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<u>**I, Amanda G. Hatch, hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Germanic Languages & Literature.**</u>

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"Where is Home?" : Examining Borders in Yüksel Yavuz's "Kleine Freiheit" and Kutlug Ataman's "Lola und Bilidikid"

Student's name: <u>**Amanda G. Hatch**</u>

This work and its defense approved by:

Committee chair: Tanja Nusser, Ph.D.

Committee member: Stephanie Sadre-Orafai, Ph.D.

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"Where is Home?"

Examining Borders in Yüksel Yavuz's *Kleine Freiheit* and Kutluğ Ataman's *Lola und Bilidikid*

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by

Amanda G. Hatch

B.A. University of Cincinnati

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Committee Chair: Tanja Nusser, Ph.D.

Abstract

"Where is home? How are transnational mobility and traumatic memory represented in cinema? Do immigrants live in a 'parallel world'? [...] And where are German (and global) spectators positioned in relation to immigrant spaces and networks?"

Deniz Göktürk, 2004

This thesis analyzes the depiction of the German nation-state in *Kleine Freiheit* (Dir. Yüksel Yavuz, 2004) and *Lola und Bilidikid* (Dir. Kutluğ Ataman, 1999), two German-language diasporic films, by examining how borders are defined, portrayed, negotiated, and often transgressed in both the plot and cinematography of each film. I argue that the films, on the level of the plot, question the idea of the modern German nation by asking what this nation-state looks like and who belongs (or does not belong) in it. Through close readings of the films, I examine how they work on the cinematic level to depict, comment upon, or even deconstruct the notion of national, social, personal, and structural borders that actually or apparently exist in Germany in the early 21st century. Using sources from the social sciences, I examine the actual structures of migration in Germany and its connection to stereotyping, stigmatization, and gazes, and I use Sigmund Freund's concept of the *unheimlich* to interpret the uncanny spaces in the film. Concluding with an interpretation that takes these approaches and interpretations from various academic disciplines into consideration, I argue that both films ultimately address, in plot *and* on the filmic levels, Deniz Göktürk's question: "Where is home?"

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Introduction

In her engagement with *A Little Bit of Freedom* (*Kleine Freiheit*),[1] a 2004 German-language film by the Kurdish director Yüksel Yavuz, Germanist and film studies scholar Deniz Göktürk presents several questions to her readers (Göktürk:2004 1). She argues that *Kleine Freiheit* asks, among other questions: "Where is home? How are transnational mobility and traumatic memory represented in cinema? Do immigrants live in a 'parallel world'? [...] And where are German (and global) spectators positioned in relation to immigrant spaces and networks?" (Göktürk:2004 1-2). Yet, despite being clearly presented by a leading scholar of diaspora and migrant media more then ten years ago, these specific, significant questions— which can be related directly to *Kleine Freiheit*, as Deniz Göktürk originally argued, or easily applied to other texts—have remained largely unaddressed in scholarship of diasporic films set in Germany.[2]

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[1] This film is referred to throughout this thesis by the German film title *Kleine Freiheit.*

[2] Following the argument of film studies scholar Daniela Berghahn, because the films portray characters who are either seeking refugee status or a part of the post-war "Gastarbeiter" labor movements in Germany, I will use the terms *diaspora* and *diasporic* to describe the films and the characters ("Queering the family of nation" 130). As Daniela Berghahn explains, "diasporic cinema is generally conceived of as a particular type of transnational cinema that transcends the boundaries of the national in specific ways" and "is inextricably linked to the postcolonial and labour migrations of the second half of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first centuries" ("Queering the family of nation" 130).

An important difference between transnationalism and diaspora is in the mobility of the characters and one of the primary reasons why I prefer to use the term diaspora over transnational: "'Transnational' connotes hyper-mobile cosmopolitan elites who are at home nowhere, whereas 'diasporic' refers to settler communities that have evolved out of mass migration movements…that were, at least initially, more likely to belong to the working class than to the social elite. The adjective 'diasporic' inevitably implies sharing in the collective identity that is characterized by 'a strong retention of group ties sustained over an extended

In this thesis, I look at the depiction of the German nation-state in *Kleine Freiheit* and

Lola and Bili the Kid (Lola und Bilidikid),[3] two German-language diasporic films, by examining

how borders, generally, are defined, portrayed, negotiated, and often transgressed in both the

plot and cinematography of each film. I argue that the films, on the level of the plot, question

the idea of the modern German nation, what this nation-state looks like, and who belongs (or

does not belong) in it. Through close readings of the films, I examine how the films themselves

are working on the cinematic level to depict, comment upon, or even deconstruct the notion of

national, social, personal, and structural borders that actually or apparently exist in Germany in

the early 21st century.[4]

In order to do this, I use sources from the social sciences to look, in the first section of

this thesis, at the actual structures of migration in Germany, clearly situating these films in the

real-world structures that they are depicting. I examine the stereotyping and gazes in *Kleine*

Freieheit using theories of visual culture and address the use of genre in *Lola und Bilidikid* from

a film studies perspective. In both films, I use Sigmund Freud's concept of the *unheimlich* to

interpret what I argue are uncanny spaces in the film. Ultimately, all of these different modes of

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period (with respect to language, religion, endogamy and cultural norms)' (Cohen 61, Berghahn, "Queering the family of nation" 131).

[3] This film is referred to throughout this thesis by the German film title *Lola und Bilidikid.*

[4] On a political level, examining the nation-state as an actor with agency in these films is significant, when one considers that individual citizens *give* the nation-state powers through various political, social, and legal actions. Thus, any interpretation of the nation-state's active role in these films is not so removed from individuals' roles within the state. I use the term nation-state throughout this thesis, then, with the assumption that included within this term is all of the political, social, and legal decisions that go into producing and reinforcing this power, which often begins on the level of the individual citizen. With this in mind, what I argue the nation-state is *doing* in these films clearly has broader political and social implications, though not explicitly focused upon in this thesis.

interpretation, I argue, speak to Deniz Göktürk's questions at the opening of this text by depicting various ways that subject and subjectivity are negotiated in the films—and, indeed, in a modern Germany.

With the real-life German structures established in section one, I examine Yüksel Yavuz's 2003 *Kleine Freiheit* and Kutluğ Ataman's 1999 *Lola und Bilidikid*, in the second and third sections of this thesis, respectively. *Kleine Freiheit* shows the diasporic experience of characters from a Kurdish village, Africa, and Bosnia and Herzegovina currently living in Germany and *Lola und Bilidikid* depicts main characters of Turkish and Turkish German backgrounds.[5] The timing of the films' release is important, in that Germany only *officially* acknowledged their status as an immigrant country with the passage of a new citizenship law in 2004, despite having been a somewhat reluctant country of immigration for quite some time (Berghahn, "Turkish-German dialogues on screen" 3).[6] Part of this reluctance stemmed from Germany using migration, since the 1950s, as an only temporary solution for strictly economic problems. Both films, then, represent the diasporic experience *before* the passage of the reformed citizenship laws of 2004.

Using the interdisciplinary theory developed in section one and the close readings of the films in section two and three, I argue that the films ultimately and significantly depict not just the borders of diaspora and migration, but also the borders of identity and the body. In *Kleine*

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[5] I am intentionally vague regarding the backgrounds of the characters of *Lola und Bilidikid*, as less overt comments are made as to the nationality of the characters in this film. Based on cues, such as code-switching and the preferred spoken language of the characters, as well as some characters' plans to return to Turkey, it appears that some of the characters are migrants to Germany from Turkey and others are likely meant to be second-generation Turkish Germans.

[6] For more information on the history of immigration in Germany, see, for one example, Triadafilos Triadafilopoulos and Karen Schönwälder's "How the Federal Republic became an Immigration Country" (2006).

Freiheit, the fluidity of the diasporic identity is represented as dangerous to the nation-state,

something that must be hidden and is ultimately sought out and punished or completely

removed. In *Lola und Bilidikid*, the fluid identity is presented in characters that dress in drag and

are also members of the diaspora community in Germany. Here, fluid identities are dangerous

not only to the nation-state,[7] but also to the social structures, which promote categories that

uphold hetero-normative family values.[8] I argue that the social process of stigmatization,

whether or not acknowledged in the films, is still necessarily used to categorize the normal

from the abnormal, as part of this categorization.

By referencing the actual structures of diaspora and the diasporic experience, as

theorized in the social sciences,[9] and particularly how these structures create spaces for

national and social coding, which is in nature binary and does not easily allow for fluidity or

transgressions, I look at how *Kleine Freiheit* and *Lola und Bilidikid* are both reflecting the real-

life experiences of migrants in Germany, and also acting subversively against these fixed

categories. The latter, I argue, leads to an interpretation of both films *not* as depictions of

transnationalism and hybridity, as they are often approached on the scholarly level, but as

depictions of what does not belong in—or at least does not fit into the binary structures of—

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[7] As represented, for example, by the German boys, who harass and threaten the Turkish protagonists.

[8] As represented in the Turkish / Turkish German characters of Bili and Osman, who do not care that the protagonists are migrants, but are still threatened by their fluid gender and sexual identities (discussed further in section three).

[9] I focus on sources from the social sciences for several reasons, including, as Daniela Berghahn aptly summarizes, that "the study of the diasporic family is primarily the domain of sociologists and anthropologists" ("Turkish-German dialogues on screen" 3).

the German nation-state. In this way, too, the films, when read in context of the immigration laws that were passed shortly after their making, could be viewed as a sort-of warning: although the reformed legislation perhaps intended to make immigration easier in Germany, they arguably just make clearer those who do not belong, those who are abnormal—those who are not easily or not 'correctly' categorized, based on national and social standards—in the construction of the modern German nation-state.

1. Borders, Bodies, and the Nation-State

As a first step in analyzing the films, it is important to define, or at least recognize the existence of, the borders and boundaries identified by the state or social structures, since the characters of the films work to negotiate or transgress these limits and categories in acts of border-work, with varying degrees of success. Despite the sometimes non-existence of actual borders of nation-states and, historically, the potential for movement of these limits and boundaries between nations, states perceive that they must protect and, in doing so, constantly define their borders.[10] One way that the nation-state does this is in the creation of categories— such as citizen, non-citizen, migrant, asylum-seeker, and refugee—which she is able to assign to and impose on those living within or outside of her borders.

