkish German living in post-Wall Germany. By mapping these subjective processes that revolve around the structures and conditions of labour, Arslan creates an aesthetic



and affective cartography of living in the margins of a rapidly metamorphosing social environment under global capitalism. As Beller argues, the reorganisation of the visual field affects our relationship to reality and Deleuze in “Powers of the False” argues for the potential that the creativity of the visual field carries in changing our relationship to reality, in favour of the new. As Farocki’s famous quote suggests, Arslan’s cinema is an attempt to depart from adhering to previous models: ‘in the cinema, it is as if the world itself wanted to tell us something’ (2004: 243).

### 1. 3. Beyond Movement: *Der schöne Tag*

‘...to exist is to change, to change is to mature, to mature is to go on creating oneself endlessly’ (Bergson 1998: 8).

Whereas the first two films of the trilogy *Geschwister* and *Dealer* have been considered as aesthetically fresh portrayals of the dominant narratives of migrant alienation, *Der schöne Tag* (2001) was viewed as a departure from these themes. The protagonist of the film is female unlike the protagonists of the previous two films, and her ethnicity becomes a peripheral detail in the course of her quotidian encounters that the film follows. Reminiscent of the opening sequence of *Dealer*, *Der schöne Tag* opens with consecutive ten-second takes of a clear blue sky, a door knob in close up and a sleeping man, before the image retains an extended still focus on its protagonist, Deniz (Serpil Turhan). Deniz embarks on her day in Berlin, which the film will follow throughout. She goes to her apartment, goes to work in a studio where she works as a voice over artist, meets her boyfriend Jan (Florian Stetter) at a café and together they walk to a park where she breaks up with him. She then goes back to her apartment, packs a bag and goes to visit her mother where she does her laundry. She talks about her recent break up and love in general with her mother, goes to a job interview then meets Diego, with whom she has been exchanging looks during her travels around the city. After a brief promenade in the park with Diego, Deniz goes to meet her sister Leyla (Selda Kaya) who makes a transit stop in Berlin on her business trip to Munich. Leyla is

pregnant and undecided whether she wants to keep her baby and abandon her career. Deniz then parts with her sister and meets Diego again, and walking around the city, she finds out that Diego has a girlfriend who is about to return to Berlin from a year abroad in the USA for her studies. On her way to work the next day, Deniz exchanges glances with Diego's girlfriend, stops at a café where she has a brief discussion about the changing perception of love in history with a professor who teaches 'everyday history'. After another brief session at the dubbing studio, Deniz exchanges a brief look with a stranger on the metro.

The film follows its protagonist's movement throughout the day, her walks around the city, metro and tram rides and often simply her waiting in the stations. The camera simply conveys an observant attitude towards the protagonist and her choices, actions, affects and what constitutes the movement on the screen, centred on the body of the subject. Without cutting the transitional sequences such as walks through the park towards the metro station to reach the studio as a destination, the film pays close attention to the movement wherein subjectivity – what mobilises the subject: i.e. desires (past), beliefs (future) to constitute action (present) – emerges on screen. This part of the chapter will look at how Arslan constitutes character subjectivity as a cinematic process in *Der schöne Tag*. To do so, I will use Deleuzian concepts and ideas that he developed through his philosophy of film, drawing on Bergson's philosophy of change. I will first give a brief description of these concepts and Deleuzian cinematic subjectivity.

In his two volumes on cinema, Gilles Deleuze characterises two major categories of film: the movement-image and the time-image. Drawing on Bergson's conception of time and his theses on movement and change, Deleuze defines the movement-image as the pre-war classical cinema, in which the narrative flows in an action-reaction schema and the time image as the post-war modern cinema, in which the causal relationship between action and reaction is suspended and movement is subordinated to time. In *Creative Evolution*, Bergson makes a critique of the Western conception of time as a succession of immobile sections (1998). He argues that time is an indivisible whole, irreducible to instants yet human perception can only perceive time when it is spatialised as movement, as a continuity of instants, and this is an erroneous formula. According to

Bergson, time is a whole wherein the virtual (past as memory and future as potential) and the actual (present) coexist. The present is a continuous actualisation of the virtual and this is where subjectivity – which is not reducible to the human – emerges. Subjectivity, according to Bergson, is virtual and it emerges in living matter – which he calls ‘centre of action’ or centre of ‘indetermination’ – as an actualisation of the potentiality of the virtual (Bergson 1998: 5; Deleuze 2005: 65). Unlike psychoanalytical theory that sees subjectivity as emerging from a radical break with matter, Deleuzian materialism views subjectivity as emerging from matter. Deleuze’s subject, drawing on Bergson, is a becoming in time – a temporal, fragmented, indeterminate and impersonal flux.

With the time-image that emerged after World War Two according to Deleuze’s cinema books, a different kind of cinematic subjectivity appears. Whereas the emergence of subjectivity in the movement-image mimics the Western conceptualisation of what a human subject is - an actualisation of the virtual that follows a causal chain of processes: perception, affection and action, this linear procession breaks down in the time-image. In this post-war situation, perception is no longer followed by action and time is no longer subordinate to movement. The rational continuity maintained by the montage and determined by the sensory-motor schema in the movement-image is suspended in the time-image. Whereas subjectivity appears as a unified, determinate form that acts in a causal linear progression, the subjectivity in the time-image is fragmented; perception does not extend into action but flows indeterminately. Deleuze’s cinema project and his philosophy at large critiques this unified notion of rational subjectivity that has its roots in Western philosophy’s conception of time and insists on the necessity to analyse the process of transformation – the becoming of the characters – the process which initiates actuality. In *Cinema 2* Deleuze argues,

What cinema must grasp is not the identity of the character, whether real or fictional, through his objective and subjective aspects. It is the becoming of the real character when he himself starts to “make fiction”, when he enters into “the flagrant offence of making legends” and contributes to the invention of his own people. (2005a: 145)

Deleuze argues against focusing on identity construction and representation of truth on screen and suggests a new way of looking at the process of subjectivity creation.

*Der schöne Tag* is a time-image, which allows the process of the subjectivity creation of its protagonist to come to the fore. The action-reaction schema of the movement-image is suspended as the interval between perception-action and action-reaction expands as the camera follows the protagonist's trajectories through the city of Berlin. The movement that prevails in the long sequences of Deniz's travels renders visible a qualitative change that is temporal rather than the quantitative change that characterises the movement-image. A different kind of movement is at stake here, which is not spatially measurable but provides a temporal sense of the character and the milieu that surrounds her.

This distinct quality of movement in the film is evident from the opening sequence. The first image that follows the opening credits is a ten second shot of the blue sky. At a glance this image seems static but with the passage of some seconds, it becomes apparent that the clouds are in an extremely gentle motion. The image then cuts to another seemingly static shot of a balcony door. It is only after a few seconds that the wind slightly touches the curtains and the image moves. The following shot is similar: a young man who later on in the film we learn to be the boyfriend of the protagonist, sleeps intact with the exception of a slight movement of his chest breathing. This short sequence of shots, establishes a fragmented space before introducing the protagonist with a close up of her head as she turns to the other side of the frame making a 180-degree angle. These sequences that register such slight movement may be viewed as examples of observing movement in a Bergsonian sense – the movement is in the image itself and not added to it, and special attention is required to see what the image hides from natural perception. Bergson writes in *Creative Evolution*,

we pluck out of duration those moments that interest us, and that we have gathered along its course. These alone we retain. And we are right in so doing, while action only is in question. But when, in *speculating* on the *nature* of the real, we go on regarding it as our practical interest

requires us to regard it, we become unable to perceive the true evolution, the radical becoming. (1998: 273)

The opening sequence exemplifies how the time-image engages in a speculative sort of perception where movement can no longer create a quantitative (spatial) change, and this is how time as qualitative change of becoming, is revealed. In so doing the image engages with the virtual – a spiritual and/or mental dimension that goes beyond movement. As David N. Rodowick explains, ‘beyond movement means beyond the physical world toward a mental one, or one that entwines the physical and spiritual worlds in a new way’ (1997: 27).



**Figure 3 - Deniz walking in Kreuzberg**

It is this molecular movement that the film further pursues; it extends the linkages that initiate actions. Deniz leaves Jan's house as the following shots of the clear open sky and the open balcony door suggests, followed by an extensive sequence of her trip back to her apartment, which creates a sense of watching the action in real time [Fig.3]. She watches a couple sleeping peacefully on the bus with a look of longing in her eyes, and disillusioned by her failing relationship she walks back home. The camera follows her vertical and horizontal movement

across the screen until her presence has appeared in each corner of the frame. There are no instantly recognised privileged actions that serve the interests of the narrative but a pure continuous movement that is followed through Deniz as the ‘centre of action’. The line of the movement travels through the physical and the mental/spiritual as two separate planes, yet as it persists, the two planes become more and more permeable until they are no longer distinguishable. This is where time itself appears in the image as the virtual and the actual start to co-exist as the inner and outer planes become indistinguishable. In *Cinema 2*, Deleuze evokes the Bergsonian conception of time and subjectivity as exterior to human being, rather than internal properties of our life,

the only subjectivity is time, non-chronological time grasped in its foundation, and it is we who are internal to time, not the other way round. ... Time is not the interior in us, but just the opposite, the interiority in which we are, in which we move, live and change. ... Subjectivity is never ours; it is time, that is, the soul or the spirit, the virtual. (2005a: 80)

This is the movement inherent in time that reflects back on the character in a situation wherein she cannot react while she ponders upon the complex nature of love, relationships and bonding. Therefore it is no longer the movement that links the perception to action that defines subjectivity on screen; but rather it is the movement of the character that melts into the movement of the world outside, as Thomas Schick observes how the movement has multiple layers: ‘...from the movement of the figures on a topographical space over to the movement of the inner world of the characters, then towards a movement in the perception of the spectator’<sup>4</sup> (2011: 82). This aberrant movement in *Der schöne Tag* requires a different kind of engagement with the movement in the image.

Deniz and her colleague at the dubbing studio are asked to repeat their lines a few times to match the images of Eric Rohmer’s *Conte d’été* (1996): a film that

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<sup>4</sup> Original text: ‘...von der Bewegung der Figuren durch einen topographischen Raum über Bewegung im Innenleben der Figuren bis hin zur Bewegung in der Wahrnehmung des Zuschauers’.



similarly meditates love and bonding. The scene they are working on is where the male protagonist Gaspard (Melvil Poupaud) has a chance encounter with Margot (Amanda Langlet) on the Brittany coast of France, where he goes to meet his girlfriend. Gaspard and Margot have long conversations about relationships but Margot is waiting for her boyfriend to return from South America. The film follows Gaspard's encounters with three different girls, each of whom he has feelings for, but he is unsure which trajectory to pursue. *Der schöne Tag* aligns itself with the narrative of Rohmer's film as Deniz starts her introspection on love and relationships. As she meets Jan at the café, she questions Jan's commitment to herself. Jan says that he is considering quitting his studies, which Deniz condemns as a bad decision. Similar to Gaspard, Jan is attracted to other girls and does not see that there is anything wrong with this and he is passive in making decisions in his life. The film haunts Deniz, as she increasingly feels frustrated by her relationship with Jan, whose uninspired and anonymous presence resonates with Gaspard's. Deniz repeats the lines over and over again, and as a consequence of this repetition, the narrative slowly unfolding on screen affects Deniz. The film is not merely an object that is worked or pondered upon, but it does affect life – as Deniz asks questions that she later claims, have lingered in her head for a while, after repeating the same questions on the nature of love in Rohmer's film.

### **Intensification of movement**

The café sequence is highly stylised – as the two argue, the camera crosses the 180 degree line several times and it stays on the couple even when they are talking about the waitress who serves them. In this way, the camerawork hampers all identification. The distinctive quality of the aesthetics of realism – i.e. natural lighting, lack of non-diegetic sound, sparse use of dialogue and props – differs significantly, as argued by many scholars and critics, from the aesthetics of conventional realism which intends to capture a legitimate representation of reality. Abel argues that the 'aesthetics of reduction' and the 'un-dramatic' narrative tensions that dominate Berlin School films abstract images from reality and intensify the experience of viewing both cinematic and empirical images. He writes,

the (hoped-for) effect of such esthetic intensification of the act of seeing is to bring about a momentary suspension of our habituated tendency to read images through the framework of representational realism. (Abel 2008)

As Abel suggests, freed from the clichés that lead the narrative of ‘truth’ of the movement-image, the film conjures a more intense engagement with reality. The rarefied image brings the virtual to the fore and thus advances a more intense form of perception than the human perception that Bergson critiqued for blocking reality. The conventional realism of the classical cinema reduces images to ‘utterances’ and treats it as a language but by refusing to pursue an indexical trajectory, the camerawork in Arslan’s film engages more intensely with what happens – i.e. the forces and qualities – on screen rather than what information can be gleaned from these images and what they mean. The image lingers on the movement and the characters as the centres of action and in this way forces thought to follow a new trajectory other than the one instructed by indexical images as utterances. Deleuze argues that this is the power of cinema that re-establishes the body and mind connection severed by Cartesianism, drawing on Nietzsche as the cinema’s power to ‘replace the model of knowledge with belief’ (2005a: 167). As a recurrent sequence in the film, the static camera focuses on Deniz’s movement on screen while she walks by, and then with a slight tilt, it continues to follow her movement. With the intense focus on the movement of the body, the camera explores a different kind of movement than the change from one situation to another, but rather a movement where these situations coexist as the body accumulates these moments and opens them up to the future.

As Deleuze argues, ‘the body is never in the present, it contains the before and the after, tiredness and waiting... The attitude of the body relates thought to time as to that outside which is infinitely further than the outside world’ (2005a: 182). Rather than a metaphor of the psychological state of its character as Burns suggests, when he argues that the movement on screen creates a line through the character and the milieu as her ‘outward dynamism is symptomatic of an inner restlessness’, the movement in the film seeks to convey the corporeal and



incorporeal as immanent to each other (2007: 21). We watch the material change through the space covered by Deniz on screen, yet this change is a non-event in the traditional sense – it is rather the virtual change that we cannot see but sense through the material movement on screen that Arslan is interested in. The film constantly pursues the virtual that lurks in the cinematic present and corporeal movement. The micro movement in the opening sequence is present even when Deniz is in stasis – the river, the wind and the sound of traffic continues to render sensible the omnipresence of the open by liberating movement from its spatial extensions. And it is this open that confronts thought – when movement is released from a determined and identifiable start and an end and breaks out of linearity, then gaps, cracks and fissures appear that confront thought with its ‘powerlessness’ (2005a: 164). This powerlessness is what urges us to think the unthought and think anew. As Deleuze, drawing on Artaud’s writings on the political theatre argues: ‘Artaud never understood powerlessness to think as a simple inferiority, which would strike us in relation to thought. It is part of thought, so that we should make our own way of thinking from it, without claiming to be restoring an all-powerful thought’ (2005a: 164).

We do not know much about Deniz’s past; the character-building process is different from traditional illustrative and definitive character narration. Rather we meet Deniz strictly through her encounters, interactions and multiplicities that altogether assemble her and contribute to her becoming - and space is one of the many forces that affect her becoming. The urban spaces in Arslan’s Berlin Trilogy are predominantly transitional spaces such as metro stations, metros, trams, cars, empty streets or urban housing estates. Thomas Schick, drawing on Sabine Wolf’s article on spaces in Berlin School, uses Marc Augé’s notion of *non-place* to define the anonymous, ‘impersonal and sterile’ places that emit alienation and loneliness as characteristics of the modern urban life (2011: 86). In a similar vein, Jessica Gallagher uses Deleuze’s concept of the *any-space-whatever* to analyse the locations that indicate a certain sense of ephemerality that signals maintenance of the themes of migrant alienation that characterised the spaces of the so-called ‘Cinema of Duty’ (2006). However, as Schick quotes from an interview with

Arslan, he claims that the spaces do have reference to interiority and are very specifically linked locations in real life (2011: 84). Arslan also argues that choices of locations were intentional and very integral to the film. These transitional urban spaces are like individuals: in constant motion and they are transformed through assemblages. They consist of speeds even when they are static: the movement is inherent on bridges, in parks, in bedrooms and living rooms as it is in the metro stations and trams. The transitive nature of the spaces may be conceived as places without a beginning or an end but places that are in the middle – the places *are* the middle, they are caught in becomings. They render perceptible the ‘absolute speeds’ in time – speed that is inherent in every object in time that the stasis renders imperceptible (Deleuze and Parnet 1987: 31).

Deniz meets Diego in such an ephemeral setting – eye contact behind glasses and frames, yet even as a brief encounter, Diego and Deniz exchange affects, sensations and intensities without verbal communication. These speeds are not necessarily the alienating forces of the modern urban life as the concluding scene of the film suggests: Deniz exchanges a brief look with a stranger on the tram – when Deniz is open to an exchange of affects, the young man returns his attention to his book. The relative speeds which Deleuze and Guattari describe as the speed ‘that concern only the succession of movement from one point to another’, render imperceptible the moments of exchanges of sensation and affect – yet the film moves to the credits to offer a moment to ponder on these encounters that are pure potentialities (2003: 214).

Understood in this way, it is not urban or migrant alienation that haunts the movement that, according to Gallagher, reflects an ‘inner unrest and a search for something undefined’ (2006: 350). It is the complex human and nonhuman forces that affect modern ways of existence, that assemble these movements, and the film tries to map out the subjectivities that emerge through the collision of these imperceptible forces. Deniz is not mobilised by a spiritual ‘unrest’ and a constant search for the truth as Gallagher and Burns suggest, rather she is perpetually in a process of becoming that this one ‘fine’ day in her life tries to render sensible. Her ponderings on love and relationships as one of the most ‘sensible’ human

affections is a confrontation with the limits of human affection when it collides with non-human forces.

Deniz decides to end her relationship with Jan after repeating Margot's questions on love and its limits in Rohmer's film. During her conversation with her mother, Deniz asks if she has a love interest in anyone at her work environment. Deniz's mother rejects this possibility, declaring it unprofessional and claiming that it would only bring harm. This is where the non-human forces come to the fore, it is not the mind's control over emotions that causes this collision: it is capitalism's impersonal forces disguised as a rational and personal choice. Similarly, Deniz's sister Leyla has doubts about having a baby when she could go on pursuing her career that pervades her life. Diego talks about his brother who has been abandoned by his wife for his working overtime. Diego and his girlfriend spend a year apart as she goes to America for her studies. The non-human forces of advanced global capitalism join the assemblages that create these various subjective positions and lead subjectivity towards crisis, when the individuals are confronted by the limits of 'their' subjectivity, as these impersonal forces collide with the personal - human affections.

Deniz has a brief conversation on the nature of love with a professor of 'everyday history' near the end of the film. The professor tells Deniz that romantic love was an invention of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when family ties and financial security were more important. She continues to argue that earlier life was largely determined through work, whereas now there are both private and professional relationships: a bifurcated life determined by work on one side and emotions on the other. It is this non-separation in the film that is explored through the relationship narratives on the screen. What is foregrounded is beyond the mind/body duality that defines the work/personal life, yet it is the virtual that is captured in the process of actualisation, experienced as the non-human forces: forces that are beyond human consciousness and enter into relation with the human affects. Deleuze and Guattari evoke the Spinozian notion of affect as central to a material understanding of the body, 'we know nothing about a body until we know what it can do, in other words, what its affects are, how they can or cannot enter into composition with other affects, with the affects of another body'

(2008: 284). It is once again important to note that a body in the Deleuzian sense is not limited to humans and *Der schöne Tag* traces those relations as they are actualised on the movement as the subjectivity in perpetual becoming.

#### **1. 4. Affective Maps of Post-Fordism's Transit Zones: Christian Petzold's *Jerichow* (2009)**

Considered as one of the most prominent first generation Berlin School directors along with Thomas Arslan and Angela Schanelec, Christian Petzold has garnered more recognition in both German and international spheres, his films having attracted more spectators than other Berlin School directors, partly owing to his marrying of the more conventional Hollywood genres with avant-garde aesthetics and thus his films being more accessible for a relatively wider audience. Until his GDR drama *Barbara* (2012) won the Silver Bear for the Best Director at the Berlinale in 2012, being the most prestigious award that a Berlin School film has won to date, it was the drama about an ex-Red Army Faction couple, *Die innere Sicherheit* (The State I am in, 2000) that had attracted the biggest audience in Germany amongst his films. According to an interview with Petzold, *Die innere Sicherheit* attracted an extraordinary number of 200,000 spectators owing to a contemporary debate about the RAF in Germany (Abel 2008). Along with *Die innere Sicherheit*, his two subsequent films *Gespenster* (Ghosts, 2005) and *Yella* (2007), all of which were co-written with Harun Farocki, were coined as the “Ghost Trilogy” and were the first Petzold films to be released theatrically outside Germany.

Broadly speaking, all three films of the trilogy deal with the eerie lightness of neoliberal capitalism and the ghosts of communism haunting post-Reunification Germany. As Jaimey Fisher puts it, Petzold's films have been ‘widely praised for their sense of eerie and uncanny liminal spaces’ and the academic work on Petzold's films have predominantly focused on the cinematic construction of these spaces (2011: 447). Similar to its precedent *Yella* which was loosely based on Herk Harvey's horror classic *Carnival of Souls* (1962), Petzold's *Jerichow* is also a loose adaptation of James M. Cain's novel – turned Hollywood

classic *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (1946, Tay Garnett), and Visconti's *Ossessione* (1943) and was also set in the Prignitz district of former East Germany. Although *Jerichow* only attracted 99,357 spectators in German cinemas in 2009 according to the records of the German Federal Film Board, it was released theatrically outside Germany and according to *Box Office Mojo*'s figures, it made \$905,600 total gross worldwide.<sup>5</sup> Consequently Petzold has garnered more critical and academic interest outside Germany than his peers Schanelec and Arslan. Whereas Arslan's works have rarely attracted critical interest in Anglo-American film studies outside the context of Turkish German filmmaking and therefore the two films that followed his road-film documentary about Turkey, *Aus der Ferne* (2006) –*Ferien* (2007) and *In the Shadows* (2010)– have been generally neglected in the studies of Berlin School or Contemporary German Cinema, Christian Petzold's films have been widely discussed through the larger political questions that resonate behind the elliptical plots and personal dramas in focus.

With *Barbara* as the single exception, Petzold's films are all set in Germany in the present, yet always in a persistent yet subtle dialogue with Germany's pre-reunification past and the ramifications of this past for Germany's people today and the potential openings onto the future (Abel 2009). Abel argues that Petzold's films are 'political precisely because of their special aesthetics', but the information provided on the characters' backgrounds, albeit being limited, are always already politically charged, and the films deploy a hybrid aesthetic that supports the traumatic pasts of the characters (2010: 258). Set in the economically deteriorating former eastern German town Jerichow, (although filmed almost entirely in Prignitz in Wittenberge), with the main characters being two former Eastern Germans and a Turkish-German immigrant from West Germany, *Jerichow* weaves a politically charged set up on the narrative level. As Jaimey Fisher argues, *Jerichow* makes a more overt problematisation of the 'troubling constellation' of the ethnic Germans and migrants by dismantling prevailing binaristic logic about ethnicity and migrants in German cinema (2010: 57). Placing *Jerichow* in the context of Turkish-German Cinema, Fisher argues that *Jerichow* moves beyond the conventional depictions of the relations of ethnic

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<sup>5</sup> See: <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/>

Turks and ethnic Germans ‘into one of reciprocal influence and interaction’ (2010: 57). Instead of locating *Jerichow* in comparison to its precedents under the rubric of Turkish-German cinema, this section will explore how *Jerichow* reconfigures the visual and sensory fields to allow new connections to occur from the merging of the inter-subjective forces with the newness of post-Reunification Germany, the visible and the nonsensuous reality as a dynamic unity in becoming. To do so, I will look at the concept of affect in relation to film aesthetics and spectatorship, and the philosophy of process – or what Massumi terms activist philosophy – and filmic expression of time as duration (2011).

*Jerichow* opens with the camera following a man in a suit from behind, whom then we learn to be Thomas (Benno Fürmann), a young man coming to his hometown Jerichow in the Saxony-Anhalt region of the former East Germany to attend his mother’s funeral. At the funeral, Thomas is confronted by Leon (André M. Hennicke) who threatens him to pay back his debts left over from the café business they used to run together that has since gone bust. While Thomas tries to convince Leon that he has got no money left, Leon finds a box full of cash in the tree house in the garden of the house, which Thomas claims to have saved to renovate the house. Leon and his men leave Thomas unconscious lying on the lawn. The next day, Thomas goes to the job centre where he reveals that he has received a dishonourable discharge from his military service in Afghanistan. Thomas starts a temporary job as a cucumber harvester, soon after which, one day walking home from the supermarket, he meets Ali (Hilmi Sözer), a Turkish immigrant who owns snack bars in the region. Ali is an alcoholic and soon after his chance encounter with Thomas, he loses his driving licence and offers Thomas a job as his driver while doing his deliveries to the businesses he owns. Ali is a successful entrepreneur, spending most of his time going from one of his businesses to the other, checking on the accounts and delivering stocks. Thomas is attracted to Ali’s wife Laura (Nina Hoss), who helps Ali with his deliveries and accounting. Thomas and Laura start an affair, while Ali, unaware, continues to build up his confidence in Thomas. As Ali becomes increasingly paranoid that everyone is cheating on him, Thomas assists him in controlling his temper, saves his life in one of his confrontations with a cheating business partner and thus

secures his trust. Laura reveals to Thomas that she has served two years in prison and was released on bail, and Ali took over her debt with a pre-nuptial agreement. Thomas, convinced that Ali is physically abusing Laura, offers that they run away together and Laura immediately rejects him, telling him that one cannot love without money. The two then set up a plan to take Ali to the beach and murder him on his return and make it look like a suicide. Ali finds out about their plot and after confronting them, drives his Range Rover off the cliff to his death.



**Figure 4 - Ali dancing on the beach**

The choice of the name “Ali” for the Turkish migrant character calls for a potential Rainer Werner Fassbinder reference. Fassbinder’s 1974 film *Angst essen Seele auf* (Fear Eats the Soul) – initially planned to be titled *Alle Türken heißen Ali* (All Turks are called Ali) albeit the main character is a Moroccan Berber, hinting at the stereotyping of the immigrant worker as outsider – had the main character Ali (El Hedi ben Salem) developing a stomach ulcer, and getting hospitalised with his illness, which the doctor links to his stressful and socially insecure status as a guest worker and predicts that he will never fully recover from it. Alasdair King, in his article on *Jerichow* situates the film in traditions of both

Heimatfilm and Film Noir and follows the parallels between the two films in a suggestive way. King argues that similar to Fassbinder's Ali, for Petzold's Ali, 'his traumatic experience of his social situation is played inwards, resulting in the inability of his body to stand strong against these damaging forces' (2010). However, there appears to exist a very important difference between the social classes and milieus of the two Alis: Whereas as one of the earlier generation migrants in the pre-reunification West Germany, Fassbinder's Ali gets married to the German Emmi (Brigitte Mira) who is older than him yet from a similarly working class background, and their relationship is increasingly frowned upon by the ethnic Germans, Petzold's Ali expresses his frustration thus: 'I live in a country that doesn't want me, with a wife I bought' – he is relatively better off than the former generation of immigrants, wealthy enough to 'buy' a German wife and yet he is still 'unwanted' and at odds with this country. Michael Sicinski in his detailed review in *Cinema Scope* notes that the age difference between the original couple in Cain's novel – which could as well be extended to the couple in *Angst essen Seele auf* – has been replaced with a 'racial and cultural difference' (2009). This cultural conflict is not foregrounded but implied, since there is not an overt reference in the film that suggests a cultural and racial 'discrepancy' between Laura and Ali [Fig.4]. Whereas in Fassbinder's film, it is the West Germans' bigoted and judgmental attitude that slowly erodes Ali's and Emmi's relationship, Sicinski argues that the spectator enters this equation of judgment in *Jerichow* by their complicity in the Western bigotry to find the relationship of Ali and Laura odd due to their ethnic incompatibility (2010). He notes that film noir's genre mechanics are at play in this narrative plot, which conditions the viewer to think that Ali is not 'the appropriate object choice' for Laura when Thomas is, yet *Jerichow* follows on to twist this structure and confront the spectator with their complicity in this bigotry. Sicinski writes,

Why am I willing, like Thomas, to accept that a Turkish-German man would necessarily subjugate his wife, when all available evidence shows that Ali generally treats Laura like an equal partner? And why, even as I'm well versed in noir logic, am I inclined to take Laura's word over Ali's? Petzold is tapping into



prejudices that we may or may not exhibit in the social world, but that unconsciously govern our relationship with the visual world and its marked bodies. *Jerichow* becomes an occasion for coaxing us into old, harmful habits of seeing in order to shift those habits in surprising, productive new directions. (2010)

Sicinski builds his argument on how Petzold's re-rendering of film noir mechanics function as a spectatorial process of self-reflexivity. In this way, *Jerichow* employs intertextual references to both Cain's novel and Fassbinder's film for a radical reworking of *Gastarbeiterkino* politics by obliging the viewer to reflect on their own position, and Petzold's framings manifest a centrifugal affectivity where the film's aesthetic elements as well as its narrative are charged with intertextuality. The film relies on these external references to influence thought to move beyond these past narrative structures, genre conventions and stereotypes. Petzold's revisiting of the past narratives is an endeavour to find new visibilities, new affective intensities and to think anew about what has radically changed and remains unexplored in today's global condition, to establish a 'new relation between cinema and thought' (Deleuze 2005a: 165).

In the chapter 'Thought and Cinema' of *Cinema 2*, Deleuze writes about a new kind of image that expresses the need to put thought into new encounters with the cinematic image. By shaking the idealist promise of classical cinema that 'we were seeing everything', modern cinema brought about a shock to thought by breaking the sensory-motor continuities, by rearranging them so that the new connections challenge thought to face its own limitations and powerlessness (2005a: 19, 164). Drawing on Artaud's writings on political theatre, Deleuze's description of this new relation of thought to cinema via facing its own powerlessness is not a negative encounter. On the contrary, it is through this challenging confrontation with the 'unthinkable in thought' that we 'make our own way of thinking from it, without claiming to be restoring an all-powerful thought', and this new thought is neither designated by the director, nor channelled through identification with character, it is not pre-scribed and thus it is an autonomous process (2005a: 164). This confrontation moves the viewer from the detached position of the knowing subject vis-à-vis the aesthetic work, towards

creating an active and affective relationship with it. The powerlessness of thought thus forces us to establish a new connection with the world, and it is ‘not in the name of a better or truer world that thought captures the intolerable in this world’, but on the contrary, the unthinkable forces us to believe in this world, to believe in the powers of creating the new within this world (Deleuze 2005a: 164). This reformulation defines Deleuze’s cinematic ethics: replacing ‘the model of knowledge with belief’ in the Nietzschean sense and thus to undo the hierarchical model of the knowing subject and the knowable world (2005a: 166).

Sicinski’s review engages with a crucial aspect of Petzold’s cinema in terms of its employment of classical cinema’s genre conventions and structures in its disallowing the spectatorial expectations to be met. Whereas both Fisher’s and Sicinski’s studies situating the film in the contexts of Turkish German Cinema, Heimatfilm and Film Noir provide very insightful readings, to understand how film can retain belief in the body and belief in this world as Deleuze describes, I will be looking at the affective level – the level of the virtual as it appears or as it expresses itself on a level of sensation, to map the constitutive forces and different connectivities that come together in *Jerichow*, moving beyond a semantic exploration of the space and characters in order to follow the vectors, intensities and forces that operate the post-Fordist capitalist world of *Jerichow* and that overflow the realms of the visible and intelligible.

While it is certainly useful to consider how *Jerichow* diverges from such genre-conventional narrative trajectories and how it realigns itself with these conventions in order to generate new ways of thinking about ethnic difference and reactivate thought in cinema; it is a no less challenging and potentially more fruitful task to follow how the film operates on a less cognitive level. Petzold claims in an interview that *Jerichow* is set in a new era of capitalism and in this way it diverges from *Ossessione* and *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (Levy 2009). In the interview, Petzold refers to the world of *Jerichow*,

From the get go, I found the film’s love story to be rather “post-Fordian.” It is from an era in which blue-collar jobs have been obliterated. It’s reminiscent of the realms you see in *Ossessione* or Cain’s *The Postman Always Rings Twice*. Nonetheless, in present-day

Germany, there are almost no real blue-collar jobs left. There are jobs in the service industry and mere remnants of the old jobs—exploitative jobs, like the cucumber harvesting work Thomas does in the film. But even they are in decline. The cucumbers that used to come from the Spreewald are now planted in China. In Germany, we no longer see the kind of exploitative, gruelling farm-work like that done by B. Traven's cotton pickers. It was interesting for me to see how passion, love and intrigue work today; how you can convey these things in times when these blue-collar jobs no longer set life's pace. (Levy 2009)

As this quote suggests, Petzold's aim in the film is to create an affective environment of the post-Wall Prignitz region in the former east Germany, where the era of the Fordist industrial economy is in the process of waning and leaving a vast, emptied, rural land behind. The landscape of *Jerichow* exudes an opaque otherworldliness; the whole environment is an immeasurable, open landscape with few houses dispersed from each other, and a barren cliff facing an open sea. The one person who succeeded to capitalise on these transient spatial traits is Ali, who has invested in transit snack bars. The space insinuates stagnancy, yet it is always active with transit travellers in motion, who leave nothing perceptible behind in the first instance, but capital. These transit zones are experienced as nothing but duration with the impenetrable, opaque visibility they provide. Economy thus relies on a new model here, as Ali with an overwhelming sense of paranoia attempts to master himself and train Thomas on the new rules of exchange.

