

*Versions of Minor Literature: Two Contemporary Cases from Turkish Film**

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Abstract

The concept of “collective enunciation,” which Deleuze and Guattari propose in delineating their idea of minor literature/cinema, remains regrettably underdeveloped for the purpose of exploring the political investment of a given film. In the context of cinema, the concept designates the possibility of attaining a collective voice in film under a set of negative conditions, such as the crisis of a private poetics and the objective disintegration of the category of the “people,” through the transformation of both parties involved in these conditions, the author and real characters as her people. In this way, it becomes possible to imagine the political dimension of a film in such a way that goes beyond the merely thematic treatment of political issues. In the end, this refers to the politics of what is called minor cinema.

This paper reflects on the place of such a politics in the cinema of two contemporary Turkish cinematographers, Zeki Demirkubuz and Nuri Bilge Ceylan, who are rarely imagined as political filmmakers. It proposes a theoretical framework which enables reading their films as two different aesthetic responses formulated within cinema against the fragmentation of what made the classical political cinema possible: the “people.” For this purpose, it is necessary to show that Gilles Deleuze’s concept of “missing people” or “minorities,” which made modern political cinema possible according to Deleuze, is not restricted to the historical period chosen by him. The paper demonstrates that an analysis of certain aspects of Ceylan’s and Demirkubuz’s films, such as real characters, formation in series, national allegory, autobiography, interiors and outdoor landscapes, warrants an understanding of the work of these two authors as instances of a second generation, minor political cinema.

Keywords: Political film, Deleuze, minor literature, Zeki Demirkubuz, Nuri Bilge Ceylan, collective enunciation.

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*Minör Edebiyatın Görünümleri: Çağdaş Türkiye Sinemasından İki Örnek**

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Öz

Deleuze ve Guattari'nin minör edebiyat/sinema fikrini açıklamak için ortaya attıkları "kollektif bildirim" kavramından, verili bir filmin siyasi katmanlarını arařtırmak için yeterince yararlanılmadı. Bu kavram sinema bağlamında, yazarın kendini içinde bulduğu kişisel bir dil yokluğu krizi ile "halk" kategorisinin nesnel olarak zayıflayıp parçalanmaya yüz tutması gibi olumsuz koşullar içinde kollektif bir söze ulaşabilme olasılığını anlatır. Öyle ki, bu olasılığın gerçekleşmesi sözkonusu koşullara tâbi olan iki tarafın da (hem sanatçı hem de sanatçının halkı olarak gerçek hayattan oyuncu) başkalaşması demektir. Böylece bir filmin siyasi boyutunu sadece siyasi meselelerin konu edildiği tematik bir sinema anlayışının ötesinde düşünmek mümkündür. Sonuçta minör sinema diye adlandırılan da bu tür bir kollektif söz siyasetiyle belirlenir.

Bu yazı, pek de siyasi sinema örneği olarak görülmeyen Zeki Demirkubuz ve Nuri Bilge Ceylan filmlerinde işleyen bu türden bir siyasetin yeri üzerine düşünmeye çalışıyor. Burada önerilen kuramsal çerçeveye göre Demirkubuz ve Ceylan sineması, klasik siyasi sinemayı olanaklı kılmış "halk" kategorisinin parçalanması karşısında geliştirilmiş farklı iki estetik cevap olarak görülebilir. Bu sorunsalı açmak için Deleuze'un "kayıp halk" ya da "azınlıklar" kavramına başvurarak bu kavramların Deleuze'ce uygulandığı tarihsel dönem dışında da geçerli olduğunu gösteriyoruz. Yazı, Demirkubuz ve Ceylan'da rastlanan profesyonel olmayan oyuncular, serileşme, ulusal alegori, otobiyografik öğeler, iç mekânlar ile dış manzaralar gibi bazı özelliklerden yola çıkan bir analiz bu sinemacıların ikinci kuşak, minör bir siyasi sinemanın örnekleri olduğunu gösterebileceğini iddia ediyor.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Politik sinema, Deleuze, minör edebiyat, Zeki Demirkubuz, Nuri Bilge Ceylan, kollektif söz.

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Versions of Minor Literature: Two Contemporary Cases from Turkish Film

On Minor Literature and National Allegory

In their *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, Deleuze and Guattari summarize the three characteristics of minor literature as “the deterritorialization of language, the connection of the individual to a political immediacy, and the collective assemblage of enunciation” (1986: 18). These deservedly famous maxims have been quickly adopted for critical study not only by those working in the field of literature but also in cinema studies among other fields of the humanistic study of texts. The first two maxims in particular—possibly for the immediate political energy they inject into the object of criticism—have come to be associated with the idea of minor literature. The first of these refers to the potential of the destabilizing, and therefore liberationist, creativity of a minority perspective (whether this is indexed to an ethnic, national, sexual, or social marginality) working in relation to normative language. The second one, already an extension of the influential idea of the artificiality of the separations between the private and the political

that has been operative in the humanities and social sciences since the sixties, designates the necessity not only of extending the realm of the political to hitherto unimagined corners but also granting the dignity of political writing and art, which have been aesthetically devalued in the comparison with the achievements of a personal and private poetics in the Western tradition. As Deleuze (1989), in the second of his two-volume work on cinema, created a schema of modern, third world, minor political cinema analogous to this schema we find in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, cinema studies also reflects the same tendencies and points of emphasis.