These layers and levels of borders in these often-overlapping categories makes borders more complicated than just those dictated by the nation-state, which are often remarked upon in scholarship of transnational studies. In the films examined in the next two sections of this thesis, borders, such as the subjective borders of identity, the structural borders of legal categories, and the physical borders of the nation-state, are depicted on several and nuanced levels in plot and cinematography. The borders' relation to other social processes, especially those of visualization and stigmatization, are also important aspects of the border-work in real-world situations, as well as in both of the films. I argue in these sections that both films present

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[10] In this thesis, I focus mostly on the political construction of the nation-state and use this term to mean the political, agreed-upon boundaries of a nation (i.e. those you would find on a map). Other aspects of the nation-state and nation building, such as national identity and the creation of a diasporic nation-state, although outside of the scope of this current project, are undoubtedly also thematized in these (and other) diasporic films and deserving of further interpretation. From an anthropological perspective on nation building, its link to identity, and the diasporic nation-state, see Nina Glick Schiller's chapter in *American Arrivals*.

these themes regarding the limitations of various borders and attempt to navigate or ultimately transgress these limits. In this way, the films work to politicize the very *definition* of a transnational or hybrid space and the problematic relationship between identity and these established and enforced borders.

Kleine Freiheit and *Lola und Bilidikid*, in their representation of queer or gender-fluid characters, are especially significant in their depiction of subjective borders, such as those of gender and of the body, as opposed to the more obvious physical (and often metaphorical) national borders addressed in diasporic narratives. As film studies scholar Daniela Berghahn argues, there is an intersection in queer and/or diasporic identities, namely in that, together, these identities multiply marginalize a person. That is, in each group, one risks being cut off from the dominant culture, be it the "heterosexual culture of their childhood, which becomes the site of impossible return" for the queer person (Fortier 189), or the "separation and loss of home and homeland" for the diasporic (Berghahn, "Queering the family of nation" 132).

This, as Daniela Berghahn also argues, allows that the "queer diasporic identity functions as a master trope of hybridity" ("Queering the family of nation" 133). In section three, for example, I read closely the few scenes in *Lola und Bilidikid*, in which the drama genre of the majority of the film is juxtaposed with scenes, which appear to belong in the horror genre. By reading these scenes in light of the gender and sexuality of the characters in the film's plot, I argue that the film, itself, is acting to deconstruct the binary notion of gender, sexuality, and, indeed, national belonging, which is also addressed more overtly in its plot. At the same time, it addresses the separation created by these borders, which Berghahn points out in her text.

Films are an important medium for studying these questions of modern personal and

national identities and in looking past socially constructed borders, which is precisely the

reason that I bridge theories from film studies with those from the social sciences as a basis for

this analysis. As Women's Studies professor Rosemarie Garland-Thomson argues in *Staring,*

staring at 'abnormal' populations can be a knowledge-producing act; however, abiding by

various social contracts, we often regulate the ways that we look at populations that we

perceive as abnormal. Here, I would argue that films create a unique space that draws the

audiences' gaze back to the 'abnormal,' creating spaces for staring, which are at the same time

distanced and regulated by the gaze of the film. This interaction is socially acceptable and

perhaps less threatening for the audience member, who is therefore not forced to navigate the

social intricacies of a face-to-face interaction. I would argue that staring through film is

important, especially in the context of diasporic German language films, in that they allow a

national and an international audience to see the underrepresented populations and to

reconsider the cultural makeup of the modern German nation-state and begin to answer Deniz

Göktürk's question of where German and international spectators are positioned with regard to

these diasporic spaces (Göktürk:2004 1-2).

Kleine Freiheit, for example, depicts the diasporic experience through the juxtaposition

of the Western and non-Western gazes on the filmic level. Using theories of visualization and

dominant forms of seeing, as well as stigmatization and how this process is involved in acts of

seeing and looking, I interpret how the cinematography could actually reflect the diasporic

experience and the minority gazes in the majority white German society. The sociologist Erving

Goffman writes that it is after we learn that there is a stigma that we push away the person,

because they are coded as "different" and this is unexpected (5). I argue in the following

chapters that this becomes especially important in the films discussed in this thesis, since the

films are addressing who fits—or often does not fit—in German society: and in order to be

labeled Other/not belonging, the characters must first *appear* different. That is, the judge of

this difference has to be able to *recognize* and label this difference—and this is often done

through culturally conditioned stereotypes and stigmatizations*.*

In these ways, both films, I argue, work to deconstruct the notion of transnationalism

and hybridity, which, as anthropologist Jenny White explains, is "an inadequate term for

migrant identity," and instead, drawing on cultural theorist Stuart Hall's work on identity and

diaspora, imagines a migrant and diasporic experience that is fluid (759). Likewise, Daniela

Berghahn points out that diasporic identities are inevitably hybrid, and therefore the term

'hybrid' or the concept of 'hybridity,' when applied to diasporic, or even transnational, groups,

is somewhat useless ("Queering the family of nation" 133). Instead, I agree with anthropologist

Katherine Pratt Ewing that 'hybrid' is an inadequate term for migrants,[11] in general, and would

add that it is an especially inadequate technique for approaching diasporic films, as many

scholars have continued to do.[12] As Daniela Berghahn also points out, from a film studies

perspective and involving the aspects of diaspora and sexuality addressed in both films:

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[11] "A more careful exploration of the process of identification is an important step in promoting a fuller understanding of the immigrant experience that goes beyond popular but superficial notions of identity such as that of 'hybrid' or 'halfie'" (Pratt Ewing 120).

[12] See, for example, Nilgün Bayraktar's argument, citing Deniz Göktürk and Barbara Mennel, that several of the modern diasporic directors "belong to this new wave of filmmaking that fosters a hybrid and plural Turkish German cultural identity" (95).

> Queerness therefore implies transgression, subversion and dissent, and is often conceived of as a state of 'in-betweenness'… Similarly, conceptualizations of diasporic identity revolve around the space of the 'in-between' that positions diasporic subjects at the interstice between the home and the host country, the culture of origin and the destination culture, national rootedness and transnational roots (133).

Although much scholarship from many disciplines has addressed the fluid identity of migrants, this has been especially apparent in more recent works of anthropologists, who actually warn against the fiction that there is a fixed identity for migrants—either an identity of the sending country, an identity of the receiving country, or a hybrid identity that seamlessly combines the two. So why do scholars and lawmakers continue to use words, such as 'hybrid'? Because, although two identities are implied, "hybrid" is nevertheless still a fixed category and, as anthropologist Katherine Pratt Ewing explains, "the fixing of identities is a basic means by which the state contributes to the ordering of the social world." Thus, even though 'hybrid' might imply, on the surface, a level of fluidity, it is actually just as fixed as any other category, and, as I argue below, nation-states and societies have a perceived need of these defined and fixed categories, in order to function and protect themselves. Likewise, while there is an obvious social role in identity formation, the state dictates identities "through law, public policy, and routinized practices in everyday arenas" (Pratt Ewing 117), making it an important player in perpetuating the fiction of a fixed identity.[13]

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[13] The state also dictates fixed categories of identities in official policies that formulate the basis of ethnic, racial, and other identities, which contribute to the essentialization of ethnicity as primordial or natural, thereby maintaining 'minorities' as different from members of the dominant 'culture'" (Pratt Ewing 117).

This concept is especially important in approaching German texts, as Katherine Pratt Ewing explains, with regard to the Turkish German identity:

> in contrast to American citizenship, Germanness is an identity that is not simply a matter of living within the territory of the German nation-state, and the bestowing of German citizenship occurs in very different ways among different ethnic groups, instantiating the particular principles of German identity, which are rooted in an idea of ethnicity through "blood" that excludes anyone who carries and identity of "Turk" (127).

Katherine Pratt Ewing continues to argue that most migrants do not organize their identities in such a fixed and binary way, and instead move "quite fluidly through a German environment" (130). The queer identity is clearly linked in this construction of a fluid identity, as Daniela Berghahn reminds readers in a very similar way to Katherine Pratt Ewing's discussion of migrant identity, that "being queer is essentially about resisting containment within clearly demarcated borders and categories" (133). Thus, the fact that the films attempt to show the limits to these fixed identities, as discussed in the following sections, is incredibly significant in beginning to deconstruct these notions on the political, legal, and social levels.

Sociologist Franck Düvell also argues that, in this intersection of neoliberal ideologies and migration policy, "market economies have an interest in preserving social or geographical divisions by genderizing, racializing, or territorializing humanity" (28). In this way, the political policies of migration *urges* the marginalization of migrants based on labeled identities by the states. In practice and in discourse, in the state's support of integration and mandated *Integrationskurse*, a term such as 'hybrid' becomes a catch-all for those who are apparently successful in this integration into the host country, though still visibly (often through stereotyping, discussed below) distinct from the 'normal' members of the (white) German

society. Thus, the state actually benefits from these labeled categories and social divisions, which includes ethnicity, regardless of the birth country or personal identification of the migrant. However, these labeling and binary structures do not stop at the level of the state, as we will see in the examination of the films: the statements, which are "embedded within a broader discourse" of national policy, "also manifest in everyday practices" (Pratt Ewing 118). This becomes the distinctly social aspects of these labels and categories.

In this way, migrants perform identities with which they not only self-identify and negotiate (such as ethnic, queer, and gender identities), but also identities *forced* upon them in the labeling efforts of the state. The state *needs* these labels in order to exert control over citizens and in their politics of belonging. In turn, the immigrants, according to social psychologist and economist Dale T. Miller and psychologist William Turnbull's expectancy model,[14] assume these labels as part of their identities and perform them, accordingly. Despite not having any agency in this decision, migrants are often sought out and punished by the state for this identity, especially when this identity involves some form of illegality.

This is not a new phenomenon, which is why it has been addressed by filmmakers for decades, and the stratifications are likewise still reflected in actual German migration policies of 2004 (Rotte).[15] As professor of law and politics Eleonore Kofman argues, this unjust system has been developing in European states since the post-Cold War period, wherein states "have created an increasingly complex system of civic stratifications with differential access to civil,

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[14] Wherein one conforms to the expectations of an identity labeled unto him.

[15] As Pratt Ewing explains: "Modern law gives rise to a proliferation and naturalization of identities, creating and policing many of the categories that individuals are obliged to take up as identities" (117).

economic and social rights, depending on a mode of entry, residence and employment" (4).

Depending on a migrant's status, then, which is *entirely* determined by the state, a migrant

might have limited access to rights, be granted a legal status on a conditional basis, and be

forced to undergo processes of assimilation and acculturation, all of which can reinforce the

idea that the immigrant is a guest, wholly dependent on the generosity of the host country. This,

therefore, reinforces the gulf between belonging and not belonging, a guest/host relationship

that was once, and in some cases still is, linguistically emphasized in Germany through the label

of the post-war immigrant as *Gastarbeiter*.[16]

However, what the state and social structures apparently do not consider, or at least do

not address, is that the reality of the situation is much more complicated than these fixed

categories, and this is what is similarly reflected in both films on multiple levels. Films such as

Kleine Freiheit and *Lola und Bilidikid*, instead of representing hybrid characters fitting

seamlessly into the new German society,[17] [18] actually show how these forced identities and the

related stigmas and stereotypes in this process do not fit into this society *at all*. Indeed, the

very act of fixing these identities is problematic, and this, too, is reflected in both films,

discussed in the following sections. As Katherine Pratt Ewing explains:

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[16] A term that is played with in *Lola und Bilidikid*, as Lola, Callipso, and Sherazat's drag
performance group is called *Die Gastarbeiterinnen*.