Franco Berardi describes this post-Fordist mode of exchange economy 'Semiocapitalism' (2011: 106). Berardi argues that the production process and the general shape of commodities of today's capitalism have a semiotic character. He writes,

The Fordist industrial economy was founded on the production of objectively measurable value quantifiable by socially necessary labor time. The postindustrial economy is based on linguistic exchange, on the value of simulation. The simulation becomes the decisive element of value. And when simulation becomes central to the productive process, lies, deceit, and fraud enter to play a part in economic life,

not as exceptional transgressions of the norm but as laws of production and exchange. (Berardi 2011: 106-107)

Petzold in his previous feature film *Yella* explored this new semantic and affective mode of production that assembles not only quantifiable commodities but also new affects and subjectivities to capitalise on, in the world of venture capitalism. *Yella*'s main character Yella Fichte (Nina Hoss) leaves her economically stagnant hometown of Wittenberge, a town in the Prignitz region in order to find employment in the former western German town of Hanover. Yella's whole subjectivity is infiltrated with this new neoliberal capitalist mode of production: her dreams, percepts, affects, desires, feelings, memories, habits are caught up in a complex constellation of nonhuman affects which capital seems to be in charge of. *Yella* thus traces this new virtual cartography that we hardly have tools to analyse at present – the world of what Hardt and Negri famously call *affective labour*: a new condition of immaterial labour that involves 'the production and manipulation of affect and requires (virtual and actual) human contact, labour in the bodily mode' (2001: 293). *Yella* explores its main character's subjectivity on both virtual and actual levels that are constructed as immanent to each other in its cinematic formation, as well as creating the field of the nonsensuous, through affective powers of the cinematic medium. Co-written with Harun Farocki, the film follows the mimetic and symbolic nature of venture capitalism's business deals, following on from Farocki's 2004 documentary that follows the proceedings of a venture capital business deal, *Nicht Ohne Risiko* (2004). *Yella* conveys a new regime of images and sounds that often travel seamlessly between the virtual/subjective and the actual/objective, yet the subjective terrain that the film depicts does not belong to its subject, Yella. In the interview he gave to Abel, Petzold mentions Deleuze's idea of the 'control society' as a major influence on his political cinema (2008). As mentioned earlier in the chapter, Deleuze designates this new model of society as a replacement for Foucault's 'Disciplinary Society' of the pre-war era. Control societies of today's capitalism are defined as networks that operate on abstractions: they are radically different from the previous model of institutions of enclosure such as the hospital, the army, the school, the prison, the factory and so on (Deleuze 1992: 3-7). These immaterial

forms of authority operate on the level of the virtual - on desires, emotions, affects, percepts and are under constant transformation, and they defy being contained as categories, and therefore can only be traced as connections, relations and processes of their becoming, and they can hardly be understood in pure experiential form, without mapping these affective flows. In *Yella*, Petzold traces this process of subjectivity production by mapping these affective flows of this new economy via audiovisual abstraction.

While *Yella* centres on subjectivity formation as an open process of experimentation – where Yella’s desires, anxieties, memories and senses are taken up in a network of impersonal affective flows, *Jerichow* expands this equation by merging human and non-human bodies –money as the body of capital– together in duration, to an extent that, as Abel argues referring to Petzold’s cinema in more general terms, ‘subject and object become Other to themselves, so that the object stared at becomes available in its immanent becomings, differentiations, or change, just as the subject is affected by these very becomings, with regard to his or her perceptual apparatus’ (2010: 268).

The humans in the film often do not bear psychological or subjective disclosure; they become things, as well as capital itself having an affective presence that at times outgrows those of the characters. During the film’s first few seconds, we are introduced to Thomas through the back of his head. From the start, the film interrupts identification with its characters as from the opening sequence until the very ending, the camera conveys an observational and contemplative attitude. *Jerichow* thus exudes slowness, as it does not create mobility through its montage or camera action. The otherwise static camera – similar to Arslan’s camerawork in the Berlin Trilogy, particularly *Der schöne Tag* – simply pans to follow the characters and cars in motion. This slight movement carries an eerie slowness in itself and brings an image of transformation – creating a temporality that is non-progressive. The eeriness is that of the immense potentiality of the pure virtuality of the time-image: it is the pre-subjective quality of the Bergsonian duration, not a subjective experience of time that the image pursues.

According to Alasdair King’s argument, the film opens with Thomas’ perspective (though not filmed as a point of view shot) and halfway through the

film, the camera switches its position to Laura's point of view (2010). However, the image strictly defies being contained in a subjective perspective, as it simply pursues the characters' unfolding with what unfolds before/around them and often the characters are as impenetrable as the landscape. There is not much background information given on Thomas' past, the only information the narrative discloses is that he is forced to start his life anew without any money. Having received a dishonourable discharge from his military duty in Afghanistan and the only job that he can find is cucumber harvesting, which looks hardly like a satisfying and appropriate position for a white, male, ethnic German in his own homeland. Similarly, Laura does not show any emotional particularity or personal history apart from her prison past, which she reveals to Thomas in order to confirm that her marriage to Ali is a financial arrangement. As Sicinski argues, Petzold 'instantiates Laura as a social position rather than an actual woman, a set of coordinates and not a point of identification' (2009). The argument that Laura's character can be explicated in vectorial terms rather than psychological traits is suggestive; in that, they express the inhuman flows, which need to be mapped out in order to reformulate the question of what is required to live meaningfully in a present that is in constant transformation and modulation. However, it would be a reductive approach to locate her as a mere metaphor or social position as Sicinski argues. As Abel has astutely put it relation to *Yella*, *Jerichow* reformulates the question of 'what are the consequences for the very possibility of living in the present and, ultimately for the prospects of forging a people, a properly constituted post-reunification people in Germany?' (2009). Laura, Thomas and Ali are rather depicted as 'blocks of movement/duration', they are to be understood not as 'a point [sic] in metric time but rather as a qualitative duration – a dynamic mutual inclusion of phases of process in each other, composing a "span" in becoming' (Deleuze 1998: 15; Massumi 2011: 9).

### **The Aesthetic Economy of the Virtual**

This lack of teleological subjectivity therefore calls for new viewing tools, just as this new world system requires new subjectivities – it is useful to view the film through a philosophy of process, what Brian Massumi calls 'activist philosophy',

in order to map the invisible forces within a predominantly non-semiotic mode of expression that the film employs. Massumi in his book *Semblance and Event* theorises a methodology to overcome the subject/object dichotomy that dominates cultural discourses and argues for a reworking of the questions that this dichotomy poses (2011: 1-28). As he explains,

Activist philosophy does not deny that there is a duplicity in process between subjective and objective. It accepts the reality of both. Rather than denying them, activist philosophy affirms them otherwise, reinterpreting them in terms of events and their taking-effect. Specifically, it understands them in terms of the relaying between events, in their “successive takings.” This makes the problem of the subjective and the objective fundamentally a question of time, as implicating a multiplicity of events. (Massumi 2011: 8)

While cognitive methods aspire to ‘know’ their object, activist methods of abstraction view objects as ‘derivatives of process’ and take the process itself as its object (Massumi 2011: 6, 14). Activist philosophy’s question thus, is ‘what’s doing’ rather than the cognitive questioning of ‘what the subject can know of the world’ (Massumi 2011: 6). In control societies, the subjective realm is produced by intensive flows and economic relations of the capitalist world system, and however the transformative and mutant nature of these flows elude subjective grasp and are ‘non-representable’ as Steven Shaviro argues drawing on Fredric Jameson, they are nonetheless not entirely ‘unknowable’ (2010: 5). Shaviro replaces Jameson’s suggested model of ‘an aesthetic of cognitive mapping’ with ‘an aesthetic of affective mapping’ – that requires replacing the model of knowledge with belief in the Deleuzian sense – that favours viewing these works in a ‘non-representational and non-phenomenological way’, via methods of abstraction (2010: 5). This is how, Deleuze argues, cinema can enhance the ethical pursuit of restoring belief in the world – these non-cognitive, pre-personal, intensive affects certainly leave a residue beyond cognitive grasp, yet, this residue is ‘not in any sense otherworldly and transcendent; it is situated in the here and now, in the very flows and encounters of everyday existence’ (Shaviro 2010: 9). *Jerichow* gives the viewer a sense of these flows that are ubiquitous in the

mundane, everyday reality as well as in the personal and intimate realm, in the economic and noneconomic relations of the Turkish immigrant and the German host that we have come to view in certain solidified structures, yet these relations are bound up with broader and more complex social and economic processes and intensities.

Questions of transition and liminality in Petzold's works have often been discussed through spatial terms but they remain to be explored in temporal terms. His filmography often explores the state of being in-between and the intense processes of transition from one defined category to the other. All three films of the *Ghost Trilogy* explore this liminality on the level of temporality rather than a quantifiable spatiality. Petzold's characters are living matter transmitting the affective intensities of the times they are experiencing, yet they are lacking the tools to manage them since they are not well equipped to give meaning to the complex flows of the temporality of the present, that has taken on a new character, elusive from cognitive grasp. As Petzold explains,

People are poorly prepared for modern life and always carry archaic remainders of another life. It is these people who are being pushed out of societies or are put in motion, but they do not even know where to go, where all of this is supposed to lead. They consequently end up in transitional spaces, transit zones where nothingness looms on one side and the impossibility of returning to what existed in the past on the other. These are the spaces that interest me. (Abel 2008)

The world of *Jerichow* is of no exception to the transitional zones that Petzold explains in this quote. All of the main three characters in *Jerichow* are caught up in a duration that is at odds with the 'outside' temporality. Both Thomas and Laura are thrown to a "free market economy" from the institutions of the disciplinary society that they were brought up in: Thomas expresses a biopolitically militarised form of subjectivity, as his body seems to be responding to affects faster than his judgment. Having been discharged from the army to the world of a stagnant free market economy and having lost all his money, Thomas' only capital becomes his well-trained and disciplined body. The props that surround him are objects from his childhood, living in the house



that he grew up in as a boy, a tree house where he hides his money and a toy-car lighter that gives away the truth about his scheme with Laura against Ali. He is clearly unprepared for the world of neoliberal economy, which seems the only means to achieve a false sense of freedom, yet he does not acknowledge this in the self-assured fashion that Laura does, as she tells him that one cannot love without money. In a similar way to Thomas, Laura conveys a semi-juvenile subjectivity that Ali often subjugates.

Ali seems to be the only character in the film that has acquired a certain 'maturity' and experience in this transformation economy in a stagnant area left behind by the forces of global economy. Yet he struggles with the laws of this new world economy, the laws of Berardi's *semiocapitalism*, which 'don't resemble those of the glorious epoch of industry'; these new relations 'don't involve the productive discipline, work ethic, or enterprise that dominated the world of classical industrial capitalism, the Protestant capitalism that Michael Albert... dubs *of the Rhine*' (Berardi 2011: 107). Berardi here refers to Michael Albert's famous characterisation of the Rhine model, the capitalism of Germany and Western Europe which he contrasted to the more malicious and violent "Neo-American" model of capitalism, with its ethical and efficient labour conditions (Albert 1993: 169-191). Ali aspires to adapt to this new system that does away with the work ethics of the industrial capitalism that brought him to Germany in the first place. This is most obvious when he subtly approves of Laura's fraudulent deal with the beverage dealer to share Ali's profits, thinking that she is being trained for the wild world of free market. On the other hand, he is forced to paranoia due to the corrupt ways of his employees and apologises to Thomas for his initial patronising attitude towards him. Ali's economic mastery leaves his body weighed down by the paranoia that grows in him from working in a system that operates and recreates itself on a relentless desire for accumulation that justifies lies, deceit and fraud. This is not yet the futuristic world of finance capitalism of *Yella* where immaterial commodities reign and value is extracted from affect (Shaviro 2010: 3). Nor it is the heavy industrial Rhine capitalism that operates anymore, the world of *Jerichow* is caught up in the process of transition, where labour is in the process of evaporation and the

surplus value has to be extracted from subjectivities, rather than from corporeal labour.

As in his previous trilogy, the transitory zone in *Jerichow* is a virtual zone of intensity and affect – the subjectivities on screen are caught up in an ungraspable duration. This new world system requires new aesthetic tools beyond cognitive and semiotic readability towards an aesthetic economy of intensities, putting an emphasis on the zone of virtualities. Massumi gives the example of lightning as the virtual making itself ‘perceptually felt, not so much “in” vision as *with* vision or *through* vision: as a vision-effect’ (2011: 17). He explains that we do not see the fullness of the lightning’s conditioning events, yet it is felt and what appears ‘steals the show’ (Massumi 2011: 24). *Jerichow*’s aesthetic economy is haunted not just by the past, but also by a futurity, as in Massumi’s example of the lightning: what does not appear yet expresses itself in what does appear are the past and the future (2011: 24). As Shaviro puts it, ‘the bewildering new world space of late or multinational capitalism cannot be represented; it also cannot be contained within the framework of a conventional narrative’ (2010: 52). *Jerichow* expresses the need to reformulate the questions of subjectivity, ethics, labour and responsibility in the passage to global capitalism through a reworking and intensification of cinema’s aesthetic economy.

This chapter explored how the re-configurations of the aesthetic field in Berlin School films lend the films to post-representational viewing strategies, foregrounding temporality, change and transformation. In the following chapter, I will look into how these strategies can be brought into contact with documentary films.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Aesthetics of the New Documentary Film and Beyond**

#### **2. 1. Introduction: Documentary Film and the Question of Representation**

This chapter sets out with two aims: to explore the aesthetic challenges to the history of ideas that shaped the conception of Turkish migrant presence in Germany within non-fiction film, and to reassess the implications of the documentary form as a creative practice and artistic activity that can be singular, non-representational and potentially antithetical to knowledge. Both aims come with interconnecting complications and challenges, since documentary film is, by definition, situated outside the zone of artistic autonomy for its claim to represent reality, actuality and facts. Whether produced for theatrical release, television or through other release patterns, non-fiction film as a genre or a set of techniques has occupied a problematical position in terms of representation, and has often been analysed and studied in terms of authenticity, objectivity, historical accuracy and ethical responsibility of the filmmaker towards their subjects. In the introduction to this chapter, I will first attempt to summarise current debates on the question of documentary representation, and then explore briefly the history of Turkish German documentary filmmaking before moving on to my analyses of five documentary films.

In his seminal article 'New Subjectivities Documentary and Self-Representation in the Post-Verité Age', Michael Renov argues that cinema owes its very existence to the ideals of authentic representation, as well as laws of cinematic motion and the perfectibility of perception, since those were the ideals that lay at the core of the experimentations of the early practitioners (1995). Linking this view of cinema to the scientific project of the era, Renov writes, 'it is the domain of nonfiction which has most explicitly articulated this scientific yearning; it is here also that the debates around evidence, objectivity and knowledge have been centred' (1995). Renov's teleological account of the

emergence of the cinematic medium is also echoed by the genealogies of the documentary genre. The dominant historical accounts of documentary conventionally argue that non-fiction genres are born out of a 'need to inform people', and function as 'a reaction against the monopoly that the movie as entertainment came to have on the uses of film' (T. Minh-ha 1993: 94). This tendency to equate documentary with historical document is typical within the field. For instance, Bill Nichols as one of the most prominent scholars of documentary places the form distinctly in a hierarchical structure within modes of film practice with its assumed access to historical facts and social issues. Nichols writes that documentary comes about from 'epistophilia' and conventionally 'posits an organizing agency that possesses information and knowledge, a text that conveys it, and a subject who will gain it' (1991: 31). This designation reduces documentary film form to a historic document, a cultural object to be analysed and such an approach at best undermines the aesthetic and intensive registers that documentary film operates in. According to this model that Nichols formulates, documentary is predominantly a signifying system that functions mainly as a textual economy.

Although it has been acknowledged that non-fiction is an umbrella term that conveys myriad forms of organisation, techniques and methods, documentary film that falls under this rubric has predominantly been examined within terms of objectivity: to what extent and standard does the image capture reality? If documentary 'begins with the viewer's recognition of the images that represent or refer back to the historical world' as Nichols suggests, is it licensed to go beyond the zone of recognition or must it operate within a determinate set of rules which ultimately ensure that the knowledge that it promotes reaches its destination (1995)? Nichols continues to argue that the documentary practice becomes problematic and polemical 'only when the viewer's sense of the historically true and the filmmaker's sense of creative license diverged', which risks reducing documentary to a functional or instrumental form that rarely goes beyond the current commonsensical organisations of thought, and of what is and can be known (1995). Although it is widely acknowledged that documentary cannot be boiled down to a journalistic practice, the methodology and functions that have

been attributed to the form by documentary scholars time and again are hardly distinguishable from those attributed to journalism. Whilst noting that they are by no means exhaustive, Michael Renov lists the four fundamental tendencies of documentary as:

1. to record, reveal or preserve
2. to persuade or promote
3. to analyse and interrogate
4. to express (1993: 21).

His analyses of each category illustrates the discursive functions of documentary, yet they leave out one very substantial and necessary function of the form, that of the creative function. Within the category of expressivity, Renov addresses the aesthetic difference between journalism and documentary film as ‘a matter of degree’ and frames it within a phenomenological structure wherein he notes that the ‘shadings of sound and image’ can have a power to ‘invoke emotions’ or ‘induce pleasure’ in the spectator (1993: 35). However, he very quickly denounces these powers as he concludes that the expressive dimension is always to be overwhelmed by the didactic function, that the aesthetics of the documentary will always be a method to convey its narrative more efficiently but the aim of it remains to be ‘pleasurable learning’ (1993: 35). Documentary is thus, according to Renov, reducible to an aesthetic mode of knowledge production, and the aesthetic register merely organises the form of its representation.

In her book *New Documentary: A Critical Introduction*, Stella Bruzzi addresses the problem of representation, which has become more acute with the ever-accelerating advancements in audio-visual technology (2000: 5). In the introduction to the book, Bruzzi gives a brief account of the problem of objectivity and authenticity that, as she argues is ‘dictated by documentary history and theory’ (2005: 7). Taking issue with the prevalent problematisations of authenticity within documentary theory, Bruzzi designates her project to overcome this interrogation by acknowledging that it is futile to position documentaries against the real event, for she argues that ‘a documentary can never be the real world, that the camera can never capture life as it would have

unravelling had it not interfered' (2005: 7). Bruzzi condemns this binary structure of representation for being a futile pursuit that will ultimately fail its impossible competition with authenticity, while at the same time she maintains the binary model of the objective versus the subjective, in other words, the authentic real world versus its filmic representation and instead, proposes that we view films as a 'negotiation between the polarities of objectivity and subjectivity, offering a dialectical analysis of events and images that accepts that no non-fictional record can contain the whole truth' (2005: 39). Maintaining the binary structure that prevails in the documentary theory that she sets out to criticise, Bruzzi's alternative dialectical methodology perpetuates the hierarchy of truths and non-truths, which of course eventually devalues documentary practice as idealistic and ideologically driven vis-à-vis fact-driven, scientific modes of practice and disciplines of knowledge.

This chapter engages with five documentary films via a set of theoretical approaches that aim to move beyond representational paradigms that rely on dualisms. Moving on from the fiction films explored in the previous chapter, the films that are discussed in this chapter illustrate how the aesthetic and political registers are entwined with, and are irreducible to one another within documentary form. Against the tendency to downplay the creative function of documentary to factual cultural objects, I argue that a post-representational viewing of documentaries can be a powerful method to explore the unfolding of the events in their own complexities. It is through this pragmatic approach that the relations that form these complexities are studied for the sake of creating new relations and connections that aim to affirm film as an artwork, and the world-historical events as processes that are irreducible to rhetoric, function or meaning. The films examined in this chapter have not before been brought together for the ways they engage with Turkish labour migration to Germany. While arguably it is possible to identify common aesthetic tendencies in Harun Farocki, Thomas Arslan and Aysun Bademsoy since they operate within a cohort of contemporary Berlin directors, Seyhan Derin's *Ben Annemin Kızıyım* (1996) extends the focus of interrogation beyond a biographically or geographically determined categorisation. The grouping of the works that are explored within this chapter is thus a strategic

choice that stems from the need to re-evaluate and dismantle the dominance of historical narratives within the study of post-Wall cinema of Germany through a focus on nonfiction films that convey new political and aesthetic sensibilities.

Although Gilles Deleuze does not analyse documentary form in depth, and spares no more than five pages on the works of a number of cinema vérité auteurs in his cinema books, his and Guattari's interrogations of art forms and their operations develop multiple useful concepts that will inform the theoretical basis of this chapter. Unlike the films explored in the previous chapter, some of the works that will be discussed here have not been released theatrically and as such are not cinematic works in the traditional sense. Moreover, some of the films are shot digitally and therefore are ontologically distinct from the conventional celluloid format that Deleuze's cinema books engage with, and this might open up new trajectories to re-evaluate the questions of representation and the analogical nature of the moving images (Rodowick 2007). It is within the general aims of this project to extend these concepts to the contemporary moving image in its various media-cultural forms and in doing so, to organise the heterogeneous material that it engages with, in a non-linear manner.

### **Turkish Migration in German Documentaries**

Of the earlier documentary films dealing with the issues of Turkish labour migration to Germany, Günter Wallraff's *Ganz Unten (Lowest of the Low)*, Jörg Gefrörer, 1987) has attracted more critical interest amongst scholars for its unorthodox methodology in exposing the appalling living and mostly illegal working conditions of the Turkish guest workers in the Federal Republic of Germany. Initially published as a book in 1985, Wallraff's undercover study of his experiences while working in disguise as an imaginary Turkish guest worker Ali Levent Sinirlioğlu for two years has been both contested and celebrated for its subversive journalistic techniques in approaching its subject. Though not speaking Turkish himself, Wallraff sets off with his cameraman Jörg Gefrörer, who disguises himself as a Greek contractor to follow Ali's experiences with a hidden camera in his pocket. Produced by Radio Bremen and other major media patrons,

*Ganz Unten* attracted more than 200,000 viewers in the year it was released in West Germany according to FFA figures, and was also screened in a number of GDR art-house screens the same year with merely three imported prints (Stott 2000: 34). *Ganz Unten* won multiple awards at a number of film festivals in Germany, France, Spain and Britain yet it was hardly considered a success by scholars and critics. The film has rarely been discussed separately from the book and has mostly been assessed as a work of journalism. Since Wallraff had been notorious for his unorthodox and provocative journalistic work, critics have predominantly engaged with the ethics of his journalistic methods and issues of authenticity. One of the many issues raised in those criticisms was his misrepresentation of the Turkish male as naïve, one-dimensional and archaic. As Anna Kuhn writes,

*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 naïve, 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. (1989: 192)

Although here Kuhn engages solely with the book and not the film, her critique of the stereotypical representation in *Ganz Unten* is an early example of the dominant paradigm that frames representational thinking within the subdiscipline of Turkish German studies. On another level, Randall Halle criticises the film for emphasising its risky method over its politically poignant content. Arguing that Wallraff's popular persona and the overemphasis on his undercover technique turns the film into a thriller, Halle contends that the film diverts the attention of the viewer towards Wallraff's potentially risky undercover task and in doing so,



undermines the radical point that it conveys (2008: 143). Despite these criticisms taking issue with Wallraff's controversial method, the imagery of the living and working conditions of Turkish labour migrants, which *Ganz Unten* reveals, have influenced subsequent Turkish German cinema, while the film itself did borrow influences from previous cinematic depictions of migrants. The nighttime long shot of the industrial landscape in the opening scene with the traditional Turkish music in the soundtrack and Wallraff's choice of Ali as a pseudonym implies a potential reference to Fassbinder's *Angst essen Seele auf* (1974). The final film that was put together from a hundred hour long original footage is a montage of documentary images filmed in observational and revelatory mode; interviews with Wallraff and other members of the film crew in disguise, and the hidden camera footage of his encounters with other workers and employers. The film thus conveys a hybrid aesthetic, along with its mise-en-scène which foregrounds the dark, often black and white canted shots of claustrophobic interiors, and the dark courtyards and industrial settings that are chosen as backgrounds for his interviews. The film was harshly criticised for its infuriating agitprop aesthetics and stereotypical depictions, yet it succeeds in raising the issue of migrant labour exploitation for the first time with such an incisive and powerful view of the failures of the West German society.

Of the second-generation migrants in Germany, Yüksel Yavuz's *Mein Vater, der Gastarbeiter* (My Father, the Guestworker, 1994) and Fatih Akin's *Wir haben vergessen zurückzukehren* (We forgot to go back, 2001) are precursors of a new subjective mode of documentary filmmaking in Turkish German Cinema. A second generation filmmaker of Kurdish descent, Yavuz's very first feature film *Mein Vater, der Gastarbeiter* was produced by Zero film which was founded by Martin Hagemann and Thomas Kufus and has produced several Turkish German feature films since. *Mein Vater, der Gastarbeiter* was filmed in Yavuz's hometown Karakoçan, a village in South-eastern Turkey, and narrates the memories of his father's coming to Germany as a first generation guest worker in 1968, with his experiences of working in a shipyard in Hamburg for 15 years that involve exploitation, longing and alienation. Not having been able to obtain the permission to film at the factories where his father had worked, Yavuz's film was

argued to have ‘proved a critical failure’ and he developed his following fiction film *Aprilkinder* (April Children, 1998) with the material that he initially planned to use in *Mein Vater, der Gastarbeiter* (Halle 2008: 160). *Mein Vater, der Gastarbeiter* was one of the earliest films made by a second generation Kurdish German migrant filmmaker and as such, it has since been seen as one of the precursors of a new era in migrant filmmaking in Germany.

Akın’s *Wir haben vergessen zurückzukehren* was produced by Bavarian company Megahertz for a television documentary series entitled *Denk ich an Deutschland... Filmemacher über das eigene Land* (Thinking of Germany... Filmmakers on their Homeland, 1997-2003) that included films by famous German filmmakers such as Dominik Graf, Andreas Dresen and Doris Dörrie.<sup>6</sup> The film was made after Akın had already made a name as a young and flourishing new generation filmmaker in Germany. Similar to Yavuz’s documentary, *Wir haben vergessen zurückzukehren* records interviews with Akın’s family and friends, all of whom are regulars in his films, talking on their experiences of coming to Germany, growing up in-between cultures and languages, and about the sense of disillusionment that the return to homeland upholds. Both films are examples of what Michael Renov described as a new subjective attitude that occurred in the 1990s documentary film and video practices (1995). Renov contrasts this new attitude with the observational mode of documentary in which the voice of the documentarists and self-reference is absent or minimised – such as the *vérité* method – that was dominant in the 1960s and 1970s. Renov calls this insurgence, ‘the new subjectivities’ of the post-*vérité* age and names ‘works that explore exilic identities’ such as Jonas Mekas’ *Lost, Lost, Lost* (1975) and Chantal Akerman’s *News from Home* (1975) as the precursors of this mode. In these films, he explains, ‘the maker’s subjectivity is explicitly aligned with social affiliations’, and as such, ‘almost inevitably a self, typically a deeply social self is being constructed in the process’ (1995). Renov observes this

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<sup>6</sup> The series take its title from the first line of the poem “Nachtgedanken” (Night Thoughts) by Heinrich Heine: “Denk ich an Deutschland in der Nacht, dann bin ich um den Schlaf gebracht” (When I think of Germany at night, I lose all sleep).

new attitude as a discursive strategy to speak ‘the lives and desires of the many who have lived outside the “boundaries of the cultural knowledge”’ (1995). These films blend the subjectivities and personal histories of the filmmakers with the social and political histories they record – and as such, they explore the filmmakers’ marginalised or otherwise invisible identities within a larger scope of political events. Renov argues that it is a radical political pursuit to reinterpret and reformulate official histories: whereas the observational vérité method that was dominant in the 1960s and 1970s championed objectivity – the non-interference with the reality unfurling in front of the camera – as a political tool, Renov points out that the most prominent vérité filmmakers were ‘white male professionals [who] had assumed the mantle of filmic representation with the ease and self-assurance of a birth right’ (1995). In contrast, the post-vérité subjective images were ‘transgressive’ self-enactments (Renov: 1995). Renov’s argument thus reverses the hierarchy between objective and subjective modes of documentary practices, and values the latter as a more ethically responsible way of representing the plights of marginalised identities or communities.

Alongside the issue of return to homeland, hybridity and integration, another prominent subject explored by the myriad television documentaries on migrant Turkish population in Germany are the issues of gender and honour crimes. These themes, which have been pervasive within the news features and fiction films have also been popular outside Germany, such as David Gould’s documentary *Two Sides of the Moon: The Honour Killing of Hatun Aynur Sürücü* (2011). Gould, who is a film academic based in the USA, explains his motivation in making the film as follows,

Choosing to tell Hatun’s story was one of the most illogical decisions I have ever made. I had never been out of the country, don’t speak a word of German, and knew nothing about the culture and psychology behind this horrendous act. My objective was just as naïve: that by somehow telling one woman’s story, I could give a face to countless others. While the jury is still out on my abilities as a filmmaker, my

journey to give Hatun a “voice” is over. Now armed with her story, the next step [is] yours... (2011)<sup>7</sup>

Gould’s documentary has been screened in various documentary film festivals around the USA as well as at the *Society of Cinema and Media Studies Conference* in 2012 and is one of the many examples of dutiful representations of honour killings that aim to raise consciousness about the issue of violence against women.

The five documentary films that will be explored in this chapter engage with these recurring themes and issues via new aesthetic and narrative sensibilities. Aysun Bademsoy’s *Am Rand der Städte* (*On the Outskirts*, 2006) looks at the lives of migrant families returning from Germany to Turkey, with a particular attention to landscape and architecture. The second film to be explored by Bademsoy is *Ehre* (*Honour*, 2011), which explores the issues of honour crimes in Germany via interviews with young males from various cultural and ethnic backgrounds and state authorities. The following section explores Harun Farocki’s video installation *Aufstellung* (2005): a mute display of a series of whole or fragmented iconographic and diagrammatic images of labour migration to Germany taken from language books, history books or newspapers. The final two films that will be discussed in the chapter are Seyhan Derin’s *Ben Annemin Kızıyım / Ich bin Tochter meiner Mutter* (1996) and Thomas Arslan’s *Aus der Ferne* (2006). Both films explore the filmmakers’ personal odyssey via a journey to their geographical roots and include interviews with their family members, albeit conveyed through two very different attitudes.

## **2. 2. Aysun Bademsoy’s *Am Rand der Städte* (2006) and *Ehre* (2011)**

In one of the rare scholarly articles published in the English language that explores Aysun Bademsoy’s work amongst other Turkish German documentary

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<sup>7</sup> See the director’s note on the film’s official website:

<[http://www.twosidesofthemoon.com/letters/directors\\_letter\\_1\\_4\\_10.pdf](http://www.twosidesofthemoon.com/letters/directors_letter_1_4_10.pdf)> Accessed May 2014.

films, Randall Halle argues that the study of migrant cinema in Europe focuses predominantly on fiction film (2009: 39). Although documentary studies have occupied a relatively minor position within European cinema scholarship, artists engaging with non-fiction film have reached wider audiences via an increasing number of exhibition platforms, film festivals and events such as dOCUMENTA (13), which heralds a growing interest in documentary studies. Drawing on Michael Renov's claim that documentary has an increasing 'power to shape our world', TJ Demos in his monograph *The Migrant Image* suggests that the documentary mode has grown to become a means to intervene in the world in the hands of politically engaged filmmakers and artists (2013: xvii). Demos observes that contemporary filmmakers like Hito Steyerl, Steve McQueen and Emily Jacir have invented new and creative ways to inspire a new politics of mobility and migration contributing to a new imagination of a world to come. In line with this argument, this section is intended to explore how Aysun Bademsoy's documentary work offers new avenues to imagine communities without solely confining them to identity politics, via new assemblages of sound, spoken word and image. With a necessary return to Deleuze's writings on the concept of 'a people to come', which he develops in *Cinema 2*, this section aims to provide a close inspection of Bademsoy's films *Am Rand der Städte* (*On the Outskirts*, 2006) and *Ehre* (*Honour*, 2011). By revoking an admitted tendency towards cinema vérité aesthetics with little or no voiceover commentary, handheld camera observing everyday situations and procedures, long takes and extended shot lengths, Bademsoy's films abandon the dramatic narrativity that dominates a majority of Turkish German fiction – as well as non-fiction – film. Understanding Bademsoy's stylistic choices as a post-representational strategy that moves film beyond discourses of (national) identity politics and political representation, my purpose is to view these films within the tradition of German post-representational political cinema of Harun Farocki, Bitomsky and Straub-Huillet, rather than as ethno-documentaries or a mere renunciation of the so-called *Gastarbeiterkino*. The aesthetic experimentation in Bademsoy's films is too subtle to classify her as an experimental or avant-garde filmmaker, yet her 'subjects' do not lend themselves to all too readily recognisable identity categories, nor do her films have a narrative construction that relies on a model of politics that transmits a

statement to an audience. This problematisation of documentary articulation and representation presents itself as a raw image that challenges psychological or ideological interpretation in a traditional sense, and I argue that this renders Bademsoy's position within Turkish German Cinema studies obscure. Whereas documentaries such as Fatih Akin's *Crossing the Bridge: The Sound of Istanbul* (2005) have reached wider audiences and garnered critical attention mainly thanks to the director's auteur status, filmmakers working exclusively within the documentary format such as Bademsoy have been frequently mentioned, though very rarely explored in depth within studies of German, or Turkish German Cinema.<sup>8</sup>

Jacques Rancière defines the relation between aesthetics and politics as a 'distribution of the sensible': the aesthetic regime is political precisely because it organises what can be visually or sensibly expressed and experienced (2004: 12). Drawing on Foucault's problematisation of the relation between words and things, the visible and the articulable spheres as an 'infinite relation' (2002: 10), Rancière writes that aesthetics,

is a delimitation of spaces and times, of the visible and the invisible, of speech and noise, that simultaneously determines the place and the stakes of politics as a form of experience. Politics revolves around what is seen and what can be said about it, around who has the ability to see and the talent to speak, around the properties of spaces and the possibilities of time. (Rancière 2004: 13)

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<sup>8</sup> A remarkable number of the chapters featured in one of the most recently published edited collections on Turkish German Cinema, Sabine Hake and Barbara Mennel's *Turkish German Cinema in the New Millennium* (2012) focus on Fatih Akin's works, including one section exclusively dedicated to his auteur cinema. A chapter in the collection by Ingeborg Majer-O'Sickey looks at Bademsoy's women football players' trilogy in the context of 'soccer films' (2012: 72-84). Bademsoy has been cited as the wife of Christian Petzold under the entry dedicated to Petzold in the names directory of *The Concise Cinegraph: Encyclopedia of German Cinema* (Bock and Bergfelder 2009: 361). Although the entry mentions her as 'a prolific director of documentaries in her own right', the collection does not include an entry under her name.

Artistic creation has the potential to redistribute the realms of the visible and the sensible, what can or cannot be expressed and experienced both in language and on the level of affect as well as in determining what remains invisible.<sup>9</sup> Viewing film as an aesthetic regime operating both on signifying and a-signifying levels as understood by Deleuze, Guattari and Rancière, it becomes important to look into the ways in which Bademsoy refrains from utilising conventional signifying strategies, in order to investigate the political potential in the new assemblages of the regimes of the visible and sensible. In Rancière's words, this is precisely the zone where 'potentiality inherent in the innovative sensible modes of experience that anticipate a community to come' can be located (2004: 30).

Both *Am Rand der Städte* and *Ehre* are heavily reliant on individuals from various communities talking directly to the camera, often introduced without an intertitle, interlocutor or voiceover commentary of the filmmaker. Speech and every day acts and situations are foregrounded in Bademsoy's films: often a single subject talks directly to the camera without pre-contextualisation; hence the viewer often spends a few early seconds of each speech by attempting to figure out what is readily available in the shot. Subject and speech – the spoken word and the image form an abstract machine, as the signifier-signified relation becomes perturbed and the image requires alternative interpretive strategies than psychological analysis of the visual field. Bademsoy's camera captures speech as a creative act which can be described as a production of subjectivity unfolding on screen, and which in turn encourages the viewer to look for different strategies than what is available at hand.

