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Giovannella Rendi, Ferrara

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Thanks to German-Turkish filmmakers the German Cinema has overcome the dark decade of the 1980s and is alive again. Strongly influenced by popular film genres, the second generation of migrants refuses to be victimized, claiming, on the contrary, a new multicultural identity, and asserting a pride in being “Kanak”. In a panorama strongly dominated by male film directors, female filmmakers attest to the parallel existence of a different language, one in which they try more critically to reconcile their Turkish roots with their German present. Particularly Ayşe Polat and Seyhan Derin show a new way to overcome the “cinema of duty” re-elaborating in an original way the theme of the journey and redefining the enclosed space of the *Kammerspiel*.

One of the most interesting features of what might be described as the renaissance of German cinema since the fall of the Wall is the so-called German-Turkish phenomenon. In the late 1990s, a new generation of German-Turkish filmmakers brought about a crucial change in the cinematic representation of German minorities, which in turn led to a radical transformation of the way in which national identity is understood. Because of their attitude towards popular genres, which has led them to develop what might be described as transnational cinema, the children of the second generation of migrants, the grandchildren of those original *Gastarbeiter* who arrived in Germany in the 1960s, are now considered the heirs of the New German Cinema of the 1970s. However, even if German-Turkish or Turkish-German cinema (the question remains open) is undeniably a significant cultural and ethnic event, it neither has a manifesto, nor can it be considered a movement, produced as it is by very different personalities who can be said to belong to a group only on the grounds of shared ethnic origin. The aim of this essay is to analyse the female contribution to the development of what is an almost exclusively male cinema, to explore the work of a minority within a minority as it were, with a view to ascertaining whether common elements in the work of German-Turkish women filmmakers can be understood as a consequence of gender.

My title refers to *Kanak Sprach: 24 Mißtöne vom Rande der Gesellschaft* by the Turkish-German writer Feridun Zaimoglu, a volume of interviews with young migrants which in 1995 elevated the multicultural *Umgangssprache* to a literary level for the first time. With

this book, Zaimoglu also proclaimed his pride in being “Kanak”: “originally meaning ‘man’ in Hawaiian, then indentured labourer or low, uneducated person, here [it] denotes Turkish-German people and their patois or creole (Sprak)” (Boa; Palfreyman 2000: 210). It was followed in 1998 by *Koppstoff: Kanaka Sprach vom Rande der Gesellschaft* in which Turkish-German women were also enabled to give voice to their experiences. The question mark I have added is meant to imply that while a comparison can be made between the works of male Turkish-German filmmakers and that of their lesser known female counterparts, it is nevertheless important to distinguish between their different cinematic languages.

In the first part of this essay I will look at some of the important aspects of the relationship between German and Turkish cultures as it has been presented in film in the recent past, exploring the image of Turkish migrants in German and Turkish films in order to create a context for comparison. I will refer in particular to what Sarita Malik, in her essay about black British cinema, has called “the cinema of duty” (Malik 1996), a term that Deniz Göktürk has also applied to German productions (Göktürk 2002: 250), namely a tendency of the New German Cinema and the male Turkish-German cinema of the 1980s to represent the *Gastarbeiter* as an object of compassion and as a victim of cultural dislocation. In the second part I will consider in particular some of the films of German-Turkish women filmmakers Seyhan Derin and Ayşe Polat, focussing on the subject of space, both in relation to the (spiritual) journey from Turkey to Germany and vice versa, but also as it takes the form of the prison, that is the enclosed space where migrants rebuild their cultural identity abroad, such as the small flats in which they live and where they try to recreate the living conditions they left behind. I will also consider the way in which the image of migrants in film is being reworked in the present in comparison with the recent past.