[17] An aspect of Turkish German films usually agreed upon by scholars, first positioned in Deniz
Göktürk's often-cited argument that there is a shift in Turkish German film from the "cinema of
duty" to the "pleasures of hybridity" in this time period (Göktürk 131; Berghahn, "Turkish-
German dialogues on screen" 6; Hake and Mennel 5).

[18] As Katherine Pratt Ewing also notes, it is an "implicitly normative conclusion that such
descendants of immigrants are likely to experience some form of identity confusion if they
cannot clearly identify themselves as either Turkish or German" (119).

Much of the time…we do not speak from specifiable identities. The apparently all-pervasive importance of identities stems from a global discursive shift in the late twentieth century away from a discourse of assimilation associated with the vision of the modern nation-state as the basic constituent of a global and political social order to a discourse of multiculturalism and the associated spatial juxtaposition of culturally diverse groups whose members defend their particular 'identities' and cultural practices in specific social contexts and a variety of political arenas (122).

Further, from a social sciences perspective, the very notion of identity is already complicated, before one even looks at the other players' roles in this identity formation. As Katherine Pratt Ewing explains, scholars "have begun to question the usefulness of 'identity' as an analytic category" altogether, as "it is now generally recognized that such identities are not primordial and essential" (118). And besides the mandated identity categories that are labeled unto members of society, many rightly argue, as already explained in this section, that identity is inherently fluid. This means that not only are the categories themselves often flawed and not representative, but one can also "be observed to project multiple, inconsistent self-representations that are context-dependent and may shift rapidly" (Pratt Ewing 121), in ways that are not always—indeed often not—based in conscious decisions.

Thus, the subsequent political and social structures produced through these processes and described in these anthropological studies actually *create* systems that emphasize discrimination and marginalization in the very *creation* of categories like 'illegal' and 'legal,' 'citizen' and 'non-citizen.' Indeed, these are categories, as anthropologist Nicholas De Genova argues, that do not exist naturally in the world, and are instead social constructs that the state uses to emphasize the wanted from the unwanted residents within a particular (and also often socially constructed) boundary. This discrimination and marginalization is perpetuated, on the social and political levels, through acts of visual stigmatization and stereotyping.

At the same time, "ideologically and bureaucratically imposed identities may or may not

be taken up as a subject position by the individual in a straightforward or predictable way"

(Pratt Ewing 119). This is the point, at which diasporic identities can become a perceived threat

to social structures, including hetero-normative family structures and the nation-state. We see

this play out on various levels in both films: in *Kleine Freiheit,* the characters with non-fixed

identities are a threat to the nation-state and ultimately sought out and presumably removed

from the country after the film's end and in *Lola und Bilidikid* the characters with clearly fluid

identities (as represented in the doubly-coded ethnic and drag markers) are a threat not only to

the nation-state, but also to society and the hetero-normative family.

Part of the issues discussed thus far stem from the fact that both citizens and states

often perceive migration flows as an economic threat to national stability, and the nation-state

responds by creating policies clearly rooted in the ideologies of the capitalist, industrialized

world (Düvell 26). This emphasis on neoliberal ideology necessarily leads to the evaluation of

what Eleonore Kofman calls the "human capital," or the "utility to the economy" offered by

each applicant, in order to differentiate between what she calls "wanted and unwanted"

migrants (Düvell 27, Kofman 6). This, in turn, produces a system that emphasizes politics of

difference, creating a system full of different rights, wages, legal statuses, and so on, all of

which are easily exploited by the society and the state (Düvell 28). This aspect of human capital,

whether or not explicitly acknowledged by the state, is certainly *used* by the state in

distinguishing between who is allowed in Germany and who is not, and these labels and laws,

distinctions between legal and illegal, are used to control the population. This, again,

encourages the acts of stereotyping and stigmatization as a means of visually identifying those who belong and those who do not belong.

It is this discourse of policy and structural injustices that lies at the center of these and other films dealing with migrant characters in Germany, shifting migration's economic logic from that of labor to issues of human capital and evaluation of human worth. Within this economic logic there are spaces of control (social and structural) that allow for the imprisonment (literally and figuratively) of certain populations. Interpreting these comments on Germany's structures of migration in *Kleine Freiheit* and *Lola und Bilidikid* reveals that each film is clearly political. The films not only criticize migration and asylum policies within the state, but also opens a larger dialogue regarding the reality behind the illegal labor acts of migrants, who are often perceived in policy and public discourse as dangerous and ultimately unwanted. In these ways, legal policies of migration in Germany allow for issues of marginalization, assimilation, and integration in migration policies, and they *create* the unjust systems and allow for discrimination and Othering of foreigners, who are perceived as 'abnormal.'

Further, because there are these inherent links between political structures and policies of migration, stigmatization, discrimination, the fixed categories of identity, and social responses to migrants, it is important to look at *all* of these aspects of political and social structures when addressing texts depicting the diasporic experience in Germany. Both *Kleine Freiheit* and *Lola und Bilidikid* address these issues and the relationship between them overtly, in the plot of the film, but also, as I show in a close reading of each film, on the filmic level. In the following chapters, I look at the ways that each film addresses or, indeed, subverts these real-world social and political processes. In the end, the films work to deconstruct the notion of

a hybrid migrant identity and plays with the fluidity of identity, which, as we will see in the films,

can ultimately have dangerous outcomes.

2. Yüksel Yavuz's *Kleine Freiheit*

Yüksel Yavuz's 2003 film *Kleine Freiheit* tells the story of the daily life of Baran, a Kurdish migrant originally from Southeastern Turkey, living in Hamburg. Because Baran lives in the country illegally, he also works illegally, making bicycle deliveries for a kebab shop and residing with his cousin. During the course of the film, he meets Chernor, an illegal immigrant from Africa, who also performs illegal labor in the form of small-time drug dealing. The two become friends and eventually develop a romantic relationship, and much of the film focuses on the daily lives of the two boys during an unspecified (but seemingly short) period of time. While the film predominantly focuses on these two characters, other characters, such as Baran's cousin Haydar, Haydar's friend, Baran and Haydar's boss, the boss' daughter Meryem, and Haydar's girlfriend Alma, also play sometimes small, but significant, roles in the plot. All of these secondary characters are also members of a diaspora community, and many are political refugees. Much of the plot, too, focuses on the political aspects of the sending countries, most notably in its presentation of the Turkish/Kurdish conflicts and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)'s role in this.

Themes of immigration, both legal and illegal, are consistently apparent throughout the film, as it is overtly discussed by many characters, who are living either illegally or legally within Germany. At the end of the film, while Baran and Chernor try to evade the police, Chernor is caught. Baran, who witnesses this happening, reacts by retrieving a gun that he previously disposed of and approaching the police with it. The police subdue him, and the film ends somewhat unresolved, with the two characters certainly in police custody, but with their ultimate fates undetermined.

Despite its rich political and social themes, this film did not receive much commercial or critical attention, especially when compared to other diasporic films released around this time (including another film by Yüksel Yavuz, *Aprilkinder*). *Kleine Freiheit* has been remarked upon for its use of amateur actors (Göktürk, "Yüksel Yavuz's *Kleine Freiheit*" 2); however, the film is especially unique, I argue, in its non-traditional cinematography. While most of the film is filmed using a professional camera, as one might likely expect, parts are filmed using a non-steady, personal handheld camera. These scenes shot with the handheld camera often produce subjectivity from the perspective of the person filming (usually Baran) and there are a few scenes, in which the prior footage stored on the handheld camera is shown, either directly on-screen or through the mediation of the professional camera filming the handheld camera. This unique cinematography becomes an important aspect of my interpretation of the various levels of borders depicted in this diasporic film.

In *Kleine Freiheit*, both Baran and Chernor are diasporic characters, which is readily apparent on the level of the plot, for example, as both boys overtly discuss their respective asylum applications. Baran is further characterized as transnational in his socio-cultural connections to his sending country, most obviously through the stored footage on his handheld camera and his code-switching, and Chernor in the fact that he admits a desire to only pass through Germany, not to settle permanently. In its plot, *Kleine Freiheit* overtly addresses that diasporic citizens present a danger to the state, which reflects the actual policies of migration, as discussed in the previous section of this thesis. In the end, to be between two countries or two definable categories adds to the characters' negative human capital, and thus negatively impacts their evaluation by the state, eventually requiring that these characters be removed.

Because Chernor and Baran are not granted asylum, as they comment upon in the film, they are illegal and both performing illegal labor. This illegality is a theme that is returned to repeatedly in the film, as the boys periodically hide from the police. Despite not having any agency in this decision, they are consistently visually identified, pursued, and ultimately punished by the state for this same (performance of) illegal identity. While, on the one hand, this could be read as a superficial comment upon the criminal behaviors of migrants, I would argue that plot is actually working to make a political comment regarding the inherent link between these structures, labeled identities, stigmatization, and the construction of illegality on the political and social levels. This link develops in the expectations that the characters perform an identity, based on the expectations that they will do so, and depicts the structural lack of alternative outcomes, at least while the characters remain in the German society.

Kleine Freiheit offers little explanation in the plot as to why these young men were denied asylum. Though both Baran and Chernor speak explicitly about the process of asylum and their illegal status in the country, the state, although introduced as the character of authority in the film, remains very abstract through this lack of discourse regarding specific policy and the lack of symbolic figures to stand in for the state (with one exception, explained below). In fact, the audience seems to be more aware of the political situations in the sending countries of Baran and Chernor than anything political happening in Germany; we actually see very little of Germany, with the plot taking place in a limited space in one city, and with the film following primarily non-German characters.

This allows the German state to remain the abstract villain of the film, and could urge the audience to identify with the protagonists in their lack of understanding of the immigration

process (since the audience, too, lacks an understanding of this process and must passively accept the identification categories created and imposed by the state). The only actors of the state's authority that the audience sees are the police officers, who eventually exert their power and arrest these main characters. This penultimate scene is filmed in a confusing montage of subjective shots with unsteady camera movements, objective shots, lack of focus, bodiless intra-diegetic voices, a gunshot, and, eventually, a cut back to Baran's handheld camera as he is detained (in a close up) on the cop car. Speaking from the level of the plot, this all culminates in an ambiguous ending, in which the *only* clarity is in the fact that the state has finally succeeded in labeling these men as unwanted migrants—and then succeeded in removing them, physically, from the state's domain (here, the streets of Hamburg).

