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## ARTICLE – RETHINKING MINOR LITERATURES

# Relational Subjectivity: Sasha Marianna Salzmann's Novel *Außer Sich*

Annette Buehler-Dietrich

University of Stuttgart, DE

[annette.buehler-dietrich@ilw.uni-stuttgart.de](mailto:annette.buehler-dietrich@ilw.uni-stuttgart.de)

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Sasha Marianna Salzmann's debut novel, published in 2017, covers the experience of antisemitism, migration, queerness and political struggle during a 100-year time span. Its structure is anything but straightforward and features homo- as well as heterodiegetic narrators. Structurally, the novel can be related to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, with its analysis of the logic of Kafka's writings. Rosi Braidotti's work on nomadic ethics and on the posthuman supplements the framework given by Deleuze and Guattari. Drawing on these writings, my analysis foregrounds the concept of the relational subject as developed in the novel as well as the link between its narrative structure and the exploration of time and anxiety. Taking into consideration its opening James Baldwin citation, I relate these issues to the novel's of multidirectional memory of oppression.

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**Tweetable abstract:** This article explores how Sasha Marianna Salzmann connects queer subjectivity, multidirectional memory, time and narrative structure.

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### 1. Introduction

In 2017, Sasha Marianna Salzmann, a renowned German playwright, published her first novel *Außer Sich* [Beside Oneself]. Salzmann was born in the Soviet Union and migrated to Germany with her family in the 1990s. Salzmann's family is Jewish and she herself claims her Jewishness. The author also describes herself as a queer, non-binary subject. In a recent essay entitled "Sichtbar" [Visible], she says: "Ich gehöre gleich mehreren Minderheiten an; das kaschieren zu wollen, birgt für mich größere Gefahren, als meine Positionen zu benennen" [I belong to several minorities; to hide this involves greater risks than to name my positions] (13). Her subject positions – German-Russian, Jewish, queer, non-binary – construct a web of relations to other subjects, defying the exclusionary binaries society tries to impose on her. In a striking example, she tells of how a newspaper wanted her to write about possible anxieties she might feel towards Muslim men as a queer Jewish woman. Instead, in her essay, she shows how different religions and sexualities need pose no obstacle to living together, how bonds can be forged across differing origins, religions and sexualities. Nevertheless, Salzmann is clearly aware of and points to current tendencies of homophobia, islamophobia

and antisemitism, even if she chooses not to foreground the latter in her essay. That antisemitism still impinges on Jewish lives in Germany was recently discussed in an extensive *New York Times* article (Angelos).

Salzmann's essay chimes well with the discussion of contested subject positions in *Außer Sich*. Highly acclaimed from the start and shortlisted for the Deutscher Buchpreis 2017, the novel has already provoked several conference papers and dissertation chapters, demonstrating that its topics are at the heart of current critical discourse. *Außer Sich* combines elements of the transgenerational and transnational novel with a discussion of queer subjectivity, racism and politics from a highly contemporary perspective, being situated for its main plot in a timespan between 2013 and 2016, thus right during the writing process of the novel. The achronic plot, together with its mix of heterodiegetic and homodiegetic narrators, indicates that coherence and sovereignty are not the purpose of this book. Its multilingualism and the considerable quantity of references to Russian literature, history and popular culture show that it partakes in several universes at the same time. The protagonist's family history, encompassing four generations and more than 100 years of Russian-Jewish history, is being reconstructed in the course of the novel, yet the protagonist herself undergoes a series of deconstructions, defying fixed subject positions. The title, *Außer Sich*, is as much a diagnosis as it is a programme or project. In German, to be "außer sich" means that one is upset or overjoyed and might therefore lose control. It is an extraordinary, but not a pathological emotional state. To be "außer sich" for an entire novel, however, raises the question of what kind of "sich" this "außer" creates, what a subject is like who defines itself by being outside of its very self.<sup>1</sup>

In the following I will examine how this novel conceives of subjectivity and how it relates subjectivity to other parameters such as time and history. Starting points for my reflections will be, in harmony with the idea of this special issue, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's *Kafka: Pour une littérature mineure* [Toward a Minor Literature],<sup>2</sup> as well as Rosi Braidotti's *The Posthuman*, in which she conceives of relational subjectivity in a posthumanist and post-anthropocentric frame.

Deleuze and Guattari's brilliant reading of Kafka allows me to highlight specific features of Salzmann's novel and bring them into relation with each other, notably its narrative construction, the use of affect and the question of narrative order and time. In *Kafka*, the two philosophers analyse the coherence of Kafka's oeuvre across his different genres and work out the connections between them. Untying Kafka from hermeneutic readings, their semiological approach allows one to think about the dynamics of Kafka's writing or, in their terminology, the writing machine. Instead of focusing on the often-quoted chapter "Qu'est-ce qu'une littérature mineure?" [What is a Minor Literature?] with its analysis of language, politics and collectivity, I will draw on their structural observations concerning Kafka's choice of specific genres. They bring together questions of anxiety and hope ("Immanence et désir" [Immanence and Desire]), analyse forms of a narrative deterritorialising of the subject by way of letters, animal stories and the assemblages ("agencements") of the novel ("Les composantes de l'expression" [The components of expression]) and discuss narrative structure and architecture ("Blocs, séries, intensités" [Blocks, Series, Intensities]). In Deleuze and Guattari's reading, Kafka constructs a non-Oedipal, deterritorial and in itself political writing machine, an agencying which remains 'minor' and transgresses the unifying structures of a major literature. Their description of a 'minor' literature – "la déterritorialisation de la langue, le branchement

<sup>1</sup> See also the article "Ec-static Existences" by Maria Roca Lizarazu in this special edition.

<sup>2</sup> This is the title of the English translation by Dana Polan. Note that the French preposition 'pour' means 'for'; Deleuze and Guattari's book is also taking a stance for a minor literature. All translations in the following are my own.

de l'individuel sur l'immédiat-politique, l'agencement collectif d'énonciation" [the deterritorialisation of language, the connection of the individual with the immediately political, the collective agency-ing of enunciation] (33) – articulated in their famous third chapter, remains valid throughout the Kafka essay.<sup>3</sup> All of the structural phenomena whose logic they spell out testify to his literature being 'minor'.