In contrast to other nations such as Great Britain and France, whose political strategies favoured a process of slow and gradual assimilation of migrants from the 19th century onwards, in Germany, which had lost its colonies after the First World War and had suspended every kind of multicultural intercourse during the Third Reich, the sudden mass immigration of Turkish labourers in the 1960s created a true culture shock. According to Claus Löser (author of one of the most recent essays on the subject of German-Turkish cinema) one of the consequences of the prolonged absence of foreigners in Germany was

the subsequent development of a *Parallelgesellschaft* which allowed for only a partial social and cultural exchange between migrants and the existing population (Löser 2004). Unlike their *beure* colleagues in France who were conditioned from the beginning by the language and culture of their colonizers even as they remained aware of the dualism of their origins, Turkish-German filmmakers must be understood as analyzing the German environment through foreign eyes.

The result of this lack of integration is the “cinema of duty”. German filmmakers generally chose to represent migrants as mute victims on the margins of society in numerous documentaries and didactic films which demonstrated a protective attitude of compassion to those outside the mainstream of society. This was the case with films of the New German Cinema of the 1970s. Those who had rebelled against “Papap Kino”, not least by demonstrating a socially-critical interest in the depiction of outsiders, were the first to make ethnic minorities a topic of feature films, but they did not succeed in avoiding a patronising tone. This is particularly true of the feminist director Helma Sanders-Brahms, whose *Shirins Hochzeit* (1976) became the classic depiction of the repression of women in a patriarchal society. Rainer Werner Fassbinder, the first to deal with the theme of *Gastarbeiter*, was one of the few to offer a more differentiated view in his original and provocative representation of migrants: in *Katzelmacher* (1969) he decided to play the role of a Greek worker who is the victim of prejudice and racism himself, and for the first time, in *Angst essen Seele auf* (1974), he presented a migrant (played by his lover El Hedi Ben Salem) as the object of a German woman’s love and desire.

Only in the 1980s did migrants cease to be the passive subjects of German cinema and decide to let their voices be heard. However, as I will show, they were not able to emancipate themselves from similar attitudes towards victimization, repeating the strategies of the “cinema of duty”, but focusing on women as the privileged object of compassion. The forerunner is an Iranian, Sohrab Shahid Saless, whose film *Utopia* (1983) is a strong indictment of the violent world of prostitution in Germany. The most significant example of this tendency, however, is Tevfik Başer’s low budget film *40 qm Deutschland* which in 1986 broke the silence of the migrant as a mythic mute figure, and which gained, with its international success, both the attention of the world and national recognition for the issue of migrants in Germany. In this film, as in the following *Abschied vom falschen Paradies*

(1989), the Turkish-born director explores the condition of Turkish women in Germany in a claustrophobic *Kammerspiel*. In both films the protagonists are locked in their flats, which become true prisons, by their repressive husbands. While *40 qm Deutschland* ends with the nameless bride in the doorway, unable to cope with her sudden independence, in *Abschied vom falschen Paradies*, the young Elif, after killing her husband, obtains an ephemeral freedom in the German gaol which paradoxically develops into a home. There, in fact, she can learn German and finally feels like a member of a group. Her need to belong to a community is so strong that after her release, she sees no solution other than suicide. Similarly *Yasemin*, directed in 1988 by the German Hark Bohm, presents Turkish women as victims of their male relatives and unable to communicate in a strange world. This “Romeo and Juliet-romance” between a Turkish girl and a German man in Hamburg emphasised the need for migrant women to act out a double, almost schizophrenic role in order to be accepted in their homes and at the same time in German society. In this film, however, an attempted suicide proves to be the only way to convince Yasemin’s dictatorial father not to send her back to Turkey and to let her live with her German boyfriend. It is evident that both Başer’s unhappy endings and Bohm’s final emancipation clearly represent German culture as modern and civilized and Turkish culture as primitive and patriarchal, thus emphasizing the superiority of the former over the latter.