Simon O'Sullivan suggests that this subjectivity production is a processual project, drawing upon Guattari's *ethico-aesthetic* project (Guattari

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<sup>9</sup> Deleuze and Guattari further complicate the relation between these two realms as intrinsic to each other and not disparate, which they elaborate on their conceptualisation of 'abstract machines' in *A Thousand Plateaus* (2008). Here they write, 'Abstract machines [thus] have proper names (as well as dates), which of course designate not persons or subjects but matters and functions. The name of a musician or scientist is used in the same way as a painter's name designates a color, nuance, tone, or intensity: it is always a question of a conjunction of Matter and Function. The double deterritorialization of the voice and the instrument is marked by a Wagner abstract machine, a Webern abstract machine, etc.' (Deleuze and Guattari 2008: 157).

2006): ‘a call to creativity, a call to become actively involved in various strategies and practices that will allow us to produce/transform, and perhaps even go beyond, our habitual selves’ (O’Sullivan 2010: 239). Exploring recurrent themes such as labour migrants and their families returning home and urgent questions that demand analysis and action in ethical and humanitarian terms such as honour killings, Bademsoy works on a representational ground often loaded with signifiers, yet her subjects and images challenge these signifying assemblages in their directness. They create new realities and their unfolding stories enter into new assemblages – the image and words simultaneously get into encounters on a plane of expression and a plane of content – they do not refer to a ‘beyond’ as such. In this way, they operate as abstract machines. Abstract machine, as Deleuze and Guattari explain in *A Thousand Plateaus*, is the diagrammatic connection between form and content, language as form and semiotic system as the content: ‘the aspect or moment at which nothing but functions and matters remain’ (2008: 156). I will propose that the pursuit to explore the future-oriented potentiality of Bademsoy’s cinema in its appeal to a “people” necessitates viewing image and speech, the visible and sensible world and its semiotic implications as an immanent function and not as representation of reality, a community, or a people as traditional politics of emancipation presumes.

### **The Missing People**

Born in Mersin in 1960, Bademsoy moved to Berlin with her family at the age of nine. She started her career in filmmaking as a student in Theatre Studies at the Free University of Berlin between 1978 and 1989, and since then she has worked with a cohort of directors, critics and theorists such as Hartmut Bitomsky, Harun Farocki and husband Christian Petzold. She counts Bitomsky and Farocki amongst the people who have been vitally significant for her career, both in terms of influence, inspiration and support. Farocki has produced many of Bademsoy’s films and she has worked as the assistant director in Farocki’s *Ein Tag im Leben der Endverbraucher* (*One day in the life of end users*, 1993) and Petzold’s *Cuba Libre* (1996), as well as collaborating with Ulrike Ottinger as the editing assistant in her documentary film *Taiga* (1992). After working in several theatre



productions, Bademsoy made her first documentary film *Fremde deutsche Nachbarschaft* (*Foreign German Neighbourhood*, 1989) as her final project at university, wherein she followed a group of teenagers meeting their neighbours, entering local businesses accompanied by her camera. Her subsequent films have followed a consistent thematic line, as she has continued to explore issues and discourses revolving around the Turkish labour migrants and their offspring in Germany with a specific focus on communities as wholes and individuals as its parts. Bademsoy's camera follows the becoming of her subjects on a molecular level as they go about living their everyday lives without prioritising particular moments, but dwelling on the ordinary. In the observational tradition of direct cinema and vérité auteurs such as Raymond Depardon, Jean Rouch and Frederick Wiseman, Bademsoy avoids voiceover commentary and simply follows occupational or community groups in action, filming procedures and institutional practices via the labour of the individuals who make these institutions function. Her procedural style is manifest in a direct and observational manner in *Deutsche Polizisten* (*German Police*, 2004), wherein she observes the practices of the police officers of immigrant – mainly Turkish – origin in Kreuzberg and Neukölln, and *Hochzeitsfabrik* (*The Wedding Factory*, 2005), which focuses on the institutional practices of Turkish German weddings.<sup>10</sup> In her female football players trilogy *Mädchen am Ball* (*Girls on the Pitch*, 1995), *Nach dem Spiel* (*After the Game*, 1997), and *Ich gehe jetzt rein* (*In the Game*, 2008), Bademsoy creates a chronicle of five women of Turkish German origin, playing for Ağrispor football club of Kreuzberg over a period of thirteen years. The film follows their personal and professional lives, their observations and experiences told directly to the camera and intimate conversations with each other. Over time, a picture of their unfolding subjectivity emerges – not as a closed set with a beginning and an end, but as an ongoing creative process of becoming and transforming, where the figures are

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<sup>10</sup> As Daniela Berghahn observes: 'weddings and marriage practices occupy a prominent place in Turkish German cinema' (2012: 19). In her article 'My Big Fat Turkish Wedding: From Culture Clash to Romcom', Berghahn argues that the social realist dramas represent wedding practices as a 'key signifier of cultural differences', whereas the light-hearted romantic comedies treat them as a 'rich source of humor' which resonates with Göktürk's famous designation of 'the pleasures of hybridity' evident in post-Wall Turkish German cinema (2012: 30).

allowed to create their own fiction and narrate their own stories. The films do not convey a sense of identity as a stable continuum, but as a fluctuating multiplicity of actions, changes, desires and dreams-in-process. As Halle notes,

The camera documents, but does not explain nor does it function in a typical liberal multicultural dissemination of information about an ethnic minority, since it neither imagines a minority nor a majority. As it inspects, it does not interrogate through the presumptions of an ignorant majority. Instead, it constructs a community of people who live down the street or across the river, or maybe, even in the same building. The camera, thus avoids the ethnographic gaze, conveying information but remaining multivalent in its address. (2009: 51)

The footballers in these films do not serve as figures to correct a misconception of a minority, neither is their marginalised and minoritarian position as female migrants performing in a highly male-dominated profession, entirely disregarded. Halle's aptly formulated observation captures an important thought that lies at the core of Bademsoy's films. Rather than presenting a collectivity as a whole that equals the sum of its parts, the women portray a *sense* of community, not as an existing history but as an emergence that is the transformation of their everyday reality and hence always open and appealing to a future. This is how Bademsoy's cinema abandons the regime of representation; by leaving the zone of the political representation of a minority and the films take on a future oriented articulation of the political as a potential.

As Deleuze writes in *Cinema 2* with reference to Paul Klee's idea of the 'missing people', what distinguishes modern political cinema from the classical is the way it invokes a people who do not exist yet, precisely by showing their absence (2005a: 208). Deleuze argues that in the classical cinema, giving the agit-prop Soviet cinemas as an example, 'the people are there, even though they are oppressed, tricked, subject, even though blind or unconscious', whereas in modern political cinema they 'no longer exist, or not yet... the people are missing' (2005a: 208). Modern political cinema, for Deleuze, must contribute to the task of inventing a new people: 'The moment the master, or the colonizer proclaims "there have never been people here," the missing people are a becoming, they

invent themselves, in shanty towns and camps, or in ghettos, in new conditions of struggle to which a necessarily political art must contribute' (2005a: 209). It is therefore an invocation of a virtual community as a future potentiality – this is where representation becomes abstraction in Bademsoy's footballer women trilogy. The three films documenting the women's becoming do not aim to narrativise their dreams in a dramatic form, but merely their becoming along with the undramatic contingencies that these processes involve: the sense of their togetherness and separation, shared loves, desires and moments and as such, the films often change the contours of their minority status, challenging representational attitudes which reduce documentary subjects to objects of sociological assessment.

This is why I propose that the concept of abstract machines is useful as an alternative to the representational paradigm. This approach permits us to view the films as what Guattari calls *machinic assemblages* – a methodology that focuses on the virtual as the future, while looking at film not as a cultural artifact, but a living and changing entity which functions on semiotic and material levels at the same time and is not just a pile of dead facts.<sup>11</sup> Bademsoy's three part chronicle thus presents the possibility to go back and revisit the changes in the five women's lives, and view it as a narrative, but even that narrative-as-history hints at a future that challenges being reterritorialised by the representational approach.

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<sup>11</sup> Guattari writes in 1979 in his solo-authored work *The Machinic Unconscious*: 'We are accustomed to think of material and social facts in terms of genealogies, archaeological residues, dialectical progress or in terms of decline, degeneration, and rising entropy... Time goes on toward better days or plunges blindly toward unimaginable catastrophes; unless it simply starts to vegetate indefinitely. We can bypass these dilemmas by refusing any sort of causalist or finalist extrapolation and by strictly limiting the object of research to structural relations or systemic balances. But no matter how one goes about it, the past remains heavy, cooled down, and the future seems largely mortgaged by a present closing in on it from all sides. To think time against the grain, to imagine what came 'after' can modify what was 'before' or that changing the past at the root can transform a current state of affairs: what madness!' (2011: 10-11).

### *Am Rand der Städte*

Funded by *Kulturstiftung des Bundes* (The German Federal Cultural Foundation) as part of the *Migration Project*<sup>12</sup> and produced by Harun Farocki, *Am Rand der Städte* premiered at the International Forum section of Berlinale in 2006. Filmed entirely in Mersin, the southern coastal town in Turkey where Bademsoy was born, the film explores the new housing estates which were specifically built for the former immigrant families that have permanently returned from Germany to Turkey. Although Bademsoy's personal affiliation with the geography suggests an autobiographical dimension, she is quasi-absent in the film – at very rare moments her off-screen voice can be heard interviewing the former immigrants and their children. In this way, Bademsoy handles an often recurring theme in Turkish German cinema: the permanent return to the country of origin, which I will look into with more detail, later in this chapter.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> *The Migration Project (Projekt Migration)* was a major trans-disciplinary project launched by *Kulturstiftung des Bundes* in 2002. *Am Rand der Städte* was shown in a comprehensive exhibition in Kölnischer Kunstverein in Cologne that opened in Autumn 2005.

<sup>13</sup> Jaimey Fisher in his article "Calling All Migrants: Recasting Film Noir with Turkish-German Cinema in Christian Petzold's *Jerichow* (2009)" argues that permanent return is a cliché of the Turkish-German film, giving Akin's *Gegen die Wand* (*Head-on*, 2004) as one example (2010: 71).



**Figure 5 – Opening Scene**

The film opens with a static long shot of a car, parked by a cliff with the Turkish singer Gülşen's "Nazar Değmesin" heard in the background merging with the sound of the waves [Fig.5]. The image then cuts abruptly to the close up image of a young male, sitting inside the car, talking about his initial experience of his family's return to Turkey from Germany. The young male Miray Özdemir explains how difficult the experience of return has been for him, after losing all hope that his father will ever join him with his mother and his sister in Turkey. Overtaken by emotion, Miray sheds a few barely noticeable tears as he explains that he would be happier in Germany, whereas Turkey presents a difficult life. Miray's talk starts abruptly within the first 30 seconds of the film, without an introduction or an interlocutor, it requires a few moments from the viewer to establish a connection with his emotional intensity and make sense of his story. In this way Bademsoy requires the viewer to make an immediate entrance to her film, rendering the viewer's position as precarious as the subject on screen. Miray interrupts his talk to answer his mobile phone to speak with a friend whom he calls 'uncle', and Bademsoy's off-screen voice asks whether it was his uncle on the phone. Miray explains that this is Turkish slang to call friends, similar to 'Alter' (Old Man) in German and following this seemingly mundane exchange of

words, Miray makes a heartfelt confession about his connection to the setting and his perpetual loneliness. There is a moment of time lag following his speech as the image lingers on Miray, who is singing along to the song for a few seconds before the opening titles appear.

This opening sequence, from which Christian Petzold subsequently developed the cliff-top *mise-en-scène* which plays a central part in his film *Jerichow*, juxtaposes the sensory qualities and the materiality of the image with the dramatic and affective quality of speech that are simultaneously foregrounded in the film. The long takes of the very ordinary and mundane are layered with the interviewed subject's personal experience, which unfolds an intensity that makes it not entirely personal. The extended shot lengths achieved by the camera persistently dwelling on the moment when nothing happens, creates a *sensory realism* as the term coined by Tiago de Luca (2012: 183). Matthew Flanagan elaborates de Luca's conceptualisation thus: 'a tendency toward emphasising the sensory qualities of the filmic image and its subjects (in particular, the physical bodies of actors and material contours of the world) in preference to overt dramaticity or psychological motivation' (2012: 15). Throughout the film, Bademsoy's subjects further share their reality in all its affective intensity and availability in the comfort of their homes and workplaces – they talk and sing about their experience of seemingly chosen action of return to their homeland in search of decent standards of living, and this machinic constellation of affective speech and spatial operations brings forth a new documentary assemblage that calls the politics of representation into question. The migrant subjects of enunciation challenge being cultural objects of a sociological reality that awaits assessment – they create their own reality and a *sense* of a community with not only their speech as modes of semiotisation, but also their physical and material presence and excessive long takes of their everyday activities – such as running on the beach, performing labour, praying, playing *saz*, eating, or merely being inactive sitting on their balcony. As they speak and perform these mundane tasks and actions, they rewrite their own, complex versions of the problematic “un-belonging” of the migrant narrative on a molecular level.

This molecular level comprises both ‘signifying transformations concerning linguistic semiologies, and symbolic transformations concerning “intensive” semiotics (on the level of perception, gesture, mimicry etc....)’, similar to the Guattarian rhizomatic methodology as an alternative to the linguistic and semiological systems, which ‘occupy a privileged place in the field of the humanities and social sciences’ (Guattari 2011: 17-18). Deleuze and Guattari, both in their co-authored and respective solo-authored works, make a distinction between the Barthesian *semiology*, which Guattari describes as the ‘trans-linguistic discipline that examines sign systems in connection with the laws of language’ and Peircean *semiotics*, as the ‘discipline that proposes to study sign systems according to a method which does not depend on linguistics’ (Guattari 2011: 22). As Stephen Zepke explains, in Peircean semiotics, signs have to be in direct, physical contact with the things they signify, and therefore they are material and not linguistic – they are ‘inseparable from the brain and its cerebral vibration – thought’ (2005: 85). Peircean semiotics emphasises ‘the material continuity of thought’, and this is what it shares with Bergson’s ontology of the image, since ‘in both the sign shares a materiality with what it expresses, and it is inseparable from an endless movement of thought as its condition of possibility’ (Zepke 2005: 85). As Deleuze and Guattari write, the abstract machine is the function that ‘connects a language to the semantic and pragmatic contents of statements, to collective assemblages of enunciation, to a whole micropolitics of the social’ (2008: 8). To link this back to the aesthetico-political regime and the political function of art that Rancière describes, Bademsoy’s film disrupts the ‘relationship between the visible, the sayable, and the thinkable without having to use the terms of a message as a vehicle’ and reorganises it on the molecular level of everydayness that operates as an abstract machine (2004: 63).

At one point in the film, after a series of location shots, Bademsoy’s camera joins a group of women playing *okey*, a popular Turkish tile-based game, on the balcony of the Çember family. The women are talking about their experiences of living in Germany as first generation migrant workers without interrupting the game. At this seemingly very banal moment, one of the women says that they felt very welcome and respected when they first arrived in Germany

– only until the collapse of the Berlin wall. One of the women claims: “When the wall fell, they suddenly wanted us to go away. They were done with us. It felt as if they were all looking in our eyes, asking us why we’re still here”. It becomes difficult to determine which one of the three women is speaking as the framing seems to become increasingly non-cursory, lingering on half objects while leaving the voices off screen. The voices of the women become indistinguishable as they complement each other’s statements and become a collective assemblage of enunciation. This collective enunciation challenges the widely accepted sociological assessment that the mute, exploited and subaltern migrant figures of the 1970s and 1980s evolved into less oppressed, more confident and integrated subjects in the 1990s, which defines the paradigm shift in the Turkish German cultural studies. As Hake and Mennel observe in relation to the field of film production, ‘in the mid-1990s heretofore unseen images produced by Turkish Germans of the second generation brought a fundamental change in the modes of representation and enunciation... Gone were the exploited guestworkers...’ (2012: 6). With this collective enunciation that challenges the progress observed within the area of artistic production and read as an expression of successful multiculturalism within German society, Bademsoy’s film produces a new connection between the social and the collective experience of labour migration and the economic consequences of the fall of the Berlin Wall, which led to an intensification of labour migration from the former East to the West. With post-industrial capitalism becoming the dominant economic system in the reunified Germany of the 1990s, exploitation of the increasing number of migrants in the former West was only intensified, which presents a counter-argument to the discourses of multiculturalism’s progress and its reflection in the sphere of cinematic production. However Bademsoy does not focus her film upon this collective enunciation as an ideological statement. The enunciation instead functions as an abstract machine, which builds a new connection between the local, the singular expression of individual experience and the social, the collective and the political –the collective sphere of worker exploitation which global capitalism, or as Guattari calls it ‘Integrated World Capitalism’ – seeks to undermine by incorporating it into the discourses of multiculturalism and cultural conflict (2009: 203).



The film's insistent focus on the materiality of the banal is foregrounded in the long takes of the interiors and exteriors: the furniture and household objects such as traditional tea glasses, display cabinets, *okey* boards and tiles, the cars, stacks of buildings and shops. *Bademsoy* demands a certain habituation from the viewer to the here-and-now of the habitat via the camera's avoidance of any reference to the outside world, and this facilitates the intensification of a less mediated affective environment. What do these labour migrants do when they are no longer in the economically or socially defined spheres of life but in their own time? What are their aesthetic preferences, rituals, tastes? What sorts of subjectivities are produced when they are no longer occupying the contours of their worker or immigrant identities? What sort of collectivity can emerge from there? The film displays what Guattari defines as 'collective micropolitical infrastructures responsible for arranging our most intimate temporalization and modelling our relation to landscapes and the living world' (2011: 109).



**Figure 6 – High-rises robbing each other of sunlight**

**Figure 7 - Modern blocks folding inwards**

*Am Rand der Städte* is not solely centered on the human subjects and speech. Architecture and spatial contours of the milieu are at the very core of the film, and twice in the film, the image cuts to a set of subsequent static long shots

and aerial views of the architectural structures and landscape [Fig. 6 and 7]. These include stacks of storeys, windows and balconies of the modern high-rises built in the style of social housing but the film as a whole reveals a very contrasting insight. In the press material, Bademsoy explains how these modern residential blocks are specifically built for leisure and not work, the residents are retired people and their children – the blocks circle a swimming pool, and in between them are mosques, supermarkets and other convenience shops. The residents of the blocks reveal that they pass their days mainly by performing non-productive leisure tasks and activities such as sitting, chatting, walking, driving around, and playing board games – with the exception of Cemil Uyanık, a former labour migrant who, since returning to Turkey has been operating a dry cleaning business. Uyanık claims that one thing that Germany taught him was ‘working very hard’ and this is the only way of living that he knew. As Bademsoy argues however, leisure and vacation is compulsory for these families who have returned to Turkey, which shows a normative capitalist life plan for these subjects – after returning from their destination of labour migration and completing their tasks, they are now required to live a bourgeois lifestyle (see. Appendix). Just like the settlements, the people themselves are on the edges of visibility and on the outskirts of the city, which can only operate on the wheels of a working life, which they have ‘naturally’ been expelled from. The film is thus an exploration of the sensory and affective aftermath of the movement of people under globalisation – how a post-Fordist order of time and space influences and stymies the formation of communities. The specific affective environment of the spaces that are left behind by the flows of globalisation create a distinctive temporality, which may be argued to have influenced Petzold in creating the former east German town of *Jerichow* subsequently in his film.

### *Ehre*

Bademsoy’s most recent film *Ehre* centers around the phenomenon of honour crimes, which has taken a central position within the debates on multiculturalism and Islam in Germany, particularly after the murder of Hatun Sürücü in 2005 (Oberwittler and Kasselt 2011: 1). Bademsoy was at an initial stage of a film

project that would involve Sürücü a few months prior to her murder, over which the two women had bonded and developed a friendship (see Appendix). *Ehre* was conceived as an effort on the filmmaker's side to understand the phenomenon of honour in the context of honour crimes and come to terms with her loss, but the film includes no references to Bademsoy's real life relationship with Sürücü and as in her previous films, Bademsoy abstains from using a subjective tone.

*Ehre* opens with an extended shot of German soldiers pledging their loyalty to the Federal Republic by repeating the Ceremonial oath of the *Bundeswehr* (Federal Defence Forces), which reads as "I pledge to faithfully serve the Federal Republic of Germany and to bravely defend the right and the freedom of the German people". The title card of the film appears following the opening shot, with the word *Ehre* embedded in a quote from the 16<sup>th</sup> century Spanish poet Francisco de Quevedo: "So is Honour... It steals sweets from the body and bliss from the soul. Look how unfortunate you are, how uncertain everything is..." The all-male military members' display of obedience to the nation in its most evidently patriarchal form is juxtaposed with the lines of the early modern poem condemning honour as a source of unhappiness. This flow of juxtaposed image and text immediately reveals that Bademsoy's investigation focuses on the manifestations of patriarchy in the context of social and legal institutions. Contrary to the immediate associations of honour with Muslim communities, Bademsoy starts with a more inclusive method of inquiry that views the concept as directly linked with the practices of patriarchal culture, and turns her camera to the male members of specific social communities, and social and legal institutions. On one side, she explores the production of masculinity and male subjectivity through interviews with the male members of a certain social class as potential perpetrators; and on the other, she interviews male police officers, criminal psychiatrists, lawyers and anti-violence training officers, mapping the production of knowledge and the official discourses of honour crime on a no-less patriarchal institutional level. Bademsoy's strategy to leave women out of the film raises an important question about the politics of documentary representation – how can the strategy of muting the already mute, or otherwise subordinated women contribute to a critique of patriarchal power? To go back to Rancière's argument of the

political art's necessary function to reorganise the aesthetic order, what does Bademsoy aim to bring into visibility and audibility, by turning her camera towards the male groups who are the holders of legitimate and illegitimate power?

Unlike *Am Rand der Städte* – where an affective plane emerges from an assemblage of the singular enunciations of the ex-immigrants and their social, physical and material relations via an extended focus on their habitat – the discursive and affective planes in *Ehre* have an elliptical organisation. The sequencing of the shots creates ruptures in the narrative continuity. Bademsoy does not provide much background information on her subjects apart from what the situations reveal, which in some cases include their names, professions or status; we only find information on them through what *they* reveal in their speech. Both the strategies of leaving women out of the frame, and leaving gaps in storytelling signal a break from traditional strategies of documentary representation. Although Bademsoy sets out with what Lila Abu-Lughod describes as an 'anthropological motive of understanding' honour in the patriarchal context, her methodology can be better explained as a post-representational strategy (2011: 25).

### **Post-representationalism as a Political Strategy**

To understand *Ehre* as part of the long-standing cinematic tradition of representing women's subordination within the patriarchal formations of ethnic communities in Germany would be an underestimation. The film shares few common motifs with the Turkish German fiction films exploring gender inequality within migrant communities, most recent of which is Feo Aladağ's *Die Fremde* (2011), which is loosely based on the murder of Hatun Sürücü. Aladağ's film takes its political-representational cue from its female protagonist's subject position, as opposed to the much-criticised films of the previous decades, portraying women's subordination to ethnic (Muslim) men. This subject/object dichotomy is an integral part of the structural logic of this sort of representationalism and emancipatory practices – be it artistic, literary, philosophical or political. Emancipatory artistic engagement has been traditionally

linked to the aim of becoming a subject (Steyerl 2012: 50). As Hito Steyerl argues in her critique of representational logic, ‘emancipation was conceived as becoming a subject of history, of representation, or of politics. To become a subject carried with it the promise of autonomy, sovereignty, agency’ (2012: 50). Steyerl continues her problematisation by identifying the split between the represented and its image,

The struggle over representation, however, was based on a sharp split between these levels: here thing—there image. Here I—there it. Here subject—there object. The senses here—dumb matter over there. Slightly paranoid assumptions concerning authenticity came into the equation as well. Did the public image—of women or other groups, for example—actually correspond to reality? Was it stereotyped? Misrepresented? Thus one got tangled in a whole web of presuppositions, the most problematic of which being, of course, that an authentic image exists in the first place... But what if the truth is neither in the represented nor in the representation? What if the truth is in its material configuration? (Steyerl 2012: 51)

Steyerl’s definition of a post-representationalist approach aims to subvert the subject/object dichotomy by suggesting that we view the image as an ‘object without a subject’ – or as the poetic title of the article suggests, ‘a thing like you and me’ (Steyerl 2012: 52). Steyerl’s materialist approach thus resonates with the so called ‘speculative’ trend in continental philosophy – also referred to as the *Object Oriented Ontology*, which tends to consider all existing things, including the human subject as a type of object. In contrast with ‘the repetitive continental focus on texts, discourse, social practices and human finitude’, speculative realism entails, ‘speculating once more about the nature of reality independently of thought and humanity more generally’ (Byrant, Srnicek, Harman 2011: 3). Although the theorists/philosophers associated with the speculative trend in philosophy such as Quentin Meillassoux, Graham Harman, Levi Bryant engage with very diverse approaches and diverging perspectives, what brings them together is the break from the long standing philosophical tradition that privileges

the human subject in relation to the world of objects. Meillassoux's critique of what he calls *correlationism* in his famous long essay *After Finitude* designates the crux of the speculative realist thought (2008: 5). According to Meillassoux, correlationism refers to the human-centred philosophical doctrine that views the object as 'nothing more than its accessibility to humans'; in that, all that can be known about the world and reality is limited to the consciousness of a perceiving subject (Harman 2008: 22). In Harman's summary, 'the correlationist holds that we cannot think of humans without world, nor world without humans, but only a primal correlation between the two' (Harman 2009: 122). By contrast to language and cognition oriented philosophical traditions (as practiced by Jacques Derrida, Slavoj Žižek, Immanuel Kant, Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger), speculative realists 'explore what it means to think about reality, without placing worries about the ability of human beings to know the world at the centre of all discussion' (Shavero 2008: 280).

I shall briefly reflect on how a speculative realist approach presents itself as a post-representationalist strategy in thinking about/with film. Traditionally, film studies in Anglo-American scholarship explores how film operates on a cognitive level - similar to correlationist thinking, cognitivist approaches limit film to the consciousness of a perceiving subject. As John Mullarkey explains, nearly all cognitivists – including analytic philosophers engaged with film theory – 'presuppose a *representationalist axiom*: filmic features operate on us as representations of reality' (2009: 55). Mullarkey summarises the direct connection between representationalism and cognitivism as follows:

whatever the particular representational scheme employed – reference, intentionality, language games, cognitive maps or projected illusion – it is always tied to an approach that sees film viewing as representational, as information *about* the world rather than a direct and worldly connection... Affectivity is reduced to the brain's information processing. (2009: 56)

Understood in the broadest sense, representationalism refers to the theory that the world can be represented as it is. For the world to be representable, it is necessary to presume that its components are representable as such, and thus have

somewhat stable identities. Representationalist thinking like correlationist thinking, entails a subordination of ontology to epistemology – ‘it can only discuss things, or objects, or processes, in terms of how a human subject relates to them’ (Shaviro 2009: 280). In this vein, representationalist approaches explore film, first and foremost as it operates on the human consciousness, whereas in contrast speculative realism would see the film, its diegetic and non diegetic world (the tools, the objects, the geography and locations, the people involved in the making of it, temporality) as well as its viewer as ontologically equal and thus offers an alternative to the cognitivist model of the subject as centre, without altogether abandoning it.

To explore further the problems that representationalism’s hierarchical subject/object dichotomy entails, and the ways in which it allows certain crucial complexities and differences to be neglected, it is instructive to look into Gayatri Spivak’s famous query ‘Can the Subaltern speak?’ (1988). In this lengthy essay, Spivak engages with what she considers to be the limitations of post-representational thinking within the area of postcolonial studies (1988). Deconstructing an interview between Foucault and Deleuze titled ‘The Intellectuals and Power’ from 1997, Spivak forcefully argues that the poststructuralist thinkers’ strategy to abandon the task of politically representing (speaking for) the subaltern effectively serves to maintain the same hierarchical power structures that they critique.<sup>14</sup> According to Spivak, this approach lays the groundwork for overlooking ‘both the epistemic violence of imperialism and the international division of labour’, only to end up reinforcing the Eurocentric construction and theoretisation of a political subject (1988: 289).

Although Spivak’s meticulous critique takes issue with the interview and the larger expressions of Deleuze’s (and Guattari’s) post-representationalism on multiple levels, I shall focus here on the essay’s central claim that Deleuze and Foucault’s ‘postrepresentationalist vocabulary hides an essentialist agenda’ (1988: 285). As Spivak argues, Deleuze and Foucault reintroduce the structure of

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<sup>14</sup> Borrowing from Marx, Spivak differentiates between political representation as expressed by *vertreten* and artistic representation as articulated by *darstellen*.

hierarchy of the sovereign subject of desire against the mute, oppressed subject, and make their own position of the “intellectual subject” vague and transparent when they claim to analyse the power and desire structures without acknowledging their privileged position as intellectual subjects of enunciation. Spivak claims that by rejecting speaking for the oppressed and announcing that ‘there is no representation, no signifier... and the oppressed can know and speak for themselves’, Deleuze and Foucault passively perpetuate the existing structures and mechanisms of power (1988: 279). With the aim to formulate what a subject is in the Deleuzian sense, Spivak critiques the concept of desire as theorised by Deleuze and Guattari. Unlike the Lacanian understanding of desire as lack, for Deleuze and Guattari, desire is a processual and productive assemblage of drives, forces and affects and desire itself is produced by pre-subjective forces. As Guattari explains to George Stambouli in an interview:

desire is everything that exists before the opposition between subject and object, before representation and production. It's everything whereby the world and affects constitute us outside of ourselves, in spite of ourselves. It's everything that overflows from us.... there is, yet, no question here of “structure” – that is, of any subjective position, objective redundancy, or coordinates of reference. (2009a: 142)

Desiring production is therefore the process whereby the subject comes to exist: contrary to traditional theories of the subject, the subject in Deleuze and Guattari is not the producer but a product of desire (Robinson and Tormey 2010: 22). Spivak argues that in this reversal, what emerges as the subject-effect is ‘much like the generalized, ideological subject of the theorist’ and ‘not the desiring subject as Other’ (1988: 273). Spivak rejects the Deleuzo-Guattarian understanding of the subject as a multiplicity, a collective assemblage of flows, movements and relations and not a unified identity – and argues for the necessity to represent the subject as other for the purposes of political struggle and inclusion in cultural and social life. In Robinson and Tormey’s summary, Spivak asserts that ‘we should embrace representation, not only because “post-representation” is naively complicit in the maintenance of the status quo, but because those who cannot speak must be represented’ (2010: 27).



While Robinson and Tormey's summary distorts Spivak's critique and reduces it to a manifesto for dutiful representation, Hito Steyerl in her article 'The Subaltern's Present' provides a better account of Spivak's questioning within the context of the politics of representation (2007). As Steyerl argues, Spivak's article is essentially a critique of historiography and thus, it ties into a project of counter-historiography. In Steyerl's words, Spivak

questions whether it is really so easy to bring the excluded to speak. Is it enough to metaphorically hold a microphone in front of their mouths, even if the microphone is replaced...with the historical methods of archive research? This is more than doubtful, since the archive is a refuge of power, in which the traces of the subalterns are necessarily twisted and distorted... Can we even understand the stammeringly rendered expressions of the subalterns in retrospect, especially those of women? Must "experts" in turn translate the language of the subalterns to explain to us what they really mean? ...They play a kind of ventriloquist for underprivileged groups, while acting at the same time as though they were not even there. (Steyerl 2007)

Indeed, Spivak's critique of Deleuze and Foucault's dismissal of representation by letting the others speak for themselves highlights a crucial issue at the heart of the politics of post-representation. Post-representationalism cannot afford to ignore the questions of representation altogether. Post-representationalism, as a methodology should thus function as a micropolitical analysis of power and its production of subjectivities and cultural identities, not by undoing the subject and object altogether, but by highlighting the relations and interconnections that produce them as such, and reproduce them as otherwise. It should thus cut across such oppositions that define the terms of well-worn oppositions such as materialism and idealism, agency versus structure, poststructuralism versus Marxism (Barad 2007: 225). It should explain the relations of power not by undoing the question of representation, but by reformulating its questions. Thus, such a post-representational understanding should be advanced by engaging productively with its critiques, not altogether abandoning the terms of

representation. Spivak's critique itself is a critique of representational thinking, and in this way can be useful to move post-representational understanding forward by recognizing the limitations of its terms and by articulating the relationship of the sides of oppositions to each other.

The rhizomatic, schizoanalytical and micropolitical methods of analysis, developed by Deleuze and Guattari both in their co-authored and solo works study events in their occurrence and not as entities or identities defined by pre-established coordinates; nor in terms of subjects, objects or things that exist as such but the relations that perpetuate them as by-products. And as such, Spivak's critique of representation can be married to Deleuzian and Guattarian analysis in a productive way. At this point, it is important to note again that Guattari in his lengthy explorations of subjectivity formation, considers the subject as a 'collective assemblage of heterogeneous formations' and as Gary Genosko argues, this entails 'distinguishing non-absolutely between subject (actively exploring self-defined projects) and subjugated groups (passively receiving directions)' as they each affect 'the relations of their members to social processes' and as such, they are future-oriented and political in a non-representational sense – they have the potential to form and transform subjects (2009: 3). As Genosko continues to explain, schizoanalysis as a methodological process 'entails a politically progressive and provisional transformation of concrete situations and predicaments of living', with a micropolitical task of discerning 'the mutational potential of a given component' and 'explore the effects of its passages in and between assemblages and milieus' (2009: 4).

Bademsoy's delimitation of the range of her interviewees by leaving women out of the frame and talking to a strictly gender-homogenous group of men suggests that, political representation as understood within much of critical theory is not foregrounded as the main objective of the film. Neither does Bademsoy's strategy to film her subjects in the banality of their everyday life through long takes of them posing to the camera within their local neighbourhood express the traditional logic of documentary exposé. Rather, Bademsoy pulls the politics of the representation and signification apart from the practices that elaborate the reality, things and processes that 'honour' as an abstract and ideal

concept inhabits, in other words her subject of exploration is ‘the entanglement of matter and meaning’ (Barad 2007). She films the material conditions of existence for the concept of honour and the human, male subjects are only a part of this set of materialities as a whole. It is not just the lines of thought that the documentary follows, but also the very material lines of everyday existence and its management as a vector for thought to move beyond symbolism and political idealism.

The opening military oath sequence points out towards the rhizomatic thread of patriarchy and the masculine ethos of the state in the cartography of honour that the film is about to embark on. Unlike mainstream public discourses in Germany which directly associate the oppressive and violent implications of patriarchy exclusively with immigrant communities and more specifically Islamo-Turkish masculinities, Bademsoy turns her camera at the *Bundeswehr* as the site where the patriarchal codes are most evidently implemented by the state. Although arguably militarisation is not prominent in daily life in Germany, and the nation is defined as an economic rather than a military power in the global sphere, the *Bundeswehr* is still one of the most authoritative and economically powerful units of the German state under the Ministry of Defence, with major efforts being made to prevent any affiliation with the former fascist German military. Bademsoy opens and closes *Ehre* with the German soldiers repeating the code of honour of the German nation, and in this way frames the film with the suggestion that patriarchy is an elemental technique of the disciplinary state apparatus. Not only is patriarchy a tool for discipline and control, it is also overcoded by the state apparatus, as a vice and excess of the state’s other, the Muslim male.