Deleuze and Guattari's interrogation of social, sexual and literary structures relates to ideas on subjectivity, posthumanism, gender and time as articulated by thinkers such as Rosi Braidotti, who, in the wake of Deleuze and Guattari, consider the human subject in an anti-humanist way, stressing an ethics of non-anthropocentric relationality and conceiving of time as non-linear. A critique of the notion of linear, 'straight', time has been as much part of Queer Studies as the awareness of biotechnological interfaces which constitute the posthuman. References to Deleuze and Guattari's writings abound and seem especially fruitful concerning questions of the transgender (cf. *Preciado, Testo Junkie*). In the frame of *Außer Sich*, the links between the politics and aesthetics of a 'minor literature', posthumanism and Queer Studies follow the logic that the novel itself purports.

Reading Salzmann with Deleuze and Guattari allows me to address the assemblage that the novel creates. This assemblage is political in the sense that a minor literature is always political. Yet, beginning the novel with a citation by the African American writer and activist James Baldwin, Salzmann makes a specific intervention which I will connect to other political instances in the text.

In the beginning, my thinking about *Außer Sich* revolved around the scenes of storytelling and the necessity of stories in Salzmann's novel. Discussing embodied human being, Hannah Arendt and Adriana Cavarero conceive of storytelling as an existential human activity which opens up the subject towards the other. Narrating and relating thus fit with the ideas put forward in Braidotti's "Nomadic Ethics", without Braidotti sharing Arendt's humanistic core. In contrast to Judith Butler, who also draws on Cavarero (cf. Butler 30–40), Braidotti's nomadic ethics stress relationality over and above vulnerability:

Openness to others is an expression of the nomadic relational structure of the subject and a precondition for the creation of ethical bonds. The emphasis therefore falls not so much on vulnerability as on the immanent structure of a subject – an entity, or a body's – capacity to affect and be affected – in pleasure as in pain – and to express multiple forms of intensity. (Braidotti, "Nomadic Ethics" 174)

Deleuze and Guattari's reading of Kafka thus prefigures what Braidotti claims for their ethics as a whole: "They replace it [the traditional notion of the transcendent nature of power] with a flat ontology of immanent relations of mutual constitution through a transversal, collective rhizomatic web of relations" ("Nomadic Ethics" 174). It is this "rhizomatic web of relations" that I will now trace in my article.

## 2. Ali

Ali, the short, gender-neutral name the protagonist of *Außer Sich* uses instead of her given name, Alissa, is a young German-Russian woman, who is Jewish and queer. She has a male twin, Anton, who has disappeared after an incestuous encounter between them. Since Anton's last trace leads to Istanbul, Ali travels there to look for him. Yet this search is of

<sup>3</sup> Erin Manning comments on the translation of 'agencement': "This is a word that is impossible to translate. The best that anyone's come up with is 'assemblage', but that's misleading. *Agencement* connotes a doing doing itself. You have to understand the event itself as agency-ing" (Manning in Massumi 157). I therefore translate 'agencement' as agency-ing in the following.

minor importance for the plot, since Ali really only makes an effort at the beginning and then retreats to waiting:

Und was habe ich getan, als ich gedacht habe, er ruft mich? Ich bekam diesen Wink, ich missdeutete die Zeichen und zögerte, tippelte vorsichtig [...] legte mich auf ein Sofa, das mich auffressen sollte, bewegte mich kaum und wartete, denn was ist Warten sonst als eine Hoffnung.

[And what have I done, when I thought he was calling me? I got this hint, I misread the signs, and hesitated, tiptoeing carefully (...) I laid down on a sofa which was going to devour me, hardly moved and waited, for what else is waiting than some hope.] (AS 275)<sup>4</sup>

Although the reader learns of Anton's whereabouts in the second part of the novel, when he figures as a homodiegetic narrator for three chapters, there is no reunion of Ali and Anton. Instead, Ali decides to recreate her brother in her own body, injecting testosterone, and thus becomes Ali-Anton. Even though she asks her avuncular friend Cemal, who provides refuge in Turkey, to call her by the name Anton, she clearly does not actually become Anton but a third, non-binary person. "Ich sah Ali, der jetzt, plötzlich, als er seiner Mutter gegenüber saß, auch Alissa hätte sein können. Das machte die gewohnte Umgebung, er schwankte zwischen den Zeiten, zwischen den Körpern, er war leer" [I saw Ali who, now, sitting opposite his mother, could have been Alissa. It was because of the habitual surroundings, he swayed between times, between bodies, he was empty] (AS 272f.). Even after the request to be called Anton, the narrator keeps on calling herself Ali.

In this passage, in a magical realist moment that will not be explained any further, Ali slips out of her body to witness from above the conversation between herself and her mother. The observation that it is the surroundings, the maternal bedroom and Ali sitting opposite her mother, which, in spite of the character's beard and manlier stature, recall Alissa, shows how this subject, "in between" and "empty", is defined by the web of relations it is part of.

Ali can be in between times and bodies because she refuses to be stuck in a specifically gendered subject position. In the novel, both pronouns she and he are used for Ali: she before she uses testosterone, and he after her physical shape has become manlier due to the hormones. Yet both pronouns are more or less inadequate, since Ali has always been defining herself as both female and male; even before Istanbul she tucks her breasts away, wears men's clothes and loved to swap clothes with Anton as a child. Her use of testosterone makes more than obvious what Preciado calls the "pharmacopornographic" era, when gender and sexuality are controlled by the intake of hormones and when reproduction no longer determines gender binaries (see *Testo Junkie* and "Gender Address"). Ali's in-betweenness, however, has been part of her life all along.<sup>5</sup>

It is worth noting that Ali's fluidity is not an issue for the people she encounters. Although, at the beginning of the novel, she thinks that the Turkish customs officers are confused about the difference between her passport image and her real looks, in fact they are not concerned about this at all. They only wonder what she will do with her body once in Turkey, since it is her family and first name that qualify her as a Russian female. This makes her suspect of

<sup>4</sup> I will cite Salzmann's novel as AS. All translations from the German are my own.

<sup>5</sup> The language with its oppositional structure of male and female is not fit yet to capture this reality. In order to avoid confusion, I will stick with the pronoun 'she', stretching it to include Ali's newly acquired masculine body. The transgender option of using the pronoun 'they' seems to me too confusing in a research paper. Technically, we would need to find a new fourth pronoun and thus change language.

prostitution (AS 15f.). Neither her grandparents nor her great-grandparents and not even her mother wonder about or contest her new physique and voice once she has started to take testosterone. Her mother is more concerned about her child's safety in Turkey than about any changes in Ali's voice. Yet Ali's fluid subjectivity is coupled with certain narrative strategies which can also be read in the register of the posthuman. On the posthuman subject, Rosi Braidotti writes:

The idea of subjectivity as an assemblage that includes non-human agents has a number of consequences. Firstly, it implies that subjectivity is not the exclusive prerogative of *anthropos*; secondly, that it is not linked to transcendental reason; thirdly, that it is unhinged from the dialectics of recognition; and lastly, that it is based on the immanence of relations. (*Posthuman* 82)

These relations, maintained on an interpersonal level and uncoupled from traditional narrative order, are at the heart of the novel.