In this essay, in an attempt to reflect on the earlier films of Nuri Bilge Ceylan and Zeki Demirkubuz through the lens of the idea of minor literature, I will rather focus on the third characteristic of minor literature, “the collective assemblage of enunciation,” which I believe is an underdeveloped idea although it is critical enough to highlight the stakes in the concept of minor literature or cinema in relation to the central problems that survive in ma-

ture works of Deleuze and Guattari.

For example, in an interesting article in which he reads Yeşim Ustaoglu's *Journey to the Sun* as an example of minor cinema and provides often persuasive arguments for the place of the first two characteristics of minor literature or cinema in the film, Yasin Aydınlik is revealingly equivocal about "collective enunciation."¹ He refers ambiguously to the "dialogue" that minor films start with their spectators (Aydınlik, no date: 6). In the following pages, I will argue that collective enunciation must be conceived in relation to the force of "becoming" —the key ontological concept for Deleuze— which concerns the presence of real characters, who will have given birth to the stories of the people, and the author, who finds a way out of her private confinement in her relation to this character, in the assemblage of the film. None of this specifically concerns the spectator. Thus, the necessary medium of becoming is produced equally by the production of collective utterances and the existence of minorities (missing people). It is noteworthy that identity is not a required function here. In fact, the concept of collective enunciation remains uncertain in Aydınlik's essay because identity still seems to be a functional notion for him.

¹ As far as I can tell, this essay, titled "*Journey to the Sun: Minor Possibilities in New Turkish Cinema*," is unpublished and therefore does not have a date. https://www.academia.edu/15497914/Journey_to_the_Sun_Minor_Possibilities_in_New_Turkish_Cinema. Accessed on 05.02.2016.

About *Journey to the Sun* he writes that it "opens the door slightly to the possibility of a national identity which transforms and changes in a constant process of formation" (10). For the reasons I indicated, and will explain further below, identity cannot "transform" for Deleuze; rather, the force (*puissance*) of transformation (becoming) counteracts the power (*pouvoir*) of identity.²

Although minor literature/cinema is the guiding notion in my essay, I also make use of the concept of "national allegory" proposed by Fredric Jameson in reading Nuri Bilge Ceylan. At this point, I would like to clarify the context of my use of Jameson and Deleuze —whose works are informed by very different theoretical problems, projects, and traditions— in the same analytical space, in anticipation of possible questions. Jameson's idea of national allegory is useful for my account only insofar as it illuminates the allegorical structure of Nuri Bilge Ceylan's *Clouds of May*. It enables me to show that the storyline of private individuals in this text, mainly the peasant father and the artist son, cannot help but be intertwined with an "embattled" public issue in an allegorical fashion. Moreover, since the object of the allegory openly declares an irretrievable loss, i.e., the destruction of a pre-capitalist life-world by capitalism, this gives me an opportunity to conceptualize Nuri Bilge Ceylan's

² This is a central Spinozian problematic for Deleuze's political ontology. An excellent resume of this is found in Deleuze (1988).

position, *qua* the *author*, as an instantiation of the immediately political nature of the private in minor literature according to Deleuze and Guattari.

Deleuze and Guattari first published *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* in 1975. Jameson's essay dates from 1986. Jameson's notorious formula states that in the third-world texts "the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society" (1986: 69). Deleuze and Guattari suggest that since the private affair is immediately political in minor literature, enunciation gains a collective value in it: "What each author says individually already constitutes a common action, and what he or she says or does is necessarily political, even if others aren't in agreement" (1986: 17). Jameson's formula explicitly emphasizes the economy of textual organization ("the story"), but on the question of the distribution of the private and the political in minor/third world literature his thesis evidently repeats Deleuze and Guattari. Thus, it is at the moment of the passage from the text to the author (or authorial policy) in my reading of *Clouds of May* that I establish a relationship between Jameson and Deleuze, since whereas Jameson focuses on the "story" or the third-world text, Deleuze focuses on the minor or third-world "author." Again, this particular correlation between the two texts must be kept in view as the justification for my

reading them side by side. It is not a question of positing the identity of or even the similarity between obviously two different philosophical frameworks. What is important for me is that the textual economy of *Clouds of May* warrants Jameson's conceptual framework; it is strictly unimportant whether Jameson's conceptual framework warrants the film, which needs no warranty other than its own existence.

For this reason, I should also indicate that the place of Jameson's text in the vast literature of the post-colonial debate is the subject-matter of another essay and beyond the scope of the interests of my discussion here. On this point, I can only repeat a point I hint at later in the following pages. In fact, it seems to me that the post-colonial context of Deleuze's examples of minor literature in cinema constitutes the most outdated aspect of his reading. Even more importantly, my argument relies on the presupposition that Deleuze's theory works, perhaps even better, outside this limited historical context under the conditions defined by the contemporary constitution of capitalism that does away with the conditions of even revolutionary identity politics. Hardt and Negri's (2000: 219-325) account of the global process of "real subsumption" of society by capital can serve as a theoretical ground for this presupposition: Today "life" as such, the vital forces of human beings, is what capital relies on to reproduce itself. And capital seeks to control what itself turns

into forces that escape capitalist identities by reterritorializing them on its artificial atmosphere of identities, supported predominantly by information and communication systems. In my reading, Ceylan and Demirkubuz emerge as the first artists to have an intuition of this process insofar as they seek to oppose the identities concocted by capitalist reterritorialization in their commitment to minority.