With the real-life political structures discussed in the first section of this thesis in mind, specifically how the nation-state *needs* fixed categories for migrants (and populations, generally), in order to theoretically make it safer, the next reasonable step—that the identities need to somehow be visually marked or apparent—is therefore not logically very far removed from this practice. That is, because the state has a need to genderize, racialize, and ethnicize society (again, in a binary and fixed way that does not allow or account for outsiders of these categories, nor fluidity among them), the state also needs to believe that they can *see* who fits in—or does not fit in—to these categories. Here, I would argue that theories of visualization and dominant forms of seeing should be used to further interpret how looking, how one looks, and the socially-conditioned stigmas associated with certain populations can be used as a

further means of sublimation—or, in the case of *Kleine Freiheit* and *Lola und Bilidikid*, as a form of subversion.[19]

Stereotyping and stigmatization become important to society and the nation-state, whether or not this is officially acknowledged, because they are used as a means to label these fixed identities in a socially-coded and learned way. That is, members of a society learn and believe stereotypes, sometimes even subconsciously and often as a means of making sense of the world, which, again, relates back to the social, political, and legal categories of identity. At the root of belonging (or not belonging) is the structuralist idea that there exists an 'abnormal' counterpart to the 'normal' or 'average' majority population—and that you can *see* these visual indicators of exceptions or variations from the "modal or average" (Segal 235). As Rosemarie Garland-Thomson argues, this happens through a process of "rationalization" that has obviously links to bureaucratic structures and categories of identities (30). She explains that "rationalization abstracts and simplifies us through bureaucratic structures" but "does not actually reduce human variation; rather, it erases our particularities from the record of who we are and how we live" (Garland-Thomson 30).

Anthropologist and historian Daniel A. Segal further explains that it is not only a fiction to believe that you can *see* an "average" member of a group, but also that this leads to "visual

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[19] While other scholars, such as Germanists Sabine Hake and Barbara Mennel in their introduction to *Turkish German Cinema in the New Millennium: Sites Sounds, and Screens*, recognize the historical importance of stereotyping and stigma developing against guest workers in Germany since the post-war period and how this is reflected in film, they do not examine this political bias for the perpetuation of these stigmatizations, nor focus on the modern implications of these processes.

typifications,"[20] which indicates a perceived correlation between the visual and "knowable facts

about…identity" (233).[21] This also works to solidify the fiction that one is able to not only

identify a person through the way they look, but also know something about the identity of a

person. In this way, stereotyping and visual typification often leads to stigmatization, as a

person believes socially-embedded stereotypes and stigmatizes accordingly—and much of

these processes take place on the visual level, based on how an individual *looks* and the

(conscious or unconscious) perception that one can label and identify another person entirely

through a looking act.

Regarding stigmatization, sociologist Erving Goffman states that, "we lean on these

anticipations that we have, transforming them into normative expectations, into righteously

presented demands" (2). In this way, we do not *think* about these demands until a question

arises regarding whether or not the normative expectations will be fulfilled. Stigma thus

involves "a special discrepancy between *virtual* and *actual* identity" (Goffman 3, emphasis

added). Clearly, based on the sources regarding migrant identity discussed in the prior section,

this discrepancy between virtual and actual identity could become especially problematic in the

diasporic identity, as external social *and* political structures, in addition to personal affiliations,

are used in labeling binary, fixed, and often hetero-normative identities onto migrants. As

Erving Goffman defines it, "a stigma, then, is really a special kind of relationship between

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[20] Segal prefers this term to stereotype "in order to stress that I am concerned with taken-for-granted habits of through and perceptions more than with self-conscious 'opinions'" (236).

[21] As Segal continues to explain throughout his article, these typifications are often without basis and justified by a reality effect. In other words, he concludes: you *can't* tell a Jew when you see one.

attribute and stereotype" (Goffman 4). *Kleine Freiheit* plays with this relationship in its blatant

presentation of stereotypes, for example when Chernor asks Baran if his African hair is real (and

Haydar's friend later touches it), Chernor's roommates label Baran as white and are distrustful

of him, Baran tells Chernor that Turks in Istanbul are macho, Baran and Chernor comment that

all of the Germans in Hamburg wear captain hats and in this way pretend to be sailors, and

Chernor claims that all Kurds are crazy, to name just a few.

Further, from a sociological standpoint, stigmatization is not a static process that ends

on the level of the stigma. Instead, stigmatization is a social process that has very serious

implications, including discrimination, which can inform and uphold discriminatory practices in

the above-mentioned social, political, and institutional structures. As Erving Goffman explains:

> By definition, of course, we believe the person with a stigma is not quite human.
> On this assumption we exercise varieties of discrimination, through which we
> effectively, if often unthinkingly, reduce his life chances. We construct a stigma-
> theory, an ideology to explain his inferiority and account for the danger he
> represents, sometimes rationalizing an animosity based on other differences,
> such as those of social class (5).

Clearly, there is power in stigma on multiple levels, and it therefore remains an important

aspect of diasporic films, even when it is not overtly commented upon in the plot of the films.[22]

Stigmatization is also complicated in its two-fold definition, as defined by Erving

Goffman: discredited, meaning that the "the stigmatized individual assume his differentness is

known about already or is it evident on the spot" or discredited, that the individual assumes "it

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[22] Apart from the discrimination of others, stigmatization also has the potential to affect the
identity and feelings of self worth of the individual, as "the standards he has incorporated from
the wider society equip him to be intimately alive to what others see as his failing, inevitably
causing him, if only for moments, to agree that he does indeed fall short of what he really ought
to be (Goffman 7).

is neither known about by those present nor immediately perceivable by them" (4). *Kleine Freiheit* actually presents diasporic characters that are multiply stigmatized (and, as a result, multiply marginalized) on both the discredited and discreditable levels. This allows the discreditable stigmas of, for example, homosexuality and illegality to become discredited and stand in for the discredited stigma of minority ethnicity or race in majority white Germany, ultimately begging the question of whether—or when—the characters' discredited ethnic markers are even relevant aspects of the film. *Kleine Freiheit* (and also *Lola und Bilidikid*), after all, takes place in predominantly diasporic and seemingly non-German spaces and actually follows, at least in the forefront of the films, the social codes and rules of the migrant societies. Ultimately, then, the film juxtaposes these discredited and discreditable stigmas, in order to add another layer to its political reading, as the process of stigmatization is so closely linked to the social and national interests in categorizing and labeling.

Further, because stigmatization can lead to discrimination, there is often a linking in the political and public discourses between stigma (which one cannot control) and fears, which can create "culturally and ethnically oriented xenophobia" wherein "national identity is still closely connected to country-specific culture and ethnicity" (Rotte 362). Because stigmatization is often an inherently visual process, this allows for not only the nation-state, but also individuals within a society to believe that they can *see* the discredited differences, such as ethnicity, that mark an individual as 'abnormal' or not belonging in a society. This creates a power structure within societies that is both reflected and justified in political structures of labeled identity and the creation of categories such as 'legal' and 'illegal' and promotes racism and discrimination. Indeed, these issues of looking like you belong or do not belong (whether or not this is even

true, as is the case of many legal migrants or German-born citizens) in a majority white German

society and the power structures that dictate these forms of seeing are consistently addressed

in both plot and cinematography of *Kleine Freiheit* from the very beginning to the very end of

the film.

As already mentioned, particular stigmas are commented upon overtly throughout

Kleine Freiheit. However, there are also subtler instances of stigmatization, particularly those

involving race. The issue of race and ethnicity and the intersection of a discredited ethnic

stigma with the other forms of marginalization and stigmatization become apparent in a scene

near the end of the film, before Baran and Chernor are arrested: the police officers, as the

actors of the state, chase the two young men, after visually identifying them as 'not belonging.'

Here, one officer distinguishes between the "white" and the "black" boy, clearly highlighting

the difference in race, despite the fact that both characters are illegal in the eyes of the state

and being pursued for the same reason. In this way, Chernor's multiple marginalizations

includes his race, and places him slightly below Baran in the attendant hierarchy of illegality in

the film, a fact that is reiterated in the film when Chernor is the first to be placed in police

custody. The film therefore depicts *various* forms of marginalization and shows that the more

multiply marginalized a migrant, the more negative his human capital and unwanted-ness.

In *Kleine Freiheit*, I would argue, this marginalization is also uniquely performed in the

cinematography, through the subjective shots from Baran's perspective throughout the film.

This subjectivity is clearly demarcated by the use of a handheld camera, which highlights the

difference between the remainder of the professional film. Interestingly, *Kleine Freiheit* opens

in a distinctly non-German space, with a non-German character speaking in a foreign language.

The film begins and ends with footage of Baran's Kurdish family in their home country, which, we later realize, is footage that is located on Baran's camera, the device that is also producing his subjectivity in the film. More than just episodes of code switching, which are prevalent in many diaspora films, *Kleine Freiheit* consistently *visibly* shows the close link between the Kurdish village of Baran's youth and his host country of Germany.

The juxtaposition of the Kurdish footage on the handheld camera with the professional footage in Germany reflects that Baran is not seamlessly integrated, nor has he completely assimilated, into his host society, despite his fluency in the German language and his application for German political asylum. He therefore remains not only an illegal, but also a distinctly *marginal* member of the majority German society—and, although remarked upon in plot, this is reiterated on this filmic level. These themes of diaspora are also reflected in the plot, as Chernor expresses his desire to just pass through Germany, on his way to Australia, and likewise is not assimilated into this therefore only temporary host society.

In this way, the handheld camera, while producing subjectivity, also acts as a signifier of this particular marginalization. This becomes especially apparent and significant in the scene immediately before the police pursue Baran and Chernor. The audience sees, for several seconds, images of a pigeon, park bench, and Chernor, through the handheld camera. By this point, towards the end of the film, the audience easily recognizes this handheld camera footage as a subjective shot from Baran's perspective. When the police approach the young men, Baran immediately places the handheld camera into his pocket. Here, I would argue that Baran, in hiding his handheld camera from the police, is actually hiding his act of gazing (his *look*) from the authority figures of the dominant culture. Despite the film itself often using a diasporic gaze

through this very subjectivity (discussed below), this gaze is still presented, in this scene, as something that can be dangerous and not actually empowering. Baran is quite literally averting his gaze from the dominant culture, and in putting the camera away, the Western gaze of the classical cinematography again takes over the film.

I would argue here, too, that Baran is hiding this signifier of his marginality, his visible diasporic identity and non-Germanness, which clearly marks him as not belonging, from the actors of the state. However, as becomes quickly apparent and should be no surprise considering the Goffman's theories of stigmatization, Baran's discredited ethnic stigma is ultimately unable to be hidden. In this way, the camera, itself, could be read as a signifier of a discreditable stigma and Baran's actions visually show that the discrepancy between a stigma that is discredited and one that is discreditable; despite his best attempts, Baran is not able to 'pass' as a legal member of German society.