A common element in the majority of these films, with the exception of *Yasemin*, is the extremely restricted setting of the action which is largely limited to the confines of a flat, a painful and distressing space that can be considered a kind of no man’s land governed by its own specific rules and duties and not protected by German law. The climax in the depiction of this world behind closed doors, to which Jean Paul Sartre’s contention that “hell is other people” certainly applies, is reached in a film of the early 1990s, *Berlin in Berlin* (1993) directed by Sinan Çetin. It can be considered the first post-Wall attempt to overcome “the cinema of duty” and its static Manichean configuration of German oppressor and Turkish oppressed. In fact, in this film the victim of a claustrophobic domestic set up is German: the photographer Thomas, in love with the Turkish Dilber, is imprisoned in the flat of her Turkish family after accidentally killing her husband. Although absolved by German law, he is considered a murderer by the Turkish family. The laws of hospitality, however, forbid his killing as long as he remains in the flat. In the course of the film, the audience discovers

that Thomas and his persecutor, Mürtüz, are in fact parallel characters. Both feel their virility is threatened by emancipated German women and they are united in their love for Dilber whose maternal behaviour restores in their eyes a traditional sexual hierarchy. Dilber remains a silent and passive figure throughout the film but it is she who, in the end, by refusing to marry her husband's brother, makes her own choice and leaves the "small Berlin" of the flat with Thomas. This would suggest that in the wake of German-Turkish men in the 1980s, German-Turkish women in the 1990s were finally given a cinematic voice, enabled to break the conspiracy of silence to express their wishes and reveal their opinions. But is this really the case all the time that their voices are mediated by male filmmakers? As I will explain in detail later, German-Turkish women filmmakers are gradually defining their own cinematic paths, but at the beginning of the 1990s the audience still identified migrant women with these unfortunate heroines because of the greater international success of male filmmakers.

In the second half of the 1990s the phenomenon of German-Turkish cinema really took off. "Is the new German cinema Turkish?" Tunçay Kulaoglu asked in a much cited article in *Filmforum* (1999). Young German-born directors such as Fatih Akin, Thomas Arslan and Yüksel Yavuz were suddenly heralded by critics as representing a new wave of the kind of engaged, political German cinema considered more or less moribund since Fassbinder's death in 1982. Turkish-German cinema is considered to be an *Autorenkino* and as such to provide an antidote to what has been described by Eric Rentschler in derogatory terms as the "cinema of consensus". With its strictly codified yuppie comedies, this has been seen to represent a triumph of individualism over social conscience, to provide evidence of intellectual lethargy and "of an over-determined German desire for normalcy as well as of a marked disinclination towards any serious political reflection or sustained historical retrospection" (Rentschler 2000: 263). In judging the German cinema of the 1990s, some critics seem to forget, or at least temporarily to marginalize, important figures who had emerged in the meantime, such as Tom Tykwer, Andreas Dresen, Romuald Karmakar or Christian Petzold, perhaps because their films do not share common elements and their "too German" *auteurism* is (with the partial exception of Tykwer's) seen as too difficult to export. The Turkish-German cinema, on the other hand, with its mix of popular action genres, references to Neo-realism and to Italian-American directors such as Scorsese and

De Palma, proved to be a transnational product. In spite of their declared (and legitimate) refusal to locate themselves within a programmatic movement, these directors share at the very least the desire to overcome the strategies of victimization of the New German Cinema and the Turkish films of the 1980s. They no longer portray migrants as passive subjects but as agents. According to Deniz Göktürk, they therefore move away from the “cinema of duty” of the silent *Gastarbeiter* towards the “pleasures of hybridity” (Göktürk 2001), implying a much more self-confident image of the ethnic minority which could also provide a clue to the films’ commercial success.