At this juncture, it is worth emphasizing an important, but strangely often forgotten, aspect of Deleuze and Guattari's idea of minor literature. Their book on Kafka is a testament in its entirety to the fact that one cannot exclusively seek out the political nature of a text in its explicit political thematics. The paradigm case itself illustrates this: Kafka, a "suffering saint" in the eyes of many and a detached individual who had never written about the explicit political struggles of his day, is portrayed by Deleuze and Guattari as the author of the political literature *par excellence*. "Art and philosophy," they write in *What is Philosophy?* nailing this idea down, "converge at this point: The constitution of an earth and a people that are lacking as the correlate of creation. *It is not populist writers but the most aristocratic who lay claim to this future*" (1994: 108, my emphasis). Ceylan and Demirkubuz are representative for minor literature in this sense as well. Forgoing "populist" thematization of explicitly political issues, they might be seen as authors in

search of a deeper politics of resistance in the earlier films that I read here. It is relatively easier to take a film which, say, thematizes the struggle of an ethnic minority and read it in the light of the idea of minor literature, but to show the most unexpected author as political is something more rarely done.³

Collective Enunciation, Minority, and Becoming

In his well-known work on cinema, Gilles Deleuze bases the discussion of third-world film, which he sees as a second generation or modern political cinema, on an original observation. Even when they might be oppressed or deceived, the "presence of the people" in classical political cinema, whether Soviet or American, never becomes problematic. For example, the presence of the people can be portrayed through a process of evolution, as a result of which new conditions emerge for a given society, or the time of a revolution that makes a leap from the old to the new, introducing a break between two sets of conditions. Moreover, the faith in the possibility of solidarity among different people, the existence of the will for a unitary cause, functions as a strong sign of the presence of the

³ Ulus Baker's (2011: 145-159) assessments of modern political cinema, which draw on similar theoretical and artistic sources with mine, are in agreement with my arguments here: neither political thematics is the only measure of political cinema nor can the historical post-colonial context be the exclusive terrain of minor cinema.

people. However, according to Deleuze's famous thesis, modern political cinema becomes possible on the basis of the difficult acknowledgment that "people no longer or not yet exist," that they are "missing" (1989: 216).

If it is true that political cinema becomes worthy of that name to the degree that it concerns itself with the fate of "collectivities," one is then justified in expecting to find that a political cinema which establishes itself on the acknowledgment of the absence of people has redefined the form of discourse in which it relates to the life of collectivities: A problematic that can be covered by the notion of "collective enunciation." It is in fact Deleuze's formulation of the manner in which modern political cinema surmounts this difficulty—the difficulty of attaining a collective voice—that, I think, is the most powerful and, even today, the most relevant aspect of his theory. It is certainly the most relevant aspect for this essay.

As Deleuze formulates it, the third world author/filmmaker finds herself in a position where her disadvantages are, so to speak, her only advantage. For example, he points out that in small nations or colonized communities there is a scarcity of individuated utterances associated with great names, but this also makes it possible to imagine artistic utterance as intrinsically collective. "Because the people are missing," writes Deleuze, "the author is in a situation of producing utterances which are already collec-

tive, which are like the seeds of the people to come, and whose political impact is immediate and inescapable" (1989: 221). If this author has any privileges, it is the privilege of being relatively protected from the trap of having to invent personal stories or private fictions. But why should this be such a terrible thing, as it indeed appears to be in Deleuze's narrative? The complicity of fiction with the apparatus of power becomes more visible in the case of colonized populations. The cinema author, Deleuze argues, finds herself facing a people who is doubly colonized: Colonized by the stories that have come from elsewhere, but also by their native stories that have become impersonal narratives at the service of the colonizer.

Every private story is already a story from elsewhere, and, it is true that the author's world of fiction would be just one more of those colonizing stories, even if it is a story "about" the people or, to tell the truth, more so if this is the case. Yet following another direction away from personal or private fictions toward impersonal stories does not offer a solution either. The myth, which must have contained something like the wisdom of the people, the reservoir of the collective memory of an existing people, functions as the obverse of capitalist violence. In one of Deleuze's examples, in Yılmaz Güney's *Yol*, the protagonist who is on a conditional release from the prison has to cross a snow desert to reach the community of his unfaithful wife, who is

being held captive by her own family and whom the custom condemns to death in the hands of the husband himself. The state has no mercy on its subjects nor does the custom of the people on its own members. The state and folklore merge and swoop down on the destiny of the individuals making impossible any respite from their suffering.

In the end, this is why the people are missing. If I return to my remarks about the “old” and the “new” above, the old situation offers nothing but myths with which the people imprison itself, whereas the new situation only offers false stories imported from elsewhere and imposed on the people, even if this “elsewhere” designates the intellectual herself. The people are missing because one cannot discern *their* stories anymore. The difficulty the author is confronted with is obvious now: If “every personal fiction, like every impersonal myth is on the side of the ‘masters,’” (Deleuze, 1989: 222) the author must avoid inventing private stories, but she must also avoid becoming the ethnologist of her own people. How can she produce collective enunciations in order to escape both?

Instead of inventing a story, the film author takes “real” characters and puts them in a condition in which they will start making up stories: A condition of story-telling or creation of “fables.” It is as if she catches them in the act of making up “legends.” Is this then a situation in which we witness real stories in-

stead of the author’s private fiction simply because of the presence of a real character? I believe that the whole point of Deleuze’s argument lies here. The answer to this question must be “no,” because if getting hold of a real person was all that there is to it there would be no reason why this person, left to herself, should not also be telling just another private story. “It is the real character who leaves his private condition,” writes Deleuze, “at the same time as the author his abstract condition” (1989: 223). In the film, in its space, the real character gives birth to something that she would never be capable of otherwise, just as the filmmaker finds a material to work on with the real character that she would never have had otherwise. Thus, something takes place in the medium they both contribute to and does not belong to either of them. In fact, compared with this consequence, one realizes how they each become something other than who they are: The real character becomes someone other than what her private condition dictates through storytelling and the film author becomes someone other than what her abstract condition dictates by providing herself with real characters.