Deleuze and Guattari define the state as ‘a process of capture of flows of all kinds, populations, commodities or commerce, money or capital, etc.’ (2008: 425). Insofar as the state’s tools of capture are also active in the molecular processes that produce subjectivities – they also capture flows of desire and affect and hence they are central to the processes of subjectivisation. *Ehre* follows the non-visible forces that are active in these processes of capture in subjectivity production; instead of handling the issue of honour/patriarchy as a social ill that is

exclusive to migrant and ethnic communities, Bademsoy also looks at the molar institutions which provide anti-violence education and training for young offenders under the Violence Prevention Network, as well as talking to forensic lawyers, detectives, police officers and other state authorities. In this way, Bademsoy moves beyond identity and class politics and representation towards a micropolitical cartography of patriarchy in organisations and processes that regulate, legislate and control violence in its potential (virtual) and actual forms in Germany. The absence of women in this cartography is thus foregrounded as a critique of representation which Deleuze describes as ‘the indignity of speaking for others’ in his conversation with Foucault (1980: 209).

Following the opening sequence, a young man appears on screen in a medium shot. The frame provides no information on the man’s identity and as he unsuccessfully seeks to formulate an answer to a question posed by the filmmaker off-screen. Inarticulate and hesitating, he utters an accented ‘I think a man is... he is a person...’ What follows is a tedious long take of the man while he is searching for an answer to Bademsoy’s question, which the viewer assumes to be ‘What is a man?’ until he starts to talk about a man’s responsibilities as a husband, and what could be the exceptional conditions of the justification for a divorce. Opening her film with a blatantly inarticulate interviewee, Bademsoy puts forward the challenge to come, that of making sense of her subjects and squeezing meaning out of the concept of honour in the patriarchal context. What could traditionally be an example of bad documentary editing is exactly what Bademsoy manifests in her films – the viewer is immediately made aware that the images in *Ehre* are not purposefully crafted to support a linear narrative, a theory or a truth as the subjects on screen do not merely provide evidences to a proposal, theory or schema. The viewer is thus confronted with the challenge of being at their own editing table, as these inarticulate monologues by subjects whose identities are seemingly provided in a haphazard way seem to create a raw mass of speech which defies discursive capture.

Only after these two seemingly unrelated sequences does the film introduce the two young offenders that will be the film’s central focus: 16 year old Christian who is ethnically German, and 17 year old Abdullah of Palestinian

origin. The two are filmed separately, each amongst a group of friends on the street, discussing their takes on honour in a non-questioning, self-righteous manner. The scene then cuts to a single figure talking to the camera, next to a barred window. The man who we will later learn to be an ex-detainee called Izzettin speaks in the past tense: ‘I used to think like that, I am a man, I can do whatever I want. And my sister can’t’. Contrasted with the previous self-assured remarks of the teenagers, Izzettin’s remorseful monologue is followed by a 360-degree panoramic take of the site where Hatun Sürücü was murdered in 2005. The subtitles only appear after the camera returns to its initial position and focuses on the memorial stone and the diegetic sound of the street slowly fades and is muted. This powerful sequence expresses the materiality of the place where Sürücü was murdered by her brothers in what was referred to as the most well known case of honour killing in Germany.



**Figure 8 - The memorial site for Hatun Sürücü**



**Figure 9 - 360-degree panning shot of the site of murder**

In *Cinema 2*, Deleuze describes any-space-whatever as ‘empty, disconnected spaces characteristic of modern cinema’ (2005a: 234). The concept has often been understood as a cinematic space lacking significance or singularity, such as ‘disused warehouses, waste ground, cities in the course of demolition or reconstruction’ (Deleuze 2005a: xi). Any-space-whatever retains an expressivity that is independent of narrative and signifiers, as David Martin-Jones explains, it ‘illustrates our existence in time, as opposed to the actualized spaces of the action-image which are given purpose and meaning by the sensory-motor actions of protagonists’ (2011: 137-138). However, in the context of the cinema of modern auteurs such as Robert Bresson and Jean Marie Straub and Daniele Huillet, Deleuze explores these spaces further, and defines their expressive potentiality as ‘those silent powers of before or after speech, before or after man’ (2005a: 234). He continues,

The visual image becomes *archaeological, stratigraphic, tectonic*.

Not that we are taken back to prehistory (there is an archaeology of

the present), but to the deserted layers of our time which bury our own phantoms; to the lacunary layers which we juxtaposed according to variable orientations and connections. (Deleuze 2005a: 234)

Archaeological here designates the cartographic quality of the layers of time that the image, now uninhabited by humans or narrative, exhibits. Bademsoy's panning camera renders visible the purely rarefied image of the site of an honour crime, which initially provides no discursive information – in that, the shot does not enclose any useful or related information to the discursive field of honour crime, but merely documents the site of the murder [Fig.8 and 9]. The space itself exposes the affective 'curve which imposes itself with almost abstract trajectories'; the site reflects back on the human history that it holds and 'stands for what is buried in it' (Deleuze 2005a: 234). The withdrawal of women from the image opens up a variety of possible connections of thought and perception, and as Deleuze quotes Noel Burch, it 'requires a considerable effort of memory and imagination' (2005a: 235). The absence of women forms an abstract presence via the concrete presence of the site of murder which still holds a powerful affective force – the image turns the absence into 'a fullness in which there is nothing missing' (Deleuze 2005a: 235). As Mark Fisher identifies in Deleuze's writing, geology is continuous with politics: 'The idea of social "stratification" is not just a vague metaphor in Deleuze's work, but rather an expression of the way in which both human populations and the earth are shaped by vast impersonal processes. The unpeopled is therefore not the same as the empty.' (Fisher 2010: 50). The image thus leaves the zone of representation and requires a different sort of engagement with the milieu – an active engagement that is necessary for a new sense of politics to emerge.

The muted long takes of the honour murder sites appear three more times in the film; the third of which is followed by the commentary of a forensics expert on the particular case of Sazan B. of Iraqi-Kurdish origin, stabbed and burnt to death by her former husband on a street in Garching near Munich. An aerial view shot observes the scene of crime, with a single police officer working cursorily on the site, marking the ground with white chalk. The officer narrates

the crime to the camera in close up, followed by the forensic lawyer Kızılhan describing the gruesome details that are commonly seen in honour crime cases. Kızılhan argues that the attacker aims for disfiguring the faces and genitals of the victims as a strategy to harm the body parts that are most representative of femininity. Bademsoy thus draws attention once more to the material dimensions of honour crime: biology and its symbolic and representational function as media of storage and forensic-aesthetic evidence. Like the sites of murder, the bodies of victims are also read by forensic experts for evidence investigation – in this case to gather information in order to put the crime into the context of patriarchal violence. To borrow Thomas Keenan and Eyal Weizman's term, forensic aesthetics signal 'a shift in emphasis from the living to the dead, from subject to object' and I would add, from human to non-human (2011). They write,

Derived from the Latin *forensis*, the word's root refers to the "forum," and the practice and skill of making an argument before a professional, political, or legal gathering. In classical Rome, one such rhetorical skill involved having objects address the forum. Because they do not speak for themselves, there is a need for something like translation or interpretation. A person or a technology must mediate between the object and the forum, to present it and tell its story. (Keenan and Weizman 2011)

Insistently dwelling on the milieu, Bademsoy's camera and all things it captures become mediators in a continuum; be it human or nonhuman, each possessing an expressive agency to varying degrees. As Keenan and Weizman argue, what appears as significant through this new materialist tendency is not that we have suddenly acquired an ability to understand what things and objects are saying; but rather how a new attentiveness to the nonhuman expressivity in various forums of life have 'changed the meanings and practices of discussions' and how 'the entry of non-humans into the field of human rights has transformed it' (2011).

Kızılhan points at one particular fissure in the geographical continuity of the discourse of honour crime. Talking about the case of Sazan B from Northern Iraq, he argues that after nearly 60 years of resistance and organised guerrilla warfare against Turkish and Iraqi armies, patriarchy has lost most of its power



amongst the Kurds in Northern Iraq. Women have fought near men and have gained freedom, power and influence through their struggle and hence today in cities like Sulaymaniah women have gained considerable power in politics and social life. This statement undermines a very fundamental element in the honour crime discourse: namely the overarching sense that patriarchal violence emerges from an archaic world-view peculiar to the other/outsider. Indeed the often repeated enunciation of ‘This is Germany, and in Germany women have equal rights as men’ uttered by the authorities in the film encapsulates in itself the presumption that the outsider has brought the pathological and extreme thought patterns from elsewhere and needs to leave them behind on entrance to Germany. As the forensic lawyer of the Sazan B. case describes the court proceedings in the empty courtroom before the trial takes place: ‘...the judge will say: “you may believe what you like, but what you believe has no validity in this courtroom. What is valid here, are the values of the Federal Republic of Germany.”’



**Figure 10 – The state as patriarch**

The lawyer’s utterance of the German legal discourse implies nothing more than an institutional rhetoric and statements such as ‘everyone is free’ become a symbol of the liberal state discourse to an extent that it cannot function as anything else [Fig.10]. The sequence captures the inadequacy of the vocabulary

of transcendental legal determination. The camera thus takes on an aesthetic-archaeological function, capturing the gaps within the density of legal discourse and the material (both visible and intangible) conditions of the discursive formation of honour in institutions and social groups and their relations. Bademsoy presents unpeopled long-takes of each institutional and non-institutional milieu, which express the outside of the discourse, and how they are organised and disorganised by discourse. As Foucault writes in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*,

Behind the visible façade of the system, one posits the rich uncertainty of disorder; and beneath the thin surface of discourse, the whole mass of a largely silent development (devenir): a “presystematic” that is not of the order of the system; a “prediscursive” that belongs to an essential silence. Discourse and system produce each other... (2002a: 84)

Discourse, understood as immanent to matter implies its prediscursive form(ation); that is, it is more than a mere product of judgment as a human faculty. The emphasis on the material qualities of the filmic image poses the rather procedural question of how patriarchal discourse, social groups and institutions produce and organise each other.

Although a remarkable length of the film focuses on Abdullah and Christian both individually and within social group activities (loitering or anti-violence training sessions filmed in the manner of life-as-rehearsal documentary style established by Farocki), the camera retains a substantial distance from them; passing over the remarks that reveal their individual histories, often in mute long takes of the characters. Reminiscent of Warhol’s screen tests, the image constantly seeks the moments where the subjective gets entangled with the messy, disordered and undramatic everyday and its management and organisation within the social, the discursive, the cultural and the institutional. In this way, Bademsoy conveys a distinctive cartographic attitude separating her film from conventional social-representational documentary, emphasising the role of the liberal state and its myriad organisations in capturing expressive forces in the processes of meaning making.

### 2. 3. Diagrams in Harun Farocki's *Aufstellung* (2005)

Harun Farocki's single-channel video installation, *Aufstellung*, opened in 2005 at the *Kölischer Kunstverein* alongside Bademsoy's *Am Rand der Städte*, as part of a large-scale cross-media exhibition where the results of the two-year long project, *Projekt Migration* (The Migration Project) were presented. This project was funded by *Kulturstiftung des Bundes* (German Cultural Foundation), and comprised workshops, and screenings which together aimed to 'fill the crucial gaps in the history and representation of migration to Germany' as laid out on the foundation's website.<sup>15</sup> Farocki's 17 minute-long essay film, made specifically for the project and also funded by the German Cultural Foundation, presents its viewers with a mute montage of ideograms, pictograms, pie and graph charts and various maps and diagrams illustrating histories of migration to Germany from a diverse period range. In what follows, the film is viewed as a machinic system, which, through rapid montage, forms new connections between histories of migration and displacement that are otherwise kept separately. To this end, I use Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the diagram, which they develop drawing on Foucault's definition of the Panopticon: 'a generalizable model of functioning; a way of defining power relations in terms of everyday life of men...' (Foucault 1979: 205). I will explore how Farocki makes visible the diagrams of migration, using a deliberately impersonal technique for interpellating the viewers to make, and actively build such machinic connections between what would otherwise remain separate: the cost and the profit attached to human migration.

Taken from school and language textbooks, history books, official pamphlets, newspapers and magazines, Farocki's rapidly cut series of images conveys (visualisations of) statistical data and qualitative information showing patterns and trends in human movement and displacement. The series present human migrant figures as pictograms: the Turkish male worker is often identified

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<sup>15</sup> See: [http://kulturstiftung-des-bundes.de/cms/en/projekte/trans\\_und\\_inter/archiv/migration\\_project.html](http://kulturstiftung-des-bundes.de/cms/en/projekte/trans_und_inter/archiv/migration_project.html)

with a fez, moustache and a suitcase; women, though scarcely present, almost always appear with a headscarf or a hijab. The sequencing is non-chronological and, although a majority of the images refer to post-1950s labour migration, they are juxtaposed with maps and cartographic illustrations of mass migratory movements from a much broader period: from the multi-directional movement of Germanic tribes around the fifth century to the post-War mass migration of refugees from eastern Europe to the West. Maps of concentration camps are followed by figures showing waves of migration from the GDR and figures for asylum seekers in the last decade of the past century. In this way, Farocki fuses together within 17 minutes more than two hundred still images via rapid montage, in a sequencing which brings together histories that are catalogued and stored separately, aligning labour migration, imposed mobility and displacement of humans with commodity flows via the market maps that are shown. As the following pages will demonstrate, instead of seeking to ‘fill the crucial gaps’ in the history of migration, Farocki brings to the fore those gaps and indeed opens up new ones in a visual archaeology. This archaeology of visual abstraction is productive of a new set of questions about the logic of labour migration as a cognitive and subjective economy.

### **The im/perceptible, the visible and the articulable**

Farocki’s heterogeneous filmography consists of dozens of documentary and essay films alongside a number of collaborative feature films, and video installations produced for and exhibited in several institutional contexts including cinema, television and gallery space. Trained at the Deutsche Film und Fernsehakademie Berlin alongside radical activist contemporaries such as Holger Meins, Farocki has produced written and audiovisual works that are mainly concerned with what images reveal and hide as a continuum. Nora Alter defines this continuum as ‘the political in/visible’ in her analysis of *Bilder der Welt und Inschrift des Krieges* (Images of the World and the Inscription of War, 1989), one of Farocki’s internationally better-acclaimed essay films (1996: 167). Alter argues that a majority of Farocki’s works ‘problematize technologies of visual representation and reproduction, generally exposing the view inculcated by mass

media and contrasting them with a more independent coverage' (1996: 172). She suggests that Farocki's critique implies a theoretical position, which seeks to study how media apparatuses operate on different cognitive levels. This in turn enables certain political visibilities while simultaneously and strategically producing invisibilities. Alter's critique engages with prior phenomenological and psychoanalytical approaches to *Images of the World* by Thomas Keenan and Kaja Silverman (who take their theoretical cues from Heidegger and Lacan respectively). Following these earlier critics, Alter argues that these specific theoretical frameworks can limit the political potential of the essay film to what is readily available as a message advocated by the work itself (1996: 191–192). Instead of a merely socio-historical approach, which would rather crudely reduce the film to advocating a single ideological cause, Alter argues for a multi-layered engagement with the film, which should also pay close attention to its form, so as to analyse effectively its immediate 'tactical' political position as well as its strategical 'more long-term' form of 'warfare' – which is 'more or less concealed, more or less im/perceptible' (1996: 190). Written in the mid-1990s when psychoanalysis and phenomenology were still amongst the dominant paradigms in Anglophone film studies, Alter's critique of a certain tendency towards 'contentism' articulates the radical potential of the virtual aesthetics of the political 'im/perceptible', even as it warns, on the other hand, against this potential as a form of decentralisation of the film's radical message, one that risks making intangible an otherwise direct militant content. Alter gives the unexplained and disconnected shots of the wave machines at a Hannover water research laboratory which opens and closes *Images of the World* as an example of the political im/perceptible: Farocki shows these machines to advocate the use of hydropower as an alternative to nuclear power, which is a comparison, with which the viewer is invited to critically engage with earlier in the film (1996: 191). Alter's concept of the 'im/perceptible' is not intended to express that which has no visual attributes and which is not available to perception in the audiovisual constellation of the film, but instead it refers to that which has no immediate or explicit semantic attribute, that which is not uttered but visually implied and therefore escapes immediate cognition. In other words, it remains reliant on the signifier/signified model – what is shown on screen delivers its political message

in an indirect way, the im/perceptible in this schema is between the sign and its referent.

In this part of the chapter, I will explore this zone of the political im/perceptible, by setting out a diagrammatic connection between the visible and the articulable formations evoked in the previous chapter. Foucault puts forward this distinction in the first chapter of *The Order of Things* wherein he analyses Velasquez's painting *Las Meninas*, by describing the relation between the things and words – what is visible and what is articulable (through language), or the seen and the said as an 'infinite relation' (2002: 10). Foucault explains this relation or non-relation between the two registers as follows:

it is in vain that we say what we see; what we see never resides in what we say. And it is in vain that we attempt to show, by the use of images, metaphors or similes, what we are saying; the space where they achieve their splendour is not that deployed by our eyes but that defined by the sequential elements or syntax. (2002: 10)

These two formations are irreducible to one another and they are untranslatable to each other's terms – yet together the seen and the said form a singular stratum. Strata, as Deleuze writes in his book on Foucault, are 'historical formations, positivities or empiricities', and as such they are not *objects* of knowledge, but they are active *agents* of knowing (2010: 41, 44). Deleuze here gives Foucault's studies of the histories of madness, prison and sexuality as specific examples of such social strata, but prior to this, in *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari refer to the human body as a stratum: strata can refer to chemical and biological, as well as social and historical formations. In Plateau Six, 'How do you make yourself a body without organs?' they name the three strata that constitute the human body as the organism, interpretation/significance, and subjectification (2008: 176). With an ironically evangelical tone they refer to the imperative of signification,

you will be an organism, you will articulate your body – otherwise you're just deprived. You will be signifier and signified, interpreter and interpreted – otherwise you're just a deviant. You will be a subject of the statement – otherwise you're just a tramp. (Deleuze and Guattari 2008: 177)

Whether the stratum in question is a biological, biochemical or biosocial formation such as an individual or a historical/social formation such as law or sexuality, the regime of signification functions as a fundamental machine of capture which nails the individual 'down to a dominant reality', and language (the articulable) has primacy and a determining function over the visible register that is determinable (Deleuze and Guattari 2008: 177; Deleuze 2010: 57). The articulable determines the visible in an infinite number of ways – the visible, operating on a level that is different in nature from that of the articulable cannot be exhausted or reduced to any finite number of determinations, and is determinable infinitely. In different strata, these two registers can attain certain political, aesthetic or scientific functions, and with these functions and through how the two relate to each other, both registers can be infinitely effective in the production processes of knowledge, and knowledge in turn actualizes, modifies and redistributes these relations (Deleuze 2010: 65). It is this 'dual tendency' which interests Deleuze and Guattari as Bruce McClure explains in his study of the function of language in the two philosopher's works: 'on the one hand, towards the order and regularity of the strata - where visible and articulable are clearly and distinctly distributed, and on the other, towards creation, disruption and change, the plane of the inarticulable and unrecognisable' (2001: 10). The assembled structure of *Ausstellung* makes these strata urgent to understand.

### **Diagrams**

The main object of investigation for Deleuze and Guattari is neither the word nor the image but the diagrammatic relation between the two. Deleuze and Guattari's works convey a proliferation of concepts, which the two thinkers use to describe their methods of evaluating these processes of stratification: schizoanalysis,

rhizomatics, micropolitics, metamodelling, pragmatics, intensive cartography and abstract machines. ‘Connect, conjugate, continue: a whole “diagram”, as opposed to still signifying and subjective programs’ (Deleuze and Guattari 2008: 178). This diagrammatic formula of making yourself a body without organs through ‘experimentation’ as explained in *A Thousand Plateaus* can be traced back to the radical semiotics that Guattari explores extensively in his previous work, *The Machinic Unconscious*, originally published in 1979. Here, taking its cue from a mix of Charles Sanders Peirce’s and Louis Hjelmslev’s semiotics in opposition to Saussurean and Lacanian semiology and linguistics, Guattari develops the concept of a-signifying semiotics as a tool to explore ‘non-linguistic information transfers’ (Genosko 2009: 92). In his introduction to *The Machinic Unconscious*, Guattari provides a ‘sort of synthetic glossary’ wherein he explains certain concepts that reappear throughout his study (2011: 19-20). He describes two groups of ‘pragmatic components’ of his semiotic methodology: the interpretative components, which include ‘analogical’ and ‘signifying’ transformations, and the non-interpretative components, which include symbolic and diagrammatic transformations. The former group expresses representational assemblages of enunciation, which operate on a regime of resemblance or signifiante, whereas the latter refers to intensive and a-signifying semiotics (2011: 20). Like the visible and the articulable, the signifying and post-signifying regimes are closely intertwined, but they operate on different principles (Bogue 2001: 144). What discerns them is the post-representational, creative and transformative function of the latter. As Gary Genosko writes, diagrams in Guattari’s thought are ‘irreducible to icons because icons remain encysted in pre-established coordinates, beholden to a given meaning they can do without’ (2009: 11). Thus, diagrams are productive functions rather than icons, they are ‘non-representational’ and ‘they give meaning’ (Genosko 2009: 11). The diagram is not a metaphor, symbol or a sign.

Guattari’s writings are often accompanied with illustrations and drawings, however as Janell Watson argues, he never refers to his illustrations as diagrams. She continues,

His drawings work like diagrams in the sense that they at times seem to generate ideas, as if they were operating on their own,



like little machines. Each term that he adds to one of his tables or schemas calls forth another; each movement sets off another. It is very easy to lose sight of what the original drawing was for in the first place. To my mind the drawings embody and enact his concepts of metamodeling, mapping, and diagrammaticism. (Watson 2009: 13)

Diagrammaticism is a process of operation, a function, a relation and not a pursuit of representation. Representational grids of the icon or drawing, understood as a signifier, is a wholly constituted image that allows little or no room for transformation. Guattari names 'algorithmic, algebraic and topological logics, recordings, and data processing systems that utilize mathematics, sciences, technical protocols, harmonic and polyphonic musics' as diagrams of a-signifying character (2011: 199). For Guattari, the non-human, machinic processes of production were crucial for thinking about the post-representational logic of the contemporary network society and understanding the principles of this machinic and diagrammatic activity was the condition for a critique of global capitalism where production is becoming increasingly computerized, automated, immaterial and non-tangible. However, machinic creativity for Guattari is not solely a quality of non-human techno-bodies although cyberneticisation is the locus where it is most evident – instead, machinic relations are already in operation between the basic semiotic elements. As he writes,

we will be able to advance in this way only on condition of better understanding what traverses these components, what happens – what passes – between their basic semiotic elements (signs, signals, symbols, icons, indexes, signs-particles, etc.). (Guattari 2011: 200)

The diagrammaticity is explained in this quote as a cartographical and transversal practice. In Guattari's 'material semiotics', words and things occupy the same immanent realm - signs do not belong to a purely semiotic realm, nor can meaning be explained in terms of purely physical processes – instead, as McClure explains, 'this method requires the resources of both the actual/virtual opposition' (2001: 54). In what follows, the application of a diagrammatic

economy of images and words will illuminate the productive function of montage in *Aufstellung*.

### In/Formation

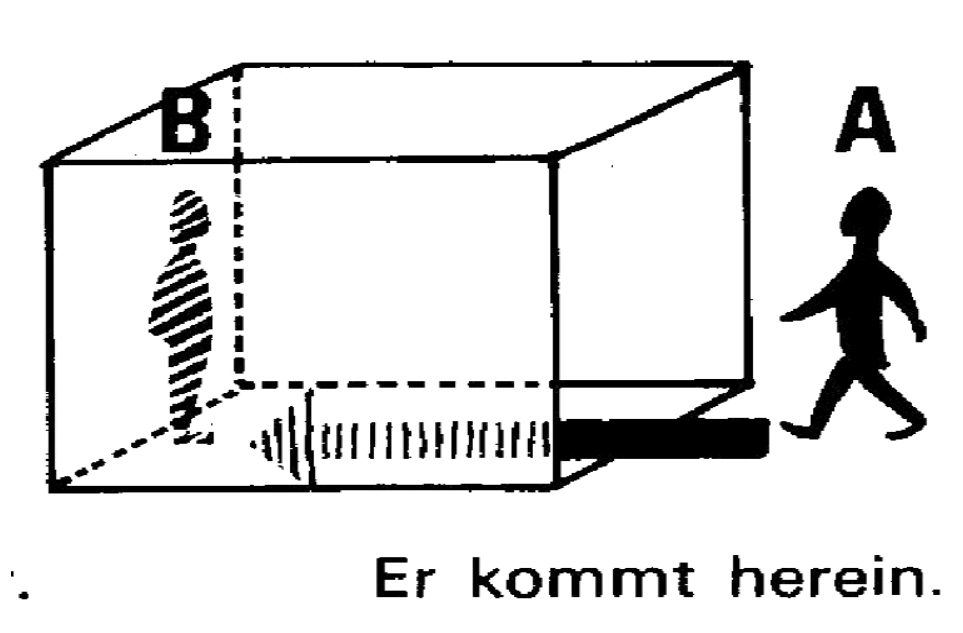


Figure 11 - *Aufstellung*

Translated into English as In/Formation, the German title of Farocki's *Aufstellung* literally means 'array', a systematic ordering or arrangement of objects – implying a certain syntactic structure. The film was initially conceived as a longer installation piece, with an additional section consisting of film stills, animations and pictograms of migratory movements from different geographical/historical contexts.<sup>16</sup> The final exhibited piece brings together a 17-minute long, mute slideshow of representational iconography conveying

<sup>16</sup> Harun Farocki writes about the process of the film's conception on the Transit Migration website: 'In our two-part video project, we have selected a variety of diagrams that illustrate migration... This is followed by film stills, animations, and comparisons of images with different arrows representing a country's imports and exports, or population exchange between two nations and the related flow of goods and people.' The final exhibited piece excludes the second part. (see: [http://www.transitmigration.org/db\\_transit\\_e/ausgabe\\_e.php?inhaltID=54](http://www.transitmigration.org/db_transit_e/ausgabe_e.php?inhaltID=54))

information on migration and as such it stands out from Farocki's filmography as a piece consisting entirely of found images and still frames. Over more than four decades as a filmmaker, Farocki has utilised various imaging and narrative strategies in a heterogeneous audiovisual oeuvre: whether in cinematic productions or installation works, Farocki has used direct cinema, observational/objective documentarism and subjective/essay film conventions across various media formats. One recurring area of investigation in his filmography is the key position of image technologies within the processes of capitalist production: material and immaterial labour; cognitive, social, subjective and cultural production and the production of images themselves. In his discussion of the Farocki Retrospective at Raven Row Gallery in London, Benedict Seymour summarises some of the major themes that reappear throughout Farocki's oeuvre as 'the symbiotic relationship of (image) technologies across military, consumer and productive spheres, the centrality of technological and pedagogical simulation in an increasingly performance-based capitalism, a rigorous and self-scrutinising investigation of the language of cinema and television' (2010).

The constellation of the found images in *Aufstellung* are characteristically self-reflexive and autonomous, the subject and object of the pedagogical simulation are the diagrams themselves, which make meaning entirely in their own right. What distinguishes *Aufstellung* from the rest of Farocki's audiovisual oeuvre is that it sits at the zero degree of the cinematic - with no soundtrack, no inherent movement and no original footage, the installation, which was composed in the digital video format and not as a photographic slideshow, is essentially a-cinematic. Yet, even under the cacophonous soundscape of the gallery space, the single-screen film has a strong effect of direct address to the spectator and in this way it arguably asserts itself as an essay film in the sense that Laura Rascaroli defines the term (2009: 35). Rascaroli identifies the essay film as necessarily having a structure in which the spectator is 'called upon to engage in a dialogical relationship with the enunciator, hence to become active, intellectually and emotionally, and interact with the text' (2009: 35). For Rascaroli, subjective reflection and interpellation are the two key characteristics

of the essay film, which distinguish the category from what she calls ‘authorial documentaries’: the observational form which presents ‘factual images in a way that both informs us of certain realities and comments on them... but we, the spectators do not necessarily feel summoned and engaged in a continuous dialogue with the filmmaker/essayist’ (2009: 40). She gives Farocki’s *Images of the World* as a quintessential example of an essay film, enhanced with the voiceover narrator as a physically present enunciator. However, although *Aufstellung* does not use voiceover narration and an overt interpellation, what makes it an essay film is its direct address to the spectator, with visual effects such as fragmentation, close-up and repetition. The narrator/director is not present in physical form, and the argument is created entirely by the sequencing of non-indexical images: taken out of their context and stripped of their symbolic meaning, these pedagogical images creatively unfold their own narratives and as such they generate a demand on the spectator to think history anew. The meaning appears to be created entirely by the images, which abandon their original representational and indexical status, and take on an autonomous, creative and provocative function.

This a-cinematic quality of the film produces a two-fold effect. Firstly, it enables reflection on the quality of the medium in its relation to time. Farocki strips the video of its most fundamental and distinctive element, namely movement, and aims thereby to create specific and austere *dispositifs* in the sense that Raymond Bellour employs. Bellour uses the complex term *dispositif* to express the machinic constellations of the cinematic medium which include its spatial dispositions and the conditions of its material affects on the spectator – as Adrian Martin subsequently explains ‘a *dispositif* is heterogeneous’ and ‘it is truly a matter of bits and pieces of very different substances brought into an often volatile working relation’ (Martin 2011). Martin continues to argue that as a particularly strong *dispositif*, the ‘communication with a spectator’ is ‘a crucial aspect of the materiality of any audiovisual medium’ and the media-ecological environment of the art space continuously brings forth the need to theorise new *dispositifs* (2011). Bellour argues that the transformations that the digital

revolution has brought to the study of film have enriched the constraints of the particular social and affective *dispositif* that cinema could offer. He writes:

thanks especially to the digital image, the contaminations between images that move and those that do not have become more and more fertile – as have those having to do with the degrees of realism of the worlds presented – the *dispositifs* in which these images appear always respect a clear division, in spite of things that may enchant or threaten them: endlessly transformable *dispositifs*, each different and specific in the world of installation art; stubbornly one and the same in the world of cinematic art. (Bellour 2012: 11)

Bellour does not simply dismiss the cinematic *dispositif* as a limitation but encourages and welcomes the machinic connection produced by the ‘contamination’ of various media environments (2012: 11). Not dismissing the pluralism of the specific *dispositifs* that different media forms offer, Bellour argues that understanding these *dispositifs* or the modes of images in relation to each other will be a more yielding pursuit. Criticising Deleuze for having excluded the function of the stilled image and photography from his study of the moving image and cinema, Bellour argues that the still image ‘has acted and still does act as a medium for the relentless search for another time, for a break in time...’ (2012: 133). This critique is fruitful for understanding the striking durational aspect of *Ausstellung*. Due to the spatial *dispositifs* of the gallery space, which allow the viewer to enter into the film at any moment in its course, the film loses its temporal coordinates. The history of migration that *Aufstellung* presents on the gallery screen resists being conventionally historiographical, in that it works on certain exclusions and contraptions – no specific opening or closing, no soundtrack and no movement, what creates the narrative effect is simply how one image connects to the next and as such makes powerfully meaningful connections – like a semiotic system which works on an entirely different and indefinite set of principles than that of language: a machinic system.

The second effect is closely connected to the first and is about the diagrammatic economy that exists between the images and words. The film,

when played in a chronological order starts with a close up on the German word “kommen” (come) [Fig.11]. The next frame reveals the whole of the image that the previous fragment was taken from. This shows two human pictograms in black and white, a man and a woman with an arrow below them, showing the woman in movement towards the man, on top of which the word “kommen” stands. Taken from language books, the abstract drawings both in parts and as wholes follow each other- as if in a series, only without the narrative quality that series would suggest. Movement is simulated in still images with arrows; the constant zoom-ins and zoom-outs simulate the sensory quality and tuning in of perception. The wholes do not merely serve the purpose of revealing the context that the parts belong to, but also that they are more than a sum of their parts: the fragmented words and images increasingly create a crisis in representation. This machinic constellation of still images follow a musical motif: each frame remains on screen for three seconds and the zoom-ins and zoom-outs act as refrains (as Genosko defines the term, ‘recurrent beatings of time understood in relation to a milieu and its components’), which reinforce connections while simultaneously breaking the flow and texture by constituting repetition with a difference (2009: 79). The creative force appears to emerge from the images themselves, as the singularities emerge in the measured interstices of the fragmented, rescaled and repeated images. As Genosko explains with regard to the meaning making process in Guattari’s thought, the images assemble ‘new constellations of components with their own intrinsic and extrinsic relations’ (2009: 81).



**Figure 12 - 'Foreigners'**

In these pictograms, migrants are often portrayed looking jaded, downtrodden, with bad posture and often along with a numeric figure taken out of context [Fig.12]. The quantification of labour comes to the fore here in the physiognomy of population control, so that the statistics of foreign labour classified according to nationalities are juxtaposed with commodity illustrations and statistics of mass consumption. At first glance, illustrations appear to be supporting the statistical figures and vice versa – numbers and words appear to be enhanced with illustrations. The actual forms are autonomous in conveying information, but without thinking their virtual convergences, each actual formation, word, image and number each go in multiple semiotic directions and beyond traditional semantic structures. German media theorist Wolfgang Ernst, while working on an algorithmic cinematic archive with Farocki, explains their planned non-semantic archiving technique as an alternative to traditional iconographic archiving which sorts images thematically, and as such, he defines this as a form of media archaeology (2004: 261-289). Ernst argues that the

technique of gathering images according to their visual attributes instead of the hermeneutic information they convey will help to 'supplement film-philological approaches by trans-hermeneutic ways of processing information' (2004: 271). *Aufstellung* is a visual archive of migration iconography that is put together thematically, but Farocki's technique of eliminating an overt narrative intervention and letting his materials 'speak for themselves' in Seymour's words, resonates with the media-archaeological materialist approach which aims to eschew hermeneutics in favour of a diagrammatic machinism (Seymour 2010). Even though, as Ernst argues, it is only through a total elimination of any human intervention that an archive can be composed in an utterly non-narratively driven and technical sense, the diagrammatic transformations on screen mimic a machinic unconscious which traverses and goes beyond the confines of a politics of anthropocentrism and linguistic idealism.