“Scorsese und die anderen Italo-Amerikaner haben siebzig Jahre gebraucht, bis sie anfangen, ihre Filme zu machen. Die Algerien-Franzosen haben dreißig Jahre für ihr *cinéma beur* gebraucht. Wir sind schneller. Wir legen jetzt schon los”, Fatih Akin proudly claimed in an interview in 1998 (cited in Nicodemus 2004: 340). He is considered the most significant, or is at least the best known director of this “new wave”, closely followed by Thomas Arslan. In the panorama of German-Turkish film production, they represent two opposite poles in terms of style, influenced as they are by very different kinds of cinema and belonging to different generations. Arslan, born in 1962 in Germany, son of a Turkish father and a German mother, is evidently indebted less to Italian Neo-realism than French cinema, particularly Robert Bresson and the *Nouvelle Vague*, for example Eric Rohmer. From the beginning he appears to be interested in a cinema which tends to minimise and simplify, which chooses to observe rather than to narrate. In his films he investigates reality with slow camera movements and no sound except dialogues and everyday noises, allowing the audience to reflect on what is happening on the screen. Akin, on the other hand, born in 1973, actor and DJ, is more eclectic, mixes different genres and styles, tending to gain the audience’s empathy through an intense use of colour, and, above all, music, both rock and folk. His strongly characterized anti-heroes belong to well defined social and ethnic groups.

Although very different in style, both depict contemporary and multicultural German society: Akin, with films like *Kurz und schmerzlos* (1998) and *Gegen die Wand* (2004), and Arslan with *Geschwister-Kardeşler* (1997), *Dealer* (1999) and *Der schöne Tag* (2001), which form a sort of “Berlin Trilogy”, exploring the living conditions, often dramatic, often grotesque, of second generation Turks. They also share what I consider the distinctive feature of German-Turkish male productions, that is what can be called a “static

dimension”, namely the identification of characters with circumscribed metropolitan neighbourhoods in order to get around or avoid the limits imposed by their ethnic “otherness”. Instead of the journey, a subject frequently analysed by their female colleagues, the male directors generally prefer to focus on a centripetal movement.¹ This tendency, I would argue, shows their difficulty in coming to terms with their Turkish roots.

Located in Berlin and Hamburg, where pimps, drug dealers and outsiders fight more for the money to buy status symbols like expensive German cars than for social improvement, these films develop a gendered discourse of criminality, a so-called “ghetto aesthetic” (Jones 1991). Once again they present an enclosed space, defined by Barbara Mennel as “a phantasmatic site for the negotiation of resistance” (Mennel 2002: 141), where the search for identity occurs, I would argue, less within the Turkish families themselves than in the form of a negative self-assertion towards German society which often consists in breaking its laws. Apart from at the end of Akin’s *Kurz und schmerzlos* (where we see the protagonist Gabriel praying with his father in a short and belated reconciliation), fathers are absent figures, or at least superficially depicted, defeated individuals from whom young people cannot expect any help, or, on the other hand, violent and dictatorial characters with whom any dialogue is impossible.

Despite this association of its male characters with a clearly circumscribed space, the German-Turkish cinema, heavily influenced by a macho (masculinist) tradition, nevertheless structures itself according to a division between “static femininity and dynamic masculinity” (Mennel 2002: 145). With very few exceptions (among which is Deniz, the self assured and confident protagonist of Arslan’s *Der schöne Tag*, played by Serpil Thuran, criticized because she is too far removed from the usual stereotype), the Turkish female citizens of the ghetto embody a universal middle-class morality, in contrast to the criminal tendencies of the young ghetto *gangstas*, and are not sexually defined but presented only as sisters, mothers and wives of the protagonists who consider them only as objects to be protected. German women, on the other hand, tend to appear as prostitutes (as

¹ Only Akin partially develops this theme in the documentary *Denk ich an Deutschland – Wir haben vergessen zurückzukehren* (2001) which I will analyse and compare to a number of films by women directors.

in Yüksel Yavuz's *Aprilkinder*, 1998) or, at the very least, are presented as too emancipated (see Akin's *Kurz und schmerzlos*).