The fact that *Kleine Freiheit* not only opens in a non-Western space, but actually consistently throughout the film includes subjective shots from Baran's perspective (both through the handheld camera and professional camera), is both unique and significant: while many diasporic films thematize the migrant experience in Germany, the majority of the films are still depicted through a distinctly western gaze. *Kleine Freiheit,* on the other hand, is not only a film *about* diaspora, but also partly shown through a distinctly diasporic gaze. Further, the juxtaposition of the diasporic and western gazes in *Kleine Freiheit* are also compounded with the footage of the handheld camera, which works to link the sending country into the otherwise German narrative. Because all of these perspectives and spaces are cut together quickly and often without warning, the result is that the film blends and often completely

disregards or transgresses the stylistic, geographical, and temporal borders that are normally quite clear in classical cinematography.

In this way, too, the transnational anxieties depicted in *Kleine Freiheit* are not just the anxieties of the host country towards migration, as is often apparent in diaspora film, but anxieties of the migrant, himself. This is apparent on the filmic level in the frenetic subjective shots throughout the film, such as one scene in which Baran falls off his bike and another, when he rushes to confront the police at the end of the film. This latter scene is the longest scene shot from this subjective perspective and the scene almost creates a sense of motion sickness in the audience member because of the lack of auto-stabilization in the medium of handheld cameras (versus the incredibly stable professional cameras of classical cinematography). The audience, then, is encouraged to feel the same anxiety that Baran apparently feels in the plot and this anxiety is likewise visually reflected on-screen. That is, the western gaze in *Kleine Freiheit* actually implies a sense of danger and compounded in the sense of the western gaze is the sense that there is a constant threat of the illegal immigrant being *seen* and marked as not belonging—and this, too, is reflected in these filmic gazes.

Reading the film in terms of the real-life structures in Germany, this makes perfect sense: Baran and Chernor do not 'belong' in the country, from a strictly legal perspective, and therefore the threat of this recognition, which would thus have a negative outcome, is dangerous and ever present. Further, as I have already argued, when the state and society feels the need to categorize the citizens or social actors, they also need to believe that they even *can see* when someone does not belong, in order to perpetuate this fiction of stability and safety.

So, while it is important that the film, itself, shows the audience the diasporic

perspective, it is still complicating the whole looking process by commenting on the plot and

filmic levels that ultimately *being seen* can be dangerous. The acts of seeing and looking are

powerful and important aspects of knowledge-producing acts, especially with regards to

minority populations; but the act of being seen is dangerous—and the audience, significantly,

has access to both of these forms of seeing in this film. Following this line of thinking, then, the

streets, too, become dangerous, since this is where the diasporic characters are made most

visible. This is also significant, in light of many scholars' praise of modern Turkish German

cinema, in particular, as finding freedom on the streets and in urban spaces (Gallagher 180).[23]

The danger of the streets is especially apparent in the few instances in the film, in which

the camera utilizes shots that signify surveillance footage. In one especially telling shot, Chernor

asks Baran to come with him to ride a rollercoaster; he walks out of frame, but the camera does

not pan to follow him. When Chernor walks back into frame to ask Baran why he will not come,

Baran responds that has to work and Chernor leaves the frame again. In this scene, the

professional, classical cinematography is used. However, the film immediately cuts to an

overhead shot, perhaps from the top of a building, in which the camera follows Baran, who is

moving through city on his bicycle. The angle and style of this shot implies that Baran is being

watched and followed, as the camera is imperfectly and abruptly zooming in and out and

following his movements from a slightly overhead position that is clearly evocative of

surveillance images. Further, because the camera has to zoom in from such a far-away position,

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[23] Jessica Gallagher offers a less optimistic reading of the movement to the streets as a search for identity and a safe haven, but still does not comment on the potentially dangerous spaces that streets can become for diasporic characters.

the scene lacks the sense that it is from a professional camera for a cinematic film, as Baran is slightly out of focus and the movements of the camera are choppy and incredibly apparent. However, after this brief scene, the film immediately returns again to the professional, classical cinematography of the previous scene.

I would argue, here, that the film is presenting the danger of being watched—or, more accurately, of being *seen* and potentially identified as not belonging—to the audience. Instead of just telling the audience about this danger, as the film also does in the plot, it actually allows the audience to *participate* in this looking act, through this visual signifier of surveillance. It is in these few scenes that the danger of the Western gaze—a gaze that is often used in film and is generally seen as commonplace and unremarkable—actually becomes apparent to the audience member, who is likewise participating in the many and layered looks and gazes throughout the film.

Likewise, when the boys do go to the festival, there is another shot that is instantly out-of-place with the other cinematography: Chernor and Baran are in a photo booth, taking photos, and the entire scene is shot from behind the opposite side of the glass, presumably where the photo booth camera is located. Again, I would argue that this scene is implying a sense of surveillance—the fact that the boys are always running the risk of being seen when they are in public, especially in those few moments, like this one, where they apparently let their guards down. This, too, encourages that the audience consider what this looking act implies, in the broader terms of surveillance. That is, I would argue that these scenes, because they feel so out of place with the rest of the film, can leave the audience feeling somewhat uncomfortable with the entire act, and this discomfort is an important reaction in the viewing of the film.

To put it another way, the fact that Baran is under surveillance from a rooftop is not comforting and does not imply a sense of safety, as surveillance—especially on the level of the state—is theoretically supposed to. Similarly, in the photo booth, the audience could feel as though they are watching something they are not supposed to be watching. Here, the image does not overtly signify the classical images of surveillance, but still allows the audience to participate in a looking act that feels out-of-place and almost taboo. When thinking about the larger issues presented in the film regarding belonging and not belonging, looking and being looked at, I would argue that these scenes, on the filmic level and like the film's plot, are working to address these very issues: to *encourage* that the audience consider what it means to look and to be seen and, ultimately, why and how we give the state and society power in these looking acts.

Following this line of thinking, the ending of the film becomes doubly pessimistic, when one considers the implied outcomes of Baran and Chernor's capture. Not only are the young men almost certainly facing deportations, but, because the white German authority figures (the police officers and bureaucratic system) now have access to the physical camcorder and videotape, they also have access to this previously non-visible culture (since it is physically located on this camera) and Baran's distinctly diasporic gaze. In this way, the film shows the dominant culture gain control over, or at least put a stop to, the perpetuation of Baran's diasporic gaze. So, in the end, although there are positive aspects of the looking acts proffered through the diasporic gazes throughout the film, the Western gaze is nevertheless dominant and successful in suppressing the diasporic.

Also thematized in the film is the juxtaposition of mobility and immobility. As I've argued, the film often seems borderless, from a national perspective, in the juxtaposition of the images in the Kurdish village with the German settings. This German setting seems somewhat borderless in the fact that it is a Germany made of almost entirely non-ethnically German characters. Early in the film, after Baran has his tooth pulled in the kitchen of his work, the film cuts to subjective images of bicycle wheels overlaid with various images of different spaces in Germany—again, implying a sense of mobility, as it becomes clear that Baran is constantly navigating the city on his bicycle, making his deliveries. There is also an implied mobility in the character of the Captain, a homeless man, who brings Baran and Chernor together and, despite never actually leaving the park bench, tells stories of his travels to other, distant places.

However, as becomes apparent from early in the film, there is also distinct lack of mobility depicted and referenced in the plot, most obviously in the overt conversations regarding the characters' inability to leave the country. For example, Baran and Chernor discuss their migrant experiences and the places, to which they are trying to eventually travel, literally standing on the edges of the city of Hamburg. In this scene, as the boys discuss their current immobility, a ship actually travels out of the frame, visually juxtaposing the protagonists' landlocked and immobile status with the mobility of the ship. On the filmic level, though, I would argue that *Kleine Freiheit* transgresses the immobile borders in the very acts of linking the diasporic and western gazes, as well as the Kurdish village and Germany. However, this eventually fails, when the dominant culture catches the illegal immigrants and turns off—or shuts down—their gaze, by turning off the camera.

Thus, we can see throughout the film, reflected in plot *and* cinematography, a representation of the diasporic experience and the borders between minority and majority, belonging and not belonging, legality and illegality, in modern German culture. Further, in juxtaposing the Western with the diasporic gazes in the film, *Kleine Freiheit* seems to address the issue of the various regulations of looking, to borrow a term from Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (63). That is, while there is a cultural taboo against staring at those who appear different (in this case the diasporic characters in the white German landscape), *Kleine Freiheit* is potentially educational for the audience: it not only allows the audience to stare *at* these characters, which is already a knowledge producing act, but to actually stare *as* these characters, through the diasporic gaze. In this way, too, the film not only invites the looking *at* the diasporic gaze, but also, *through* the diasporic gaze, allowing the audience to participate in both sides of the staring act in a way that is normally not available to an audience in the standard reliance of a single filmic gaze.

While the positive aspects of these gazes are clear, especially reading in terms of Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's work in *Staring*, the ending of the film still remains negative: despite the acts of staring *at* and staring *as* in the film, in the end, the white German authority figure of the police officer still physically and metaphorically takes away the diasporic gaze from Baran, signified by his handheld camera, and literally turn it off. This final scene is particularly interesting, from a filmic perspective, because it is only one of two instances in which we see Baran filmed by the diasporic handheld camera (as opposed to the usual subjective filming

through the camera).[24] In this way, I would argue that *Kleine Freiheit* is doing more than just juxtaposing the gazes and is actually blending—or transgressing—the borders of the Western and diasporic, turning the diasporic gaze back onto itself. However, any positive reading of this transgression and the potentially subversive reactions to such an act are immediately contradicted in the shutting down of the gaze and the film's end with the footage from the Kurdish village, which also fades to black.

Finally, when reading *Kleine Freiheit* in connection with the interpretation of *Lola und Bilidkid*, in the next section, it becomes clear that both films utilize aspects of the Freudian *unheimlich* in their presentations of the modern German nation-state and both films' portrayal of diasporic *and* queer characters. The Freudian *unheimlich* lends itself well, I would argue, to a reading of the double-separation from home (the physical place and the heterosexual culture) in these films, presented by Berghahn ("Queering the family of nation"). That is, the films present the characters' search for *heimlich* spaces, from which the characters are doubly separate, to borrow Berghahn's term, and juxtapose the *unheimlich* with the *heimlich.* In the end, although aspects of queer spaces and diaspora are not the same, both "constitute a challenge to essentialist notions of the nation and nationalist ideologies" (Berghahn, "Queering the family of nation" 132), which is notable in each of these films. When the films are read together, I would argue, it becomes clear that the *unheimlich* is used to question the makeup of the modern nation-state and certainly challenges the nation and nationalist ideologies.

For example, because the characters in *Kleine Freiheit* are refugees and/or members of the diaspora community, the film's political message is ever-present, even when it is not being

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[24] In the scene, in which Baran is explaining the context and history of the camera to Alma, she takes the camera from him and films him, briefly, addressing his family.

commented upon. While not exactly discussing the themes of the *unheimlich*, Deniz Göktürk

aptly comments that in *Kleine Freiheit*, "Baran's place of origin is the absent presence in the film"

("Yüksel Yavuz's *Kleine Freiheit*" 2). On the level of the sub-plot, this already sets up the feeling

for the audience member that there is something there, lurking beneath the surface, that is at

the same time very significant and also completely unacknowledged.