### 3. The Need to Tell a Story

*Außer Sich's* affirmation of a non-binary lifestyle, shared by Anton and Ali as children and adults, is juxtaposed with the need to anchor the subject somewhere, in this case the family history. Yet this history is one of movement, migration and antisemitism; there is no anchor unless it is being found in the very act of telling a story and listening to it. Originating from Odessa, the great-grandparents settle in Czernowitz after the Second World War. During the war, Ali's maternal grandfather flees to Almaty as a child. Later, he needs to study in Grosny, Chechnya, because Moscow will not accept Jewish students. In Czernowitz he meets Emma, Ali's grandmother, whom he marries. Together, they move to Wolgograd, where Valja, Ali's mother, is born. After a failed marriage, the latter moves to Moscow and marries Kostja. Although antisemitism has been a constant in their lives, it is only Valja who decides to leave the Soviet Union for Germany, seeking immigration as a Jewish 'Kontingentflüchtling'. With this genealogy, Salzmann covers the entire history of the Soviet Union and its impact on the Jewish population. Yet, although Ali's great-grandfather witnesses the German invasion of Romanian-occupied Balta on 22 July 1941, one of the very few precise dates in the novel, and although Etja and Schura move to Czernowitz after the war, the novel speaks neither of the Jewish ghettos, the Transnistria camps nor the rich Jewish life in Czernowitz before the war (see Hirsch and Spitzer). It is only Schura's boldness to address Etja in Yiddish, at the university, before they get married, that shows there was indeed a specifically Jewish way of life. In all other instances, it is the restrictions and discrimination faced by the Russian Jewish population that mark Salzmann's novel.

In *Außer Sich*, these life stories serve a double function. On an extradiegetic level, they inform the reader of Jewish life in the Soviet Union before, during and after the Second World War. Soviet antisemitism, on an institutional as well as everyday scale, is as much discussed as quotidian, intrafamilial violence. Yet, beyond that, political events, music and literature are also referred to, creating a web of references potentially little known to a German reader and reflecting the cultural life at the time.

On an intradiegetic level, the act of storytelling itself becomes important. Once Ali has decided to return to Germany, she starts to collect the stories of her maternal family members, who have all migrated to Germany in the meantime. Her visit to her great-grandparents and her grandparents is as much born of a need to hear their story as from the need to have them accept her with her different, male physique. Her grandfather Daniil's story triggers Ali's own storytelling in response:

Diese distanzierten, höflichen Menschen, mit den breiten, offenen Gesichtern [...] hatten etwas von sich preisgegeben, hatten mir Pfade gelegt und saßen nun nackt vor mir, während ich mich fühlte, als würde ich mich verstecken hinter dem, was sie glaubten von mir zu wissen.

[These reserved, polite people with their wide, open faces (...) had given away something of themselves, had laid paths and were now naked in front of me, while I felt as if I were hiding behind what they believed to know of myself.] (AS 209)

Because she feels that her grandparents have handed their history over, an intimate history, which renders them “naked”, this vulnerability requires Ali’s story in return. She decides to tell them how Ali became Anton, a story the following chapter, “Testo”, recounts. She gives it to them as a gift, hoping “dass sie mich aus meiner Entrückung wieder an sich heranziehen, mich drücken oder mich wenigstens ansehen würden, das wäre schon viel” [that they would pull me towards them from my distance, that they would hug me or at least look at me, that already would be a lot] (AS 210). Ali wants to be touched and embraced, or at least looked at. It is not social recognition that she most needs. Looking at someone is not primarily a cognitive act but a sensory one and as such subordinated to physical contact. Ali asks for affective proximity and physical relation in return for her storytelling. As in the quote from Braidotti above, the subject is unhinged here from the dialectics of recognition. It is in touch that the difference between the third and the first person is overcome.

When Ali finishes the story “Testo”, the first-person narrator resumes in a matter-of-fact way (AS 235). Yet she looks for further stories, especially that of her mother Valja. However, she can hardly bear this one: “Mein Körper blieb starr vor Valja sitzen, während ich aus mir heraussprang, nach draußen, ich war außerhalb, das Zuhören konnte mir nichts mehr anhaben” [My body remained stiff in front of Valja, while I jumped out of myself, outside, I was outside, listening could do me no harm anymore] (AS 263). Later Ali says: “Von hier oben tat es nicht weh” [From here, above, it didn’t hurt] (AS 269). Ali is literally outside of herself because she cannot bear Valja’s painful story of conjugal and familial violence – note the three references to being outside. Although she has unleashed the painful story herself, she cannot stand the affective impact it has on her.

Eventually, Valja’s storytelling counteracts Ali’s experience:

Überhaupt gab es so etwas wie Folgerichtigkeit für sie [...] Ein Я konnte ich nicht denken, das merkte ich, als meine Mutter mir ihr Bild von sich zeichnete. Ich konnte es nicht einordnen. [...] Ich dagegen fühlte mich unfähig, verbindliche Aussagen zu treffen, eine Perspektive einzunehmen, eine Stimme zu entwickeln, die nur die meine wäre und für mich sprechen würde. Ein festgeschriebenes Я.

[In fact, there was something like consistency for her. (...) Я was something I could not conceive of. I noticed this, when my mother drew a picture of herself. I couldn’t place it. (...) Myself, on the contrary, I felt incapable of making commitments, of taking over a specific perspective, of developing a voice which would only belong to me and only speak for myself. A fixed Я.] (AS 274f.)

The sound of the letter signifying ‘I’ in Russian is [ja]. In German, one would hear a ‘Ja’, an I which is at the same time an affirmation or a binding statement. Ali is suspicious of this proper voice, “incapable”, yet she nevertheless uses the signifier ‘Ich’ for part of her story, using it without conferring on it any certainty (AS 261). The pronoun ‘I’, however, is

a linguistic shifter, referring only to the person pronouncing it: “*Je* signifie ‘la personne qui énonce la présente instance de discours contenant *je*’” [*I* signifies ‘the person who utters the present instance of speech containing *I*’] (Benveniste 252), it has no denotation outside of the situation of enunciation. As *Außer Sich* shows, this pronoun can also cover that which is not fixed, “festgeschrieben”.