Storytelling or fabulation produces collective utterances, which are neither personal fictions nor impersonal myths but words in action, speech-acts. As Jacques Rancière observes in relation to Deleuze, fabulation marks “the suppression of fictional privilege.” For Deleuze, “free indirect discourse” does not

express the Flaubertian “absolute point of view of style” of the author but manifests the becoming of the real character when she commits that ultimate, unforgivable crime: Making up legends, which contributes to the invention of a new people (2004: 158). Indeed, there is scarcely anything more moving, in literature or film, than witnessing a character crossing the boundary of her misery and powerlessness, to which she is condemned by her private problems, with the story that she is making up in front of our very eyes. So this is how Deleuze formulates the new access to the collective by modern political cinema under conditions in which people are acknowledged to be missing: By using real characters who become “intercessors,” the author becomes a “collective agent” whose utterances carry the seeds of a people to come (1989: 223).

This is the moment to observe the intrinsic connection of two other concepts, “becoming” and “minorities,” with the concept of collective enunciation in Deleuze’s framework. Since a collective assemblage, in our case the “film” itself, is the element that causes the terms or parties to become, one can talk about becoming only when there is a production of collective enunciations. Consider the difference between the two following formulas: “A becomes B” and “X, which is the actual process of A becoming B” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 106). The first formula is in fact the formula of identification: A becomes B

according to a principle of resemblance, following a model, and so on. It is the second formula that accounts for a process of becoming. It is *with* the assemblage of collective enunciation, *in it*, that the real character becomes a storyteller and the author becomes a collective agent. It is in this manner that there is a real process of becoming which involves both parties in transformation.

Secondly, the formula of becoming itself already provides the explanation why it should require or concern minorities to operate. Indeed, if there has been an identity before becoming, there would never be a process of becoming in the first place. Anything that presumes to have an identity outside the process of becoming will, therefore, make this process impossible. It is because minorities lack such identities by definition, for that is why they are termed minorities to begin with, that they are the necessary medium of becoming. Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of becoming tends to be terribly misunderstood. Becoming is a process in which the individual gains determination or distinction; it is not a vague transformation from one identity to another. The concept of becoming is grounded only when becoming decides on the fate of identity, not if it presupposes the latter. While minority may designate the membership of a set, it essentially designates the becoming of that member. If we look at the situation defined by the real character and the cinema author con-

structured above one last time, we see that the real character first appears, before she enters the assemblage of enunciation, as the member of a set through her private condition, but she also appears, *in the assemblage*, as the storyteller, the agent of a speech-act, through which she crosses the boundary that separates her private preoccupation from politics. One might offer the following formulation: What she is not capable of accomplishing *as* a minority she becomes capable of accomplishing *through* her minority.

Capitalist Reterritorialization and the Condition of Minority

Having delineated these concepts and their interrelation, I now want to move on to Nuri Bilge Ceylan and Zeki Demirkubuz. Deleuze's examples for his minor political cinema in his *Cinema II: The Time-Image* include figures as diverse as Rocha from Brazil, Sembene from Senegal, Perrault from Quebec. This is mainly what may be called an ethno-critical or mytho-critical cinema. It is an ethnic cinema that addresses a missing people in the sense I tried to explain above. This body of film also usually presupposes a colonial history and is explicitly political.

The films of Ceylan and Demirkubuz can neither be said to be political in the sense Deleuze's examples are nor, Turkey having never been a colony, do they have a proper colonial context. It is perhaps this ethno-critical body of films that

constitutes the most dated aspect of Deleuze's argument. The post-colonial contexts and the minority struggles of the sixties and seventies are today disaggregated. Now that the new conditions of the global tendency are set by a new media despotism and its opinion societies, and the fake communities, fabricated subjectivities, and self-fashioned tribes of capitalism, there is even a strain within theory that emphasizes the commodification of difference and appropriation of minorities by the capitalist machine.⁴ Although I agree that the universal tendency of capitalism has been revealed today on a scale that has never been seen before, I do not think that a puerile notion of "appropriation" is the only theoretical alternative available. On the contrary, it can even be argued that the concept of missing people or minorities is even more relevant under the new dispensation. Is it not the case that Deleuze and Guattari's concept of minority, if it is inseparable from collective enunciation and becoming, provide one of the most radical critiques of any politics of identity? At any rate, I will argue that the films of Ceylan and Demirkubuz that I will be dealing here are still defined by the problematic of the missing people or minorities, and that this problematic finds its expression in a "national allegory" in Ceylan's cinema and takes the form of a "search" for

⁴ Zizek's (1997) critical reflections are among the first to come to mind on this issue.

a new people in the cinema of Demirkubuz.

Capitalism can never acknowledge that people are missing. On the contrary, it compensates for this by constantly inventing fake subjectivities, people who must at all costs be identified and are good enough as consumers or opinion holders. Deleuze and Guattari were referring to this when they argued that capitalism compensates for its “deterritorialization” by a complementary “reterritorialization” (1983). Minorities or missing people are an eternally deterritorialized people; conversely, all reterritorialized people are fake substitutes. I take it that the experience of a multifaceted capitalist reterritorialization is the defining condition for both directors with which I am concerned here. This is particularly true since Turkey has witnessed an immense process of capitalist decoding in the last thirty years or so, which makes the political conjuncture I refer to a relatively recent phenomenon. And both directors belong to a generation early enough to witness the acceleration of this process and know a period where things were qualitatively different. Their filmic production that roughly spans the years between mid-nineties and mid-two thousands is confronted, therefore, with the specific problem of how to define itself against the movement of reterritorialization.