Although this happens often with regard to the diasporic characters from the Kurdish

village and Turkey, it also happens elsewhere in the film. For example, this *unheimlich* space is

apparent when Alma is on the telephone with the employment placement service, describing

her experience in a hospital in her sending country. As she apparently tries to convince the

German service that she is over-qualified to serve as a waitress, she is pacing back-and-forth in

front of a poster of Sarajevo. All of this is apparent through Baran's handheld camera, as he is

sporadically filming his visit with her, which gives the sense that the dialogue is unscripted and

perhaps, like the poster, unimportant in the scene. This means that much of what the audience

knows about this woman, if one is paying close attention—that she, too, is a refugee from a

state at war—is portrayed on the sub-plot level. Alma's history never becomes a direct plot

point of the film and is not mentioned elsewhere. Even if a close reader of the film will pick up

on these cues, there is no payoff, in the sense that her past does not become relevant later in

the plot—it just *is*, and it just *is* in a distinctly back-grounded and almost separate way from the

majority of the plot, thus making it seem *unheimlich*.

As another example, a similar mood is portrayed in the plot regarding the political

situation in Turkey: although the audience is given more direct information regarding this (such

as the introduction of the man who acted as a traitor, which led to the death of Baran's family,

and the meeting of the political group in the kebab shop), it still does not seem to be the direct focus of the plot and is often happening in the background of scenes. At best, these events are subplots, clearly important to Baran and his family and continuously touched upon in various plot points of the film—but only that, touched upon. This touching-upon is what I find significant in this film since this, like in *Lola und Bilidikid*, works to create a sense of the *unheimlich* in each film.

In a much broader sense, I would argue that the politics of the sending countries of real-life migrants, then, become one aspect of the *unheimlich* in modern-day Germany. It is something that is definitely a part of the migrants' experience, but is not recognized as part of their history in the German society. Again, when relating this back to the first section, which explains in detail the state's need for categories and classifications, this idea of that which does *not* belong is indeed a threat—as we see more overtly portrayed in the horror genre of *Lola und Bilidikid*, discussed in the following chapter*.*

Kleine Freiheit, then, problematizes the relationship between stigmatization and ways of looking *beyond* the issues and limits already presented by scholars like Ervin Goffman and Rosemarie Garland-Thomson: through these *unheimlich* spaces, stigmas become even less reliable as sources of information, since in these spaces it is that which is *not* represented that carries meaning (and it is, additionally, a meaning that is suppressed). Thus, a gaze that relies on stigmatizations and stereotypes as a form of knowledge, as presented in several instances in the film and likewise present in real life, cannot actually identify another person, his or her history, or his or her identity. Ultimately, *Kleine Freiheit,* in juxtaposing the diasporic and Western gazes, the various forms of seeing and being seen, and these spaces of the *unheimlich*,

not only makes a political statement regarding diaspora and Germany, but also shows, on a

structural level, that a gaze that stereotypes is in and of itself *unheimlich.*

3. Kutluğ Ataman's *Lola und Bilidikid*

Kutluğ Ataman's 1999 film *Lola und Bilidikid* also depicts the lives of diasporic characters, although the legal citizenships of the characters is never overtly mentioned in the film, as it is focused on in *Kleine Freiheit*. *Lola und Bilidikid* begins with the protagonist Murat, a German Turkish teenager in Berlin, struggling with his sexual and diasporic identities. While there are several plot points to follow in this film, many of which often overlap, the center of the film focuses on Murat. Murat learns that he has an older brother (the titular Lola), who was banished from the family before Murat's birth by his father and older brother, Osman, due to Lola's homosexuality and after appearing one evening in a red wig. Murat, who is himself homosexual, seeks out Lola after he comes to the family's apartment, and, as a result, also runs away from home.

However, Lola is murdered on the same night that he and Murat officially meet, and Murat is taken in, in a way, by Lola's macho boyfriend Bili, his friend Iskender, and Lola's friends and co-members of the drag performance group *die Gastarbeiterinnen*, Calipso and Sherazat. After Lola is murdered, Bili convinces Murat that he knows who did it: three German teenagers who have been harassing Lola. Bili and Murat, dressing as Lola to trap the boys, set out to enact what Bili deems 'Lola's revenge' against the three German teenagers. Bili castrates one boy and murders another and the second youth also fatally wounds Bili. Only Murat and Rudy, Murat's friend and love interest in the beginning of the film, survive this fatal scene, allowing Murat to return home and confront his brother, who he has learned is Lola's actual murderer. In the end, Murat's mother, a mostly passive and silent character to this point, slaps Osman for murdering her other son and her and Murat leave the apartment together.

Many scholars have commented on the aspects of fluidity in gender and sexuality in the plot of the film,[25] with Christopher Clark boiling the film down to dealing overtly with "the intersection of ethnic and sexual identifies…set in the Turkish gay/drag subculture of Berlin" (554). Christopher Clark argues that Kutluğ Ataman's use of *Transe* themes throughout the film do actually work "to undermine a range of binaries, including male / female, Turkish / German, and tradition / modernity" (555). While my basic argument strongly agrees with Christopher Clark's conclusion of the film's subversion of binaries, I argue in this section that this is happening just as much on the filmic level as it is, as Clark argues, in the plot of the film.

To this end, I focus more in this chapter on the *other* borders represented, and often transgressed, in the film's genre and cinematography and read this against the transgressions happening in the plot. I look at the categories of identity, which, as I argued in the first sections of this thesis, the nation-state and society have a (perceived) interest in protecting, and question how the fluid identities and shifting categories fit, or do not fit, into these social and political structures. I question how these categorical borders are used to show the anxiety that the nation-state has towards migrants, in particular, and any non-binary/non-categorizable inhabitants, generally. This film, in particular, with its plotline of the white German aggressors against the Turkish and queer characters, is overtly significant in looking at the ways diaspora films address the question of the modern German nation. However, beyond these three white German youths, we again, similar to *Kleine Freiheit*, see a space that is predominantly non-ethnically German.

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[25] See, for example, Daniela Berghahn ("Queering the family of nation") and Christopher Clark

In order to address the border-work in the film, I look at the generic borders of the film, particularly the scenes that appear to belong to the horror genre, and are therefore somewhat outside of the typical boundaries of the film's otherwise dramatic genre.[26] Like the shots of the professional and handheld camera and the subjective and objective perspectives in *Kleine Freiheit*, *Lola und Bilidikid* also juxtaposes different stylistic aspects that do not fit seamlessly together, yet are nevertheless layered against each other throughout the film. Here, I look at theories regarding the horror genre and tie this back to the idea of transness and fluidity, broadly, in order to enrich these existing scholarly interpretations of the film.

To this end, and similar to my analysis of *Kleine Freiheit* in the previous section, I look not only at how the plot relays a subversive message in acting against fixed identities, but also how the film *itself* works to do these same things, in the juxtaposition and transgression of these borders in cinematography and genre. Genre, in particular, is significant as a basis of these borders: genre is often used to relay expectations to the audience through its patterns, forms, styles, and structures, which are related in films through "characters, setting, iconography, narrative and style" (Lacey 133-134). Thus, by juxtaposing two genres, namely drama and horror, that do not normally or logically fit together, and by cutting between them without warning, the film is actually setting up expectations that are unfilled or explicitly transgressed. This, I argue, reflects the same transgressions happening on the level of the plot.

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[26] Or melodrama, as Christopher Clark argues. Clark begins to interpret the juxtaposition of genres in his article cited for this paper, but he pays more attention to the larger genre of melodrama and its juxtaposition with comedy; he only mentions that there is an "American thriller" (562) genre to the film in the third to last scene, analyzed in this scene, but does not focus on this scene.

The two scenes, in particular, that I argue belong within the horror genre are the very

opening scene of the film and the penultimate scene, in which Bili, along with two of the

German teenagers, are killed. In the opening scene, the very first image that the audience sees

on the screen is the white letter "O," which, although quickly becoming part of the word "ZERO"

in the credits, lingers for a few seconds, very clearly against the black background. This already

creates anticipation, because the audience is unaware, to what this letter belong. Further this

particular letter—O—already hints at the horror genre through the visual connection between

this letter and a screaming mouth, which is iconographic of the horror genre.[27] Additionally, the

audience can hear thunder, which, especially in conjunction with the other horror markers

discussed below, is an audible iconographic sign of the horror genre.

As this scene continues with the white words of the opening credits against the black

background, the music, which begins very quietly, is also iconographic of the horror genre. The

music begins in the scene with plucky, low notes, performed by alternating stringed

instruments and a synthesizer, at a slow tempo in the minor second, which is a harmonic

interval range that is very often used in horror films to "create moods of…anxiety" (Cherry 70).

Further, the instrumentation of the music is another indicator of the genre, as "synthesizer-

based scores were becoming a much more noticeable feature of film music, and especially

horror film music" (Hutchings 143). These "musical cues" of the horror genre are used to

"enhance feelings of suspense, moments of shock or general feelings of unease" (Cherry 55).

Further, one can hear among this music the sound of footsteps in an outdoor setting (evident in

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[27] This particular letter-image can also have the sexual connotation of a penetrable hole, which
is a thematic idea for the remainder of this film as well as another motif of the horror genre,
which often has a blatant or implicit sexual component.

the sound of branches snapping and rocks shuffling), but there is an uncertainty regarding to whom the footsteps belong and where the person is going. This uncertainty continues to build tension and anxiety in the audience, while the credits are still rolling, which encourages the audience towards the proper emotional state for this opening horror scene.

Finally, the camera pans left to reveal that the black background was actually the black night, and the audience is barely able to see the gold image of the Siegessäule from a low angle shot. The fact that the scene takes place in the dark night is another convention of the horror genre, as it is among the "lighting codes" that include "darkness, shadows and obscurity" (Cherry 55). Again, an "O" remains on the screen, and eventually becomes part of the title "LOLA + BILIDIKID." The camera continues to pan left, so that the Siegessäule is now on the right of the screen, and the credits continue to roll, while the eerie music, thunder, and footsteps also remain audible. Finally, the camera moves away from the Siegessäule, as the music changes to include more stringed instruments playing in low, minor notes. The pacing of this opening scene, which is rather slow (since the audience still has not had any indication of characters or narrative), combined with these iconographic images, lighting, and sounds, further adds to the expectations of this genre, as the tension continues to increase.

In the next shot, we see the protagonist, Murat, walking, and it becomes clear that the footsteps heard during the opening credits belonged to him. The higher angle of this shot is just slightly above and to the right of Murat; it is not quite an overhead angle, and can be read as another marker of the genre, which often relies on off-kilter camera angles (Cherry 66). When the camera cuts to a close up shot of Murat's face the audience is able to see the expression on his shadowed visage, which is one of reluctance and, perhaps, fear.