At the origin of Ali’s effort to find her own story is Schura’s memoir. The narrative of her great-grandparents is a history she has contiguously been in touch with herself, sharing their life and being able to listen to their story. Thus it is the farthest she can go back in time with respect to an embodied origin. Searching for their stories, she fights her own ignorance – “ich will sie so viel fragen. Ich kenne sie nicht einmal” [I want to ask them so much, I don’t even know them] (AS 358) – and puts herself in relation to these stories which have been next to her all along. “Openness to others is an expression of the nomadic relational structure of the subject and a precondition for the creation of ethical bonds”, writes Braidotti in the passage quoted above (“Nomadic Ethics” 174). “[T]he verbal response to *who* someone is always consists in the narration of his or her life-story”, argues Adriana Cavarero in *Relating Narratives: Storytelling and Selfhood* (Cavarero 73, italics in original). Ali is in search of the narrations of her family, because she feels the need to know them – a need that only dawns on her during the upheaval of the Turkish military coup. There, she realises that “[t]he self – to the extent to which a *who* is not reducible to a *what*– has a totally external and relational reality. Both the exhibitiv, acting self and the narratable self are utterly given over [*consegnati*] to others” (Cavarero 63, italics in original). This “being given over” at this instance in the novel is further supported by Ali’s dependence on her mobile-phone connection to her friend Elyas, who guides her out of the danger zone. Such a concept of self utterly changes the idea of identity, which is not “coherent”, yet “has at its center an unstable and insubstantial unity” (Cavarero 63). Cavarero thus does not give up on unity, just as Braidotti maintains the idea of the subject. Later, Cavarero writes:

Following Arendt, the term identity must indeed be understood not as that which results from a process of identification, or from a social construction of that identity, but rather as that which a singular existent designs in her uncategorizable [incatalogabile] uniqueness. (Cavarero 73)

Cavarero’s reading of Hannah Arendt’s work allows me to think through the necessity of telling one’s life story and retelling it in *Außer Sich* without tying this act to identity as substance. Distinguishing between uniqueness, unity and identity, Arendt allows for the ethical claim of the uniqueness of every human life. Yet this uniqueness is traced exclusively by who and not what one is (see Arendt 179). Herein lies the link to Braidotti: “My own concept of nomadic subject embodies this approach, which combines non-unitary subjectivity with ethical accountability by foregrounding the ontological role played by relationality” (*Posthuman* 93). Keeping unity and uniqueness apart, the subject can be non-unitary and still unique.

In Arendt’s terms, Ali is unique, yet she is also double: Ali and Anton are twins, their bodies and lives are entangled; they form a unity against others until Anton disappears. As children, they play at being interchangeable, exchanging clothes whenever the occasion permits. Even when they do not know of each other in Istanbul, their lifestyles are similar – both earn their money through prostitution – and they make contact with the same characters: Katho and Aglaja. When Ali acquires a provisional subject position “mich als mich zu denken” [to think of myself as myself] (AS 142), after having read her great-grandfather’s memoir, she has become ‘Ali-Anton’ and has thus incorporated her relation to Anton within her own body. Only in relation to her maternal genealogy on the one hand and Anton’s incorporation on

the other, does this 'Ich' come forth, as part of a web of diachronic and synchronic ties. Only beyond the binary female versus male, Ali versus Anton is it possible for the narrator to use the first-person pronoun.

During the nineteenth century it was always a sign of danger and pathology to combine two characters in one body – think of Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886). Salzmann attests to the longevity of this thinking when she writes: "Ich selber, als nicht-binäre Person, bin mit dem Gefühl aufgewachsen, dass Menschen die Art, wie ich mich selbst wahrnehme, für eine psychische Störung halten" [Myself, as a non-binary person, grew up with the feeling that people consider the way I perceive myself to be a psychic disorder] ("Sichtbar" 16). Yet, in *Außer Sich*, it is only when Ali becomes Ali-Anton that she starts to think of herself as a provisional subject. An option different to the Jekyll-and-Hyde model, built on repression, needs to be considered.

#### 4. Anxiety and Waiting

Salzmann opens her novel with a list of dramatis personae. As in stage directions, she adds information on the time of the action and quotes Ingeborg Bachmann: "Nur die Zeitangabe musste ich mir lange überlegen, denn es ist mir fast unmöglich 'heute' zu sagen, obwohl man jeden Tag 'heute' sagt" [I only had to think for a long time about time, for I can hardly say 'today', although one says 'today' every day] (Bachmann 12). The consequence Salzmann draws from this is: "Die Zeit ist also ein Heute, von vor hundert Jahren bis jetzt" [Hence the time is a today, from one hundred years ago until now] (AS [7]).

When Salzmann quotes from Bachmann's *Malina*, an intertextual reference in more than one way, she references a novel which, from the outset, situates itself 'heute', although or because today means a state of extreme anxiety for the first-person narrator, "denn durch dieses Heute kann ich nur in höchster Angst und fliegender Eile kommen und davon schreiben, oder nur sagen, in dieser höchsten Angst, was sich zuträgt" [for I can only traverse this today in a state of utmost anxiety and utter hurry and write about it, or I can only say in this utmost anxiety, what is happening] (Bachmann 12). Salzmann omits these sentences from the extract and keeps only the more casual "Nur die Zeitangabe musste ich mir lange überlegen", yet anxiety enters through the back door at the end of *Außer Sich*. There, Ali is once more in Cemal's flat, during the military coup, and she imagines Katho's life, while she is waiting: "[Ich] wartete, ich wusste nicht worauf, ich wusste nicht, was vor sich ging, schon wieder nicht, ich hatte Angst, Angst, mich zu bewegen, Angst, dass Cemal etwas sagen würde, dass Cemal sagen würde, ich müsste weg" [I waited, I didn't know what for, I didn't know what was going on, once again. I was afraid, afraid of moving, afraid that Cemal would say something, that Cemal would say I had to leave] (AS 364). This anxiety keeps Ali from acting: "Alis Hoffnung, Anton zu finden. Alis Angst, Anton zu finden" [Ali's hope of finding Anton, Ali's fear of finding Anton] (AS 348). Her anxiety and her hope are thus intertwined – she waits out of anxiety and she tenders her hope out of the same feeling: "[ich] legte mich auf ein Sofa, das mich auffressen sollte, bewegte mich kaum und wartete, denn was ist Warten sonst als eine Hoffnung" [I laid down on a sofa which was going to devour me, hardly moved and waited, for what else is waiting than some hope] (AS 275). So goes the last phrase at the chronological end of the novel, summarising her time in Istanbul. This notion of hope first appears in the context of Schura's story, one of the correspondences the novel establishes. There the narrator comments: "aber Hoffnung ist ja nichts, was da ist, um erfüllt zu werden, sie erfüllt einen umsonst und kostet einen, so viel sie eben kostet" [but hope does not exist to be fulfilled. It fills you gratuitously and costs you just as much as it costs] (AS 162). Both waiting and hope in Salzmann's work are exactly the states of mind that, in spite of being future oriented, do not act on the future. Waiting, hope and anxiety thus come together in Ali's inability to act.