If one looked for an example of this reterritorializing tendency, one of the most appropriate would indeed concern minorities as such. In

a work that can be read as an excellent record of capitalist reterritorialization in Turkey, Nurdan Gürbilek characterizes the eighties as a period in which “two different projects of power, two different politics of discourse, ultimately two different strategies of culture” were staged simultaneously. If one mandates blatant oppression and bans, the other advocates for the seduction of souls for a more total political power. If one forces silence, the other offered ever more channels of speech for self-expression and so on (2014: 8-10). With hindsight, we can perhaps see today that the second project or strategy of power, without diminishing the least of violence or the need for it, has matured and finally become dominant, in a way that signals the global constitution of a capitalist world market.⁵

Against this background of generalized reterritorialization, one can observe that the long-standing conflict with the Kurdish minority in Turkey entirely gets recoded in the language of identities and rights or, as it is sometimes euphemistically put, the “recognition of differences.” As I have already suggested, this does not at all mean the end of violence, but through the reterritorialization on the media representation and international axiomatic of rights two simultaneous effects take place. First, the complex historical

⁵ An exemplary narrative of this constitution is found in Hardt and Negri (2000). Particularly compelling is the discussion on the third chapter, “Passages of Production.”

and political question becomes just another representation in the market to compete with the others, which means that several other subjectivities are already in the making. And secondly, any genuine public attuned to the question is destroyed in advance since people are isolated in what now becomes a matter of their personal opinion and choice. The masses have their opinions about what they nevertheless cannot understand and their choices on which they cannot decide. What, they are told, can only be grasped by experts, becomes a matter of having an opinion about or making a choice between. And when the reaction of the masses is animosity—the most expected outcome since everything is now a question of identity—the intellectuals, who are now the guardians of the representations that form the only atmosphere to breathe in, disdain them. Administered and disdained, the people are abandoned in an objective state of fragmentation. This is in fact nothing other than the universality of minority. Minority becomes the universal figure since minorities are defined by an existence in an objective state of fragmentation, which is why they are missing. Nuri Bilge Ceylan must surely have something of this in mind when he dedicated his award, for the best director in the 2008 Cannes Film Festival, to his “beautiful and *lonely* country.”

The Politics of Zeki Demirkubuz and Nuri Bilge Ceylan

Asuman Suner’s (2010) important survey of recent Turkish cinema remains one of the most comprehensive discussions on Ceylan and Demirkubuz. She formulates the sense in which one can see these two filmmakers as political in the following way:

Although neither of these directors directly engages in political issues, their films are implicitly political in their relentless interrogation of the question of belonging. In contrast to the popular nostalgia films that describe situations in which home is threatened from outside, the films of Ceylan and Demirkubuz focus on situations where home is challenged from within (2010: 18).

Suner’s work is an exercise in thematic criticism. The three topics announced in her subtitle—belonging, identity, memory—classify different cinematic practices and arrange them over this same topography in divergence or agreement. The lengthy plot summaries of particular films one finds in the book also attest to the thematic nature of her criticism. My reading of Ceylan and Demirkubuz is rather interested in diagnosing “formal” (or “rhetorical” or “textual”) tools in these films which shed light on socio-political situations that the aesthetic solution (i.e. the film) is a response to. “Seriality,” “national allegory,” the presence of “real cha-

racters,” “autobiographical elements” are such tools for me. Thus, I do not think that thematic criticism alone can adequately reveal the political investment in the films.

For instance, Suner’s claim in the above quotation is that Ceylan and Demirkubuz are held captive by a crisis of identity, like popular nostalgia films, although unlike them their attitude is reflexive in the face of this crisis. However, as I already revealed, in my reading Ceylan and Demirkubuz are not captivated by an identity crisis; rather, they perceive and treat identity (rightly in my opinion) as an important effect of the contemporary form of political power and seek to develop an aesthetic resistance to it. Suner wrote earlier that “nostalgia films voice a critique of present day Turkey through an idealized representation of the past as an age of collective childhood” (2010: 16). I would rather suggest that they are, let alone being its critique, the symptoms of the present day Turkey: The Turkey that turns even the items and issues of the present day into misty relics since it is incapable of grasping its own present. As opposed to this, *Clouds of May*, for instance, precisely because it grasps the present as what it is, seeks to critique it by confronting it with an impossible past.

These are in fact related to broader issues of periodization of Turkish history. Suner relies on the commonplace diachronic periodization of Turkish history which places an enormous weight on the issue of

the problematic process of modernization. However, it is also possible to see the problematic of modernization as *passé* under the conditions of a synchronic global world system, so that aesthetic production such as Ceylan’s and Demirkubuz’s addresses the challenges of this present form of political power.⁶ In this sense, saying that Ceylan and Demirkubuz are “implicitly political” is not enough for me. My understanding of the political nature of their films are essentially different from that of Suner’s.