I will turn now to developments in the work of female filmmakers, both German and German-Turkish, within this male dominated cinematic landscape. Generally speaking, the work of female filmmakers in the post-Wall period has been diverse and heterogeneous, not least because the feminist generation of the 1970s and 1980s has not been replaced by a similarly homogenous generation defined not just by age but also by politics and aesthetics. The earlier generation's concern with production and distribution had established for women filmmakers a public sphere in terms of both audience and critical reception. However, in the 1990s, the kind of political and feminist activism which had created such conditions came to an end. Apart from Margarethe von Trotta and Doris Dörrie, considered by Rentschler as the female representatives respectively of New German Cinema and the "cinema of consensus", the only women filmmakers to achieve international commercial success were Katja von Garnier and Caroline Link. In fact, in the 1990s women were primarily visible in cinema as the ideal protagonists of male films, portrayed in yuppie comedies as frustrated working girls trying to reconcile career and love, or, later, at the end of the decade, as post-feminist heroines, strong and determined characters such as Lola in Tom Tykwer's *Lola rennt* (1998) or the Jewish Felice Schragenheim in Max Färberböck's *Aimée und Jaguar* (1999).

Turning now to German-Turkish women directors, I want to emphasize first of all that their presence is not merely the result of the success of their male colleagues, but that they have been shooting their own films since as early as 1989, as illustrated by Aysun Bademsoy's debut film *Fremde deutsche Nachbarschaft*. Turkish-German women directors were developing their ideas of cinema throughout the 1990s in parallel to other filmmakers. Compared with the transnational productions of their male colleagues, their works are less well known probably because they do not strive for the same kind of compromise between art and entertainment, or at least do so to a lesser extent. They do not reject working within popular genres, sometimes reworking them parodically, as I will show in the following analysis of a number of films. However, their refusal to submit to a focus on the kind of identity politics which restricts minority women filmmakers to stereotypes similar to those

of the “cinema of duty” obliges them to find new paths, for example in documentary filmmaking, and tends to confine their work to screenings at film festivals.

The filmmakers whose films I have chosen to analyse, Seyhan Derin and Ayşe Polat, seem to have very little in common, apart from being born in Turkey in 1969 and Turkish Kurdistan in 1970 respectively, and living in Hamburg since the the age of three in Derin’s case and the age of eight in Polat’s. Derin studied at the Hochschule für Fernsehen und Film in Munich, while Polat is an autodidact. However I would argue that in their works we find in different guises the traces of a common journey. And the theme of the journey, not coincidentally, is the basis of the first two films I want to examine, Ayşe Polat’s *Ein Fest für Beyhan* (1994) and Seyhan Derin’s *Ich bin Tochter meiner Mutter* (1996). In both cases this journey is first of all a journey of the mind within two different cultures, Turkish and German, in search of an identity. *Ein Fest für Beyhan* is a somewhat mysterious and enigmatic short film (25 minutes) which can perhaps be read as reproducing a dream sequence. The protagonist, Beyhan, like Lewis Carroll’s Alice, is continually wandering to different places, sometimes as a child (in a desert landscape which we may identify with Turkey), sometimes as a young woman (in a snowy German winter). The film is composed of a series of sequences where she is alternately walking by herself, quarrelling with her mother, meeting relatives, friends and strangers. She always avoids confrontation with them through perpetual escape, often abruptly breaking off conversations, simply walking away or suddenly finding herself in a different place, as though in a dream. All her adventures have a circular movement and a mysterious and sibylline passenger she meets on a train reveals to her that “every return to the starting-point is a failure”. In the end Beyhan finds herself in Turkey, in the middle of a party organized for her by her family: it is a welcoming party, which can possibly be read as an attempt on their part to confirm her definitive belonging to their world. All the audience knows is that she refuses to join it, turning her back on her family and departing.