This inability might be rooted in her experiences of violence, as Ali's several instances of being incapacitated by events show: She stops talking after her father's violence towards her; she retreats to her room after her father's suicide and his blaming her for his death on her answering machine; she suffers from acute hearing loss after Anton's departure. All of these events catapult her out of regular, multisensory relationships with other people.

*Außer Sich* also transposes the affect of anxiety onto its structure. While Ali remains somewhat motionless, the family members act in the historical analepses, as does Anton. In contrast to Ali, Anton is constantly engaged in getting to know people, in stealing, tricking and loving. He is willing to risk his life, a tight-rope walker who deals with his own anxieties by balancing up high.

Deleuze and Guattari argue that Kafka, in his letters, splits the subject into a subject of enunciation and a subject enunciated. "Le désir de lettres consiste donc en ceci, d'après un premier caractère: il transfère le mouvement sur le sujet d'énoncé, il confère au sujet d'énoncé un mouvement apparent, un mouvement de papier, qui épargne au sujet d'énonciation tout mouvement réel" [In its prime characteristic, the desire for letters consists in the following: it transfers the movement on the subject of the enunciated, it imbues the subject of the enunciated with a seeming movement, a paper movement, which saves the subject of enunciation any real movement] (*Kafka* 56). In this distribution of movement between a static and a mobile character, Deleuze and Guattari see the reason for the doubling found in Kafka, where the double, a double "qui n'existe peut-être pas en dehors des lettres" [who might not exist outside of the letters] (57, originally in italics), takes over the active part as in "Das Urteil" [The Judgement]. In their analysis of affects, they discern that anxiety is the affective tonality of the letters (83). Reading *Außer Sich* with Deleuze and Guattari, I argue that the doubling of Ali and Anton in the novel serves this function of expressing an anxiety which keeps one character motionless and the other in movement. That Ali's search for Anton comes to nothing is therefore part of the necessary set-up. Even Anton seems to consider this split necessary. When he imagines Ali in a situation of inner and outer turmoil after the Gezi Park demonstrations, it is painful. Yet his reaction is to exhaust himself by running and later to interact with others.

Instead of further searching for Anton, Ali decides to seemingly blend with him. Deleuze and Guattari consider Kafka's novellas, especially those concerning animal metamorphosis, to be stories of escape: "Et dans les nouvelles de devenir-animal, c'est la fuite, qui elle aussi est une tonalité affective" [And in the novellas of becoming animal, it is escape, which is also an affective tonality] (83–4). They consider these lines of flight to be unrelated to anxiety, yet to be related to hope (84). Shifting from the stage of doubling and waiting to a stage of becoming other, the affect of anxiety prevalent in the first stage, Kafka's letters, is replaced by the affect of escape in Kafka's animal stories. Likewise, the doubling of Ali and Anton due to the affect of anxiety is replaced by Ali turning into Anton as an expression of escape. Yet, this is not a chronological sequence. Although Ali tries to turn into Anton, anxiety remains, as the retrospective first-person narrator at the end of the novel confirms (*AS* 364). However, to read Ali becoming Anton as a metamorphosis with the affect of escape does make sense. To Deleuze and Guattari, to become animal is for Kafka a way to intensity. Ali's use of hormones, likewise, intensifies her life (*AS* 349). Yet it does not alter significantly, since she does not change in other ways. It is only after the acutely felt danger during the military coup that she makes a plan:

"Wenn ich das überlebe, dann gehe ich zu Mama, ich will mit ihr reden. Sie weiß nichts von mir. Und ich nichts von ihr. Und zu Emma und Danja und Schura und Etja, zu allen, die noch leben, ich will sie so viel fragen. Ich kenne sie nicht einmal."

[If I survive this, I will go and see Mum, I want to talk to her. She knows nothing about me. And I nothing about her. And to Emma and Danja and Schura and Etja, to all who are still alive, I want to ask them so much. I don't even know them.] (AS 358)

Ali makes this vow during a brief break when the telephone connection between her and Elyas, who guides her through Istanbul, is interrupted. The fact that she goes out to collect the stories of these people, as the novel testifies, proves that she has indeed kept the vow. Eventually, it is the collection of these stories and the sharing of her own story that allows her to use the first-person pronoun. Yet the logic of Kafka's letters has not necessarily come to an end: "Wenn man mich über mich selbst befragte, erzählte ich auch von anderen, täuschte vor, dass diese Erzählungen etwas über mich aussagen würden, und wusste gleichzeitig um die Hilflosigkeit des Versuches, Spuren zu verwischen" [Whenever I was asked about myself, I, too, talked about others, pretended that these stories would say something about myself and knew at the same time about the awkwardness of this attempt to hide traces] (AS 267). Thus, how far the stories Ali recollects reveal something about herself is for the reader to find out. Correspondences between passages might give hints.

## 5. Narrative Building Blocks

Stories of others, told to blur traces, do not require linearity – they are elements of a paradigm, 'stories of others', to be deployed freely. I would like to consider the chapters of *Außer Sich* as just such building blocks. In *Kafka*, Deleuze and Guattari find two different architectural patterns in Kafka's writings. They notice a system of blocks organised in a circle around a distant centre, but they also find the structure of a seemingly endless corridor. None of the models is based on continuity. Thinking in discontinuous blocks allows me to interrogate the structure of *Außer Sich* and the implications thereof. I will keep in mind that Deleuze and Guattari also consider Kafka's novels as his third type of articulation, a solution he finds when letters and animal stories are insufficient. Novels carry the affect of demontage: "Kafka se propose d'extraire des représentations sociales les agencements d'énonciation, et les agencements machiniques, et de démonter ces agencements" [Kafka intends to extract from social representations the agency-ings of enunciation, and the machine-like agency-ings, and to take apart these agency-ings] (85). Unhinging the social machine of law and desire is the task of his novels. Unhinging the social machine of race and gender seems to me to be Salzmann's endeavour. This is not disconnected from the law either – yet the law, repressive as it is, proves to be utterly useless nowadays: the police never do succeed in finding Anton, nor does the law prevent antisemitic or intrafamilial violence in the life of Ali's family.