A feature common to both Demirkubuz and Ceylan is working with real characters. If the historical conjuncture has shifted decisively for political cinema, the possibilities that real characters have in store for cinema itself certainly proved essential. The greatest example for this today is the Iranian filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami. Yet, on this point too Deleuze’s discussion seems illuminating: The issue should not be settled on the presence or absence of non-professional actors. What is important is the potential of the real characters to transform the image. They have this potential since their gestures and speech, encountering the director’s idea, tend to transform into “unforeseen” images. It is in this sense that Kiarostami claims without any exaggeration that he has learned about “life” through working particularly with non-professional actors. His description of

⁶ For a recent alternative periodization like this see Eken (2014).

the bilateral relationship between the author and the actor is striking: The director pushes the actor forward, but then it is he who follows the actor; the director will eventually take the actor to where he planned, but it is the actor who determines how the director gets there; the director determines the direction, the actor the actual route.⁷

Ceylan's cinematographic policy certainly betrays Kiarostami's influence. In his first three feature films he works exclusively with non-professional actors. His second film, *Clouds of May*, on which I will focus today, casts the director's own mother and father, and, in *Climates*, his fourth film, the director himself and his wife are cast as a couple. It is not without importance for my argument that the casting takes the family as the element to work on. How can this very personal and autobiographical investment be said to condition, as I suggest, a collective political expression?

Fredric Jameson's theses on "national allegory" might offer some help. The acknowledgement of and commitment to minorities, the resistance against the false communities of reterritorialization, this is what conditions the allegory of *Clouds of May*. Here, the story of the private individual destiny is indeed an allegory of the embattled public situation. The main line of thematic development is the story

of a filmmaker son and his father: The son who returns to his hometown in the country desiring to make a film, in search of characters, and finally settles on the alternative of casting his parents; and the father who is entangled in a juridical battle with the state for a piece of land with a stand of oak trees that is under the threat of being marked for cutting down. This is the same place where we will see the son shooting his film later, during which the terrible fate of the grove of trees will also be revealed. This land is therefore at the intersection of two personal stories and pushes them into an allegorical level since, inscribing in the same space the artist, the peasant, and the state, it appears as an intensive locus of political power, nature, and art. It is in this way that the father functions as the allegory of unalienated labor or a utopian relation to nature, whereas the son allegorizes the third world artist who is in perpetual crisis, lacks a private poetics, and is guilty of a complicity with the violence of the state even if only through his aestheticism and his indifference.

But the most important thing here for my argument is that the allegory takes effect only insofar as the land signifies an irretrievably lost world, a destruction already taken place, a world already in the past. It is through this unflinching acknowledgment of destruction or loss that the figures function allegorically. I think this is how one must read the final scenes of the

⁷ This is found in Kiarostami's video-lecture *Ten on Ten*, a companion disc to his film *Ten* (2004).

film: The sun rising on the father, his head heavy, falling asleep in a world that is gone, irretrievably in the past. Moreover, it is impossible not to take the dedication to Chekhov at the end as an allusion to *The Cherry Orchard*. In Chekhov's play the orchard that will soon be razed to the ground by the *nouveau riche* signifies the passing of a whole era, and the play ends with the aged servant forgotten and locked inside the great mansion by the leaving company: "Well, it is all over now, and I never even had a life to live" (1998: 385).

Clouds of May remains faithful to the truth of collectivity only on the condition that it acknowledges the world it depicts as already past. Neither a celebration of the country life nor a reterritorialization on the country people, it is an elegy of a world destroyed by capitalism. To put it differently, the condition of possibility of this film is a situation in which the city-country distinction is no longer valid. Rather, what becomes manifest, in the now universal subsumption of capital, is the painful truth that people are missing, that the world in which they existed has been destroyed. This is certainly how the film *a priori* condemns any attempted reterritorialization.

Unlike Ceylan's elegiac and meditative style, the films of Zeki Demirkubuz are distinguished by their sharp and apodeictic storytelling, which is perhaps a sign that the problematic has changed direction. The acknowledgment of an irre-

trievable loss induces a meditative attitude, whereas Demirkubuz's cinema seems to be animated by something racing beyond its frame. It proceeds by obsessive framings, the montage of short takes, and a camera that does not try to hide its presence. Ceylan's meditative style reaches its peak in *Climates*, a film released in 2006, in which the director and his wife play a couple whose relationship is breaking down. Several-minutes-long close range shots of faces find their corollary in the impressive landscapes. *Climates* can be usefully compared with *The Waiting Room*, Demirkubuz's film released in 2003, with which it shares things in common.

The Waiting Room also casts the director himself and his wife. Although it is about a filmmaker who is trying to put Dostoevsky's Ras-kolnikov into film and suffers from both what he feels to be his pretentiousness and an acute crisis of truthfulness, the life of the couple is no less part of the film's story. Indeed, "women" seem to be the only other indispensable component in this environment of existential crisis that has to do with artistic creativity. It is as if the rehabilitation of the artistic capacity is coterminous with the rehabilitation of the relationship with women. Lethargically sitting in front of the television all day, the director in the film gets rid of his lover using her doubts about him as an opportunity; starts an affair with his assistant during her brief stay in his apartment because of her own problems; and finally, after the

eventual departure of the assistant toward the end of the film, a young woman, a candidate for a role in the movie who comes by his apartment because no one remembered to cancel her appointment, moves in with the director. Abandoning the Dostoevsky project, the director starts another one about “himself.” But it all ends on a note of uncertainty and postponement, the artistic work as well as the future of the couple.

The Waiting Room is almost entirely shot in the apartment. In the film, the outside is reduced to sheer spectacle, whereas the private element is suffocating. Rather than being a place of awareness, it reveals nothing. The room is filled with the impenetrable spectacle of television: One poignant scene registers this well at a moment when the television occupies the room with a demonic character while its inhabitants left momentarily.