Ich bin Tochter meiner Mutter, in contrast, is a documentary commissioned by the Hochschule für Fernsehen und Film in cooperation with a Turkish school for a project about the history of female migration from Turkey to Germany. Derin goes on a journey with her mother to the place where she was born to rediscover her family roots. Through interviews with her mother, father and female relatives, both in Germany and in Turkey,

she reconstructs the story of her family and especially of her mother, whose personality gradually emerges during the film. Although she professes a belief in her husband's "superiority", officially relying on his decisions, she appears, almost in spite of herself, as a strong and self-confident person who has raised four daughters alone in Turkey while her husband was working in Germany. Her character, however, is not at all idealized and contrasts emerge continually between her and her emancipated daughters. The mother is shown to adhere to a strong male tradition, for she did not hesitate years before to reject one of Derin's sisters because she had married a German man. Coming to terms with different cultures does not seem to be only a Turkish problem however: in a tragi-comical interview the sister and her husband tell how they have also been refused acceptance by his German family which has broken off all interaction with them since their marriage. The ambiguous nature of reality, the difficulty of determining who is right and who is wrong, is also reflected in two segments of old Turkish newsreel Derin inserts into the documentary. The first describes in ironic and disdainful tones the dangers of feminism, whilst the second reminds us that in 1934 Turkey was one of the first European countries to give suffrage to women. In showing them, Derin problematizes the cliché of the civilised Germany compared to the backward Turkey and goes some way to overcoming the stereotyped image of the Turkish woman as mute victim of a male society associated as we have seen with the "cinema of duty".

Interviews and encounters are also alternated with still photos and the reading of letters from a correspondence between Derin and her father. Along with the multiple voice-over (Derin's and her father's voices speaking German) these sequences create a dialogic structure different from that we might expect in a more conventionally constructed documentary. A dream sequence in black and white also recurs in the film: a young girl is alone in a train compartment, trying to escape in vain. The sequence "provides visual consistency and familiarity but no narrative logic (...). It possesses a grainy quality, which creates images with soft contours, reflecting the indeterminacy and the vagueness of memory" (Mennel 2002: 55f.). It also refers to an episode narrated in one of the family letters, namely the escape of Derin and her sisters from their home as teenagers. I feel, however, that it can be read in a way which brings this film's meaning close to that of Polat's. Like Beyhan, the little girl (and Derin herself) is imprisoned in a "nowhere",

suspended between infancy and adulthood, Germany and Turkey, reality and fantasy. Neither the filmmakers nor the audience know where the characters will finally arrive, but the fact that they move towards an uncertain future means that these films take up a position opposed to the ghetto-centric “static” world of the male filmmakers.

Both films share the theme of the journey, but while in Derin’s it is from Germany to Turkey and implies above all a reconciliation, in Polat’s it appears to represent more of a total break and her definitive return seems to be to Germany. In the two works, moreover, the search for an identity means a confrontation with the figure of the mother whose symbol, water, appears at the beginning of each film, the moving waves of the sea in Derin’s and the stagnant water of a well in which the faces of mother and child are reflected in Polat’s. In spite of the patriarchal nature of a society in which a daughter’s similarity to her father is given expression in the saying “you are your father’s daughter”, it is the mother they have to confront and reconcile with. Derin’s title above all is an act of declaring to whom she really belongs. Both the directors also appear in their films, Polat as a passer-by showing Beyhan the way, Derin as herself at the end of the film in a kind of Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt*, telling the little actress how to perform the dream sequence. Both are thus symbolically indicating the way to their alter-egos.

With reference to the parallel productions of male filmmakers, we can compare the two films, and especially Derin’s, with Akin’s documentary *Wir haben vergessen zurückzukehren*, in which the director reconstructs his parents’ journey to Germany and the living conditions of those relatives who decided to return to live in Turkey. Alternating between comedy, with the aunt who wants to be buried in Germany because cemeteries are better kept, and melancholy, represented by the young female cousin who admits that she misses her life in Hamburg, Akin introduces the theme of *Heimat*, but presents this concept as problematic only for his parents. It is evident that the problem of belonging only concerns the first generation. For him and others of his age it is a settled affair in a way that is not for Polat and Derin. From the female perspective, the issue is still unresolved, there is still no answer: their aim is not simply to document and interview but also to question and the ambiguous presence of dream sequences within the traditional form of the documentary acts as a means to this end.