*Außer Sich* constantly decentres the reader by way of its montage structure and its use of different narrators. In the course of the novel, the reader learns that the homo- and heterodiegetic narrator are one and the same, because Ali tells the story in retrospect but maintains the gap between a provisional I and a sovereign, well-informed heterodiegetic and zero-focalised narrator with an unlimited perception of events. Yet questions remain. Whereas she bases the stories of the great-grandparents and the grandparents on their oral, and in the case of the great-grandfather, also written account, she might be making up the story of her father: "Ich muss ihn mir denken, nach Worten und Bildern suchen, um mir seine letzten Wochen vorzustellen" [I have to conceive of him, search for words and images, in order to imagine his last weeks] (AS 236). And she admits, "Ich erdenke mir neue Personen, wie ich mir alte zusammensetze" [I imagine new people just as I put together old ones for myself] (AS 275). Therefore, as readers, ultimately we do not know if it is Ali who made up the story of Anton in the second part or if, in "Zwei", new rules apply and Anton is a reliable first-person narrator, a character in his own right just like Ali. Narratologically, this raises the question of whether

there really is a reliable narrator in this novel. Yet the novel itself refutes the question, since it refuses, as we will see, all binary oppositions, including the one between truth and lies. In order for the concept of the reliable narrator to work, however, the opposition between truth and lies needs to be in place (see Nünning). In *Außer Sich*, there is no way for the reader to decide whether Anton is telling his own story or if Ali has made it up – it requires a leap of faith and the willingness to support this non-binary situation.

Non-coherence, on the one hand, and heterodiegetic zero-focalisation – traditionally a sign of narrative authority – on the other, clash in this novel just like divergent notions of time. Whereas the stories of the (great-)grandparents are told in chronological order, going back to the beginning of the family genealogy, the montage of the different chapters jumps from 1990s Germany to present-day Turkey, to arriving and growing up in Germany, interspersed with the history of Ali's mother Valja, and back to Turkey – to mention just the first five chapters. They create a link between disparate times, places and characters. On time, Braidotti writes:

Linearity is the dominant time of *Chronos*, as opposed to the dynamic and more cyclical time of becoming or *Aion* [...] Instead of deference to the authority of the past, we have the fleeting co-presence of multiple time zones, in a continuum that activates and de-territorializes stable identities and fractures temporal linearity. (*Posthuman* 165)

In *Cruising Utopia*, José Esteban Muñoz connects this different notion of time to the difference between queer and straight time: “Queerness's time is a stepping out of the linearity of straight time. Straight time is a self-naturalizing temporality” (25). Whereas *Außer Sich* allows for elements of ‘straight time’ in the stories of the (great-)grandparents, Ali's own story can only be told in ‘queer time’.

In what might be the most poetological chapter of the novel, “Valja”, Ali reflects on the notion of consistency.

Mein Name fängt mit dem ersten Buchstaben des Alphabets an und ist ein Schrei, ein Stocken, ein Fallen, ein Versprechen auf ein B und ein C, die es nicht geben kann in der Kausalitätslosigkeit der Geschichte.

[My name starts with the first letter of the alphabet and it is a cry, a halt, a fall, a promise of a B and a C which cannot exist in history's lack of causality.] (*AS* 274)

Ali's position is strictly anti-Hegelian, the idea of history's progress is out of the question. In her insistence on an extensive ‘now’ she refutes any bygone past as well as a possible future.

With Deleuze, Braidotti emphasises the notion of a “co-presence of multiple time zones”. Deleuze, in *Bergsonism*, explores Bergson's notion of duration and elaborates on how “the past does not follow the present that it has been, but co-exists with it” (61). In *Außer Sich*, the stories of the (great-)grandparents are juxtaposed with the Istanbul plot without Salzmann deploying an analeptic structure in the form of a character flashback. Even if Ali is reminded of her great-grandparents with the key word ‘Odessa’, she does not remember their story intradiegetically. Instead, ‘Odessa’ links Istanbul to a story that Ali will only collect once she has returned. The coexistence of time is thus realised in the narrative montage itself.

References to time abound in *Außer Sich*. “Ohne Zeit, 36 Stunden, Der Anfang, 15. Juli” [Without time, 36 hours, the beginning, 15 July] are all chapter headings, which, except for the day of the military coup, 15 July, refer to experiences of time but do not focus on dates

or chronology. Ali's father sings the Russian song "Es ist an der Zeit, es ist an der Zeit, sich dieser Zeit zu erfreuen" [It is time, it is time, to enjoy this time] (AS 12) at the beginning and thus emphasises time and affect. Later, Ali writes: "Zeit ist für mich eine Drehscheibe" [time, to me, is a disc] (AS 275), referring to the notion of cyclical time, but also to narrative "blocks" being organised with regard to their position on the disc. They may shift without being part of a logic of before and after but rather of contiguity and distance.

This non-chronology is played out both on the macrostructural and the microstructural level. Phrases and events repeatedly correspond throughout *Außer Sich*, connecting people on the one hand, calling into question the order of events on the other. Thus, early on in the novel, Ali refers to something her mother has said: "Ihre Mutter hatte es einmal gesagt, irgendetwas mit Gedanken, die Parasiten sind, aber ihr fiel die Formulierung nicht ein" [Her Mum had said it once, something about thoughts which are parasites, but she couldn't remember the phrase] (AS 50). Although this could be a standard phrase of Valja, in the novel it reoccurs when Ali interrogates her mother about the past, long after the Istanbul arrival, and Valja answers: "Die Erinnerung ist ein Parasit. Fang ihn dir lieber gar nicht ein" [Memory is a parasite. It is better not to catch it] (AS 274). It is not thoughts in general, but memory in particular that Valja, a medical doctor, takes to be a parasite, inhabiting a body and living off its vital energy. The fact that the novel assembles the memories that family members share with Ali raises the question of how this assemblage of memories and the notion of parasitism go together. In Cemal's flat, Ali is constantly being bitten by little bugs which suck her blood. They could be considered such parasites – impersonators, not metaphors, of memory (see AS 275). Just as Deleuze and Guattari insist that Kafka's animals are not metaphorical (65), Ali is literally host to parasitical memory. Hosting these parasites then becomes a first step towards the escape which the intensities of testosterone provide: "Le devenir-animal est un voyage immobile et sur place, qui ne peut se vivre ou se comprendre qu'en intensité (franchir des seuils d'intensité)" [Becoming animal is an immobile journey on the spot, which cannot be lived or understood other than in intensity (to cross the thresholds of intensity)] (65). In "Ec-static Existences", Maria Roca Lizarazu connects this novel to Marianne Hirsch's notion of postmemory. Ali's bugs show that she has been carrying the parasites of memory all along and she finally faces them for good when she listens to the family stories. Yet, as the "Valja" chapter shows, it is these stories that hurl Ali outside of the self and into a narrative undoing of pre-given structures.