This feature of casting oneself, and as it happens one’s wife, motivates a brief reflection on an aspect of Ceylan’s and Demirkubuz’s cinema that concerns the “serial” organization of their films. The serial organization is conditioned precisely by the lack of a private poetics and subject matter. Put very crudely, imagine a situation in which the author is not in a position to “decide” to make a film about Titanic or Holocaust. In a way, this was the failure of the director in Demirkubuz’s film: The ridiculous decision to film Dostoevsky’s novel that takes place in the void. Because the material is intrinsically collec-

tive in this cinema—a minor, second generation political, or third world cinema—one does not know what can become of it until one makes the film and falls back on the films that have already been done for the next one. This is what explains the predominance of the autobiographical in this cinema without contradicting the observation about the necessarily collective nature of its material. As Jameson would say, the psychological is politicized in the third world, whereas the political is re-psychologized in the West. Then, casting oneself, putting oneself in front of the camera appears to be something like the limit of the series. It marks something like the “present” of the filmmaker, some kind of taking stock of his work and life. In Ceylan’s cinema this is quite obvious. His first three films are literally made out of each other.⁸ And now at the limit of the series, in *Climates*, having passed through his father and mother, the director puts himself and his wife in front of the camera. The limit of the series in Demirkubuz

⁸ His first feature film, *The Small Town*, casts four of the characters that will appear in his second film, *Clouds of May*. The shooting sequence in *Clouds of May* returns to the camping scene in *The Small Town* and shows, so to speak, its site of production: Both the location and the story are the same. The third film, *Distant*, is based on two characters from *Clouds of May*, the filmmaker and the cousin from the country who helped him in his movie. But this time they are in Istanbul, in the filmmaker’s apartment who is in this film a photographer, as the cousin has been anxious to leave the town and now stays with the photographer while looking for a job.

appears to be *The Waiting Room*; whereas *Destiny*, the film made after *The Waiting Room* returns, in a way that reveals the serial logic, to the first film (*Innocence*) that Demirkubuz owns without any hesitations. *Destiny* tells the story of the youth of the two main characters that we see in *Innocence*.

I recount these to arrive at a comparison between Ceylan's *Climates* and Demirkubuz's *The Waiting Room*. Through the figure of the "woman" and the theme of the "couple," such a comparison can reveal the divergence in their treatment of the notion of minority. I suggested above that the problematic of missing people takes the form of a "search" in Demirkubuz, the search for a new people, whereas it takes, as we have seen, the form of national allegory in Ceylan.

An excellent essay on the films of Ceylan by the well-known film theorist Robin Wood provides a point of departure. Wood suggests that we should read *Climates* as a study of "the marital problems arising out of radical feminism and its consequences." He contrasts it with the "domestic setup" in *Clouds of May* which, he suggests, is operative because the father and the mother accept the traditional roles of husband and wife, and with *Distant*, which is mainly a study of a non-sexual relationship between two males. He is so impressed with *Climates* that it is worth quoting him at some length:

I can't believe that they [Ceylan and his wife] could make a film so poised, so totally lacking in any aura of sensationalism or public self-flagellation, in which the problems of male/female relations in our contemporary cultural situation are so inwardly analyzed, without having experienced them, to some extent, themselves, and been able to pass beyond that to self awareness. I can't think of any other film as intelligent, as subtle, or as devastating in its sensitivity to the problems of heterosexual relationships in the postfeminist era (2006: 280).

I think that Wood's reading is revealingly mistaken, particularly when he judges that the "domestic setup" of the father and mother in *Clouds of May* works because of the unquestioned traditional family roles. The reason for his mistake is that one cannot transfer the categories that apply to the couple in *Climates* to the world of the father and the mother in *Clouds of May*. As I have argued above, the world of *Clouds of May* is essentially a past world, a past that has never been present in a sense, which enables Ceylan to provide a figure of collectivity without falling back on a pastoral vision. It is precisely due to this temporality that the world of *Clouds of May* does not admit of any transfer from the present. It is not even appropriate to speak of domesticity there, let alone of couples, insofar as the family remains essentially open to the social field, co-extensive with the village, and

not sealed off as a private domain as the modern family is. A scene in the movie, in which the filmmaker and his assistant enter a house in search of location where they find a baby asleep, seemingly without anyone in the house and the door unlocked, is emblematic of this situation.

If the couple simply does not have any chance or future in Ceylan, as it is evident in *Climates*, this is less because of the lessons of feminism than for the fact that the couple for Ceylan is only a reterritorialization, a false community. Indeed, the couple in *Climates* is a typical slave of the signifier: Nothing is ever done with in their world, everything keeps returning. One says things whose memory of having been said is more poisonous than the words themselves are. No conversation is possible because what one does when one speaks is to try to rid oneself of the poison. In an equally emblematic scene at the beach, which functions like the representation of the content, the “monologue” of the man, who is rehearsing his speech to announce to the woman that they should split, unexpectedly turns into a “dialogue” in the space of a couple of shots. What can be said already carries the memory of things that have been said. Thus, she cannot get over an affair he had had, and he says ridiculous things like “I feel a great potential for change this time.” One can say that Wood’s reading misses the logic of the serial organization of films. He retroactively imposes on the series the logic of the limit

case (*Climates*), which he equates with Ceylan’s outlook. However, not only such a transposition is a parallogism, it is *Clouds of May* and not *Climates* that embodies Ceylan’s outlook, if one has to name one.