Turning briefly to the re-working of popular genres, a significant example is Polat's *Auslandstournee* (2000), which shows that German-Turkish women filmmakers also direct more commercial films than the ones I have analysed so far, nevertheless also focussing here on the theme of a journey and of a multicultural identity divided between Germany and Turkey. The film starts with a funeral: eleven-year-old Şenay's father is dead, and she finds out that her mother, whom she had always thought dead, is alive and lives abroad. Zeki, a middle-aged, homosexual cabaret singer, comes to Germany from Holland to attend the ceremony and, as a former family friend, is asked to take care of the girl. Together they travel around Europe by car, from Germany to Istanbul via Paris, looking for Çiçek, Şenay's mother, who is a belly dancer. At the beginning, Zeki, not enthusiastic about his imposed mother-like role, and Şenay, feeling alone and abandoned, do not get along well. Gradually, however, they learn to appreciate each other and, after some tragi-comical adventures, they eventually find out that Çiçek is not interested in her daughter. They travel back to Germany feeling that, in spite of the hostile world, they have formed an ideal family.

It is evident that in this film Polat combines the road movie genre with the theme of the "odd couple" composed of a child and an adult, a typical film situation from Chaplin's *The Kid* (1921) to Wenders's *Alice in den Städten* (1974), a film to which Polat's is particularly indebted. *Auslandstournee* works with a number of clichés, both tragic (Zeki being beaten during one of his homosexual encounters) and funny (Zeki paying a French prostitute to explain to Şenay how to use a sanitary towel), but it is most of all the history of a migration which is "thus revisited through the lens of travelling performers and homeless children" (Göktürk 2002: 254). The theme of the journey in this film not only refers to cultural roots but especially to the search for female identity through the image of the mother, a search which turns out to be painfully fruitless in keeping with the pessimism which is characteristic of all Polat's films. Not only is Şenay rejected but so too is Zeki whose homosexuality his mother still refuses to accept, insisting that he get married. Zeki, being gay, suffers a lack of freedom akin to that of Turkish women and also he finds it impossible to affirm a sense of self which is other than the traditionally masculine, or at least is permitted to do so only for other people's entertainment when he sings as a transvestite in cabarets. Germany is not depicted as a perfect place, but the homeland/mother reveals itself

to be cruel: both protagonists have to find their identity in themselves, not in their ancestors.

Parallel to the theme of the journey, in two further films Polat and Derin also re-enact the claustrophobic *Kammerspiel* of the “cinema of duty”, but with an essential difference, namely that in this case it is the woman who possesses the key to the prison, even though she is not totally free herself. Based on the true story of an aristocrat imprisoned for many years by her husband in the 18th century because she was an adulteress, Ayşe Polat’s short costume film *Gräfin Sophia Hatun* (1997) belongs, like *Ein Fest für Beyhan*, to a series of “dream-like fantastic miniature films about exile situations including *Fremdennacht* (1991)” (Göktürk 2002: 254) and is basically the tale of two kinds of solitude and two different ways of being held captive. Breaking the rules which force her to remain within the confines of her garden, during her lonely rides the countess encounters one of her servants, a Turk, who is escaping war in Germany. Feeling like a stranger herself in the microcosm of her castle, she thinks he is the only person she can talk to as the other servants are her husband’s spies. She is convinced they share a common destiny of silence and isolation, and, hoping to find a confidant, she calls him to her room, where the perpetual circular movement of the camera emphasises the sense of confinement they feel, and every day she tells him her story. The man listens to her grievances with dignity but cannot consider her and himself as equals: more than the social or cultural differences, he feels that the pain of the perpetual exile from his homeland is harder than the countess’s material imprisonment. He therefore refuses this imposed complicity until finally his contemptuous silence irritates the woman who abruptly drives him away from the castle since, in her opinion, he is not a prisoner like her and can go wherever he wants. The man’s body is found the following day just outside the border of the garden, frozen to death. Freedom is something he cannot enjoy and does not ask for, but the countess, selfishly considering only her own condition, forgets the helplessness of the migrant so far from home. His prison is the very state of mind of exile from which she cannot set him free. Filmed in a poetic yet simple style, *Gräfin Sophia Hatun* is a cruel parable about the complex nature of freedom and the misuse of power.