Seymour argues that one recurrent theme in Farocki's filmography is the abstraction of labour and value from the productive assets 'arising through the technological displacement of labour', which he refers to with the 'Marxian name' 'devalorisation' (2010). He writes:

In their form and content - not to mention their cultural and institutional context - Farocki's films and writings inscribe and are caught up within such processes of devalorisation. They begin with the multiple stigmata of this process, principally, perhaps, film itself as an agent for the displacement of labour from the process of production. Faced with the tendency of technology to undermine the very basis of profit in the exploitation of human labour, capital seeks to recompose value and so avoid a self-deflating downward spiral. This happens first of all by the reconfiguration of production and the re/production of the worker, and then, when this strategy is played out, by laying waste to human and infrastructural capital (Seymour 2010).



One particularly potent issue that *Aufstellung* raises is this elimination of labour and value from the visualisation of labour migration. Labour migrants are, more often than not, identified in the film through recurring visual/cultural attributes: males with a moustache, a worker's hat, a fez or a suitcase, females with headscarves and with babies wrapped in a blanket in their hands. They are often represented as sitting in front of a television or standing idly with cigarette in mouth. Statistics of the migrant population and their annual income categorised according to their nationalities are followed by cartographic representations of the German currency's travels to the migrants' home countries. The figures which suggest the relative prosperity of the labour migrants referred to as 'Gastarbeiter' (guestworker) or 'Ausländer' (foreigner) are juxtaposed with statistics of consumer goods and assets, conjugations of the verbs 'kaufen' (to buy) and 'arbeiten' (to work) taken from language textbooks, black smoke coming out of a factory chimney with the words 'Krankheit des Westens' (A Malady of the West) written on top. The rapid connection made between labour, value, production, consumption, health and wellbeing of the workers and environmental challenges brought about by the economic boom constitute a machinic screen duration – a machinic unconscious as opposed to a signifying system.

These images taken from publications in the 1970s and 1980s are brought together to draw connections between the processes of labour, value and production, which have grown apart with ever-increasing speed in today's global capitalism. This is what Benedict Seymour describes as the processes of devalorisation, which Farocki continues to explore persistently through his career for over 40 years. As Seymour explains,

If devalorisation is Farocki's great theme, its primary cause, the elimination of living labour, seems to me to be the key leitmotif of his films. From the imposition of abstract labour in the phase of formal domination to the present 'surreal subsumption' capital progressively evacuates and, tendentially, displaces work from re/production. (2010)

One can argue that *Aufstellung* is part of this on-going project of Farocki to map these processes of devalorising abstracting and dematerialising labour, which, according to Seymour, is conveyed across various media via a ‘formal strategy of austerity or aesthetic of devalorisation’ (2010). Commissioned by a government-funded cultural organisation for a migration-themed art event, Farocki’s film creates transversal and diagrammatic connections between labour, migration and the ‘forces and relations of production’ – the entanglement of which have long been suppressed. Both in form and in content, the film makes diagrammatic connections between the human and nonhuman forces of devalorisation, and as Seymour puts it, ‘suggest the way in which the absence/elimination of the worker ...coincided with the consolidation of the worker as an identity’ – in this case, the identity of the migrant worker (2000). Labour and the forces of devalorisation are also foregrounded in the films that will be explored in the next section.

#### **2. 4. Return to the Paternal Home: Thomas Arslan’s *Aus der Ferne* (2006) and Seyhan Derin’s *Ich bin Tochter meiner Mutter* (1996)**

A key recurrent theme in Turkish German feature films is the permanent return to Turkey, often drawn as fantasised or idealised by migrant characters. Within Turkish German film culture, the return or the journey back to homeland – or *Heimat* as the term German cinema scholars often prefer to use – is frequently used as a dramatic plot device: Fatih Akin has used the theme in nearly all his melodramas including *Im Juli* (2000), *Gegen die Wand* (2004), *Auf der anderen Seite* (2007), more often than not for a dramatic effect. Daniela Berghahn draws a compelling connection between Akin’s melodramas and the post-war *Heimatfilme* of Germany; the 1950s popular films which depict ‘an acute awareness of social problems and post-war drama’ behind the idyllic, romantic, rural settings, and which, for Berghahn, was ‘a response to the mass displacement, forced migration, and real loss of *Heimat*’, by which millions of war refugees were affected (2006: 146). As the German word *Heimat* suggests, homeland in Akin’s films is often an imagined place, or a fantasy of ‘what is lost or absent’ rather than a place that exists as such and this, according to Berghahn, places Akin ‘in a uniquely German

cinematic and cultural tradition' (2006: 145-6). Similarly, Christian Petzold's *Jerichow*, as discussed in the previous chapter conveys the theme of the search for *Heimat*: all three protagonists of the film, including the indigenous Laura and Thomas and the Turkish migrant Ali strive to start their lives anew: the former two with an effort to reconnect with the town of their childhood, and the latter trying to build a home in his new *Heimat*, eventually fantasizing about going back to his "real" homeland that is Turkey, having failed to build a home in a land which "doesn't want him". As is often the case with Akin's migrants, Petzold's Ali dies right before the planned return to his birthplace in southern Turkey, the film thus reaffirms the impossibility of return as salvation. Alasdair King argues that *Jerichow* raises 'the impossibility of returning home' and the concept of *Heimat* is foregrounded as a utopia under post-Fordist capitalism in the film (2010). Similarly, in his book on the Berlin School cinema, Marco Abel entitles his chapter on Petzold '*Heimat* as Utopia' arguing that *Heimat*-building is the thematic anchor that ties his films together. He writes,

in one way or another, his films investigate the sociopolitical conditions of possibility for (successful) "*Heimat*-building", or the building of a home, as the director himself called it repeatedly in interviews he gave when promoting the release of his ninth feature *Jerichow* (Abel 2013: 70).

The concept of *Heimat* has been useful in contextualizing and situating what could be understood as a collective migrant desire within German cinematic and cultural traditions. As Berghahn has observed, understanding the search for a *homeland* in this context, aligns the nostalgia of the war refugees and exilic communities in the 1950s with the yearning of labour migrants of the post-Wall Germany for re-territorialisation. Drawing parallels between the two historical phenomena can be and has been productive in many respects, as Farocki conveys in *Aufstellung* by juxtaposing the maps of post-war migration with statistical data on the labour migrant population in the 1970s, highlighting the changing tools and techniques of mass control. However, in this section I explore the theme of return in two subjective/essay documentaries by two second generation filmmakers, not just as an expression of nostalgia and regressive affect, but more

as a creative confrontation with a territory ripe with encounters and not-yet-territorialised visibilities and articulations. In other words, beyond the subjective and autobiographical references, both Thomas Arslan's *Aus der Ferne* (2006) and Seyhan Derin's *Ich bin Tochter meiner Mutter* (1996) foreground labour, mobility and childhood in generational perspective as a conceptual revaluing of what has often been filtered out seamlessly from the cinematic approaches to the experience of migration and their criticisms. Instead of viewing them as retrospective and introspective encounters as both the words "return", and *Heimat* suggest, I argue that they are affective constellations, which render sensible the contradictions, the precarious living conditions and the uneven speeds of change that contemporary global capitalism upholds.

### ***The Subjective Turn in Migrant Nonfiction Cinema***

As discussed in the introduction to the chapter, second-generation Turkish and Kurdish German filmmakers have made several subjective and autobiographical documentaries since the mid-1990s. Angelica Fenner in her spatial analysis of Fatih Akin's autobiographical documentary *Wir haben vergessen zurückzukehren* argues that in these documentaries, the filmmakers use their camera 'as an experiential device for exploring their relationship to their bicultural heritage' (2012: 59). Fenner explains that their autobiographical authority comes more from the social and historical conditions that the migrants have encountered, rather than who they are as public figures – more often than not the filmmakers are not of much public renown (2012: 60). In this way, the subjective migrant documentaries necessarily take issue with political and economic concerns: through subjective experiences they map the changing material conditions of global capitalism and the biopolitics of migration and society under rapid privatisation, precarisation and securitisation.

Although the autobiographical mode in migrant documentary has often been construed as a form of retracing heritage, history and identity, the films are quite often preoccupied with the complexity of the present living and working conditions in relation to the past. Laura Rascaroli argues that the 'increase in

subjective nonfiction in international cinema' is a 'reflection and a consequence of the increased fragmentation of the human experience in the postmodern, globalized world, and of our need and desire to find ways to represent such fragmentation and to cope with it' (2009: 4). The subjective format tends to eschew the question of documentary truth by abandoning the traditional documentary claim to objectivity. However, this does not mean that the zone of the subjective in nonfiction is a relativist, abstract and non-tactile ground; on the contrary, the films in discussion foreground the respective filmmakers' efforts to put in aesthetic terms that which is not reducible to information, historical and sociological facts. When the 'labour' in labour migrants' worker identity is going through a rapid process of real subsumption under capital, what remains of the migrant as a body, consciousness, identity or subjectivity? As Steven Shaviro describes the current aesthetic sphere of global capitalism,

We have moved from a situation of extrinsic exploitation, in which capital subordinated labor and subjectivity to its purposes, to a situation of intrinsic exploitation, in which capital directly incorporates labor and subjectivity within its own processes. (2013)

Understood in this way, subjectivity is never separate from the zone of the political. When viewed beyond a representational paradigm, the subjective/autobiographical documentaries discussed in this section are not *about* the migrants' return to the point of origin with a nostalgic longing of a *Heimat*. Instead, they are transformative encounters in their own right, tracing social and economic struggles, the past and present injustices and the dynamics of production and exchange both in material and virtual forms through decades.

### *Aus der Ferne*

Thomas Arslan filmed his first and, to this date only feature-length documentary *Aus der Ferne* following a five-year break after the last film of his Berlin Trilogy, *Der schöne Tag*. The film premiered at Berlinale's Forum strand in 2006 and was

the extremely well received by critics.<sup>17</sup> Writing for *Filmkritik*, Lukas Foerster claimed *Aus der Ferne* to be the best documentary film in recent years and potentially the best film of the year (2006). Despite the critical praise it has received, the film was never released on DVD. However, as a result of being produced by the German television ZDF (Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen), it has become television property and been shown on German television frequently.



**Figure 13 - The opening shot of *Aus der Ferne* – the static long take of the Bosphorus through a window**

The 89 minute-long travelogue starts in Istanbul in Arslan's paternal home in Turkey, travels to four different towns towards further east (Ankara, Gaziantep, Diyarbakır and Ağrı), reaches the easternmost point of the country on

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<sup>17</sup> The Forum, organised by the Arsenal Cinema is the experimental and avant-garde strand of the Berlin Film Festival: 'it is regarded as the section of the Berlinale most willing to take risks and stands for new trends in world cinema and innovative narrative forms, bringing together the avant-garde, the experimental, film essays, long-term documentary projects, political reports and cinema from countries off the beaten track; anything that explores new avenues and unconventional ideas from beyond the mainstream can be found at the Forum.' (See Arsenal's website: <http://www.arsenal-berlin.de/en/about/history/berlinale-forum.html>)

the Iranian border Doğubayazıt, and finishes back at its very starting point in Istanbul. The film was shot with a small crew of three, which included a driver, a sound operator, a director's assistant and Arslan himself behind the camera.<sup>18</sup> *Aus der Ferne* includes one single interview and very minimal narrative intervention/voiceover apart from few sentences that Arslan's disembodied voice utters to introduce and very briefly contextualise each city. Each introduction is accompanied by Arslan's 'signature' through-the-window shot: a static daytime long take of a window opening to the outside world filmed from inside a non-lit room [Fig.13]. This recurring shot, also familiar from Arslan's previous trilogy, has often been interpreted by critics as a gesture of cinematic self-reflexivity and realism. Ekkehard Knörer writes,

What one sees in these shots is an open window and a view, but also the window frame which is necessary to turn the "there" into cinema. A true documentary is a window to the world that never forgets that there is no picture without a frame or a framing device. The director's voice simply adds to this the facts about the place and the narrator's position. (2006)

Knörer's Bazinian take on the shot conveys an appraisal of documentary self-reflexivity as a form of realist ethics: the window frame carefully framed within the shot reminds the viewer of the limited perspective of the camera; reflects back on the film's own process of production and therefore functions as a self-reflexive device – 'a reaction against or a way of countering the traditional mode of the documentary which emphasizes verisimilitude' as the term documentary self-reflexivity suggests, originally defined by Jeanne Allen (1977: 37). Yet, by also functioning as a metaphor for the cinematic screen framing a portion of an outside reality, it maintains the Bazinian idea of the cinematic will to capture reality. The two interpretations are not necessarily in opposition to each other; documentary can both claim to present a portion of reality and emphasize the pro-filmic event as a reminder of its constructed and mediated nature. Knörer's

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<sup>18</sup> See the film's official website: <<http://www.peripherfilm.de/ausderferne/>> . Accessed June 2014.

emphasis lies on the acknowledgement of subjective mediation of the world as reality. Marco Abel, on the other hand argues that the significance of Arslan's repeated window shot lies in its emphasis on the material configuration of the image, in other words its radically post-representational approach to travelogue/essay filmmaking (2013: 39). Abel writes,

this shot setup also confronts us with the material reality of the mise-en-scène's constructed point of view itself. The serialized repetition of this introductory shot for the film's major sequences reminds us that Arslan's gaze is not a naturalizing but rather a constructive one: we witness how the camera is in the process of forging images. (2013: 39)

Understood in this way, this shot sets the post-representational tone of the film. The window both reflects on the pro-filmic event, the labour of its composition and construction and conveys that the film is first and foremost *about* the image: what conveys the meaning *is* the image and its material configuration; the meaning is not in the represented. The shot conveys that the medium (and the mediation) itself is a form of participation and a process of meaning creation. In both its form and content, Arslan's film is preoccupied with processes of human labour and how they enable certain visibilities. Making his own filmmaking process visible and audible at times while absent in others in a cyclical pattern, Arslan turns his camera on forms of material labour and makes the production forces visible in an effort to disrupt the conventional logic of travelogue documentary narration and the myth of the migrant's *Heimat*.

However, as is often the case with most documentary writing, representational logic has governed the criticism of *Aus der Ferne*. Critics have praised the film for its simple and minimal composition, achieved by extremely minimal intervention from the narrator/director, thus offering a sweeping glance at life in a country which has notoriously been ill-represented by the German mainstream media (Foerster 2006). Foerster argues,

*Aus der Ferne* is not a kitschy travel video. Arslan avoids typical postcard images of sunsets over Bosphorus bridges or old



wrinkled men next to heavily laden pack animals. Neither is *Aus der Ferne* an arrogant German view of Turkey; this country, which has often been depicted either as a military dictatorship or an outpost of Al Qaeda. (2006).<sup>19</sup>

For Foerster and many other critics, the film offers an alternative to clichéd, reductive or downright misleading representations of a country, which, in reality exists as otherwise. This was perhaps one of the key motives behind the conception of the film. Arslan explains in an interview that his motivation was not to present a more correct or authentic Turkey but ‘to be able to get an impression at all, and not to fall in line with some theory or to illustrate something you thought you already knew’.<sup>20</sup> Despite its concern with the previous stereotypical representations of Turkey, this remark, along with the film’s title, suggests a post-representational attitude instead of a claim to authenticity. In the title, which translates as ‘from far away’ lies a potential allusion to Chris Marker’s travel documentary/essay film *Lettre de Sibérie* (Letter from Siberia, 1957); a self-reflexive exploration of Siberia, and as Allen puts it an ‘essay-critique of the travelogue and its ways of conveying meaning’ (1977: 41). Marker’s documentary starts and ends with the lines ‘I am writing you this letter from a distant land’, but unlike *Aus der Ferne*, which includes very little voiceover narration, Marker’s letter/essay voiceover accompanies the images of Siberia throughout the film, his words at times deliberately splitting from the image. Through this sound/image track discrepancy, Marker subverts a dominant attitude of the travelogue genre – the documentaries ‘which feature the quasi-anthropological and geographical scientist stance, unaware or unwilling to admit that their perspective is structured by ideology and cultural conditioning’ (Allen 1977: 41). *Aus der Ferne* takes a similarly critical position of the anthropological

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<sup>19</sup> Original text: ‘*Aus der Ferne* ist kein verkitschtes Reisevideo, Arslan verzichtet auf die naheliegenden Bilder des Sonnenuntergangs über den Brücken des Bosphorus oder faltiger alter Männer neben beladenen Lasteseln. *Aus der Ferne* ist auch kein anmaßender Blick aus Deutschland auf die Türkei, die hierzulande oft wahlweise als Militärdiktatur oder als Vorposten El-Kaidas dargestellt wird’ (Foerster 2006).

<sup>20</sup> See the press kit on the film’s official website.

<http://www.peripherfilm.de/kinopresseservice/adf/heft.pdf> (Accessed 21 December 2014).

attitude by reducing authorial voice to a minimum and thus claiming very little authority over the image, and thus deploying an aesthetics of reduction.

This aesthetic reserve, however, proposes a form of resistance against the constructivist critiques of documentary exposé, which traditionally reduce the aesthetic configuration of film to a social construction, a product of ideology, allegedly hiding its agenda behind the signifiers/signified circuits in conventional travel documentaries. Arslan abstains from using self-reflexive strategies and aesthetic reduction for the sake of such a constructivist political commentary. Instead, he employs a blend of documentary strategies and combines the travelogue format with an emergent attitude in essay filmmaking: a cartographic approach that Michael Sicinski names ‘metonymic documentary’, referring to the filmic images’ power to conjure a global reach beyond their representational content and local context. Sicinski specifically refers to the films of the Austrian documentarist Nicholas Geyrhalter as the epitome of this approach, which rejects ‘both the presumed self-evidence of the image (an unspoken tenet of “direct cinema”) and the godlike explanatory power of the “objective,” unseen voiceover’ (2012).<sup>21</sup> He continues to explain that Geyrhalter’s films articulate a metonymic style, bringing together semi-autonomous segments of social life, and subjecting these material forces to a ‘camera gaze that already in some sense comprehends each element as a node within a global socio-economic system’ (2012). Instead of the representational model of metonymy and metaphor, I will explore this machinic style in Guattarian terms. *Aus der Ferne* similarly puts seemingly unrelated slices of social life, public spaces and institutions into a machinic system. As a subjective migrant documentary by definition, the film conveys an analytical camera consciousness that is aware of the complexity of the local geographic and political contexts in evaluating the effects of the global condition; or as Hito Steyerl puts it, ‘the phenomena of ethnicizing, gendering and class-specific positioning that are specific to globalization’ (2002). The film weaves together independent segments mainly exhibiting day and night time activities:

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<sup>21</sup> Sicinski names Nicholas Geyrhalter, Michael Glawogger, Harun Farocki, Hartmut Bitomsky, Andrei Ujica and Thomas Heise as some of the artists associated with this attitude.

commuters exiting the underground metro and ferry stations, people leaving a football stadium, various recreational activities at schools, a high-school English class, traffic jams, pupils on a school trip to an art gallery, and individuals engaged in different forms of labour in various workshops. These also include occasional shots of motorways, linking different city segments and a brief interview with Arslan's aunt at different sites where Arslan's father lived as he grew up in Ankara. Although the only unifying element seems to be the local context of Turkey, the often static camera, deploying an observational stance, puts the segments in a larger socio-economic world system with its persistent focus on different modes of material existence and various forms of productive and unproductive activity. Movement and processes of labour form the key threads to articulating this “far away” country for Arslan, as well as being the two inseparable strands in tracing his own individual connection to it.



**Figure 14 - Children separating plastic bottles for recycling**

Born in Germany, Arslan spent only a few of his formative years in Turkey, went to school in Ankara as a teenager and although his voiceover commentaries do not give any details of his time in Turkey, he briefly mentions

that at least twenty years have passed since his last time in his father's country. Thus the journey is far from a return to *Heimat* for Arslan. Arslan is not present within the audiovisual track while interviewing his aunt, but she addresses him behind the camera, speaking in Turkish with a meticulous clarity and slowness to him, from which we understand that Arslan has limited access to the Turkish language. While Arslan's interview with his aunt is the only segment in the film that includes an overtly autobiographical reference, the repeated focus on children and processes of labour can be read as autobiographical traces. Knörer identifies a subjective reference in the repeated motif of childhood in the film, as she argues that Turkey being 'the country of his childhood', children are featured prominently in various activities,

children immersed in play and activity, but also children at work and children reacting playfully to the camera's presence, thereby always making the camera's absence felt, the absence of that which makes you see what is there. (2006)

Knörer argues that children are not portrayed solely as a subjective thematic motif, but also are instrumental and functional in making the viewer aware of the camera as a self-reflexive strategy. Children doing crosswords at a courtyard are followed by children singing the Turkish National Anthem as part of a weekly state school ceremony. Children performing various forms of material labour are given relatively longer screen time in the film, and more often than not, they look and smile at the camera while trying to concentrate on work.

One particular sequence filmed in Istanbul shows two young children helping an older man with sorting out plastic bottles and loading them into big wheelie bags twice as tall as their heights [Fig.14]. This is one of the rare sequences in the film, in which the camera pans to follow the action in a medium close up, exuding an attentiveness towards expressions, in search of a narrative. One of the two children appears to be amused by the fact that he is being filmed, gets distracted and told off by the older man. Even at this tragicomical moment, the camera does not recruit the child subject as a metaphor or a symbol. Even though a dramatic narrativity so atypical of the film comes about in a moment of comical crisis, Arslan challenges the metaphorical, social-realist allegorical

associations of childhood with saintliness. In a similar vein, the camera abstains from repeating patronizing portrayals of child labour as a malady attributed to the exploitative modes of production in far-away countries of uneven development. Instead, the child subjects that Arslan's camera repeatedly focuses on retain their dignity as amateur actors and agents of a 'nostalgic' form of material labour: they are not yet over- or pre-determined protagonists but act as a plane of gestures and virtualities 'engaged in a process of actualization' within the aesthetic configuration of the film (Deleuze 2001: 31). In one of his later essays "Immanence: A Life", Deleuze describes this 'not-yet-determined' molecular quality of child expressivity,

very small children all resemble one another and hardly have any individuality, but they have singularities: a smile, a gesture, a funny face – not subjective qualities. Small children, through all their sufferings and weaknesses, are infused with an immanent life that is pure power and even bliss. (2001: 30)

In *Aus der Ferne*, Arslan does not accentuate the individuality of the filmic subjects through editing and the self-reflexive camerawork, carefully refraining from creating any charismatic protagonist or character for the sake of capturing the event as the immanent plane foregrounding the processes of actualisation. Children express virtualities and singularities as pure potentials in a machinic system, accentuating the activity they are engaged in, instead of perpetuating heavily determined associative meanings.

This sequence is exemplary of the machinic quality of Arslan's film: each segment and each image associates with the others generating meanings in a complex system of multiplicity. It articulates a mutual fascination between Arslan's camera and the child engaged in separating plastic waste. In an increasingly globalised world market, defined by rapid automation and technological transformation, labour becomes increasingly displaced and labour processes are divorced from the product; and such alternative, heavy, and material modes of production are not only undermined by capital, but also subjected to a hierarchy of international labour, which deems it as archaic and inferior, if indeed it exists at all. This process of elimination of material labour is

mirrored in the cultural sphere as elimination of the economic function of the migrant worker, more handsomely presented as a hybrid cultural artefact. As Hito Steyerl argues, 'social inequality is coded as cultural difference or even deficiency and thus made invisible' (2002). Steyerl critiques this bi-folded effect of capitalist subsumption,

this constant reproduction of culturalized inequality forms the law of the "unequal development" of global capitalism. The Eurocentric hierarchizations of various postcolonial contexts thus reproduce culture-racist mechanisms of exclusion, which for their part represent a fundamental structural element of global capitalist forms of utilization and/or exploitation. (2002)

Understood in this context, Arslan's prolonged and repeated focus on material forms of labour is a deliberate political strategy. As Marco Abel argues, *Aus der Ferne* 'counters many German preconceptions about Turkish society and its presumed lack of diversity', yet Arslan's thematic linking of distant and diverse geographies and cultures of Turkey through extended takes of productive and non-productive human activities take the film beyond an ethnographic, local context to a macro cartography of in/visibilities and precarious living conditions (2013: 39). In this way, Sicinski's definition of metonymic cinema with the focus on how the images extend themselves to a global scale is apt for Arslan's film. However, Sicinski's definition overlooks the multiple (non-discursive as well as discursive, material and semiotic) registers that the films transversally operate on; it remains within the confines of the representational system, as the model of metonymy and metaphors determines the function of the images and circumscribes them as signifying unities. Sicinski writes 'movement and changes that could be traced within and across the films were fairly direct metaphors for more sweeping historical shifts' (2012). While this statement highlights the immediate cartographic function of the images of this documentary trend, it undermines the creative function, which opens up new associations, instead of merely referring back to past historic events, shifts or associations. Therefore Guattarian machinism as an alternative to signifying models accommodates better the creative and radical potential of *Aus der Ferne*'s unruly travelling images,

which offer a multiplicity of trajectories for further associations and critique, foregrounding processes of production, often invisible within the aesthetic economy of migrant film.

***Ben Annemin Kızıyım (I am my mother's daughter)***

*Ben Annemin Kızıyım* is one of the earliest examples of the subjective documentary trend in Turkish German Cinema; it has also been cited as one of the first films that make explicit the theme of the return to the *Heimat*. *Ben Annemin Kızıyım* is Seyhan Derin's first feature length film, which she made as part of her final year project at the Hochschule für Film und Fernsehen in Munich. Co-sponsored by HFF München and Middle Eastern Technical University in Ankara, the film was conceived as part of a project roughly framed by the topic of 'three generations of women'. Derin travelled to Zonguldak on the Black Sea coast of Turkey, where she was born and where she left at the age of four for the Federal Republic of Germany, to film her mother and grandmother for the project. The final film took a slightly narrower focus than initially planned, since, during the filming process Derin was confronted by the fact that she knew very little about her mother Durkadin who had been overworked and had little time to spend with her children all her life. The final film is comprised mainly of Derin's conversations with her mother about the family history and how she dealt with her two daughters' leaving the family home as young teenagers to escape the patriarchal rule of their father. Throughout the film Derin reads out the letters that she wrote to her father and her mother over several years, and through these letters she narrates the images of the cinematic present. In her letters Derin reveals how the memory of her mother as a submissive, voiceless and mute wife of a *Gastarbeiter* completely transforms through her present encounters with her.

The film opens with a poetic long take of the open sea and the waves, which has since been repeatedly used as a cinematic signifier for *Heimat* in

Turkish German films.<sup>22</sup> Derin juxtaposes the image of the open sea with an old, black and white passport photo of a woman with four young daughters, three of whom have been crossed out with a pen. The image then cuts to a close-up of the woman and one of the daughters whom we understand to be Derin and her mother. This montage immediately sets out the non-linear tone of the film's narrative organisation: past, present and future coexist and continuously interact as a creative transformational process. The sea is an open whole; both a-signifying as a constellation of movements, forces and sounds and indefinitely expressive of the infinite, the unknown, the potentiality of the present and the indeterminacy of the future. This is followed by the still image of a passport stamped as 'invalid', black and white photographs of faces crossed out with a pen; an image belonging to what seems to be an archaic time and place, seized and sealed by the Turkish state as an apparatus of capture. In what follows, Derin traces the past through exchanges of words both spoken and written, through her conversations with her family and through letters and photographs, and combines them with the found footage of historical events and the fictional staging of her memories; and in this way merges the actual with the virtual. The film thus expresses Bergsonian duration in its melding of the actual and the virtual in its handling of 'memory', which the critics have often discussed through a linear conception of time. Memory in Derin's film is a creative and transformative encounter. Deleuze writes about this transformative nature of memory,

memory could never evoke and report the past if it had not already been constituted at the moment when the past was still present, hence in an aim to come. It is in fact for this reason that it is behaviour: it is the present that we make memory, in order to make use of it in the future when the present will be past. (2005a: 50)

In Deleuze's Bergsonian conception of time explored in the cinema books, the 'past' is purely virtual but it is never fully separate from the future, which gives it the potential of anticipation, creativity, change and transformation by means of

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<sup>22</sup> Recent examples can be found in Fatih Akin's *Auf der anderen Seite* (2007) and Christian Petzold's *Jerichow* (2009).



the present. This change, that is movement, is not representable in terms of time and space. As Darren Ambrose explains,

the error of thought vis-à-vis movement rests on its failure to understand the difference between two sorts of time, a determinate and measurable present that is continually and repetitively coming to pass, and the duration (*durée*) of all time coexisting with the present... *Durée* is a past that can no longer be understood as a numerated line leading backwards from the present moment; it is an immanent totality, the open-whole of time, in its continual interaction that constructs the repetitive becoming of the present. (2008: 185)

The present constantly disorganises, rearranges and falsifies the recollections of the past; not to replace the subjective with an objective truth, but instead with each new encounter, ripe with the anticipation of a future. For Deleuze, cinema is capable of ‘capturing and rendering visible certain relationships of time in moving images’, and through moving images, cinema expresses ‘manifest changes in *durée* or in the whole’ (Ambrose 2008: 184).

Understood in this way, Derin’s return to *Heimat* becomes a multidirectional and virtual journey beyond the representational time and space, expressed in cinema as duration, instead of a nostalgic journey to an archaic place which remains intact. As Mine Eren argues, ‘spaces melt into one another, the transitions between Germany and Turkey, and vice versa, are all continuous, there is no break or chasm between the two geographies’ (2003: 41). This is because the film is primarily a time-image; the spaces are subordinate to time, yet this does not overlook the risk of undermining the borders and migration policies, nor the social struggles of labour migrants. On the contrary, the private family history that Derin explores through the struggles of her mother as a labour migrant from the previous generation – which are concerned both with migration and women’s emancipation – reveals the continuities, shifts, gains and subtle changes which are often lost within the rhetoric of integration and historiographies of labour migration to the FRG. The film layers a complex set of documentary strategies and narrative elements; as Eren argues, ‘Derin’s narration... combines oral

memory, documentation and fiction, makes it difficult to map all themes employed in the film' (2003: 43). The editing stymies a conventional narrative continuity as it conveys a resistance to linear temporal succession and a geographic continuity, blending in fantasy and dream images with 'reality', fiction with non-fiction, thus often traversing between the actual and the virtual.

Similar to *Aus der Ferne*, one unifying thematic aspect that lies at the centre of *Ben Annemin Kızıyım* is the theme of work, and how it has affected the subjects, occupied the lives of the family members, infiltrated their subjectivities and caused them irreparable physical damage. Even though overworking and its consequences are the overarching and prevalent themes in the film, this has not been addressed by the critics, who have instead focused on themes such as family trauma, generational conflict, diasporic subjectivity and longing for a *Heimat* (Eren 2003; Berghahn 2013; Fenner 2006). Berghahn has summarised the agenda of the film as 'to suture the family ties that have been severed' and a reconciliation with the past through a 're-enactment of memories that haunted' the director, while Eren writes that the film is about 'how migration caused the metamorphosis of her family's situation into one of isolation and fragmentation, a reality that shaped her diasporic consciousness' (Berghahn 2013: 94; Eren 2003: 44). While both interpretations focus on social inequality and precariousness, to go back to Steyerl's argument, for both critics these are coded as 'cultural difference' and thus made invisible (2002). Instead, I argue that the film portrays how labour has organised and disorganised the lives and the memories thereof that are foregrounded in the film, yet labour is once again estranged from its performers, and their desires, the tracing of which I shall demonstrate.



**Figure 15 - Ben Annemin Kızıyım**

In the first half of the film, the camera follows the director and her mother Durkadın mostly walking in the village in Çaycuma and talking about the past. Parts of the village shots include routine labour: women separate maize kernels off the cobs and do other heavy and backbreaking labour, such as carrying overfilled buckets of water on both sides of a thick piece of wood which they place carefully on their own shoulders while men sit in the background watching. Derin places her discussions with her mother in between these long takes of women performing different forms of agricultural labour and housework. In one of these discussions, Derin and her mother stand in an awkward position, next to each other, facing the camera, yet looking at each other [Fig.15]. Derin is confounded by how relentless working has occupied every area of her mother's life: going back to her birth, the very start of her relationship to her mother. Derin finds out the gap was already set by extreme hours of farm work three days after her mother gave birth to her and childcare duties were handed over to Derin's older sister. Durkadın replies, "What can I do? I had to earn money." Derin is

repeatedly astounded by her mother's compliance with the inhumane working hours, while Durkadın questions Derin's precarious working conditions as a filmmaker. Durkadın says, "It bothers me that you tire yourself too much" while the camera focuses on her bare hands pulling out weeds. The image then fades in to Derin's hands loading a reel in her camera, followed by a sequence showing how Derin and her cameraman interact while filming the fictional dream sequences. This transition between two generations of labour – from agricultural wage labour into unalienated creative labour expresses a process of thinking beyond histories and divisions of labour and this seemingly abrupt or random sequencing, with its resistance to a simple succession, genealogy or logic of progress conveys an experimental thought process, rather than a political statement. This non-instrumental, machinic thought experiment is closely tied to the non-linear temporal structure of the film. The cinematic duration, which merges the actual and virtual is a 'pure aesthetic meditation upon the complex nature of *durée*, change and becoming' (Ambrose 2008: 193). What becomes manifest in this sequencing is 'no longer the empirical progression of time as succession of presents, nor its indirect representation as interval or as whole' (Deleuze 2005a: 262). Derin's cinematic meditation on two generations of women and labour is not merely a comparison between Fordist and post-Fordist labour regimes, nor it is an expression of emancipation and progress, instead it is a creative and productive thought experiment, constantly falsifying the progressive logic often projected on migrant film. The film articulates the changing conditions of precarity through generations – the history of migration and thus migrant cinema is inseparable from the history of precarious labour and mobility.

The politics of address foregrounded in the film requires a viewing beyond conventional questions of agency towards an inquiry on the level of intensities and via the transversal theme of labour exploitation. Derin's father has been permanently incapacitated due to a workplace accident at a German mine, yet Derin refrains from taking the exploitative and precarious working conditions of her first generation *Gastarbeiter* father into focus. Durkadın briefly mentions her own father who had also worked as a miner in Turkey, and this statement

weaves another genealogical route – along with labour comes forms of mobility and immobility. Working in an industry notoriously marked with poor labour safety standards, where the forces of capitalism are at their most evidently destructive, Derin's father suffers an injury, which leaves him incapable of using the lower part of his body. The accident makes him dependent on his wife Durkadın, who injures her own back due to the care work she performs for her incapacitated husband. In a sequence cut seamlessly from Derin driving around and filming Çaycuma to Durkadın driving and running errands in Germany, the camera once again transversally traces different forms of labour performed by two generations of women migrants. Derin's voiceover couples images of Durkadın wandering around in Germany as she admits how her mother had transformed from the passive, oppressed, mute woman that she had perceived her to be, into an overactive and assertive woman who has grown a thick skin. The camera takes on an observational, fly on the wall stance: Durkadın is seen receiving medical goods for her husband at a social care centre. Filmed from within the booth, both Derin's voiceover and the tracking shots which centre on Durkadın foreground the contrast between her passive looked-at-ness vis-à-vis the German institution (and hypothetically German audiences) and her forms of self-expression, from walking and driving to relentless agricultural labour, gestures, and words. While waiting for her husband's medicines, Durkadın talks to her daughter about how her health has deteriorated due to the heavy labour she has to perform while caring for her disabled husband. The debilitating and destructive forces of capitalist labour exploitation is thus portrayed not as an issue of the West German past, but as a passing, transforming, active and transversal force which continues to affect the material body of the migrant in various ways. This is followed by a shot which shows Durkadın looking after her husband and helping him move in the house.