Finally, another cut positions the audience behind Murat, this time with an eye level shot. Because he is now shot in a long shot, we are able to see his entire body and the surrounding setting, which are the dark woods that he is entering. The music continues and more thunder is heard, and, because the diegetic lighting of the streetlamps provides the lighting of the scene, the audience often has to strain to see what is happening, as Murat walks in and out of shadows. In this way, the anxiety is continually heightened, as the audience is drawn very close into the scene in order to interpret what is happening on screen. This anxiety is also increased by the slow pacing of the scene: it remains unclear throughout the scene where Murat is going and why. And while the audience becomes progressively more involved and strains to see what is happening on screen, there is a cut to another setting, one with loud music, brighter lighting, and dancers, which is at once disorienting and startling.

This club scene introduces the second genre within this super-genre film and very clearly juxtaposes the two genres in a confusing and strong way. It becomes clear that there is no warning or indication, outside of style and iconographic signs, when the shifts between genres will take place. This is reiterated when, after the club scene, there is an immediate cut back to Murat in the woods, and the distinctive music of the opening scene is re-introduced, which re-introduces the expectations of the horror genre.[28]

In the second half of this first horror scene, the audience is again drawn closely into the scene, since it is so dark and quiet, but the pacing of the scene is now faster, with shorter shots edited together. We receive a subjective shot from Murat's perspective, but it is difficult to see exactly what he sees and interpret its significance, since everything on screen is so dark and the

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[28] Music, in particular, aids in "the construction of formal and narrative unity…via repetition and variation of musical material and instrumentation" (Gorbman 73).

audience is still, at this point, quite unaware of the plot or broader setting of the scene. A long

shot of Murat crossing a bridge situates the setting still in the woods, and, for a moment,

distances the audience, which makes the next cut to a close up of a statue lion's head

(combined with the loud thunder and bright lightning) especially shocking.

The next shot is a medium close up of Murat, literally struggling with his hands and eyes

to navigate the woods, similar to the way that the audience is struggling to navigate what is

happening on screen. This, again, involves allows the audience to participate, emotionally, in

the fear and confusion happening in the scene. There is then a match cut to a close up of two

men kissing, which, similar to the close up of the lion's head, is combined with the crashing

sound and sight of lightening; a cut to Murat stumbling shows that he is just as startled by this

sight as the audience is by the cinematography. He is helped up by a man, but runs away, thus

ending this first horror sequence.

Murat's fear, as well as the film's opening with this genre, suggests on the filmic and

plot levels that homosexuality is something to be feared. This, I would argue, is already an early

indicator of the ways in which the film plays with or blatantly subverts audience members'

expectations: an audience member who knows anything about this film—even just having seen

its cover, which has two naked, male bodies in a bed—will likely not expect homosexuality to

be presented in these terms. Likewise, the horror or fear towards homosexuality portrayed in

this opening scene could also reflect the film's broader message regarding the western, White,

hetero-normative categories of belonging. In this way, the meaning of this first scene is two-

fold: it shows that homosexuality is horrific, and therefore does not belong in the 'normal'

construction of this space, and it, I would argue, also positions the film's gaze as distinctly

western, White, and hetero-normative.

The climactic, and perhaps most overt, scene belonging to the horror part of this film is

the scene, near to the end of the film, when Bili and Murat intend to punish the German boys

for murdering Lola. Again, this scene is immediately recognizable as belonging to the horror

genre, as the slow, string instruments are introduced at exactly the same time as Murat,

dressed as Lola, is seen by the German boys. As Murat is chased by one of the boys, they enter

what appears to be an abandoned warehouse, which, similar to Murat entering the dark woods,

could be read as another iconographic sign of this genre. Murat, representing the female in this

scene (he is literally dressed as the female and figuratively, as far as the audience knows, the

only character in this scene to have been penetrated),[29] continues to scream throughout the

scene, which is yet another marker of the genre. The camera, while utilizing a steadicam, is still

marked by movement throughout the scene, as if the cameraman is running to follow the

characters as they run through the setting. This, I would argue, encourages the audience to

further identify with the danger presented on-screen, as they are involved in this very visible

action and movement, and is thus used as a "mode of emotional affect," which is another

horror trope (Cherry 45).

The pacing of the scene is fast, since there are many shorter cuts edited together and

varying in distance and tightness, which is at times, like in the first scene, disorienting, and this

use of "rapid visual movements" and "claustrophobic framing" is another aesthetic indicator of

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[29] Murat is penetrated earlier in the film, in a scene taking place in the bathroom of the Olympic
Stadium, when he is orally penetrated by the German Rudy. Penetration is a marker of
femininity in the context of the film and Turkish culture.

horror cinema (Cherry 86). Additionally, the music continues to increase in volume and depth, layering the stringed instruments with the synthesizer, which important in horror climax scenes (Cherry 70).

Finally, when Murat escapes through the hole in the ground and Bili appears from the shadows, it suggests that perhaps some of the shots in this scene were subjective, from the perspective of Bili, who has been watching the action. Thus, in line with the horror genre, in which the subjective camera or "point-of-view shot" is often utilized "to suggest danger" (Cherry 55), it begins to become clear to the audience that the monster of this horror part of the film is, indeed, Bili, and not the German youths (whom they blame for the murder of Lola) or Osman (the actual murderer of Lola). As the scene continues, the shots are often in close ups or medium close ups, which forces the audience to remain very close to the violent and terrifying action of this castration.

After Bili returns from underground with blood on his shirt, implying that he has castrated his first victim, the shot/reverse shot between the Bili (the monster on the discursive level) and Rudy, as Bili attempts to stab him, coupled with the abundance of blood on Bili's otherwise stark-white shirt, is again indicative of the genre (Cherry 85). As Bili chases the third boy, the overhead camera perspective of the bloodied 'monster' climbing the stairs again involves the audience in the tense danger of the scene: because the camera is positioned at the top of the ladder, it is as if Bili is climbing towards the audience, as well as his victim. Finally, this scene is very clearly part of the genre in the shot, in which Bili runs towards the third boy, screaming, holding his knife, which is shot from the subjective perspective of the intended victim and causes Bili to appear to be running towards the audience. The match cuts between

his attack and the boy firing the gun, again edited at a very fast pace and indicative of the fast action, shows that both men have been wounded. The dying Bili is filmed in medium close-ups as he drags himself along the wall, and he finally opens the door to the outside and falls into the extra-diegetic sound of water.

Thus ends the horror part of the film, and the following scenes conclude the drama, with the resolution of the antagonist Osman. Now that I have argued the existence of these two distinct genres in the film, the question remains, then, why Kutluğ Ataman would use the conventions of this particular genre in an otherwise dramatic film. An obvious interpretation, and one briefly touched upon in the earlier analysis of the opening scene, is that the horror genre relates something terrifying and is meant to similarly evoke this emotion in the audience. Through the audience component of this relationship, the audience, whose experience with the film is tense and, if effective, fearful, can easily identify with the characters, who are facing dangerous and scary situations. In this way, in the opening scene, when Murat is entering the dark woods, I would argue that the audience is also meant to empathize with Murat and his experience as a young man exploring his sexuality (a point that is further encouraged through the close-ups of Murat's face). The woods, then, are symbolic of the unknown and Murat entering the woods could be read as his first step into exploring this. The portrayal of this symbolic idea through the generic lens of horror also encourages the sense that this exploration is a dangerous thing and, as is also reflected in the narrative of the film, can have fatal consequences.

However, I would argue that there is also a deeper significance in this juxtaposition and transgression of generic borders, relating back to the themes of identity presented in the first

sections of this thesis. In defining horror film, Stuart Kaminsky states that, "horror films are overwhelmingly concerned with the fear of death and the loss of identity in modern society" (101). Thus, implicit in the genre's definition is this component regarding identity, which is a very overt and significant theme throughout the narrative of the film. It makes sense, from a thematic standpoint, that this genre might be used to express these fears. When read through the interpretations of the first section of this thesis, *Lola und Bilidikid*, in playing with this idea of transness and transgression of borders on various levels, also clearly depicts how this transness can be dangerous for social structures. If you read the transness as standing in for the ethnicity or migratory status of the characters, or, indeed, as standing in for any notion of a fixed identity, the film clearly addresses the same issues brought about in the previous section regarding identity and the dangers of being labeled, belonging or not belonging— being 'normal' (that is, white European hetero-normative) or 'abnormal.'

Further, the fact that "modern horror often deals with particularly male fears about gender roles" (Lacey 235) and often deals with bisexuality (literally and generally) is another reason that Kutluğ Ataman could have chosen this particular genre as a juxtaposition to the drama part of the film, since the narrative of the film also addresses these issues (Jancovich 26). Bili, in particular, has explicit fears about these roles in the film's plot and literally tries to control them by urging Lola to undergo a sex change operation and, later, castrating one of the German boys. Bili's obsession with castration, then, and the climactic scene in which Bili actually castrates the boy, could address Bili's desire for, but lack of control over, the Other. On another level, Bili's obsession with having a female, as opposed to male, counterpart also reflects his role as the arbiter of hetero-normative, binary standards. In this way, Bili is very

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similar to Osman, who also sought to uphold these binaries and normative standards, and, taking this one step further, the very social and political structures that both *Lola und Bilidikid* and *Kleine Freiheit* are addressing.

As gender studies scholar Nael Bhanji remarks in his chapter in *Transgender Migrations*, one significant aspect in the intersection of identity of diasporic transgender citizens, in particular, is the double search for "home" and a return to such a state or place (158).[30] Here, Nael Bhanji focuses on the doubly-coded "homing desire" experienced by transnational and transgendered citizens, which is clearly and overtly thematized throughout *Lola und Bilidikid*. What I find more interesting and what scholars have tended to overlook in this film is, again, the issues of borders beyond the plot. That is, how *Lola und Bilidikid* negotiates and transgresses borders on the filmic level, addresses these very notions of "homing desires" in another doubly-coded way: in the narration *and* in the cinematography.

Nael Bhanji describes his own experience, as a "trans-identified person of color living in diaspora," as a particularly "haunted" experience. That is to say: "If home is where the heart is, then, some of us are actually out of place. And if to 'haunt' is to frequent a place habitually, then home, in a sense, is always already haunted" (Bhanji 159). Here, Bhanji's argument lends itself especially well to not only the characters of *Lola und Bilidikid*, but also the cinematography of the film, which at times—and seemingly entirely out of place—makes the film itself seems somewhat *haunted.*

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[30] Although Nael Bhanji is also clear to point out the limitations in such a comparison, as the "trans" person, then, is evaluated in an Anglo-American discourse on both levels (158)

This haunting, I would argue, is developed precisely in the film's use of these signifiers of the horror genre which, from the very onset of the film, juxtaposes a traditional drama with these odd scenes, throughout, that appear to be out-of-place and, in a very strange sense, haunted. Both the out-of-placedness and the hauntedness become important, when following Nael Bhanji's argument and reading it against other theories regarding the horror genre and gender and sexuality: the characters, who are doubly misplaced in their diasporic identity in German society and their non-binary and/or non-hetero-normative gender and sexual identities are reflected in a film that is *itself* periodically out-of-place in its strange juxtaposition of these seemingly unrelated genres. The film pushes against the drama genre, and at times actually transgresses the generic borders.