Further, Salzmann interweaves characters through the repetition of events and sensations. Schura, the great-grandfather, tells of an uncanny encounter with an old woman and numerous aggressive kittens during his panicked search for his wife after the Nazi occupation of Balta (AS 160). This scene reoccurs when Ali escapes from an annoying Istanbul nightclub conversation and encounters an old woman, "von Kopf bis Fuß in Tücher gewickelt" [wrapped in scarves from head to toe] (AS 227), just like the woman in Odessa in 1941. The woman tells an African tale about Truth, then invites Ali to follow her to an area which for Ali blends with a Russian village (AS 230) and where tiny kittens cover the ground. There she suddenly cuts the palm of Ali's hand – her answer to Ali's desire for the future. The scene, already uncanny in Schura's story, becomes even uncannier when it reoccurs with Ali. The African tale framing the encounter tells of a young man's quest for the character of Truth in order to wed his beloved. When he finally finds Truth, she is an old woman who wants him to tell the bride's father that she is young and pretty (see AS 227–9). Neither can he take Truth back as proof of his accomplished mission, nor does Truth tell the truth. Hence, to search for truth is a fruitless quest and one loses the past and the present in so doing: "Eines Tages setzte er sich gebrochen und müde an das Ufer des Angereb und begriff, dass er sich nicht mehr an das Gesicht seiner Liebsten erinnern konnte" [One day he sat down on the riverbank of

the Angereb, broken down and tired, and he understood that he could no longer remember the face of his beloved] (AS 228). Although it is then that the young man in the tale finds Truth, he is no longer sure about the motive for his journey. By cutting across Ali's palm, the Turkish fortune-teller brings Ali back to the here and now in which she needs to act by stopping her futile, half-hearted search. Consequently, at the end of the chapter, Ali decides to become Anton instead of continuing the search for her brother. Whereas Schura, escaping from the old woman who might be a personification of death, finds his wife unharmed in war-threatened Odessa, Ali returns to the nightclub only to find her transsexual lover Katho raped. Her decision that night to take testosterone is the only properly assertive action she takes throughout her time in Istanbul.

As can be seen, the narrative structure of Salzmänn's novel allows for plot elements to be assembled according to contiguity instead of chronology, to reoccur across long timespans and to appear without notice, as do Anton's homodiegetic chapters. Although it might be possible to figure out a chronological story in spite of the achronic plot, the novel refuses this ordering of events. Instead it insists on these blocks, which, according to the idea of co-temporality, could also be arranged differently.

## 6. Time and History

Salzmänn's paratextual Baldwin quotation talks of what remains beyond the subject: "Aber *etwas* erinnert sich – wenn man so will, kann man sagen, daß etwas sich rächt: die Falle des Jahrhunderts, der Gegenstand, der nun vor uns steht" (Baldwin, quoted after Salzmänn, italics in original [5]; see translation below). Salzmänn quotes from Baldwin's 1972 non-fiction work *No Name in the Street*, where he talks about his involvement with the civil rights movement and his friendship with Malcolm X and Martin Luther King. Salzmänn's choice of this citation as an epigram to her novel serves several functions. The quote de-individualises time – it is no longer human time – and it de-individualises memory: "Aber *etwas* erinnert sich." Salzmänn's posthuman concept of co-temporality does not preclude the effects and residues of history which surge up in the present.

Baldwin's retrospective gaze at the 1950s and 1960s in *No Name in the Street* shows a distinct critique of the notion of history. Salzmänn uses a somewhat disconnected passage from near the beginning of the essay, concerning the impact of history:

Well. Time passes and passes. It passes backward and it passes forward and it carries you along, and no one in the whole wide world knows more about time than this: it is carrying you through an element you do not understand into an element you will not remember. Yet, *something* remembers – it can even be said that something avenges: the trap of our century, and the subject now before us. (22)

Baldwin articulates an understanding of time that is transindividual and non-progressive, backward and forward. What happens does not simply pass, and is then over and done with. Something avenges too, there are consequences for what was done – as seen in the civil rights movement, which can be considered as one of these moments where *something* avenges – against slavery, Jim Crow laws and endemic racism.

This different notion of time goes along with a critique of history:

It is not so easy to see that, for millions of people, life itself depends on the speediest possible demolition of this history, even if this means the leveling, or the destruction of its heirs. And whatever this history may have given to the subjugated is of absolutely no value, since they have never been free to reject it. (*No Name* 47)

According to Baldwin, the achievements of civilisation come to nothing for the subjugated: “to bow down before that history is to accept that history’s arrogant and unjust judgment” (47).

Baldwin writes with the fight for independence and the situation of African Americans and other minorities in mind. Salzmans citation of Baldwin’s philippic is an instance of what Michael Rothberg calls “multidirectional memory”. Instead of “competitive memory”, directed towards the memory of one single group and its identity, memory can also be seen as multidirectional, “subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing; as productive and not privative” (Rothberg 3). Nowhere in the novel is the situation of African Americans, the civil rights movement or the struggle for African independence in the 1950s mentioned. Instead, the novel discusses the antisemitism Ali’s maternal family has suffered since the early twentieth century. Salzman recounts a tale of survival within the Soviet system and unfolds an unbroken history of antisemitism stretching across the century, infiltrating even Jewish relationships, as Valja’s treatment by her own husband shows. Yet this history is equally one of the resistance and endurance of people who confronted the system that tried to exclude them, the last in line being Valja. With Ali and Anton, antisemitism remains one factor of their exclusion, coupled with their foreign origin and queer sexuality. However, in contrast with the fight for acceptance undertaken by preceding generations, Ali and Anton have given up on a system prone to excluding them; instead, they live in the interstices of capitalism. The spectre of revenge – avenging the practices of exclusion – waits in the wings of the novel as well as those of history, as the placement of the Baldwin citation shows.