*Ben Annemin Kızıyım* not only visualises the forces of labour migration on Derin's family across generations and locations, it also traces the personal expressions and statements filmed in the form of dialogues between the filmmaker and her mother, as forms of resistance against, and modes of becoming with these forces in time. The editing throughout the film is for the most part

conventional; the shot lengths are within the range of classical continuity style, however the organisation of duration overall eschews a conventional structure, disregarding clear past/present distinctions characteristic of the continuity style narration. The overarching theme of labour crosses over various registers: past/present, actual/virtual, filmic/pro-filmic, making evident the experimentation that is duration, as opposed to a representational linear depiction of time, organised as a succession of moments – according to the Bergsonian formula ‘immobile sections + abstract time’, which lends itself to a reading of molar and majoritarian categories such as identity, nation and belonging (Deleuze 2005: 11).

Understood beyond the limits of molar categories and representation, both *Aus der Ferne* and *Ben Annemin Kızıyım* are documentary interventions to the aesthetic economy of migration, diverging from classical narrative structures and retreating from classical formalisations that rely on an economy of binary oppositions. In this way, they are more than aesthetic correctives with an attempt to repaint a more accurate picture of the migrant’s *Heimat*. Both the machinic editing of Arslan’s travelling images, and the transversal temporalities and registers in Derin’s film give further expression to *Heimat* as duration and not as a spatial denominator, eschewing the tension of nostalgia versus utopia binary which haunts the term *Heimat*. The ontological questions on the past and the future that the concepts of nostalgia and utopia respectively suggest are not resolved in the present of the image: duration is not the present. As Deleuze writes in the preface to the English edition of *Cinema 2*,

It is not quite right to say that the cinematographic image is in the present. What is in the present is what the image ‘represents’, but not the image itself, which, in cinema as in painting, is never to be confused with what it represents. ...The image itself is the system of the relationships between its elements, that is, a set of relationships of time from which the variable present only flows. What is specific to the image, as soon as it is creative, is to make perceptible, to make visible, relationships of time which cannot be seen in the represented

object and do not allow themselves to be reduced to the present.  
(2005a: xii)

In other words, what is presently available in the image does not equal the image as a whole. The whole as duration does not equal the sum of its parts: it is the relationships between these parts and elements that cinema renders sensible and in this way, creates worlds. This is precisely where the creative function of the image lies: in the production of these relationships between the parts. Both Arslan and Derin combine these elements of the image with the overarching theme of labour, which holds the unruly images, disconnected spaces and temporalities together and in this way, brings back the question of labour to migrant cinema and offers a flight from identitarian politics.

This chapter investigated various post-representational strategies within documentary filmmaking, with the aim to intervene in the official history narratives through the creative and political function of the medium. In the following chapter, similar strategies will be sought out in conventional genre filmmaking.

## CHAPTER THREE

### New Subjectivities in Social Realism

This chapter attempts to move away from this ‘cinema of duty’ or ‘pleasures of hybridity’ distinction that frames a majority of the debates on Turkish German genre cinema, in order to open up new trajectories for a critical consideration of ethnicizing and gendering aesthetic expressions on film. Instead of employing a representational paradigm which rejects the recurring themes and visual elements as signifiers of a fake construction of the migrant experience and favours a more optimistic and authentic picture at ease with global market ideals, the chapter views these images as self-reflexive appropriations and reorganisations of such an aesthetic production line, carrying within themselves a potential to disintegrate identitarian bounds and introduce gaps in their amalgams. Following Deleuze’s Bergsonian taxonomy of images, I will explore how screen spaces allow new connections to occur by bringing the actual and virtual planes together and making them sensible. I will draw on Deleuze’s distinction of the two regimes of cinematic image: the organic and crystalline narration, focusing on his notion of the cliché and the political implications of its functioning in fiction film. This chapter will begin by exploring how *Die Fremde* employs aesthetic clichés to lay bare the discontinuities of the Turkish German cinematic archive of signification which has arguably constituted a unified history of a people that exist as such. In this way, the film can encourage thinking through and beyond the archive of cinematic images that constitute knowledge on Turkish German identity as a unified and fixed category. Although the film situates itself very blatantly alongside majoritarian representational politics, released in good time for the shift in Germany’s post-Eurozone crisis agenda about immigration, I will resist a quick dismissal of popular genre films with the verdict that they are ultimately unproductive of new critical thought. In the second part, I will look at post-representational queer ethics in Yüksel Yavuz’s *Kleine Freiheit* with a focus on the a-signifying aesthetic elements. This chapter aims to consider the



autonomy of images and how they can challenge majoritarian representational readings, for a participatory critical engagement with the hidden powers of the cinematic image. This entails a radical break from totalising approaches to film which reduce analysis and criticism to an assessment of how good or bad or how authentic or fake these images are, in favour of a criticism which privileges and places attention on the emergent aspects of the cinematic process of meaning making.

### 3. 1. Feo Aladağ's *Die Fremde* (2010)

In the aforementioned article “Turkish Delight – German Fright” Deniz Göktürk argues that 1990s saw a shift in Turkish German Cinema from being a “cinema of duty” towards becoming a cinema that illustrates “pleasures of hybridity” (2001: 131). She claims that whereas the Turkish migrant of the earlier decades was depicted as a voiceless, archaic figure, themes of humour and playfulness had introduced a new dimension to this cinema of social realist tradition. She critiques the ongoing process of stereotyping via narratives of victimisation, alienation and confinement and welcomes this narrative turn as a celebration of hybridity. The last two decades have indeed seen a break from the straightforward depictions of Turks in Germany with titles such as Kutluğ Ataman's *Lola und Bilidikid* (1999), Fatih Akin's *Im Juli* (2000) and *Gegen die Wand* (2004) and Thomas Arslan's *Der schöne Tag* (2001). According to this designation, recent success of the Austrian born director Feo Aladağ's *Die Fremde* (When we leave, 2010), as a drama tackling the issue of honour crimes in Germany, could easily be interpreted as a regression towards the “cinema of duty” of the early decades, and as symptomatic of the recent malaise of multiculturalism in Germany and Europe.<sup>23</sup> The film garnered considerable success in festivals and won a number of awards, including the very prestigious LUX prize awarded by the European Parliament, which provides generous

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<sup>23</sup> In October 2010, during a gathering of the younger members of the Christian Democratic Party, German Chancellor Angela Merkel declared that multiculturalism in Germany had ‘utterly failed’. In 2012, she shifted her rhetoric during her apology at the memorial for the victims of Nationalist Socialist Underground murders.

funding for the film to be translated into the European Union's 23 official languages as well as for making 35mm copies to be distributed to each of the EU member countries.<sup>24</sup> *Die Fremde* also became Germany's official submission for the Best Foreign Language Film Award at the 83<sup>rd</sup> Academy Awards in 2011. Despite its commercial and political success, the film has been severely criticised for its 'cunning, interpellary realism', which disguises itself as 'iconoclasm, innovation and commitment to debunking stereotypes through radical authenticity' (Gramling 2012: 33, 40). Aysun Bademsoy has criticised the film for portraying the issue of honour killings in a didactic, one-sided way (see. Appendix). Coming from a different angle and abstaining from critiquing the film as an aesthetic entity, Guglielmo Meardi, professor of industrial relations at the University of Warwick criticised the European Parliament's decision to give the award to the film. Meardi wrote in his blog,

*Die Fremde* won, which is a sad political sign about the feelings in the European Parliament. For MEPs, honour killing is a more urgent problem than the human treatment of undocumented migrants and of xenophobia - and probably just because for honour killing they can blame somebody else. I wish *Die Fremde* had won the artistic prize it deserves, instead of the political one. (2010)

Meardi's comment expresses the problematic political agenda of controlling and framing migration that is behind the significant success which *Die Fremde* has garnered. The film has officially been assigned the task to promote the European identitarian ideal, which Thomas Elsaesser describes as 'the struggle to overcome difference, to grow together, to harmonize, to tolerate diversity

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<sup>24</sup> In 2011, LUX Prize commissioned simultaneous screenings of *Die Fremde* in 27 European Union countries. At the award ceremony, European Parliament President Jerzy Buzek commented that the film 'deal(s) in a very sensitive way with the issue of identity, and the differences between a collective identity and an individual one. This is an important topic because in an ever more integrated Europe, we will have to answer the question what it actually means to be European'. (See. <[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/pdfs/news/expert/infopress/20101124IPR99468/20101124IPR99468\\_en.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/pdfs/news/expert/infopress/20101124IPR99468/20101124IPR99468_en.pdf)> Accessed May 2014).

while recognizing in the common past the possible promise of a common “destiny” (2005: 35). In this way, the film is modelled after what Elsaesser defines as the ‘New European’ identity, commissioned to spread this ideal ‘in light of certain political scenarios, and economic strategies actively pursued by the European Union, its politicians, pragmatists, visionaries but also its critics’ (2005: 28). Constructed in well-meaning terms, the representational politics of this New European identity formulated within cinema is productive of new forms of exclusion and hierarchisation in its aesthetic articulations.

Feo Aladağ states in an interview that her decision to make a film about honour crimes in Germany originated from years of research on violence against women and close contact with women who suffered domestic violence.<sup>25</sup> She also asserts in multiple interviews that the proliferation of media coverage of honour crimes and the isolation of the Turkish community in Germany brought a new urgency to the necessity to provide a closer insight into the issue. These statements are notable indications of a relapse into a “cinema of duty” or at best they suggest a concern to vocalise or re-express through cinematic language, what has otherwise been presented by mainstream German and European media in a one-dimensional way. Aladağ with this corrective purpose revisits the Turkish family as a patriarchal institution to explore the cultural dynamics and internal politics that lead to a family's decision to commit an honour crime.

*Die Fremde* opens with a mute sequence, filmed with a handheld camera. In the opening sequence, the camera follows a young man walking on a Berlin street next to a woman and a child, who suddenly stops and points a gun at the young woman. After an abrupt cut, he is seen running away at full speed in close up and his heavy panting replaces the silence. The frame then cuts to a static shot where we see the young man staring out the rear window of a bus moving away from the scene, looking shocked and disturbed. Following the

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<sup>25</sup> ‘The project... grew out of two short films she made for an Amnesty International campaign to end violence against women. Spurred on by a spate of honor killings in Germany, Ms. Aladag, a former actress with a doctorate in psychology, researched the subject for three years before she began shooting “When We Leave.”’ See <<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/23/movies/23feo.html>> Accessed May 2014.

opening sequence, the narrative starts to unfold as a flashback, suggesting that we are about to see a history of events that leads to an honour crime. The young woman in the opening scene is the protagonist of the film: Umay (Sibel Kekilli), a 25 year old woman of Turkish descent who lives on the outskirts of Istanbul with her abusive husband and his family. After having an abortion, Umay decides to leave Istanbul with her four-year-old son Cem (Nizam Schiller) to move back to Berlin where her parents live. Umay's parents disapprove of her decision to leave her husband Kemal (Ufuk Bayraktar) in fear of being excluded from their community that culturally marks a divorced woman as a shame to family values. Umay's brothers get involved in arguments and fights against the members of Berlin's Turkish community; the father feels humiliated in the factory where his colleagues gossip about him. The family of Umay's sister's fiancé decides to break their son's engagement. Meanwhile, Umay flees her family house when she finds out that the family is secretly plotting to send Cem away to his father in Turkey. With the aim to start her life anew, Umay goes back to school; she starts working in the kitchen of a restaurant where she meets a young German man (Florian Lukas) and embarks on a romantic relationship. Umay continues her efforts to bond with her family despite their persistent rejection, which in the end leads to their decision to get her executed by her younger brother.

The traces of earlier Turkish German fiction film conventions have generously been ingrained into *Die Fremde* both in form and content. The decision to cast Sibel Kekilli as Umay inevitably invokes the narrative of Fatih Akin's much acclaimed *Gegen die Wand* (2004), where she played Sibel, a young female of Turkish descent in Germany who suffered from her family's patriarchal oppression. Like Sibel in *Gegen die Wand*, Umay has a strong, at times self-destructive determination to resist and struggle against the oppression and restrictions imposed by her patriarchal family. In both films it is the younger males of the family, the second generation migrants who adopt and practice extreme acts of violence attributed to their fundamentalist culture, instead of the first generation immigrant fathers who quietly suffer from the conflict between the values of the community and parental love. Films about

migrants of Turkish descent in Germany and their offspring largely focus on the oppression and victimisation of the Turkish female characters particularly by the male members of her family. Turna in *40 Quadratmeter Deutschland* (Tevfik Başer, 1986), Yasemin in *Yasemin* (Hark Bohm, 1988), Elif in *Abschied vom falschen Paradies* (Tevfik Başer, 1989), Hülya in *Yara* (Yılmaz Arslan, 1999) and Sibel in *Gegen die Wand* are amongst the predecessors of this narrative thread of oppressed female characterisation in Turkish German Cinema. There are specific spaces that these characters are often allocated to, and thus associated with, such as the claustrophobic domestic space and other sites of entrapment such as mental institutions and prisons. Common aesthetic and narrative elements together with similarities in the construction of spaces in these films suggest a continuity and in this way, a historicity. Cumulatively, they construct a visual archive constituting a unified, gendered and ethnicised identity in highly politicised victimisation narratives. Burns and Göktürk have both suggested that a shift in the recent years in such spatial configurations has cast a fresh perspective on this imagery; by moving from confining domestic environments to urban localities the characters have gained a new dimension (Göktürk 2000; Burns 2007). When the cinematic migrant left the domestic topos that was radically isolated from the urban and cosmopolitan space, the narratives gained truthfulness and legitimacy, since, as Göktürk argues, these narratives and audiovisual expressions of exclusion were ‘grounded in fake compassion rather than authentic experiences’ (2001: 139). This shift in the cinematic portrayal of the Turkish migrant in Germany in the 1990s has been the predominant observation within the study of Turkish German Cinema, and according to this postulation, by revisiting the theme of entrapment and female victimisation, *Die Fremde* reconstructs the much disputed separatist and fake environments of the cinema of duty.<sup>26</sup>

In an essay entitled “Poor Man’s Couch”, Félix Guattari compares cinema to psychoanalysis. Without referencing any specific film titles, he

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<sup>26</sup> In the German Screen Studies Network meeting at King’s College, London in July 2013, *Die Fremde* was criticised and problematised as a potential return to the ‘Cinema of Duty’.

describes commercial cinema as ‘a simple, inexpensive drug’ with significant effects on the unconscious, potentially stronger than that of psychoanalysis. However, he identifies the liberating potential of cinema thus,

a film that could shake itself free of its function of adaptational drugging could have unimaginable liberating effects, effects on an entirely different scale from those produced by books or literary trends. This is due to the fact that cinema intervenes directly in our relations with the external world. And even if this exterior is contaminated by dominant representations, a minimal aperture could result from this intervention. (Guattari 2009: 266)

Although Guattari’s critique of psychoanalysis in relation to cinema does not draw exclusively on the former’s representational logic, he addresses the political potential of cinema as a flight from forms of subjectivity control and locates it precisely in cinema’s a-signifying aesthetics. Cinema interpellates the subject as does psychoanalysis, however in cinema, even if the representational grids are reinforced through various processes of signification, categorisation, interpretation, and other discursive strategies, its machinic configuration has the potential to resist these various modes of normalisation. He argues that through ‘intensities of all kinds, constellations of features of faciality, crystallizations of affects’, cinema can offer an escape from ‘the dictatorship of the signifier’ (Guattari 2009: 262; 264). Cinema, as a montage of ‘intensities, movements and multiplicities’ has the ability to affect the spectator on registers which are beyond its semantics – it can set itself free from the signifying register of representation, which ‘intervenes only at a second stage, through the filmic syntagmatic that fixes genres, crystallizes characters and behavioral stereotypes homogenous to the semantic field’ (2009: 263). Identifying these aesthetic lines of flight requires an engagement with the film beyond structures of signification and molar grids of ideology, however fully enhanced and repeatedly reinforced they are. For this pursuit, I will look into the components of time-image as conceptualised by Deleuze, and examine how these elements are at work within *Die Fremde* as a potential rupture from the discourses of ‘cultural difference’ and ‘hybridity’.

### **The Time-Image and Break from Representationalism**

As early as in the opening sequence of *Die Fremde*, the film conveys an aesthetic attitude closer to what James Quandt negatively describes as the ‘international art-house festival film formula’, signaling a departure from the conventions of the aforementioned social realist genre films and melodramas dealing with the issue of migrant alienation in Germany (2009: 76). Quandt describes this formula, which he criticises as a restriction imposed by the festival funding bodies, as

variant from film to film but adhering to an established set of aesthetic elements: adagio rhythms and oblique narrative; a tone of quietude and reticence; an aura of unexplained or unearned anguish; attenuated takes; long tracking or panning shots, often of depopulated landscapes; prolonged hand-held follow shots of solo people walking; slow dollies to a window or open door framing nature; a materialistic sound design; and a preponderance of Tarkovskian imagery. (2009: 76)

The shaky hand-held camera that follows the yet-to-be introduced characters’ heads from behind in close-up suggests a divergence from the traditional social realist dramas of the cinema of duty, which often prioritise narrative over form and employ classical cinema’s continuity style conventions. Traditionally hand-held camera exudes a documentary feel and as David Bordwell argues, since the 1920s handheld shots were ‘associated with violence, an optically subjective point of view, or news reportage’ (2006: 144). Although Bordwell contends with the associations of the shaky hand-held camera with novelty and experimentation that is often attributed to art-house cinema, its use in the opening of *Die Fremde* does situate the film apart from the previous social realist dramas focusing on migrant experience. Quandt’s critical description of art-house film festival aesthetics does characterise *Die Fremde* to a large extent. The film has many quiet moments, pauses and rarefied frames and these features arguably signal a departure from the traditional narration of the movement-image, as the ‘clumsiness is shown, [...]’

because their apparent perfection is attacked' (Deleuze 2005: 218). The following two shots are linked together by what Deleuze calls 'an irrational cut', that is, the cut that disturbs the rational continuity of the images that dominates conventional cinema. The irrational cut indicates a difference between the narrative flow in classical cinema that Deleuze categorises as the movement-image, and modern cinema that is characterised by the time-image. Unlike the movement in classical cinema that presents itself as rational continuity, the irrational cut subordinates movement to time by placing gaps in the flow of images that allows thought to emerge in between. This signals a departure from the representational aesthetics of the movement-image to a new type of image that, as Deleuze puts it, is 'aimed at an always ambiguous, to be deciphered real' (2005a: 1). Although cinema has evolved significantly since the publication of Deleuze's cinema books and the digital technologies have arguably transformed its ontology, the distinction between movement-image and time-image still has a strong resonance in identifying the lines of flight from the majoritarian aesthetics, or the sites where new thought emerges.

For Deleuze, then, the time-image is not merely an aesthetic and formal break from tradition, but a 'political philosophy' itself (Rodowick 1999: 196). As theorists such as Jonathan Beller and Jonathan Crary have critiqued in detail, cinema signaled modernity's new forms of knowledge by constituting the individual as observer, while incorporating a perfect model of the modern industrial production techniques with its fast evolving systems of production and distribution (Crary 1992; Beller 2006). The Classical cinema thus assembled a new ontology by forming a new kind of relationship with the world, while at the same time disseminating this relationship via the culture industry. This new ontology presented reality as a mere proximity and operated by employing various convincing techniques that concealed the processes of its production to achieve a truthful representation of reality; and in this way undermined its power to create new connections with reality and produce new relations to it.

How, then, could cinema escape this disposition as a system of representation, attain its political power and in this way become a thought-



machine and align itself with life? How could it break away from its character as an apparatus of spectacle to that of involvement? Deleuze painstakingly theorises the political power of modern cinema in his cinema books, and characterises the time-image mainly as a category that releases the political potential of cinematic image, which he designates as the 'powers of the false' (2005a: 122-150). He argues that the power of cinema lies not in its mimetic capacity, but in the interstices of the image where the image reveals its falsity that leads us to think and to create, and cinema has the power to reveal this falseness of the image, implying that the human perception of reality is always already partial. Deleuze identifies the transition to the time-image with the cinemas of the French New Wave and Italian Neo-realism, both of which emerged around the mid-twentieth century. What characterises the occurrence of the time-image in those cinemas was primarily the disruption of the sensory-motor schema; the characters no longer knew how to act or react, 'this is a cinema of the seer and no longer the agent' (Deleuze 2005a: 123). Deleuze distinguishes two different regimes belonging to the two types of image: the organic regime of the movement-image and the crystalline regime of the time-image. It is essential to acknowledge Deleuze's conceptualisation of the actual and the virtual planes and their implications for the construction of cinematic space in the two image regimes, in order to grasp the political potential of the time-image.

The organic regime of the movement-image, which Deleuze exemplifies with the classical narration of the Hollywood cinema, is based on rational cuts and a succession of images that rely on the idea of chronological time and follow the linear and causal logic of Western culture. To this extent, they refer to the plane of the actual, the spatial orientation of the present, which dominates the Western conception of reality. Deleuze argues that what constitutes reality for a subject is a set of perceptible and imperceptible processes that recreate past encounters and combine them with the emergent conditions. The reality is thus what emerges from these processes of the actual and the virtual. The actual is the level of the occurrence and the virtual is the potential which is constituted by tendencies, which Brian Massumi argues, are

pastnesses opening directly onto a future, but with no present to speak of. For the present is lost with the missing half second, passing too quickly to be perceived, too quickly, actually, to have happened. (2002: 30)

Thus, the virtual can be defined as the ‘abstract realm of potential’, although not entirely reducible to a potential and it is imperceptible since it escapes the present – the perceptible temporal structure yet it is no less real than the actual (Massumi 2002: 31). The virtual is an intensity, a pure potentiality that opens up to future without being extended in space and in that, it creates falsity as it is imperceptible in the present. It renders truth indiscernible from the false as its reality is beyond the empirical time-space and it is this indiscernibility that defines the power of the cinema – the powers of the false of the crystalline narration (2005a: 125-7). Deleuze describes crystal as where the immanent actual and virtual spheres become perceptible yet indiscernible, ‘what we see in the crystal is time itself, a bit of time in the pure state’ (2005a: 79). Operating on these terms, the crystalline narration is distinct from the classical economy of continuity narration as it ‘implies a collapse of the sensory-motor schema’ (Deleuze 2005a: 124). Characters in crystalline narration have become ‘seers, cannot or will not react, so great is their need to “see” properly what there is in the situation’ (Deleuze 2005a: 124). This direct image of time expresses the deterritorialising forces of cinema: instead of truth, it brings forth the powers of the false. It is those moments of gaps and irrational cuts of the crystalline narration and the time-image, where the image ceases to demand belief by asserting its authenticity and truthfulness, and thus provides the room to think outside the predetermined relations of truth (2005a: 142). As Deleuze writes,

There is no longer either truth or appearance. There is no longer either invariable form or variable point of view on to form. There is a point of view which belongs so much to the thing that the thing is constantly being transformed in a becoming identical to a point of view. Metamorphosis of the true. What the artist is, is *creator of truth*, because truth is not to be achieved, formed or reproduced: it

has to be created. There is no other truth than the creation of the  
New: creativity, emergence... (2005a: 142)

The discontinuities and broken, self-conscious linkages that define the nature of the crystalline narration invite creation of new thought and provides the ground for philosophical activity: the activity of thinking differently, thinking outside the categories that wall the path of thought, by actualizing the virtual or rendering the virtual relations perceptible.

### **Affectability, Cliché and the Crystallisation of Narratives**

For a post-representational engagement with the film, three concepts from Deleuze's cinema books can prove useful: affectability, cliché and crystallisation of narratives. To go back to the opening sequence, the camera following the three characters slowly zooms in towards the back of the head of the young man. The camera stops zooming as soon as the character points a gun at the woman next to whom he is walking. This sequence is a flash-forward to the tragic ending of the film, and the woman is the protagonist Umay. The shot suggests that the spectator is not invited to identify with the potential assassin since the zooming stops abruptly as soon as the point of view camera is about to be acquired. A symbolic reading would immediately suggest that this opening shot establishes the purpose of the film to 'get into the mind' of the perpetrator, to understand the logic of patriarchal violence, yet each attempt to do so is interrupted. However, it might be argued that the spectator is not invited to judge his position either, as they are left to reflect on what they have not seen, what has been taken out of the sequence, what the image does not give access to. The camera then focuses on Umay in a medium close-up, looking at the gun pointed at her. The image then cuts to a close-up on the male character's face, shocked and dismayed, looking behind from inside a bus that moves away from the camera. The only information that this sequence provides is the affect on each character's face, full of shock and dismay, yet not entirely settled on a rational logic which lays out the full coordinates of the narrative thread. Unlike organic narration, which maps out the

coordinates of the story and keeps certain narrative information out for the sake of suspense, the elliptical narration of the opening overrides suspense and foregrounds the affectability as a force, pure intensity that ignites becoming and change. As Brian Massumi defines affect drawing on Spinoza,

The issue, after sensation, perception, and memory, is affect. "Relation between movement and rest" is another way of saying "transition." For Spinoza, the body was one with its transitions. Each transition is accompanied by a variation in capacity: a change in which powers to affect and be affected are addressable by a next event and how readily addressable they are – or to what degree they are present as futurities. That "degree:" is a bodily intensity, and its present futurity a tendency. (2002: 15)

The expressions on both characters' faces undermine movement and foreground transition, in this way deterritorialising the image - the image does not provide us with information on a given reality, but pure affect as intensity and potentiality, which points at multiple possible realities. Affect is what can be 'felt, rather than conceived', and thus the affection-image which gives us the pure sensation, deterritorialises the image and interferes with the process of thinking or judgment that characterises classical cinema and its representational politics (Deleuze 2005: 100). The image does not extend into an action, we do not see the action but the facial expression, which breaks the sensory-motor schema of the movement-image and leaves room for contemplation.

We are then introduced to the female protagonist and her life in Istanbul. Umay is lying in a white patient's gown at a doctor's office before an abortion. The abortion sequence consists of long shots of Umay's face from different angles, without an obvious expression but a quiet anguish, with the accentuated sounds of the surgical steel in the background. There is close to no dialogue in the first three sequences, the soundtrack of the film predominantly excludes dialogues and spares generous room to silences, while the visual field is often constructed without props, dominated by dark backgrounds which provide no

visibility and similarly the soundscapes are often as empty and rarefied as the visual track. The tracking shots of Istanbul are followed by Umay in close up watching the city. Umay gets off the bus in the middle of an empty space where an archaic rural barrenness is contrasted with the surrounding modern, tall blocks of apartments. Rather than depicting the urban spaces of the Turkish metropolis, Aladağ detaches Istanbul from its Western co-ordinates which are often reinforced in Fatih Akin's melodramas and thus constructs it as an 'any-space-whatever', a space 'which has lost its homogeneity' and which manifests instead heterogeneity, as 'the absence of link of such a space' Deleuze argues, 'is a richness in potentials or singularities' (2005: 113). It is neither a space that manifests a resemblance to urban space in its Western configurations, nor an altogether abstracted imaginary province. Umay wears a black headscarf outside the house, where her dark figure contrasts with the warm yellow hue of the sunshine that invades the frame, whereas inside the family home shared with her husband and his family, the indoor space is permeated by an almost black filter which nonetheless preserves the figure/space contrast.

Umay suffers from patriarchal violence that pervades her body both physically and mentally, and plans to escape to Germany from her abusive husband, only to embark on a struggle with her parents' patriarchal pressures. The image of the Turkish Airlines plane landing, now almost a signature image of Turkish German cinema, suggests a change of location from periphery to the centre, yet the domestic space in Germany is strikingly similar to the interior of the family home in Turkey. As in the previous dinner table sequence in Istanbul, there is a collective presence of the family at dinner table in Umay's parental home in Germany – the sitting plan and the lighting are identical, exuding a clearly outlined patriarchal hierarchy. Umay's father Kader (Settar Tanrıöğen) is a caring, avuncular figure yet his aggressive authoritarianism is not mitigated by this paternal warmth: surprised at his daughter's unannounced visit, the first question he asks Umay is her husband's whereabouts. The name of her husband invades the domestic space in Germany this time; the family constantly mentions the word 'your husband' which takes a violent and threatening edge when uttered by Umay's older brother Mehmet (Tamer Yiğit).

Drawing on Bergson's writings on perception, Deleuze defines all perception as image in the cinema books and conceptualises three types of images: the perception-image, the affection-image and the action-image. Every fiction film consists of these three image types and the quality of the film depends on which of these three categories dominate the film as a whole. For Deleuze, the three images in a sequential order constitute our subjective perception yet the time-image suspends this order and distorts this organisation. This disruption destabilises perception as well as the organisational principles of the sensory-motor schema, and gives way to pure optical and sound situations. From this weakening of sensory-motor connections appears the time-image, where the metaphors and cliché images no longer perform their tasks. Deleuze defines cliché as a 'sensory-motor image of the thing', a set of images that link automatically to other perceptible or mental images (2005a: 19). Drawing on Bergson, Deleuze continues to explain how cliché operates on perception as a system of control, which blocks the viewer from perceiving the image in its entirety and diverts perception according to their 'economic interests, ideological beliefs and psychological demands' (2005a: 19-20).

The cliché, thus, 'hides the image' - 'we never perceive everything that is in the image, because it is made for that purpose' (2005a: 20). Cliché often operates as a tool for capturing perception in cinema's tightly bound semiotic machinery, but it also has the potential to undo these processes of subjectivation and control through cracks in its organisation. Dysfunctional clichés can disrupt this automatic perception and offer loopholes in the semiotic system of recognition and thus render visible what is otherwise hidden. For this, Deleuze writes, it is necessary for cinema to introduce holes, voids and rarefy the image (2005a: 20). As he writes, 'it is necessary to make a division or make emptiness in order to find the whole again' (Deleuze 2005a: 21).

Although in terms of its narrative framework *Die Fremde* employs a linear dramatic structure, its aesthetic austerity and the rarefied image and sound tracks can offer ruptures from the tight bounds of its regime of signification. The film contains a number of dysfunctional cliché images. The kitchen space, which traditionally functions as a sign for female domestic confinement within Turkish

German Cinema, is constructed as a heterogeneous environment and suggests a break from this automatic viewing pattern. Umay's mother as a first generation immigrant is more often than not framed inside the kitchen doing domestic work, whereas Umay in the first half of the film, gets a job in a restaurant's kitchen, which offers her a release from domestic confinement. Unlike the films that were explored previously in this thesis, all of which foreground the concept of work within migrant communities and therefore give forms of labour and capitalist exploitation a new visibility within Turkish German Cinema, *Die Fremde*'s normative molar narrative structure positions wage labour as a means for migrant women's emancipation. Umay vocalises this generational contrast between her ambitions for emancipation and her mother's passive fatalism when she asks her mother "Do you want me to end up like you?" The kitchen space as a milieu thus becomes the container for the generational transformation often highlighted in discourses of integration and hybridity, and the film positions wage labour as a form of emancipation from patriarchy in contrast to domestic labour. However this line of progression breaks down in a third kitchen milieu. When Umay leaves her family home in Berlin and takes shelter at a women's hostel, she is welcomed with a warm sense of solidarity, yet this time a cold blue atmosphere pervades the institution. She seats herself in the kitchen quietly with an expression of sorrow and distress on her face, and for some sixty seconds she is seen sitting alone staring at emptiness with a glass of water, facing the camera [Fig.16].



**Figure 16 - Umay at the women's hostel**

This is a rare moment of pause in the film, which otherwise predominantly conveys a conventional editing structure. The position of the camera as level with Umay and her position at the far left corner of the frame in this extended durational shot suggests a potential allusion to Chantal Akerman's seminal film *Jeanne Dielman, 23 Quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* (1975). Akerman's three-hour-long, durational film about a single mother's claustrophobic life dominated by fixed frontal, slightly low angle shots and long takes of its protagonist *Jeanne* (Delphine Seyrig) performing routine domestic work defined by precision and occasional afternoon prostitution expresses the radical potential within what appears as a contrast between stasis and subtly intensified sensation of repression. As Ivone Margulies argues, the real-time banal kitchen scenes in *Jeanne Dielman* were in conversation with the new politicised realism of the observational 'nothing happens' attitude in postwar European cinema, and as such were experiments in dramatisation, signaling a new radical 'strong feminist accent' (2009). Margulies writes,

in its structural delineation of a link between two prescribed female roles domestic and sexual, the mother and the whore—the film engages broadly with a feminist problematic, one that takes



into account also a woman's alienation, her labor, and her dormant violence. (2009)

The potential allusion to *Jeanne Dielman* in *Die Fremde* could be suggestive of new and radical ways of thinking about expressions of gender and violence in the film beyond the confines of identity politics. Instead of tracing the continuities and ruptures in the historic route of female victimisation within Turkish German Cinema, the kitchen spaces in the film can be viewed as milieus where the passage of time insinuates a violent yet dormant sensation of repression and liberates the image from the zone of narrative representation and signification. Within its austere discursive regime, the film foregrounds the violent sensation of oppression most forcefully in the kitchen scenes, where very few words are exchanged, yet pure affect prevails. In an earlier kitchen scene, Umay bursts out of her subjugation to her father in an act of self-violence. In this moment of hysterical outburst against the severe verbal confrontation with her father, Umay attempts to cut her wrists. The intensified forces fortified with patriarchal oppression can hardly be translated into a narrative for Umay. Her struggle subtly and gradually conveys an ethics of becoming as she turns her negative forces of resistance into a form of creation – 'of new forms of life, relationships, friendships' through her choices, to put it in terms of Foucault's definition of an ethics of becoming, not only by affirming herself as an identity, 'but also as a creative force' (1997: 164). Umay rejects her friends Gül and Atife's advice on pressing charges against her abusive husband, and resisting the official narratives; and with a stubborn determination to be reconciled with her family, she actively participates in creating a generative narrative.