Here, again, Nael Bhanji's' own elaboration also serves this argument well: "haunted" is not used to mean supernatural, but rather a sense of the *unheimlich* (159), a term borrowed from Sigmund Freud describing something uncanny, familiar-yet-strange, and often taboo. If one were to make a strictly Freudian interpretation of the film, which is not my intention in this thesis, aspects of the *heimlich* and *unheimlich* are fairly obvious on the level of the plot, as also discussed in *Kleine Freiheit*. I am much more interested, instead, in the depiction of these aspects on the filmic level, in its use of these horror genre scenes, and, to bring it back again to Nael Bhanji, in how the film is using these aspects of the *unheimlich* and the search for the *heimlich* to, at the same time, address that which is homely and that, which is "hidden, concealed, or shameful" (159-160). This ultimately makes "'home'…a location of dislocation and desire" (159-160).

The fact that the film both begins and nearly ends with the horror genre is especially

puzzling, as it sets up the expectation from the very opening of the film, and seems to book-end

this expectation at its closing. That is, the audience, from the first moments of the film, expects

the film to belong to the horror genre and, when the film ends up not belonging to this genre, is

again reminded at the end of the film of the horror aspects presented in the beginning. Here,

too, I would argue that Hutchings' work on the horror genre is particularly useful for an

interpretation, as she writes that one way of "thinking about the monster often draws upon the

anthropological work of Mary Douglas" (35). In her work, Douglas adapted a structuralist

approach to anthropology, arguing, "that societies develop a meaningful social order through

imposing classificatory systems." This structuralist perspective is especially significant in light of

the narrative of this film, because the binary categories of structuralism do not allow for the

possibility of fluidity in categories, a point against which the transgender characters of the film

clearly argue and, as I've argued more broadly throughout this thesis, a system that the nation-

state and society, at large, rigidly attempt to enforce and protect.

From this structuralist perspective, a monster "is a kind of pollutant; it embodies a

crossing of borders and a transgressive mixing of categories." In this way, it could be argued,

the monsters of the horror parts of this film are actually the protagonists of the drama: namely,

those characters, such as Lola, Calipso, and Sherazat, who constantly transgress the borders

and mix the categories. Ironically, then, the film *itself* could be interpreted in this way, in its

crossing of the traditional limits of a film in the dramatic genre and the mixing-in of those

signifiers of the horror genre, throughout. Adding to the irony is the fact that Bili, because he is

the character *desiring* the stable and rigid categories, is presented as the representative of the

cultural, binary 'norm'—yet he is ultimately not a likeable character, urging Lola (and threatening him, in some instances) to undergo a sex change operation despite his wishes otherwise, and, in the end, castrating one and murdering two of the white German characters. Likewise, Osman, who is the actual murderer of Lola, is also a closeted homosexual—and thus he, too, is both the villain of the film and a representation of these very aspects of crossing borders, in his non-hetero-normative gender identity and his position as a diasporic character.

Taking this interpretation one step further, then, the film works to problematize this structuralist interpretation, and, in juxtaposing these two genres and presenting these two villainous characters as also homosexual, the film adds layers to the subversive acts that the characters are performing in its narrative. *Lola und Bilidikid*, itself, works to deconstruct the idea that the categories of masculine/feminine, homosexual/heterosexual, and, indeed, normal/abnormal, which I have examined throughout this thesis, are valid and stable binaries, to which a person must entirely belong and from which s/he cannot deviate.

Bili does not attempt to disturb system and order; on the contrary, he desires so strongly to make permanent these systems in his life, that he pressures Lola to be castrated in order to be a 'true' female counterpart to his own male category, despite the fact that he is, from a German cultural perspective, homosexual *and* an ethnic minority—and therefore already (or still) an outsider. Thus, I would argue, the film is commenting through these generic conventions, as well as the narrative, that this *order* and these *categories*, which the villainous characters—and the nation-state and social structures, broadly—desire to maintain are *actually* that which is unnatural or 'scary.'

Conclusion

In the end, both films ultimately address what the new German nation state looks like. In order to do this, the films distinctly address what the new German nation state does *not* (or should not) look like: those members that do not fit into modern German society. Here, Freud's theory of the *unheimlich* is especially important in interpreting the films. *Kleine Freiheit* uses *unheimlich* spaces to show that the diasporic characters are not blank slates when they enter the country: they bring with them past—or present—social and political structures, which potentially do not fit into Germany's understanding of itself and therefore are suppressed. This is apparent, in the filmic level, in the creation of the *unheimlich* feeling through the uncommented or under-commented upon political situations—often based in violence—of the diasporic characters, which are continually lurking in the background of the film (literally, as in the example of the Sarajevo poster) or on the filmic level. Similarly, *Lola und Bilidikid* creates and projects spaces of the *unheimlich* in both the plot and the filmic levels in its use of the horror genre.

From a visual perspective, I would argue that *Lola und Bilidikid* not only *shows* the issues of borders in diasporic narratives, reflecting the abundant spaces of transgressions and subversive behaviors in the plot of the film, but also uses the horror genre to show that fixed identities and borders are, indeed, scary and dangerous. Likewise, *Kleine Freiheit*, in its constant juxtaposition of gazes and its actual transgression against classical cinematography, works on the filmic level to address and transgress commonly accepted views of borders on the filmic level. In this way, *Kleine Freiheit*'s pessimistic ending could be read as another form of subversion: the film does not posit a Germany, in which there is a solution or end to the issues

addressed in the diasporic films. The films critique the process of determining who belongs and who does not belong, which is significant, since much of this is codified in actual German law and perpetuated in social structures, as discussed in detail in the first section of this thesis. While *Kleine Freiheit* invites staring at those minority individuals that we might not normally associate with the modern makeup of German society, it also problematizes the staring act in the juxtaposition of the western and diasporic gazes and the eventual shutting down of the diasporic gaze, altogether. Both films show the limits and question the fixed categories of identity, which are a part of social and political structures in Germany.

The interdisciplinary approach to diasporic films introduced in the first section of this thesis is important when interpreting films that are addressing real-life structures and situations, in order to take into account the messages happening on many levels in the film. For this reason, I would argue that the close readings of *Kleine Freiheit* and *Lola und Bilidikid* through this theoretical framework act case studies of the application of this intersectional approach. Likewise, this combination of theories could be useful in studying other diasporic films and is not limited to those films made in the German language. Using theory from the social sciences, in particular, yields new modes of interpretation for modern texts in a discipline that is important not only on a scholarly level, but also, clearly, on cultural and political levels.

Considering these aspects of fixed borders on the structural and personal levels, which are reflected in each film on the filmic level, I would argue broadly that the films *Kleine Freiheit* and *Lola und Bilidikid* work to problematize the fictions not only of enforceable borders and boundaries of the nation-state and personal identity, but also the fiction that immigration reforms work to improve the aspects of migration often criticized by activists and scholars. That

is, although the films were made before the migration reforms of 2004, I would argue that the reforms might make the situations ultimately critiqued in these films even worse, through its labeled, fixed identities imposed on migrants in Germany after 2004. Thus, instead of achieving more fluidity, as the films address on the plot and filmic levels, migrants in Germany are actually subjected to even more labeling efforts by the state.

For example, the state separates the migrant groups into five sub-categories: ethnic Germans, foreigners from EU member states, non-EU foreigners, asylum seekers and refugees, and family members (Rotte 365), and whichever group one falls into, dictates the legal and administrative aspects of migration, as well as the human capital of the individual migrant. Therefore, I would argue that a review of later films made by or about migrants should be studied from these same perspectives, potentially revealing a rejection of the 'hybrid' buzzword, in favor of a political reading involving imprisonment, stigmatization, discrimination, and evidence of fluid identities on both the content and filmic levels.

As anthropologist Karin Hamm-Ehsani explains, "living in German society as a 'foreigner' (*or just looking like one*) is reason enough for being branded an unwelcome 'other'" (369, emphasis added). In this observation, the aspects of discredited versus discreditable stigmas become incredibly significant, as *looking* like a 'foreigner' allows for discrimination; this discrimination against foreigners and their German descendants not only allows for discrimination in national policies, but also discrimination in a very real sense, in violent acts against foreigners due to "aggressive nationalism" (Rotte 363). For these reasons, political scientist Ralph Rotte and others have concluded that the policies for international migration need to be broader, but that the country will never be able to restrict immigration (for

economic reasons) as much as the public would like (Rotte 362; Süssmuth 1). The fact that

Kleine Freiheit and *Lola und Bilidikid* address these types of social and political issues with

incredibly significant real-world consequences, then, encourages this bridging of theories from

the social science and humanities, in order to better interpret these political comments in any

diaspora film.

Thus, although stigmatization is a social process, I have argued that the complex system

of immigration and asylum seeking, especially in the period that these films were created,

before the immigration reforms of 2004, creates obvious spaces for the perpetuation—and,

actually, the encouragement—of stigmatization. Or, put another way, the labeling efforts of the

society and nation-state intersects with the stigmatization process in encouraging members of

a society to identify, usually visually and based on learned stereotypes and stigmas, those who

do not belong.

Diaspora films like *Kleine Freiheit* and *Lola und Bilidikid* help to answer the very

questions that Deniz Göktürk argues they present regarding home, as stated in the beginning of

this thesis. The films work to problematize the very notions of home in the presentation on the

level of the plot and cinematography of the *unheimlich*. In this way, the diasporic characters of

Kleine Freiheit and *Lola und Bilidkid*, on many levels, seem to also want to answer the question

"where is home?"—with varying degrees of success. Through the *unheimlich*, the films seem to

further speak to Nael Bhanji's assertion that "home" is actually "a location of dislocation and

desire" (Bhanji 159-160). Home has little to do with the bridges, hybridity, or integration

commented upon in existing scholarly discourses of German texts depicting migrant characters.

Home is un-homely, separate, taboo, and abnormal. The films reflect the fact that the diasporic

characters, despite longing for a home, are ultimately not at home in Germany. The films, then,

make a larger political comment on the modern German nation-state, since they also, as I

argued in section one, reflect modern political and social structures and the various

institutionalized and everyday processes, such as stigmatization, involved in these structures.

"And where are German (and global) spectators positioned in relation to immigrant spaces and

networks?" (Göktürk:2004 1-2). Despite the few "ethnic German" characters in each film, the

films still suggest, I would argue, that the German—and indeed global—spectators are still at

the center of the immigrant spaces and networks, ultimately dictating in policy and social

practice who belongs in each homeland—for better or, as the films seem to posit, for worse.

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