Derin’s *Zwischen den Sternen* (2002) is a film on a lighter note, whose literary predecessors might include *Romeo and Juliet* and Christa Wolf’s *Der geteilte Himmel*. During a holiday

in Turkey, Deniz falls in love with Umut who was also born in Germany but who does not have a German passport. Umut decides to follow Deniz to Hamburg but, as an illegal immigrant, he is compelled to hide in her flat while she studies and works to earn money for them both and also for his family in Turkey. Her power lies, as does the Countess's, in her social status: she is in possession of a German passport. Enclosed in his own "40m² Germany" Umut, on the other hand, is forced to perform a traditionally female role, and to go out he must even dress like an old Turkish woman, reversing the usual cliché of women disguising themselves to gain men's rights. He takes his revenge, however, by filling the flat with Turkish newspapers and watching Turkish television all the time, partly to pass his endless days but most of all in order to undermine Deniz's "German" self-confidence, to instil in her doubts about her cultural identity and to persuade her to come back to Turkey. Umut, at the end of the film, even forms an alliance with Deniz's former German boyfriend, a kind and passive student who tries to help her with her problems, in the name of an unstated masculine solidarity. Deniz, in the meantime, defends her decision to go back to Turkey by insisting on her love for Umut and her desire to help him, but she is considered old-fashioned by her friends who would never give up their careers for love. Above all she has to face her parents, open minded upper-class lawyers, who regard her going back to Turkey as the failure of their efforts at integration. The usual problem of the sentimental *Beziehungskomödien*, the choice between love and career, is here complicated by the migrant's condition and an insensitive law which regards Umut as a foreigner, even though he was born in Germany. Again, in marked contrast to Polat's pessimism, Derin chooses to depict a compromise: her protagonist Deniz will try to live in Turkey with Umut. In doing so, she does not renounce her rights but proves that her German-Turkish status does at least allow her to determine her own future.

Is a gendered discourse in German-Turkish film possible? In my opinion, even if it is not well-defined, a "Kanaka Sprach" does exist. The presence of common elements in the films of Polat and Derin is undeniable, though the language may be different, or at least less immediately recognizable as a common language than the *Umgangssprache* of their male colleagues. Contrary to the Americanized slang and the syncopated rap rhythms of their dialogues, women filmmakers have developed a poetic language which has its roots in both modernity and tradition, and which reconciles the oral tradition of their mothers with their

sense of belonging to Germany. Male German-Turkish filmmakers still seem to be “nicht versöhnt” (to quote the title of Jean Marie Straub’s and Danièle Huillet’s 1965 film) with former generations, like their predecessors of the New German Cinema. Directors like Polat and Derin show a more critical and dialogic approach towards the migrants’ situation in German society than their male counterparts, and prove that by admitting to differences and a feeling of dislocation it is possible to define one’s own cultural identity.

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Biodata

Giovannella Rendi graduated from the University of Rome “La Sapienza” with a dissertation about cinema in National Socialism and is currently undertaking a PhD at the University of Ferrara with a thesis on the concept of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* in German cinema after the fall of the Wall. She has published several articles on film and most recently the essay “Wunschkonzert – Musica nelle tenebre”, in Matteo Galli (eds) *Da Caligari a Good-bye, Lenin!* Firenze: Le Lettere, 2004.