Umay is safe within the confines of the hostel, yet she is no longer able to recognise this safe haven as a new home. The kitchen milieu, in traditional narrative terms stops functioning as a signifier for the contrast between the two generations in this extended sequence. Strictly speaking in terms of narrative structure, peace does not come about as effortlessly as it does in *Abschied vom Falschem Paradies* where Elif finds protection from Turkish patriarchy in the solidarity of women in the German prison. Umay is no longer able to think and react in the moment, the kitchen space no longer functions as a mediator of the

movement that follows a causal linkage but instead it crystallises. The crystal-image appears in the disruption of binary terms, it is ‘an exchange between the actual image and the virtual image... an exchange between seed and environment’ (Deleuze 1995: 66). The kitchen of the hostel thus loses its relation to the other two kitchen spaces in the film, as it becomes Umay’s mental-image, her anomalous relation with the indeterminacy of her circumstances and her desire to create her own narrative against normative victimisation narratives. Similarly, the sensory-motor schema breaks down in the construction of the perpetrator’s subjectivity. It is not the female member that is confined in the Turkish domestic space this time, as we see Kader smoking by the window of his bedroom facing the claustrophobic backyard of the building. Silence and passivity prevail in the shots wherein Kader searches a way out of his moral dilemma. What brings about the decision for the murder is not a process of reasoning as conveyed by the sensory-motor schema; it rather comes about after a crisis of action, which pervades the overall tone of the film, wherein the unintelligibility of the patriarchal discourse eludes all reasoning and identification. The subjects of the decision making process no longer know what they are doing as the process itself exhausts their subjectivity and finally Kader’s body. Against this material and affective backdrop, the normative victimizing narratives take place in the bright, well-lit spaces of visibility and knowability, such as the restaurant kitchen and Umay’s new apartment. These molar lines of contrast nonetheless reinforce the processes of ethnic profiling through an opposition of affect to the familiarity of the visible. While the affective qualities of the film do open up cracks in its normative narrative with the potential to generate thought, the powers of the ‘interpellary’ molar and organic qualities of the visual field cannot be discounted (Gramling 2012: 33).

### **Molar organisation and reterritorialisation of the narrative lines**

Umay’s body of trauma articulates itself on the level of intensities more than it does so as a discursive subject – as Brian Massumi defines the concept: ‘the best word for a complicating self-relation is “intensity”’ (2002: 14). Often

hysterical and in crisis, Umay confronts her brother's threatening verbal language and physical attacks. Unlike a majority of the previous examples of female characters within Turkish German narratives of victimisation, Umay occupies the verbal zone, albeit with a broken language, taking often long breaks between words and leaves her sentences unfinished, if not interrupted by others. She is framed as vulnerable, physically abused by her father and her brother, and sexually abused by her husband, however she repeatedly attempts to assert herself on a level of enunciation. The a-signifying elements such as the affective intensities, which are often rendered sensible in these moments of interruption, delays and expressions of extreme repression, and the signifying segments such as Umay's verbal stammering and her dress code (headscarf in Turkey) operate as a machinic assemblage. As Deleuze and Guattari write,

On a first, horizontal, axis, an assemblage comprises two segments, one of content, the other of expression. On the one hand it is a *machinic assemblage* of bodies, of actions and passions, an intermingling of bodies reacting to one another; on the other hand it is a *collective assemblage of enunciation*, of acts and statements, of incorporeal transformations attributed to bodies. Then on a vertical axis, the assemblage has both *territorial sides*, or reterritorialized sides, which stabilize it, and *cutting edges of deterritorialization*, which carry it away. (2008: 97-8)

Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* also use the terms molar and molecular to characterise two intertwined aspects of material existence. According to this distinction, identity and subjectivity are molar forms yet all identities consist of and are linked together through molecular forces. All identity and subjectivity categories such as race, class and gender are molar forms whereas they are constantly challenged and mutated by molecular forces and flows that deterritorialise them on a micro level and these forms are strictly intertwined and co-existent:

one distinguishes between the molecular aspect and the molar aspect: on the one hand, *masses or flows*, with their mutations,

quanta of deterritorialization, connections, and accelerations; on the other hand, *classes or segments*, with their binary organization, resonance, conjunction or accumulation, and line of overcoding favouring one line over the others. (Deleuze and Guattari 2008: 243)

Deleuze and Guattari give the binary of the sexes as an example of the political implications of molar categories and argue that the heteronormative category of woman is a subjectivity designed according to molar lines of anatomy and cultural codes. Whatever challenges these codes are molecular forces, but molecular forces are not necessarily positive, just as molar lines are not always negative: feminist struggle might necessitate asserting one's molar identity to fight against patriarchal male violence and subjectivation. Instead, molar and molecular are merely two complementary types of organisation (2004: 304). Patricia Pisters, in *The Matrix of Visual Culture* addresses the milieu in film as its molar lines: the 'political, historical, sociologic or economic segments' that are not directly signified, yet implied, establish the molar segments of the film (2003: 58). Umay's identity as a Turkish woman wearing a headscarf is delineated by the molar lines of both the aesthetic and extracinematic discursive fields. In this respect, the narrative constituents of *Die Fremde* can be contained in a molar envelope, whereas the affective qualities of the film can offer a challenge to these organisational principles of representation. Umay's headscarf stops functioning as a signifier separately from her and becomes a part of her as a machinic assemblage, once we remove it from the representational molar grids of the regime of signification.

Umay's persistent efforts to reconnect with her family at times crash the linear flow of time as the brutal rejections that she receives each time do not erase the affections of the past. She defies a molar characterisation of the female victim by funnelling the affectionate memories of the past into a potential future by omitting the molar conditions of the present. Yet the new is not always a positive position to welcome – the line of flight, which breaks the rigid contours

of the present as a state/milieu is not one that moves independently but needs to connect to the multiplicities that surround it. According to Deleuze and Guattari, a line of flight is the line of deterritorialisation; the line which escapes the molar forms yet it entails risks and a great destructive capacity as well as power to form new relations (2004: 255). Umay's line of flight becomes a destructive one, in that the affective patterns of the past fail to connect to the destructive circumstances which fly into a potential future. She shares a moment of comic relief with her father watching a comedy programme, which is followed by a dialogue pervaded with affection. She asks the ultimate question "Why?" to which her father replies "Because". After Mehmet refuses to allow her to attend her sister Rana's wedding, she asks him "Who changed you, fed you, stayed awake all night for you?" The affections of the past therefore do not fade away and coexist with the impossibility that the future exerts. When both Gül and Atife try to discourage her attempts to bond with her family, she answers "They will accept, eventually". The past affections and the future possibilities thus overcome and hide the destructive lines of flight. In this way, Umay's line of flight fails to reveal the imperceptible forces by failing to form a shared flight, yet for that very reason her subjectivity digresses from the previous molar accounts of the cinema of duty which portrayed women as 'dependent, childlike and subservient' (Mennel 2010: 45).

The film's tragic ending, which reveals the missing scenes from the opening sequence, fills in the blanks with an unexpected narrative twist. The younger brother Acar hesitates to pull the trigger, throws the gun down and runs away from the scene, yet this brief moment of relief is followed by Mehmet's abrupt appearance and stabbing of Cem accidentally instead of Umay. Aladağ's choice of tragedy as conclusion suggests a digression from the 'authentic' cases of honour crimes in Germany in the form of an almost Judeo-Christian condemnation of human vices by sacrificing Cem as a young and innocent figure. However this interpretation could be challenged by Gül's key remark in the film "Leave Allah out of it, he's got nothing to do with this". Aladağ thus reveals the film's endeavour to detach the concept of honour crime from its associations with

the Muslim culture, which has become a successful marketing strategy for the film, claiming itself to be promoting a diverse new European identity.

In this way Aladağ reorganises what David Gramling calls the myth of honour crime with Judeo-Christian narrative undertones (2012: 32 – 43). According to Gramling, the film's 'cunning' semiotic design reinforces the myth that 'Muslim women are never and nowhere safe from violence, with or without headscarf or other expressions of piety, with or without German institutional aid or personal companionship' (2012: 38). In this signifying logic, which he calls 'mythical realism', Gramling argues that the clichés do not function as a 'flaw, equivocation or immoderation', but instead they operate 'as the internally coherent, underlying structure of its narrative design' (2012: 38). However, the cliché images in *Die Fremde* manifest a sense of poor continuity in the film's aesthetics of austerity: the silences and stases brought about by a crisis of action suggest a disintegration of the historicity of Turkish German Cinema's visual archive of signifiers. In this way, these gaps, silences and moments of delay create a sense of false continuity, a concept which Deleuze attributes to the modern political cinema's powers of the false. False continuity which rarefies the image and reveals the delays, gaps and breaks in the sensory-motor connections is necessary for the political cinema as it '... [suppresses] many things that have been added to make us believe that we were seeing everything' (2005a: 20). Rather than pre-empting the aesthetic potential of film by reducing them to an economy of signifiers that is ultimately bound to fail its task of representing an authentic form of reality, modern political cinema's strength lies in its contribution to create new and alternative forms. Rather than dismissing *Die Fremde* as an heir to what is conceptualised as the Turkish German cinema of duty, it can be a more productive endeavour to put emphasis on its deterritorialising aesthetic aspects which challenge these often failing semiotic structures. The cracks in the constitution of bodies and subjectivities destabilise identity politics and can open up new ways of thinking about the political potential of the aesthetics of affect.

### **3. 2. Post-representational Queer Ethics in Yüksel Yavuz's *Kleine Freiheit* (2003)**

Since Kutluğ Ataman's *Lola und Bilidikid* (Lola and Bilidikid, 2009), queer subjectivities within Turkish German cinema have gained considerable visibility. Films such as Ayşe Polat's *Auslandstournee* (Tour Abroad, 2000), Yüksel Yavuz's *Kleine Freiheit* (A little bit of Freedom, 2003) and Fatih Akin's *Auf der anderen Seite* (Edge of Heaven, 2007) proliferated queer forms of subjectivities, relationships and becomings on screen, and opened up new trajectories to think about and beyond the issues of gender and sexuality, which until then had predominantly focused on heteronormative forms of identity politics and power dynamics, and had often been framed through psychoanalytical theory and Butlerian performativity. This section aims to look at queer subjectivities in recent Turkish German cinema through a post-representational paradigm, with the concern to understand how this recent proliferation of non-heteronormative modes of subjectivity and desiring production might challenge normative and majoritarian forms of signification and identification, and contribute to a post-representational, non-identitarian queer politics beyond the pre-existing models and categories, directed towards a future. This post-representational endeavour is aimed at making new connections between various forms of oppression and exclusion, as well as the creative articulations and formulations of subjectivity as emergent forms of resistance against those forces, and as such it is not intended as a corrective to the representational discourses such as performativity, but a way of extrapolating their more radical consequences.

Theories of performativity traditionally rely on the recognition of pre-existing models of signification as a resistance strategy – the performative subject, for Butler, must be able to perform and 'successfully reproduce' cultural norms 'through specific acts, gestures, signs and positions' in order to be intelligible (Ruffolo 2009: 77). Without dismissing the contributions of performativity and queer theory to the studies of Turkish German film, this section aims to further

these discussions with an accentuated attention to a-signifying aesthetics which privileges difference and creation of the new, over recognition and a methodological diagnosis of signs and patterns. I will focus on Kurdish German filmmaker Yüksel Yavuz's *Kleine Freiheit* as an aesthetic challenge to essentialist and normalizing discourses of gender, sexuality, borders and migration, conveying how new and converging forms of inclusion and exclusion, visibilities and invisibilities are produced simultaneously by the forces of global capitalism. To this end, I shall first briefly reflect on how a post-representational queer ethics can be envisioned, and what uses and limitations it might entail.

While the term queer is often used as an umbrella term to define lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual and transgender identities and subjectivities, within the discipline of queer studies it is more broadly used as an analytical tool to 'undermine heterosexuality as a normative regime' (Kuntsman 2009:10). According to this definition, queer theory identifies and maps out the queer detours from normative social practices and discourses. In a nutshell, David Ruffolo summarises the function of queer theory thus,

...queer theory has become almost exclusively interested in challenging heteronormative ideologies by examining and exposing how subjects come into being through discursive interactions... Most notable, perhaps, is bringing to light how subjects become intelligible through binary identity categories such as male/female, masculine/feminine, and straight/gay. It queers –disturbs, disrupts, and centers– what is considered 'normal' in order to explore possibilities outside of patriarchal, hierarchical, and heteronormative discursive practices. (2009: 2)

This negative definition has been criticised in Deleuzian reflections on queer theory. Ruffolo argues for a radically reformed model of queer theory which aims to go beyond subjectivity and binary oppositions, and which he defines as 'post-queer politics' (2009: 4). According to Ruffolo, post-queer politics takes its methodological cue from Deleuze's schizoanalysis and his philosophy of becomings; aiming to create new lines of flight that are not 'restricted by subjectivity and language but are instead stimulated by the potentialities and



creativities of an intensive politics' (2009: 6). While Ruffolo's methodology expresses the need for a radical break from representational politics, his suggestion to make that leap by a total overthrow of subjectivity risks limiting queer theory's political agenda to a superfluous and descriptive level, divorcing desiring production from its particular contextual and material (social, local, institutional) configurations and lived experience. Also with the aim to formulate a less negative and non-identitarian model, Claire Colebrook emphasises an alliance and affiliation between the values of queer theory and 'the values of the postmodern, post-human, post-metaphysical attitude' (2009: 11). She writes,

If our situatedness is, by definition, that which also counts as normal and normative, then theory as such might be intrinsically queer, as an attempt to deviate from, or pervert, that which appears self-evident, unquestionable and foundational. Accepting such a definition of queer theory would render the enterprise both parasitic and relative; queer theory would always be a solicitation of the normal, and if homosexuality and bisexuality were to become legitimate social models, then the queer would not have withered away, but merely shifted terrain: interrogating any supposed normality or normativity, having no intrinsic power. (Colebrook 2009: 11-2)

Drawing on Deleuze's formulation of ethics and politics, Colebrook argues that a self who defines itself as 'against (autonomy) and through others (recognition) has as its prior condition pre-personal series', that is affect and virtuality – 'pure fragments' of a past that was virtual, that was 'never present and does not exist, but is always absent from itself and *insists*' (2009: 17-8). She argues that the aim of theory must be 'to affirm and open these series' of virtuality and affect, to look at what powers this potentiality presents (Colebrook 2009: 18).

Understood in this way, performativity as a representational form of thinking the queer, goes back to the 'singular points from which relations and affects have been determined': how actuality of an individual or a self comes about with the differences and modulations produced through this process of repetition of determinate selves and identities (Colebrook 2009: 18). A Deleuzo-

Guattarian queer theory in contrast requires going beyond ‘the self’ and individual existence. As Colebrook explains,

Against a critical reading, which would look at the ways in which art or literature queers the pitch of the normal, Deleuze offers a positive reading in which temporality in its pure state can be intuited and given form as queer, as a power to create relations, to make a difference, to repeat a power beyond its actual and already constituted forms. (2009: 23)

Both Ruffolo’s and Colebrook’s formulations are suggestive for a reworked, distinct model of engagement with the aesthetic field, with an enhanced attunement to the production of the new – to subjectivity production as a queer process and not as a representative category. Subjectivity, therefore is understood in the sense of Guattari’s reformulation of the concept – as an assemblage, a machinic process of production, as ‘plural and polyphonic’ and as recognizing ‘no dominant or determinant instance guiding all other forms according to a univocal causality’ – governed by a complex set of factors, the identification and definition of which should be aimed at creation and experimentation, instead of closure (Guattari 2006: 1). Looking at such processes of queer subjectivity production in *Kleine Freiheit* as an aesthetic, philosophical and political creation therefore requires an engagement with the intensities and forces on multiple platforms: social, historical, cognitive, future-oriented, actual, virtual, signifying and a-signifying semiotic levels.

### ***Kleine Freiheit***

As Kurdish German filmmaker Yüksel Yavuz’s second feature film after *Aprilkinder* (April Children, 1998), *Kleine Freiheit* opened in the Cannes Film Festival in 2003 and won the best film award in Ankara Film Festival in the same year. Often explored under the rubric of Turkish German Cinema, Yavuz is considered as one of the most prominent Kurdish diasporic filmmakers, and one of the first filmmakers to draw upon the Kurdish diaspora’s precarious and exilic

status in Germany.<sup>27</sup> His first full-length film *Mein Vater, der Gastarbeiter* was the first cinematically released documentary to focus on labour migration with a strong political investment, and since *Kleine Freiheit*, Yavuz has moved on to a more overtly radical and political terrain of documentary filmmaking, exploring the Turkish-Kurdish conflict (*Close Up Kurdistan*, 2007; *Sehnsucht nach Istanbul*, 2010) and the radical feminist Kurdish struggle against the Turkish state and army (*Hêvî*, 2013). Although *Kleine Freiheit* depicts a visually bleak and raw narrative, employing what appears as a conservatively linear film structure and social realist cinema aesthetics, it has brought about radical modifications to Turkish German cinema by its entangling of a queer coming of age narrative with a vivid depiction of living illegally as a stateless and politically dispossessed immigrant in Germany.

Unlike the films explored previously in this thesis, *Kleine Freiheit* presents a dramatic and overloaded narrative with a relatively saturated aesthetic and fast paced continuity style. The film's cluttered yet fluid audiovisual track as well as its layered and complex narrative plot bring about a different sense of immersion and intensification than the films that were previously explored, which all convey an aesthetics of austerity. *Kleine Freiheit*, nonetheless creatively proliferates new affects and new subjectivity formulations eluding the economies of representation (of national, sexual, cultural identities) and universalizing categories through a fluidity achieved through relentless camera and character movements and a vivid saturation of the milieu. This stimulating movement of both the camera and the characters undermines and destabilises the moral grids of the film's narrative, constantly changing focus and destabilizing perception, towards an outside, pointing at what is behind/beyond the centres of perception. The perpetual movement thus works as a queering strategy to resist the stabilizing and unifying aspects of traditional social realist cinema, constantly signalling the lines of flight from the seemingly graspable normative categories and knowable conditions that global market capitalism has brought about.

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<sup>27</sup> Christina Kraenzle names Fatih Akın's *Crossing the Bridge: The Sound of Istanbul* (2005), Yılmaz Arslan's *Brudermord* (Fratricide, 2005) and Hito Steyerl's *November* (2004) amongst the films which 'serve to remind us of the Turkish-Kurdish conflict and also to dispel popular misconceptions of a homogenous Turkish diaspora in Germany' (2009: 93).

Set in the urban background of the St. Pauli neighbourhood in Hamburg, *Kleine Freiheit* takes its title from a small side street in the red light district of Altona (Göktürk 2005). Having been unsuccessful in his appeal for asylum, the sixteen-year-old Baran (Çağdaş Bozkurt) is forced to live as an illegal immigrant in Germany, staying with his cousin Haydar (Nazmi Kırık) and working as a delivery boy at the kebab shop where Haydar works. Baran's parents have been killed by the Turkish army due to allegations of collaborating with the Kurdish separatists. Baran is traumatised and haunted by the loss of his parents, and often watches on his camera the footages he took of his grandparents in their village in Diyarbakır. He is introduced to the African Chernor (Leroy Delmar), a small-time drug dealer and an illegal immigrant, and the two boys immediately bond over their similarly precarious status. As their friendship turns into a homosexual love affair, Baran gets increasingly obsessed with the idea to kill Selim (Necmettin Çobanoğlu), another Kurdish refugee from the same village, who has given away his parents to the Turkish military and caused their death. Baran records his life on his camera and the image occasionally alternates between the film's main shots and footage from Baran's camera. The closing of the film shows Baran's camera footage capturing the moment of his capture by the police, as he tries to rescue Chernor from being arrested.

The film opens with documentary footage showing Yüksel Yavuz's own family in Turkey. In the film's diegetic world, this is footage from Baran's camera of his own family in Diyarbakır. The shaky camera pans in the room, and the image fast forwards to the grandfather's face talking in Kurdish looking directly at the camera. In a passing conversation, the grandfather says to the camera that his time is over. As he rephrases it, saying that time, for him, is over, the image pauses and in the next shot, the opening credits run over images of Hamburg in the present. This opening documentary shot sets the affective tone of the film: the conversations of the family members are often interrupted and fast forwarded, but as the image zooms on Baran's grandfather's face, his expressivity takes precedence over his utterances' narrative significance. The manipulation of the image being fast-forwarded and paused contrasts with the grandfather's comment

on time being over and signals the durational quality of the cinematic image that contrasts with the linearly perceived quality of lived time. The becoming in time is thus foregrounded in the image that expresses pure affect, as the affective quality of the image endures beyond representation.

This affective quality of the face in close up beyond any obvious signification signals a post-representational ethics of the image from this very opening shot onwards: between the fast paced cuts and superimposed images, relentless tracking shots and perpetual shifting of camera position, the image often cuts back and dwells on the face of the protagonist, fluctuating between expressivity and indeterminacy. Steven Shaviro describes this hybridisation of the cinematic image as a new aesthetic attitude in cinema, emerging as a response to the disorganising and deterritorialising forces of global capitalism,

The fragmentation, the irresolution, the continual switching back and forth between moments or sequences that are plot-driven, and ones that are instead purely affect-driven, the insistence that genre conventions and expectations can neither be transcended and escaped, nor fulfilled... (these features) work towards, and help construct the vision of a world that is too complex and far-flung to be totalized on any grand narrative... and at the same time too intricately interconnected to be treated linearly or atomistically. (2010: 51-52)

*Kleine Freiheit* deploys such a hybrid aesthetic. The image often switches between the plot-driven moments and sequences, and the moments of pure intensity, foregrounded in the extended sequences of Baran riding his bike around the city. In these long takes the image continuously cuts between a medium close up of his face and his point of view. Perpetual movement and rapidly shifting focus stymies psychologizing and reterritorialising the affect as emotional expressivity. Narrative closure is abandoned in favour of sensation and sensory experience.

Following the documentary opening fragment, the film introduces the protagonist Baran in the chaotic and oppressive milieu of the kebab shop where

he works as a delivery boy. Throughout fast paced long tracking shots, the camera follows Baran moving around under pressure in the cramped space. Both the soundscape and the visual field are cluttered with cacophonous sounds, music, poly-lingual fragments of conversations and movement, with which Baran's opaque expressionless face and clumsy posture and movements seem to be at odds. As Baran sits in the corner in the kitchen of the kebab shop, unable to work due to a wisdom tooth coming out, his boss grabs a hot skewer and forces him to open his mouth, insisting on this method will work as a quick cure that will make him useful as an employee again. This sequence portrays Baran's struggle in the claustrophobic and heavily threatening environment of the kitchen for a few minutes, while at the same time contrasting this tension with slapstick comedy elements achieved by the exaggerated physicality and language of the actors, functioning as a homage to early neo-realist classics such as *Rome, Open City* (Roberto Rossellini, 1945). In molar psychoanalytical terms, this sequence can be interpreted as evoking castration anxiety in a nightmarish take, yet the film in its course stymies such symbolic associations. What follows is a superimposed montage of Baran's work as a delivery boy, layered with the images of random businesses and his view while cycling around the city. The sequence is shot through triple exposure of disconnected places, the urban streets, a nightclub, a bakery and construction sites, filmed from Baran's point of view, accompanied with Mercan Dede's hypnotic sufi music in the background.

Such moments of tension in the film often remain unresolved as they are followed by non-plot-driven, extended tracking shots of the urban environment with a frenetic soundtrack in the background, verging upon music video aesthetics, in which Shaviro argues 'the images are freed precisely because they are entirely superfluous' (2010: 81). Evoking Michel Chion's writings on film sound, Shaviro writes that the use of such techniques to achieve a sort of visual polyphony, such as 'literal simultaneity of multiple images on a single screen, or of frames within the frame' emerged primarily in music videos and was rarely used in film in the 1990s (2010: 81). Such music video aesthetics in film suspends 'dramatic time', brings the fractured narratives to a halt and gives way to an 'audiovisual passage', the temporality of which is dictated by music

(Shaviro 2010: 83). This freeing of the image brings forth the a-signifying elements of the audiovisual composition, which are conventionally undermined by molar and narrative components, which nonetheless play a role in organizing and disorganizing the social relations and situations in the film. As Maurizio Lazzarato explains, the a-signifying components of any work of creation are pre-individual and their function according to the Guattarian aesthetic paradigm as such,

These kind of semiotics are animated by affects and affections and bring about relationships that are difficult to ascribe to a subject, to an Ego or individual. They go beyond the limits maintained by individual persons and identities, their roles and social functions to which language reduces them and within which they are then trapped. The “message” is not passed on by means of a linguistic series, but rather through the body, postures, noises and images, gestures, intensities, movements, rhythms and so on. (2008: 177)

The film reworks the social realist genre conventions precisely by accentuating a hybrid aesthetics and placing a new emphasis on these a-signifying components. These elements are worth particular attention when exploring the production of queer subjectivity as a-signifying semiotics is precisely the zone where subjectivity production happens on a molecular level. *Kleine Freiheit* puts a particular emphasis on how queer subjectivity formation is contingent upon other forms of social exclusion, abuse and entrapment produced by the de- and re-territorialising forces of global capitalism.

### **Representation and Affect**

Drawing on Yavuz’s resistance to being classified as belonging to the New German Cinema auteur tradition, Kraenzle argues that the film rather draws influences from a varied range of transnational cinemas of social realist tradition, particularly those that are defined as ‘accented cinema’ by Naficy (2009: 94). Kraenzle identifies the accented cinema elements in the film as such,

epistolary narrative techniques which emphasize geographical distance and persistent memories of former homes, the emphasis of visual fetishes of homeland, and the past (e.g., landscapes, photographs, souvenirs) multilingualism and cinematography which destabilizes conventional omniscient narratives and spectator positioning. (2009: 94)

Along with such narrative tendencies, Kraenzle argues that, in contrast to its title, the film is overwrought with intertextual references and spatial metaphors emphasizing entrapment. Reading the bike as a referential motif to *The Bicycle Thieves* (Vittorio De Sica, 1948), Kraenzle argues that its loss restores the sense of despair, loneliness and immobility, which evidently functions as a metaphor for Baran and Chernor's illegal status (2009: 100). The streets or long takes of physical mobility similarly are bound to offer a limited sense of freedom for Baran and Chernor, as she writes,

Although maintaining their livelihood and avoiding police require constant motion, the men exercise little agency in their movements; mobility is instead determined and limited by the state and its immigration and asylum policies. (Kraenzle 2009: 100)

Kraenzle's representational analysis offers few alternatives other than reading each element of the mise-en-scène as a closed set of signifiers, ultimately reducing the function of aesthetics to meaning and signification. In such a set, there is no other way to see the film going beyond the identities of its characters (ethnically marked, illegal immigrants) or spaces (within the grids of German state and ultimately German).

Such social structures and strata are not to be dismissed within a post-representational engagement with the film, but are thought through with a focus on affect, as a tool to undo their sovereignty that posits the impossibility of agency – the capacity to be or become otherwise. Jasbir Puar describes this as the entanglement of affect and strata as such,

Encounters with social, cultural, and capitalist infrastructures (literal, built, architectural, ideological, public policy – encounters where



bodily capacity may be rendered inadequate or challenged) potentially render affective capacity, in its productive movement, exploitative and exploited. Affective capacity in this sense – that is, a toggling between ontology and epistemology as they cycle in möbius tandem – occupies a steady tension with its opposite, incapacity. (2009: 162)

Puar defines this capture and exploitation of affective capacity by such strata as ‘debility’ (2009: 162). Understood in this way, an engagement with the affective potential of the film can act as a pursuit to challenge the incapacitating and debilitating sovereign power of such strata, which is enhanced in representation. Queer subjectivity formation in the film can be viewed in terms of such an affective power, that resists being reterritorialised in identification or direct representation, and entangles the intersections of queer politics and surveillance of undocumented migrants, as I will discuss later. For such an affective engagement with the aesthetics, one must view *Kleine Freiheit* in relation to contemporary social realist filmmaking, instead of merely recognizing various continuities or tracing the intertextual references to previous traditions. I will look at how a break from previous social realist traditions such as combining rapidly alternating point of view shots with the use of shaky handheld camera and a dominant use of tracking shots, may signal a reformulation of screen ethics for making visible multiple contrasting views and marginalised positions, as well as proliferating difference instead of eliminating it.

### **The Ethical Turn in the Social Realist Cinema of Europe**

With its reworking of the genre conventions and aesthetics of social realism, *Kleine Freiheit* can be affiliated with a recent attitude within the broader context of social realist cinema in Europe, which foregrounds the ethical need to challenge traditional narrative and formal strategies to make visible new and old forms of marginalisation, exclusion, abuse and control that are produced by the forces of global capitalism. In this way *Kleine Freiheit* destabilises a detached spectatorial

position and expresses a break from the observational documentary tradition of cinema vérité and neo-realism, towards creating a complex and intensified film world – as also employed by contemporary directors such as Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne, who convey similar aesthetic attitudes and narrative concerns in their works and are seen as pioneers of a new social realist ethics and aesthetics. As Bert Cardullo argues, Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne ‘have ascended to the forefront of a newly revived socially conscious European cinema... at a time when filmmaking in Europe, however distinguished, seemed largely unmoored from the social changes wrought by the end of the Soviet empire’ (2009: ix). Also exploring the lives of illegal immigrants in post-Cold War Europe, Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne’s *La Promesse* (1996) and more recently *Le Silence de Lorna* (The Silence of Lorna, 2008) deploy such stylistic devices and strategies that reflect this new ethical turn in recent European social realist cinema.

The aesthetics of this ethical turn expresses a tendency to complicate, create and proliferate subjectivities in an affective and immersive film world, rather than what Rancière critically describes as ‘an increasing tendency to submit politics and art to moral judgements about the validity of their principles and the consequences of their practices’ (2010: 184). In this way, such aesthetic strategies aim to move beyond a representation of situations, places and characters that relies on the moral binary principle of good and bad, and replace this with an emphasis on difference, creation and change. In his analysis of Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne’s cinema, Philip Mosley defines this attitude as a ‘responsible realism’ (2013). Evoking Levinasian ethics of primacy of the other, he explains,

Responsibility to the other implies a new subjectivity, a transformed identity, one that challenges the supremacy of freedom and the imperatives of the self. Dardennes’ major films dramatise this change in their protagonists, but it is a change that implicates the viewer too... Consequently their films...attempt an extremely difficult integration of the empirical and the transcendental, of the visible and the unseen. (Mosley 2013: 17)

Understood in Deleuzian terms of ethics, which is built upon a principle of becoming, this creation of new subjectivity and self-transformation in cinema

implicates ‘the fundamental ethical choice’, that is, ‘to believe in this world and its powers of transformation’ (Rodowick 2010: 98). This pursuit of restoring belief in the world and transformation is expressed in cinema through an encounter with affective potential as the site where transformation takes place on a molecular level. D.N. Rodowick looks at the face as such a site of potentiality in an unpublished essay, wherein he explores screen ethics from both Levinasian and Deleuzian angles, as powerful alternatives to identitarian politics.<sup>28</sup> As he argues, according to Levinasian ethics, the face has a transcendental power, encounter with the Other through the face is ‘the foundation of an ethical relation surpassing the senses or any phenomenology based on sight’, in other words, it is a ‘call to responsiveness with respect to (the) other, a responsiveness that demands I relinquish my control, mastery, or possession of the other as an image’ (Rodowick 2009: 19). For Levinasian ethics then, an encounter with the face dismantles the ‘knowing subject vis-à-vis the image as the knowable object’ schema of representational logic (Rodowick 2009: 19).

For Deleuze, on the other hand, the face is simultaneously signifying and a-signifying. He writes that ‘the face is Icon proper to the signifying regime... the signifier reterritorialises on the face’ (2008: 127). Facial expressions (which Deleuze calls facialty) are where signifiers function outside language as a set of material movements which ‘fuels interpretation’ (Deleuze 2008: 127). However, the face is not reducible to signifying expressions: it also ‘fosters a pluralism or polyvocality of forms of expression that prevents any power takeover by the signifier and preserves expressive forms particular to content’ (2008: 130). The face is simultaneously the site where meaning, signification and interpretation are deterritorialised.

Faces in *Kleine Freiheit* are such sites where the affective potential for transformation and undoing of strata and identity can be located. Social strata are accentuated through the film’s complex narrative grids: the Kurdish diaspora’s fractured groupings are vividly displayed throughout the film, which undermine a

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<sup>28</sup> See: D. N. Rodowick, ‘Ethics in film philosophy’ (unpublished essay). Available at: <<http://sites.harvard.edu/fs/docs/icb.topic242308.files/RodowickETHICSweb.pdf>>

unified conception of an ethnic identity. As Baran confronts Selim with a gun to take his parent's revenge, Selim begs for forgiveness explaining how he had no choice against the Turkish army's pressure. The PKK (Kurdish Worker's Party) members accuse Haydar at the kebab shop for not supporting the party's struggle, which ends up in a gunfight. Such moments of tension are not resolved in a dialectical manner, but are further entangled; making visible how conflicts are contingent upon several complex, spatial and temporal factors, and challenge being organised by any moralizing or universalizing frame. The film thus privileges encounters, intensities, gestures, and contingencies over representation, resolution and meaning.

After such moments of tension, the frame often cuts to a long take of Baran's face in a medium close up which refuses to give away any obvious emotional readability, through the long takes of him on duty, riding on his bicycle. The plot progression is thus suspended as the image simply focuses on Baran's face, which exudes indeterminacy in such undramatic moments, as if tracing the contingencies in the slight movements on his face and the rapid passing of the movement in the background. Amidst all the entangled strata of narrative excess, the image always goes back to foregrounding this potentiality that the face holds – this is what Deleuze writes in relation to Michelangelo Antonioni's characters who convey: 'not the drama of communication, but the tiredness of the body...which suggests to thought "something to incommunicate", the "unthought", life' (2005a: 183). The body and the face thus contain the potential to push thought beyond the representational schema of 'knowing' and replace it with belief, as 'the body relates thought to time as to that outside which is infinitely further than the outside world... it simultaneously contains the before and the after' (2005a: 183). This is where time as change and potential is foregrounded in the film as the fundamental principle of a Deleuzian screen ethics: the face is where affect as potential 'reinjects unpredictability into context' (Massumi 2002: 220). Even though the film cannot be classified as time-image as a whole, such undramatic and extended sequences foreground the affective potential of time and subjectivity. Such moments of passage hinder the reterritorialisation of subjectivity into gender, race, national and ethnic identities

by releasing the bodies' creative resistance to 'representational knowability' and the limited scopes of signification (Puar 2009: 162).

### **Queer Subjectivity as Resistance to Representational Politics**

When viewed in terms of affect as such a capacity and potential towards change, the process of queer subjectivity production, which becomes manifest particularly in these undramatic sequences that focus on Baran's and Chernor's faces, becomes a force of resistance against the signifying grids in the film. Baran's and Chernor's homosexual relationship is directly addressed at one point in the film, when the daughter of Baran's boss calls him gay for not responding to her advances. The single moment of intimacy between the two boys is also filmed from an angle which puts the emphasis on Baran's face, and is followed by a long take of Baran cycling around. Apart from a rare and passing smile, his face conveys a flux of indeterminable expressivities.