It is significant that Ceylan takes his subjects outdoors and situates them against the background of impressive landscapes. It is as if he is trying to measure the distance from the primordial nature found in *Clouds of May*. This is probably why it was necessary that the couple in *Climates* is depicted against the background of nature: In this way Ceylan negates the space of the private, and the figures deserve the elegiac and meditative tone of his cinema. Demirkubuz, on the other hand, mostly prefers interiors and examines his subjects in cramped spaces, precisely because these interiors are not private or domestic spaces: Hotel rooms, night clubs, buses, coffee houses, police stations, and so on. The couple essentially belongs to these spaces in Demirkubuz, because in his cinema the woman who carries the couple outside the domestic bond has a prominent place. In *The Waiting Room* the man and the woman do not leave the apartment because, first, there is no outside but the spectacle, and second, the women in this film essentially belong to domestic spaces. However, for Demirkubuz, there is an outside to be excavated in those non-private interiors.

Thus, everything is very different in his cinema, particularly in relation to the couple and the woman.

If in Ceylan the couple simply has no future against the background of an irretrievable loss, in Demirkubuz the world of domestic couples is left behind by means of the woman figure. The woman in Demirkubuz is, on the one hand, the agent of the taming of forces, the organization within the existing society, and even of conformism as such, but on the other hand and equally, she is the agent of excess, the destruction of boundaries, morality, and any kind of rational organization. A new bond replaces that of the couple, the prototypical form of which is depicted in *Innocence* and *Destiny* as the bond between the man whose love is unrequited and the woman who is besotted with another man who is now in prison. They nevertheless stick together in a milieu where there is nothing private. This is the medium of Demirkubuz's search for a new population out of the missing people. He takes it in the direction of the lower classes, the poor, the world of petty criminality and sordid nightlife. In this world, consciousness is useless; in fact everyone is already aware of everything. The private does not evolve in Demirkubuz; it barely exists anyway, each person lives the share of life allotted to him or her: "Destiny," the characters confess to each other. However, this is also where they point toward something beyond themselves. A light that comes from elsewhere, perhaps of a people yet to come, embraces these mediocre people. It is as if Demirkubuz is constantly looking for this

missing people in the feelings, modes of behavior, gestures, speech and reflexes of the characters that we see on the screen. For example, it is very instructive to see how the regime of the signifier completely disappears between the man and the woman whose bond is no longer that of a couple. The man's "You ruined my life," in *Destiny* and *Innocence* for example, is not the same speech-act as in a middle class family or between a couple. If it brings to surface the ugliness which has been concealed by propriety when it is finally uttered in the family, among these people, conversely, the ongoing ugliness hides a deeper "innocence." Anything can be said and forgotten; nothing returns. It is as if all parties already acknowledged the uselessness of passions. Especially in *Innocence* and *Destiny*, woman's sexuality is acknowledged to such a degree that it becomes destructive, it denies *eros*, and she grows strangely philosophical.

It is perhaps appropriate to call Demirkubuz's a cinema of the will. The truth of the will is directly proportional with the harshness of its trials. In this sense, the poor and the lower, who are immersed in the misery of evil, are perhaps the only ones who carry, without knowing it, the seeds of the innocence of a future people. Beneath identity and outside the world of private domesticity, Demirkubuz's cinema substitutes its search for a missing people as way of resisting fabricated communities of the contemporary capitalist society.

Conclusion

I have been arguing in this essay for the continuing relevance of Deleuze and Guattari's notion of minor literature/cinema for the cinematographic productivity of Demirkubuz and Ceylan in a period characterized by the newer conditions of an advanced capitalism. One of the most important symptoms of this new phase is the functionality of a politics of identity, itself based on a logic of multiculturalism, for the capitalist orchestration of social desire. I argued that the cinema of Demirkubuz and Ceylan record this development and seek to resist it. This aesthetic resistance is most tangible in the discomfort the films of these cinematographers express against forms of community — whether this is the world of the couple, rediscovered traditional bonds, liberated individualism, or any self-fashioned positive identity— propagated by the current regime of media control.

Among the constellation of concepts that together form the idea of minor literature/cinema, “collective enunciation” is particularly crucial for the investigation of this type of unconventional political investment in cinema. Collective enunciation in minor cinema refers to the set of formal devices capable of elevating the discourse of a given film to a level at which it can, *in principle*, form bonds with the life of collectivities, particularly under those conditions where such a relation becomes almost impossible to imag-

ine. I argued that the absence of a private poetics, what I called the “serial” logic of productivity, the textual economy of the autobiographical element, national allegory, non-professional actors, and the milieu of lower classes in these films can be conceived as such formal tools for the construction of an assemblage of collective enunciation.

One question, however, might legitimately linger in the minds of the reader: “What about those films made by these directors after the ones discussed in this essay?” In his ongoing cinematic practice, for example, Ceylan seems irreversibly to abandon the employment of non-professional actors. Yet another example is provided by the gradual disappearance of seriality: the screenplay, in a way that is also valid for Demirkubuz, seems to gain more autonomy. One can speculate that the earlier films were, for the directors, the culmination of period of social “transition” which created a poignant contrast between an old and the new situation. Today's “new” Turkey, however, builds itself the eternal present of the advanced industries of culture without a visible alternative. So it is a question for future research whether one can observe an equal political investment in the later films by Demirkubuz and Ceylan as in the earlier ones. The category of collective enunciation will not cease to be useful for this research, since it does not refer to a fixed set of principles but to variable formal tools that might be put into political use. One

must ask which textual devices are capable of putting into motion a collective assemblage for a given socio-political period. And this could be seen as one of the final lessons of Deleuze and Guattari's minor literature/cinema: in art nothing can guarantee a political perspective.

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