“How can one say that freedom is taken, not given, and that no one is free until all are free? and that the price is high” (*No Name* 21), asks Baldwin. In a passage leading up to that cited by Salzman, Baldwin visits a former friend. During the visit, Baldwin realises that his friend does not understand the necessity to *take* this freedom, which the civil rights movement is all about.

Salzman stretches the events in Istanbul between the Gezi Park demonstrations in 2013 and the Turkish military coup in 2016, both instances of an attempt to fight a restrictive political regime. It is Anton who actively participates in the Gezi demonstrations, where he saves the seriously wounded Aglaja – potentially a reference not only to the Swiss-Romanian writer Aglaja Veteranyi but also to a fifteen-year-old boy, Berkin, who was wounded at Gezi and died after months in coma (Adatepe 7). Although neither the Gezi Park demonstrations nor the coup are discussed in any detail, the fact that Anton and Aglaja and even Katho cross paths at Gezi is important on a diegetic as well as political level. “Das Leben, wie es nur zwei Wochen im Gezi-Park gestaltet wurde, legt die Saat für eine Utopie” [Life, as it was being lived only for two weeks at Gezi Park, sows the seed for utopia] (Sönmez 14). Salzman’s own battle against discrimination, the novel’s characters’ experience of violence and oppression, and Gezi Park as a symbol for the fight for freedom come together, once more in a multidirectional move, to contend “that no one is free until all are free”. Pulling ever more contexts into the novel, Salzman creates a web of relations held together by a common cause – the fight for freedom and against oppression.

Gezi Park figures prominently in Anton’s chapter “Aglaja” towards the end of the novel. In the description of his experience, Salzman deploys linguistic features characteristic of much of the novel.

Geräusche klangen wie das Echo ihrer selbst, ich spürte sie auf der Haut, ich sah runter zu meinen Füßen und fand sie nicht. [...] Dann wurde alles plötzlich sehr laut und sehr schnell, wie ein Vogelschwarm, der angreift. Um mich herum flogen die Lippen einer alten Frau, die an mir zerrte, ein Rudel Polizisten jagte über die Straße, blutende

Hemden schlugen mit den Flügeln, ausgerenkte Gelenke flatterten durch die Luft [...] der Schwarm rauschte durch mich hindurch und riss mich fast um.

[Sounds sounded like their own echo, I felt them on my skin, I looked down to my feet and didn't find them. (...) Then, suddenly, everything became very loud and fast, like a swarm of birds attacking. Around me the lips of an old woman who tugged at me were flying, a pack of policemen ran across the street, bleeding shirts flapped their wings, unhinged joints flapped through the air (...) the swarm rushed through me and almost tore me down.] (AS 319f.)

People are replaced by objects, synecdoches dominate, held together by the image of the swarm of birds confronted with policemen who have become dogs. Although these birds are introduced by way of comparison first, the demonstrators then turn into disfigured and wounded birds. Differences between humans, animals and matter are being deconstructed; everything can be put into contact with everything else. The novel's breaking down of categories on the level of language also applies to categories as a whole: male and female, subject and object, homosexual and heterosexual, truth and falsehood, chronological and cyclical time. Jasbir Puar writes: "Categories – race, gender, sexuality – are considered as events, actions, and encounters between bodies, rather than as simply entities and attributes of subjects" (Puar 3). How these categories can be dismantled and altered in view of a non-binary logic is being shown in *Außer Sich*. Apropos Kafka's novels, Deleuze and Guattari write:

A plus forte raison, dans les romans, le démontage des agencements fait fuir la représentation sociale, de manière beaucoup plus efficace qu'une 'critique', et opère une déterritorialisation du monde qui est elle-même politique.

[Even more so, in the novels, the taking apart of such agency-ings scares the social representation off, in a much more efficient way than a 'critique', and brings about a deterritorialisation of the world which is in itself political]. (*Kafka* 85)

Salzmann's dismantling of categories on the level of plot, character, narrator and language can be seen as just such a political deterritorialisation.

## 7. Conclusion: Relationalities

As discussed above, Salzmann opens her novel *Außer Sich* with a citation from queer black writer and activist James Baldwin. To begin with this specific citation is very much a deliberate gesture. Salzmann places herself in a tradition of queer, non-hegemonic, anti-racist and activist writing. In addition, with Baldwin, essentialist categories are up for grabs. In *The Fire Next Time*, Baldwin contests: "Color is not a human or a personal reality, it is a political reality" (104).

To place Baldwin at the beginning is thus an instance of multidirectional memory. With her citation, Salzmann cross-references Russian-Jewish experiences of racism and internalised racism with black American experiences, and relates both, via her Turkish plotline, to the demonstrations in Gezi Park. Albeit only mentioned for a few pages in the novel, the red cover image of the book evokes the graffiti of Aglaja, one of the victims of the demonstrations. In the novel, she becomes a "Symbol der Bewegung" [a symbol of the movement] (AS 317), which is why her graffiti, a "Schwarzweiß-Silhouette mit roten Vögeln, die ihr aus der Schläfe flogen" [a black-and-white silhouette with red birds flying from her temples] (AS 317)

decorates the walls in Taksim and can still be seen when Ali strolls through the streets two years later.

Salzmann thus puts different histories of exclusion in contact with each other and realises on the political plane what she likewise puts into practice with regard to notions of the subject. The 'empty' subject is the one in relation to others, made up of this web of relations to people, spaces and non-human others.

Yet, as the novel shows, this move has consequences for storytelling. Coherence and progression give way to rupture, repetition and correspondence. As I have tried to show, Deleuze and Guattari's reading of Kafka allows me to trace the web of connections *Außer Sich* creates between politics, subjectivity and time. On different planes, the novel transcends the question of the individual and brings to the fore a concept of relationality that emphasises the connectedness between subjects, spaces and political struggles. The novel allows for a reading disinterested in individual pathology but instead aware of the intensities of connections. Its being of the 'minority' in the terms of Deleuze and Guattari consists in this deterritorialised transindividuality. Hence, the posthuman asks for different models of writing and reading which focus on the "rhizomatic web of relations" (Braidotti, "Nomadic Ethics" 174). Deleuze and Guattari's seminal study can point the way towards such models of posthuman readings and provokes fresh dialogue with contemporary literature.

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