**Figure 17 - Baran and Chernor in the Photo Booth**

In Cathy J. Cohen's definition, queer intersectionalities refer to a 'shared marginal relationship to dominant power that normalizes, legitimizes and privileges' and thus, a queer politics must start from 'the recognition that multiple systems of oppression are in operation and that these systems use institutionalized categories and identities to regulate and socialize' (2001: 220). Locating this radical political power of queer intersectionality in the depiction of Baran and Chernor's relationship, Alice Kuzniar argues that such a subtle expression of homosexuality in the film is a political strategy that highlights the intersectionality between gender politics and migration policies as interrelated systems of oppression (2012: 245 – 264). Kuzniar situates *Kleine Freiheit* in opposition to Kutluğ Ataman's *Lola and Bilidikid*, which she describes as following the 'conventional trajectory of the coming out narrative', (2012: 251) Drawing on Christopher Clark's suggestion that *Lola and Bilidikid* offers up a 'queer array of possible sexual and cultural identities', she points out that this in-between yet identitarian model would be inappropriate to apply to *Kleine Freiheit*, 'precisely because identity affiliation is denied the two boys' (Clark 2006: 572; Kuzniar 2012: 249). She argues that, with its non-identitarian depiction of queer subjectivity which refuses to privilege representational politics, *Kleine Freiheit* demonstrates that 'the free expressions of gay identity and gay rights would first be dependent on extending human rights and a safe haven to migrants' (Kuzniar 2012: 251). As Jasbir Puar warns us, queer diasporic discourses 'often resituate nationalist centerings of the West as the site of sexual liberation, freedom and visibility', yet they 'may actually function as recycled domestic perspectives that run the risk of becoming globalizing ones' (1998: 406). Coming out and identifying as gay is not an option for Baran and Chernor, as for both, visibility presents a threat of exposure in the male-dominated communities and the monitored streets that they live in, rather than a liberating force which will grant them rights.

One particular scene, which presents a retreat from representational strategies is when Baran is cycling on duty with Chernor on the back of his bike. The sequence once again traces the affective bonding between the two boys in a non-plot driven take. The two stop by a photo booth to take their photos and, as

Kuzniar suggests, ‘to enjoy physical promixity to each other’ (2012: 252) [Fig.17]. Kuzniar reads the photo booth as a confining space signifying the boys’ entrapment, in a return to a representational viewing of space, as a conventional attitude in the academic criticism of Turkish German cinema (2012: 252). However this sequence can rather be suggestive of the overall tendency of the film to go beyond the representational signifying grids. The two boys look directly at the camera, as they desperately try to wipe off the screen to get a better and clearer representation of themselves. All that is available in this non-plot driven, undramatic sequence is the image of two boys, with the affective forces and desire that their proximity accumulates. Instead of representing a reality, their image becomes a portion of reality, as the two boys do not ‘perform’ an emotional bond. The indeterminacy of the expressivity of their faces becomes available in this sequence in all its directness, as well as their queer affective forces, which are ‘the basis for the force of political transformation that does not rely on identity politics, or any particular model of social movement, but a different kind of resistance’ (Puar 2009: 162). The film’s radical power lies in its rejection to reterritorialise such subjectivity formations as transgressive or otherwise identities, without dismissing the dynamics of reterritorialisation pressing on each subjectivity with full force.

In this chapter, I discussed *Die Fremde* as a film that employs a conventional structure, and a molar narrative that reproduces majoritarian discourses on honour killings and female subordination. I looked at how an attunement towards the powers of the false and its crystalline narration can open up new lines of thought, rather than re-playing the familiar archive of Turkish German images. Similarly, in my analysis of *Kleine Freiheit*, I have argued that this is precisely where the queer ethics of *Kleine Freiheit* presents itself: in the a-signifying semiotic register that asserts itself as a creative force of resistance amidst the signifying grids and the reterritorialising forces of the social, discursive and capitalist infrastructures. Queer subjectivity production in the film in all its indeterminacy is thus aimed at a proliferation of different forms of experience and affectability, and as such it invites radical transformation by

‘focusing on the next experimental step rather than the big utopian picture’ (Massumi 2003). Instead of viewing Baran and Chernor’s capture by the police at the film’s bleak ending as a return to the negative social realist narratives, I argue that in a post-representational viewing of its queer potential, the ending works as a counter-narrative to those that attribute the queer diasporas a power of transcendence from the structures of nation, gender and sexuality, only to reterritorialise this power within the context of Western liberalism. In this way, the film complicates the entanglement of queer potential and the various social, cultural, historical strata that seeks to capture them in representation.

The aim of this chapter was to investigate whether a break from representational paradigms can be productive while put in relation to conventional genre cinema. It has been demonstrated that through an accentuated attention to the asignifying elements of the aesthetic field, and the processes of transformation foregrounded by cinematic temporality, one can move beyond the limiting structures of representationalism.



## CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I have examined the ways in which artists and filmmakers have invented critical and creative aesthetic strategies to map the complex affective assemblages of subjectivities, bodies, desires, experiences, visibilities and invisibilities that the Turkish labour migration to Germany has brought about through a post-representational framework. I have focused on the post-Reunification period to address the changing conditions of living and labour under rapid globalisation and liberalisation, and to mark out the effects of these changes on the production of new affects and articulations in the recent Turkish German Cinema. Following Steven Shaviro's suggestion that films and media works are 'machines for generating affect', and as such they 'do not *represent* social processes, so much as they participate actively in these processes, and help constitute them', I view the works under discussion as ethical as well as aesthetic pursuits (2010: 2). The ethics in the title thus refers to the political pursuit of generating new thought, affects and new connections, which is why my interrogation of the aesthetics takes change and transformation as its principle.

In my introduction, I explored how critics and scholars have responded to such aesthetic strategies predominantly through representational frameworks of analysis, which put emphasis on tropes such as identity, gender, ethnicity, power structures, stereotypes and emotions. Arguing that such hermeneutical analyses rely on a model of selection and judgment, which ultimately aim at evaluating films according to how accurate and authentic their narratives are vis-à-vis the actual state of affairs, I instead propose a post-representational approach which aims to push beyond signifying structures, and put emphasis on the affective potential, creation, transformation and the production of the new. To this end, I have engaged primarily with the theoretical and philosophical writings of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari throughout my analyses of each film, particularly with Deleuze's film-philosophy developed in his books *Cinema 1* and 2 (2005; 2005a), Guattari's work on a-signifying semiotics and subjectivity formation in *Chaosology* (2006) and *The Machinic Unconscious* (2011) and finally their co-

authored critique of capitalism in *A Thousand Plateaus* (2008). Putting Deleuze's theory of cinematic time in contact with Guattari's subjectivity formation analysis, I aimed to provide a joint framework to understand the production of cinematic subjectivity as a creative process. The post-representational approach therefore aims to correspond to the project of redefining the standards of representation by abandoning a linear conception of time and space. The cinematic articulation of different temporalities through montage and the medium's particular facility in destabilizing perspective are thus used as tools to theorise such a new conception. I have employed a variety of key concepts from Deleuze and Guattari such as the abstract machines, the diagrams, the time-image and the machinic subjectivity, while also aiming to map how these concepts opened up and facilitated further discussion within the field of film studies over recent years. I attempted to demonstrate how these concepts can be productively employed in a diverse range of aesthetic, social and historical contexts and put in relation to various discourses such as labour, exploitation, exclusion, marginalisation, violence, and patriarchal power structures in my analyses of each single film.

I have structured the thesis according to three divergent modes in recent Turkish German filmmaking: the avant-garde Berlin School, the documentary films, and the social realist genre films. I explored how each of these attitudes have been examined and read through converging yet distinct models of signification and codes (identities, patriarchal family structures, headscarves and other cultural-visual codes, honour killings, spaces of entrapment); a hierarchy of representation and knowledge production (placing documentaries over fiction films), and demonstrated how they have been assessed through cultural-theoretical vocabularies favouring certain themes over others. With the aim to go beyond such hermeneutical and semiotic strategies that prioritise meaning and structures over movement and change, I instead focus on affective capacities, processes of subjectivity formation and a-signifying aesthetic components as the sites where the potential and hope for radical political transformation can be creatively mapped.

In Chapter One, I looked at four Berlin School films, Thomas Arslan's *Berlin Trilogy* (*Geschwister* [1997], *Dealer* [1999], and *Der schöne Tag* [2001])

and Christian Petzold's *Jerichow* (2009). These films have signalled a novel attitude in German cinema, conveying new aesthetic strategies and sensibilities as a radical break from the mainstream, narrative driven 'Cinema of Consensus' of the previous decade (Rentschler 2000: 264). Combining influences from a variety of European new wave films, German avant-garde political cinema of Jean-Marie Straub-Danièle Huillet and Alexander Kluge, with the conventional aesthetics of realism, they brought together a new sense of realism, which, as Marco Abel argues, aims to induce a new experience of realism 'by making reality itself appear more intensely sensible' (2013: 16). Addressing the durational and undramatic quality of the films in the context of Deleuze's time-image, I view the processes of subjectivity formation that are foregrounded in Thomas Arslan's Berlin Trilogy as ethical explorations of molecular transformations and creation of difference, which undermine and trace the instability of the normative and non-normative structures and categories of contemporary global capitalism. While *Geschwister* and *Dealer* focus on the investments of desire in repression and non-normative subjectivity production, *Der schöne Tag* explores how the invisible and abstract forces of the capitalist mode of production simultaneously organises and disorganises a day in the life of its protagonist, in terms of movement and affect. I argue that undramaticness achieved through non-plot driven long tracking shots which takes full effect in *Der schöne Tag*, foregrounds the experimental practice of privileging a-signifying aesthetics and affect over representation and psychological motivation. The final film I explored in this chapter, *Jerichow* is also concerned with the contemporary social field through an intensification of affect, abstraction and the virtual, however unlike the previous films, it maintains dramaticness in order to reformulate questions of ethics and responsibility through a reworking of the classical Hollywood genre cinema dynamics. The chapter overall addressed how the films that are under discussion employ strategies such as undramaticity through long takes and intensification of movement, and in this way how they reorganise the aesthetic economy of realism to put emphasis on the abstract, affective and virtual relations and forces.

Chapter Two opens with a discussion of how documentary form has been evaluated by representational paradigms according to its myriad modes of address.

I mapped out recent valuable and critical discussions by Stella Bruzzi, Michael Renov, Bill Nichols and TJ Demos over the concept of documentary representation and truth, aiming to put such ideas in a productive relation to specific films. Identifying key recurring themes in recent Turkish German film as return to *Heimat*, honour crimes, and hybridity and integration; I looked at five documentary films that address these themes in a novel political attitude. The first two films by Aysun Bademsoy convey an observational, direct cinema attitude in exploring their subjects. In order to analyse productively the foregrounding of speech and its entanglement with the raw yet stylized images of everyday life in Bademsoy's films, I turned to the concepts of the machinic assemblages and abstract machines as developed by Guattari and further elaborated with Deleuze. With a focus on the machinic assemblages of enunciation and the unruly materiality of everyday on screen and how these get entangled and captured by the molar contours of the social field, I attempted to demonstrate how Bademsoy employs a post-representational documentarism as a political strategy. Looking at how Bademsoy's camera deploys an observational attitude, insistently dwelling on the non-human field to explore the social structures, I addressed how materialist tendencies could challenge normative discourses and ideologies and produce new and radical associations.

Materialist aesthetics and their political implications were also manifest in Arslan's and Derin's 'return to the paternal home' documentaries. Both Arslan and Derin focus on the diverse forms and modes of labour in their explorations of Turkey, employing two divergent subjective documentary attitudes. In my analysis of the two films, I suggested that an accentuated attention to what the images do and convey, instead of pre-empting their function with the identitarian approach to retrace ethnic heritage and nostalgia, can release their radical potential in mapping the complexity of the changing world space of global capitalism. I concur with Shaviro's argument that labour, like affect, is as a power and potential of the human body and 'expressions of its "vitality", "sense of aliveness", and "changeability"', and viewing how labour is captured, reduced and qualified can conjure up the political potential of affect in these films (2010: 5). Similarly, I traced such machinic connections between the still images visualizing

labour, value, and product in the context of labour migration in Farocki's video installation *Aufstellung* (2005). I employed the Guattarian concept of diagrams to address how drawing new connections between the histories of migration that have been archived and stored separately can invite new thought.

The final chapter looks at genre cinema with the purpose to illustrate how post-representational approaches can work as a generative strategy in exploring more conventional forms of filmmaking. While the films under discussion previously in the thesis have been classified as innovative either in their attitude or style, the two films in this chapter *Die Fremde* (2010) and *Kleine Freiheit* (2003) employ and reorganise social realism's genre structure to explore the themes of honour crime and undocumented migrants respectively. As a film that has been heavily criticised for its clichéd depiction of female victimisation and honour killings in Germany, I aimed to demonstrate how *Die Fremde* could be viewed productively with attention to how such clichés disorganise ideological and hermeneutic readings to go against the grain and offer up lines of flight from the regimes of representation. The second film *Kleine Freiheit*, I argued, offers up radical modifications to the discussions of social realist cinema, with its dramatic and complex narrative organised in a fast paced continuity style, and saturated, hybrid aesthetics. With its focus on the Kurdish diasporic community and a queer narrative, I situated the film within the context of the changing politics of social realist filmmaking in Europe. Drawing on recent debates around the convergences between queer theory and affective politics, I view queer subjectivity formation in the film as a creative force of resistance to the social and discursive grids of identity formations and representational politics.

These chapters have revealed that the bodies and subjectivities that work or lack thereof produce are recurrent themes in the films under discussion. The lack of prospects that are offered to the marginalised characters in Arslan's *Geschwister* and *Dealer*, the entanglement of work and desire, and how this entanglement defines the movement of the characters in *Der schöne Tag*, the mental and physical sickness of Ali in *Jerichow*, and the disabled and weary first generation migrants in *Ben Annemin Kızıyım* are examples of the cinematic responses to the changing conditions of labour, and as such they can be viewed as

creative attempts to depict how the bodies and subjectivities are controlled and reproduced under late capitalism. While this suggests a break from the previous focus on ethnic difference and gender marginalisation, a narrative of progress is unlikely to be deduced from this narrative turn. Indeed, this recent preoccupation with the themes of exhaustion, fatigue, and mental and physical illness in Turkish German Cinema can be viewed as an extension of the wider narrative context of work and exhaustion in cinema. While fatigue, weariness and exhaustion are not recent phenomena in cinema's history, and which Deleuze contextualises as the inscription of temporality on human bodies in the films of Michelangelo Antonioni, Jacques Rivette and John Cassavetes, fatigue has gained a redefinition as a corporeal force in relation to labour in cinema within the past two decades (2005a: 183). The films of Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne such as *Rosetta* (1999), *Le Silence de Lorna* (2008) and *Deux Jours, Une Nuit* (*Two Days, One Night*, 2014), Lukas Moodysson's *Lilya 4-Ever* (2002), Ulrich Seidl's *Import/Export* (2007), Pedro Costa's *Juventude em Marcha* (*Colossal Youth*, 2006) and Stephen Frears' *Dirty Pretty Things* (2002) can be listed as some of the titles produced in the last few decades that revolve around the issue of labour and exhaustion in the context of European late capitalism. In a recent article on weariness and fatigue in post-industrial cinema landscapes, Elena Gorfinkel defines exhaustion as a 'social, scientific and industrial problem' (2012: 319). She argues

One could propose that what we take pains to endure most are the conditions of our labor. Weariness, fatigue, and exhaustion are inextricable from our latter-day understandings of work's embodied rhythms, effects, and temporalities. Fatigue's history is found most readily in accounts of industrial capitalism's transformation of modern subjectivity. (Gorfinkel 2012: 319)

While fatigue and exhaustion are known to be the greatest enemies of capitalist production, they are also the conditions of the body's survival in the form of endurance and potentiality. Therefore I concur with Gorfinkel that in today's post-Fordist and post-industrial capitalist economy where work and non-work becomes

increasingly inseparable, fatigue is ‘no longer a consequence of work but instead a precondition for survival’, a vital force (2012: 320). Cinema’s particular facility to articulate the body’s expressivity in affective and temporal terms invites further research to elaborate the changing relationship between capitalism and subjectivity. In my analyses of these films, I have attempted to illustrate how capitalist enslavement both produces and activates affects, desires and senses beyond the subject and individuated relations, not solely as a destructive and negative force, but as a force that multiplies possibilities (Lazzarato 2014: 31).

My analyses of the films have revealed that there has been a shift of focus in Turkish German Cinema both in narrative and aesthetic terms in the post-Fordist and globalising phase of capitalism – however, instead of viewing this shift with the traditional viewing tools that centralise identity politics in terms of the success or failure of integration and multiculturalism as a political project, I view them as part of a wider cinematic context that articulates the changing conditions of subjectivity in late capitalism. Such a study of the cinematic articulations of the relationship between production and subjectivation must correspond to the changing ways in which capitalism captures and produces subjectivity, which Deleuze and Guattari defines as ‘machinic enslavement’. Machinic enslavement functions in an operational manner that views the individual no longer as an ‘individuated’ or ‘economic’ subject, instead it accentuates how the individual operates as a ‘component part in the business and financial system assemblages, in the media assemblage and the welfare-state assemblage and its collective institutions’ such as schools, hospitals, museums, theaters, television and internet (Lazzarato 2014: 25). The films under discussion have placed emphasis on these assemblage sites that function beyond the representational and individuated spheres, viewing the collective aspect of subjectivity formation that goes beyond the traditional dramatic plot structure of a narrative that revolves around a single character. Both Arslan’s multi-character migrant dramas and Petzold’s accentuated aesthetics of the post-Fordist space reveal the ways in which the sphere of desiring production has become inseparable from the collective neoliberal apparatuses that shape them. Similarly, Bademsoy’s, Arslan’s and Derin’s documentaries place emphasis on how the

most individual actions such as speech, gesture, thinking and feeling fail to work at their full potentials without an accentuated look at the network of relations to other bodies and entities, economic and social structures, bureaucracy and management of everyday life through social institutions, architecture, administrative powers and knowledges. Thus, understanding the cinematic articulations of subjectivation in late capitalism needs to go beyond the realm of meaning, signification and discourse to open new possibilities that do not have literal referents, yet traces of potentialities that stretch the contours of perceived actual state of affairs.

Throughout these chapters, I aimed to illustrate that post-representational methodology is a useful political strategy for migrant film analysis, and works as an alternative to the hermeneutical and ideological models, which govern the field. This entails shifting the focus of attention to relations, rather than content, and difference rather than recognition and categorisation. For this reason, I have mainly followed Deleuze and Guattari as theoretical guides, yet I also hope to have delineated further divergent discussions that have since contributed to the field by theorists and scholars such as Brian Massumi, Marco Abel, Jacques Rancière, Steven Shaviro and Hito Steyerl. However, I have used these discussions and intellectual debates to enhance post-representational strategies and understand their limitations in comprehending subject-formation, without the aim of staying loyal to Deleuzian theory. I have used Deleuze's cinematic neologisms such as time-image and movement-image as tools to understand different time structures, without a claim to the emergence of a new cinema. Post-representational methodology can be used to view moving images with new tools to open new relations between ontology and epistemology, a new alliance between politics and art. Therefore, post-representational does not signal a transition to a new regime of images, or a new cinema type, but instead as a framework for a schizoanalysis of images.

I have been extremely selective in my choice of films, with the aim to move beyond traditional canons and genealogies, and to demonstrate how post-representational strategies can operate in different ways within different film modes, genres, contexts, modes and styles. While there has been a narrative and



aesthetic shift as observed throughout the thesis, it is possible to see different potentials in films that convey conventional aesthetics, which have been read as politically regressive such as *Die Fremde*. Therefore, despite the necessarily limited focus of this thesis, its purpose has been to show how post-representational approaches, informed by Deleuze and Guattari's thought, can provide new and productive avenues of enquiry into the study of migrant, diasporic, and transnational cinemas. My research, thus, is an exercise in alternative viewing strategies that resist interpretative closure, and highlight the potential of migrant filmmaking to generate and proliferate new affects, subjectivities and transformations, and in this way, invite new political possibilities.

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## **APPENDIX**

### **Interview with Aysun Bademsoy**

The following interview was conducted in March 2013 in Berlin where Bademsoy lives and works today.

#### **Can we start with how you started making films?**

I studied Theatre at Free University in Berlin. After four semesters of Theatre Studies, I transferred to film. During my undergraduate studies, I worked in the film industry as a director and script assistant and learnt editing. It all happened very gradually.

I started the university without knowing whether I wanted to work on theatre or in film. During the first four semesters of university, I worked as a trainee at theatres. I observed the staging process of Chekhov's *Three Sisters* by Peter Stein in 1984. I spent a lot of time with Stein and his dramaturg, read and did an extensive research on Chekhov along with him and observed closely the process of narration on the theatrical stage. Stein offered an assistantship to me at his company, which threw me into days of thinking. He was an extremely interesting director, and this could be a wonderful opportunity but I felt that the theatre company was too much of a family. I had just left my family home with a lot of struggle and had only started enjoying the feeling of independence as an individual, the idea of joining another family felt very claustrophobic. After many sleepless nights I decided to transfer to film. I managed to support myself by working in film sets throughout university and after many years of working at sets, I started my own practice. I worked with teenagers at a Lutheran social institute, staging theatrical plays for a year. While working with them, I noticed that these kids didn't know anyone in their neighbourhood – no local shopkeepers or neighbours; they had no feeling of an acquaintance whatsoever. I decided to run a small project with them which involved them meeting their neighbours and interviewing them as they liked. They entered funeral parlours, restaurants and so on and I filmed their encounters and this became my first film,



*Foreign German Neighbourhood* (1995). I noticed that what interested me in film was capturing these encounters and this was how I started.

After that I moved on to my television films on the women football players. It was quite rare to come across women playing football in Europe at the time and I found them fascinating. I have since been observing and filming the second and third generation immigrants in Germany, for about 10 years now.

**Your background in theatre is evident in your films – Performativity comes to the fore as people narrate their own life stories in front of your camera.**

I was interested in putting individuals in close up and observing how things worked around them. I followed the works of direct cinema auteurs. Raymond Depardon's *Faits Divers/News Items* (1983) had a big influence on me. In the film Depardon's camera follows police officers in Paris during their nightshift, without added artifice or voiceover commentary. I found this observational attitude very powerful; it felt like being there and watching and watching. Frederick Wiseman's *Near Death* (1989) was also a great influence. The film captures how things operate at an ER unit with no music or voiceover, in a completely detached manner but it makes the atmosphere all the more engrossing. I followed the works of these directors at festivals and they started to grow on me. Harun Farocki and Hartmut Bitomsky are also big influences and mentors, I learnt a lot from our collaborations and conversations.

**I can see Wiseman's influence in your films, but I also think that you're using speech in a different manner. You allow the people in front of the camera to narrate their own stories, which makes what unfolds in front of the camera a creative process – rather than a passive observation.**

Surely I don't mean my work is all too similar to theirs. Looking at their ways of working, the focus on the relationship between looking and seeing opened up a whole new world for me. I have been watching many documentaries since then and I find something influential in most of them. I saw Ido Haar's *9 Star Hotel* (2006) at the Amsterdam documentary film festival, which follows two Palestinians working at the construction site of super luxurious hotel across the Israeli border. I thought it captured the precariousness beautifully. This is what influences me most – looking at people. I spend a lot of time trying to understand what I see in people during the

research for my films. But what also interests me is not merely their individual stories but how they relate to each other, how they create communities – or how a sense of community is created by means of loyalty, support and confidence. This was what lay at the heart of my project with the footballer girls. I felt like a part of their community while filming them, but during the process of filming, there was a distance between us – a respect for, or a response to our labour. The whole process opened itself up gradually like a yarn – we all found out that it's not just about these individuals but about their community and a whole new generation of the labour immigrants' children and how they relate to this idea of a community.

**And was it through this realisation that you started the project of the returning families in *Am Rand der Städte/On the Outskirts* (2006)?**

I started the research for *On the Outskirts* with the idea to see where the returning families returned to – what kind of an environment they chose to live in. I saw my own uncle's house in Mersin and wondered why they preferred to live in such seclusion. I went to Izmir, Antalya and Mersin in Turkey while doing research for the film and I came across similar stories scattered around. Families invested all these years' earnings to live in these flats located in large building blocks, away from the city. I noticed that there was a conflict between the two generations; the parents wanted to return while their children were unwilling. The only thing in common in their attitude was the tendency to self-seclusion.

**Could you tell us about the process of choosing the people in your films? Do you spend long hours talking to them before filming them, or do you take hours of footage?**

No, it is not such an extensive process. I usually choose them during group sessions and the process has become much easier over time. It takes much less time now. For instance Miray, with whom *On the Outskirts* opens, caught my interest in the initial encounter. People were talking about how problematic and crazy his behaviour was, and I could see that he had an inner turmoil. We had talked a few times before but I had asked the question that opens the film at the spot. I asked him to take us to his favourite place as the setting for the interview, and he chose that cliff by the sea. Harun (Farocki) came into the mixing room while we were working on this sequence

and said Miray was like nomadic people. Constantly on the move, and when they stop, they can pour their heart out.

**I would like to talk about your collaboration with your husband and filmmaker Christian Petzold. You were the music advisor in *Jerichow* (2009). Miray talks about how he comes to his favourite spot to drink and listen to music in *On the Outskirts* with the Turkish pop singer Gülşen's 'Nazar Değmesin' in the background, similar to the beach sequence in *Jerichow*, where the Turkish-German character Ali Özkan (Hilmi Sözer) drinks rakı and sings along to the same song, looking at the open sea.**

Christian had initially planned the Ali character to be Vietnamese, but after our discussions, he decided that Ali would be a Turkish guest worker. I chose these Turkish pop songs by women artists as they all had the themes of loneliness and abandonment – Christian loved the songs once he understood what the lyrics meant. Obviously we are working in different modes of film, he's making fiction films and I am making documentaries, but somebody in the audience after a screening at the most recent Adana Golden Boll Film Festival pointed out that Christian's work and mine have something in common – what they articulated as 'the room to breathe' in between the images.

I don't apply extra-diegetic music into my films because I don't want the music to support or surpass the characters – I don't want the music to act as a narrator. I am interested in what music the people in my films listen to, or what they want to sing before the camera, as part of their self-expression and self-constitution. For instance, in *After the Game*, there's a sequence where Arzu sings to herself by the window. She is singing Mustafa Sandal's 'Onun Arabası Var' - a very popular Turkish song with seemingly irrelevant lyrics - about a woman who owns a car. We can see what is going through her mind, what she is looking at out of the window and what her passion lies in at that very moment. She is as passionate about cars and driving as she is about football – both traits traditionally attributed to men, especially in Turkish culture.

Another reason why I don't like to use extra-diegetic music in my films is that I respect the spectator and I don't want to impose a feeling on them. I feel responsible

for every single choice I make in my films – when I see a film it stays with me and lingers on my mind for days. I don't want to tell the spectator to think this or that way.

Of course I don't mean to naively suggest that I am absent as a filmmaker and that my camera represents a pure reality. I do have an obvious influence on the narrative structure especially in the editing process. I want to move away from a linear storytelling structure, instead of moving from A to B, I'd like to wander towards B and exit from A again. In this way I am not suggesting that what I tell is a complete and finished story. I want to acknowledge that I am merely trying to open up one channel amongst many possible others.

**This spiralling structure moves your work away from the traditional feature length format. Do you consider using different exhibition patterns such as the gallery space that permits more lengthy formats?**

*On the Outskirts* was re-edited to be shown as part of the Migration Project exhibition in Cologne<sup>i</sup> and excerpts from *Die Hochzeitfabrik* (*The Wedding Factory*, 2005) was shown in various exhibitions. I have a few projects lined up at the moment that have been conceived as feature lengths. I want to continue filming the women footballers, some of them have become mothers now and I am hoping to film their children.

Finding financial support for feature lengths is getting more difficult every day, which I think is a global problem not just limited to Germany. ZDF's *Das Kleine Fernsehspiel* had provided funding for three of my films.<sup>29</sup> This production scheme has been going on for more than 50 years supporting young independent filmmakers, but now they are also having a difficult time, having to go through drastic measures.

**Do the market conditions affect the control imposed on the filmmaker?**

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<sup>29</sup> German television channel ZDF's *Das Kleine Fernsehspiel* (The Small TV Play) has been a platform to obtain funding from private patrons to subsidize projects of first-time filmmakers. For a brief history of *Das Kleine Fernsehspiel*, see Thomas Elsaesser 'Television and the Author's Cinema' in *European Cinema Face to Face with Hollywood* (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam Press, 2005) 212-218.

Of course there are certain projects that will have less difficulty in obtaining funding. But I don't think that the minority status of the filmmakers has much to do with this particular case, all filmmakers regardless of their status are going through a difficult time to find subsidy today in Germany.

**Can you tell us about your most recent film *Honour*? You dedicate the film to Hatun Sürücü, who was murdered in 2005 by her brothers for 'living like a German'. In an article published in Revolver magazine, you mention that the subject had a strong personal dimension – you had developed a close friendship with Hatun Sürücü before she was murdered.**

While studying at the Free University, I worked at a hostel for women affected by domestic violence. I worked with a woman who had fled her family who threatened to kill her, over the months we developed a friendship. I taught her how to read and write and she found the effort put into her astounding, asking me why I was investing so much time in her when she didn't have much longer to live. I remember how her fatalism shocked me; I could never understand what sort of law gave men the right to kill a woman for honour. She was later murdered, and I had to sit through the proceedings at the court.

I knew Hatun for about a year before she was murdered; I was working on a film project about her. I went to her school and the building site she was working at, where I took a lot of photographs. Her son Can and my son Deniz went to the same school and they were the same age, we saw each other quite often. Over time we developed a good friendship, we had a lot of love and respect for each other. Then I got the shattering news when I was at the Berlinale, I was in shock and dropped the project for a long time.

Three years after Hatun's death, I started doing research on the concept of honour and how it has been handled by the German media. I saw the same dramatic narratives about the women victims over and over. I wanted to see what went on in the minds of the young men, the potential perpetrators.

**Female victimisation and honour killings are recurring themes in Turkish-German narrative Cinema. Most recently Feo Aladağ's film *Die Fremde* (*When we leave*, 2011) which was loosely based on the real life story of the killing of**

**Hatun Sürücü won several awards in festivals worldwide, including the prestigious European Film Award.**

I found *When we leave* quite irritating. It bothered me to see such a heavy-handed patchwork of clichés. The film follows such a straight narrative with flat, uncomplicated, almost allegorical characters. This sort of narrative only serves to perpetuate clichés.

But the reality, in my view, is much more complicated and contingent. For example, in Hatun's case, the court proceedings revealed such complex and troubled backstories in her family, to which of course the media paid no interest. The question is where does this concept of honour still come from, how does it lodge itself to these minds? It turned out that Hatun's brothers had been going to an extremely conservative mosque. German society does not have or know this concept, at least not in this form; therefore we have to ask these key questions before passing judgment. What is honour? What does it mean? While I was working with young males for the film, asking them about this concept, they turned the question back at me and asked what it meant to me. I could only think of ethics and pride, seeing my work appreciated and so on. It had no negative connotations for me.

**During the first ten minutes of the film, we meet Christian and Abdullah, a young ethnic German and a Palestinian-German being asked the same question at the anti-violence training. We automatically expect conflicting answers about their respective understanding of honour but they are equally confused.**

Violence attributed to masculinity is not restricted to Muslim men. Handling the issue of honour in this way would risk recuperating to old exclusivist terms. These young men are all prone to violence regardless of their ethnicity. Predictably this has got a lot to do with their families; they had never been treated as adults. It seemed to me that nobody had asked them these questions, nobody had spoken to them, and nobody listens to them.

At first it was shocking for me to try and interact with them; it was very difficult to not overreact to their accounts of their violent behaviour. When we were shooting the scene in which Christian tells us about his knife encounter at school we were all very puzzled, nobody knew about the incident. You see their potential to do or

something outrageous at any moment. Before getting to know them, I thought they lived in a bubble, where they didn't have to evaluate their actions. Over time Christian and I became friends, we had long and extensive discussions about his life, his troubled relationship with his family and then he started to open up and talk honestly. I thought only then he started to make sense.

**What do you think about the procedural method of the state authorities (who are all males)? Their attitude is very clinical and mechanic as portrayed in the film.**

Considering that these men are state authorities, detectives and federal court officials, they are speaking the lingo of their instrumental reason, as they have to. This is the law, and they are representatives of it. And they are not necessarily wrong; this is the way they operate. I agree with most of what they are saying in the film, this is the law that regulates German society and they are doing their job, which requires a certain work ethic that might come across as sentimental detachment.

I believe that the biggest achievement of a socially responsible state is that it offers the chance to speak and therefore think, to its citizens. The institutions that I went to, have been confronted with extremely complex situations, they are working their ways through it. These institutions are making a genuine effort, by giving these young citizens the chance to do community service for four weeks, giving them the time to evaluate their actions. I think it is vital to show these social institutions via film, to show how things operate there.

**I would like to ask you about the 360-degree camera movement that you used to frame the three honour killing sites.**

Narrative films about honour killings are built upon a dramatic network of sisters and mothers. But there is a space in between – a literal space. I wanted to capture this space. I've been very frequently asked why I haven't spoken to any women in *Honour*. I tried in the initial planning of the film, but it was extremely difficult to talk to women as sisters or girlfriends of the men they are protecting. Instead I wanted to capture this absence that these women have left behind, that absence is what is real to me. One minute of confrontation with absence, to think about what is missing.

These murders happened on the most mundane environments, in a bathroom, on a walkway between apartment blocks, in a phone booth, in broad daylight. I wanted to give a long hard look at *where* they happened, that is the closest that I could get to the reality of the situation. And I wanted to focus on the visible, so the sound of the street fades to emphasize an interval.

**Have you received divergent responses from different local and festival audiences?**

During the Q&A sessions in the USA festival screenings, it emerged that most audiences were taken by the social institutions in the film. This was new to them as according to their federal judicial system, disputes are solved in exchange of money or prison time. There aren't any discussion platforms for young offenders in the USA, and I was surprised to see how differently the film was viewed with a certain attention to these structures and procedures.

Very few people stayed for the Q&A session after the screenings at the Golden Orange Film Festival in Turkey. I think documentary is still a relatively new format for the Turkish audiences. I had been criticised for misrepresenting Turkey in *On the Outskirts*, I am very surprised by this sort of protectionism. I am not interested in any ethnocentric territory. I'm working with/in Turkish-German communities and making films about them, but I wouldn't like my films to be perceived as good or bad representations of a community or indeed a country.

**What are you currently working on?**

I am making a documentary about Marc Sinan, an Armenian-German musician who is currently travelling to Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Kirghizstan, collecting folk tales to curate and stage concerts with various symphony orchestras. We're in the difficult process of obtaining funding and permission to film in these countries.



I am also planning a new film project about the National Socialist Underground trials, which start in April 2013 and will continue for 2.5 years.<sup>30</sup> I will try and talk to the victims' families. I am currently in the process of speaking to the lawyers.

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<sup>30</sup> National Socialist Underground was a Neo-Nazi organisation held responsible for a series of racist murders of nine immigrants of Turkish and Greek origin between 2000 and 2007. The case caused a scandal in Germany, as the police attributed the murders to an ethnic mafia, having neglected the racist threat and failed to identify the Neo-Nazi connection between the murders.