



Ali: Fear Eats the Soul

Rainer Werner Fassbinder

European Cinema
Education for Youth

PEDAGOGICAL PACKAGE



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PREFACE BY JULIANE LORENZ



I have good news for this brochure's readers: Fears of children and youth being misled or beguiled through indiscriminate use of digital media are not unfounded. However, good curricula are now available for teachers, parents and all media educators to allow them to impart film culture to young users in an entertaining manner. The digital text

and image offerings from the **CinEd project** are helpful in this context, and they are easy to understand for lessons on film education. I remember my own film education in the early sixties in what was West Germany at the time. There were no terms such as media education and communication education at our schools. However, starting at the age of six, I was lucky enough to watch films my stepfather, Dieter Lorenz, showed me for educational purposes. He worked as a film projectionist at the *Freiwillige Selbstkontrolle der Filmwirtschaft GmbH* (FSK, the German self-regulatory body of the film industry) and the *Freiwillige Selbstbewertung* (FBW, the German self-regulatory evaluation body) in Wiesbaden-Biebrich. I was certainly not timid about watching films when I visited my stepfather; I asked him to put me on the high stool next to one of the two film projectors so I could look through the projection hole. While I was doing so, an honourable evaluation team in the FSK's cinema hall watched the films that had been submitted one af-

ter another. During the subsequent evaluation process, they discussed which level of evaluation and form of approval the film would be granted. At the age of fourteen, I began reading film reviews in the newspaper *Die Zeit*, mostly those written by Hans Christoph Blumenberg, and began to experience a more targeted film education as a result. I then primarily watched films by Luciano Visconti and Jean Renoir. Later on I also watched films by Pier Paolo Pasolini, which I found challenging. I watched all of these films on a big cinema screen and I literally experienced a Cinema Paradiso effect that I can still remember to this day. It was these experiences in my early years that filled me with enthusiasm for films for the rest of my life. With that in mind, I would like to thank not only my deceased stepfather for introducing me to film, but also my late working and life partner, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, who taught me about more than just cinema.



CINED: A FILM COLLECTION TOWARDS A EUROPEAN PEDAGOGY OF CINEMA

CinEd is dedicated to the transmission of the Seventh Art as a cultural object and a means to help conceive the world. To accomplish this, a common pedagogy was developed based on a collection of films selected from the filmographies of CinEd's partner countries. This approach aims to adapt to our times and to the fast, continuous, and significant changes in the way we see, receive, broadcast, and produce images. These images are seen on different types of screens: from the largest – that of a movie theatre – to the smallest on our smartphones, and likewise on TV and computer screens or tablets. Cinema is an art that is still young; its death has been predicted many times; needless to say this did not happen.

These changes impact cinema and must be considered when thinking about the transmission of it – particularly in the increasingly fragmented way we watch films on various screens. CinEd's publications propose and assert a pedagogy that is sensitive, inductive, interactive, and intuitive, offering knowledge, tools for analysis, and the potential for a dialogue between images and films. The works are considered on different scales, naturally as a whole, but also in fragments and according to different temporalities – singling out stills, shots, and sequences.

This teaching material is an invitation to engage with the films in a free and flexible way. One of the main challenges being to seize the cinematographic images with intelligence, using different approaches: their description – essential step for any analytical process – and the ability to extract and select images, to organise, compare, and confront them. This includes images both in the film being discussed and in other films, as well as images from all visual and narrative arts (photography, literature, painting, theatre, cartoons...). The objective is that images no longer elude us, but rather make sense; in that sense, cinema is an art of synthesis that is especially valuable in building and strengthening the gaze of young generations.

Authors:

The artists, curators and authors **Malve Lippmann** and **Can Sungu** live and work in Berlin, where they run the interdisciplinary project space bi'bak, which they also founded and in which they make transnational, post-colonial, postmigrant and global perspectives visible at the intersection of film, art, science and community.

Dr Martin Ganguly is a film educator, teacher, author and lecturer. He leads the school project of the Generation section of the Berlin International Film Festival and regularly works with students on Fassbinder's oeuvre. He has contributed sections to this text on pedagogical application and comparison with other films in the CinEd catalogue.

Acknowledgements:

We would like to thank the Rainer Werner Fassbinder Foundation and its president, Juliane Lorenz, the R.W.F. Werkschau GmbH, Antonio and Iris Exacoustos, and the colleagues from the DFF Fassbinder Center, Frankfurt: Hans-Peter Reichmann, Isabelle Bastian and Simon Lames.

Overall coordination CinEd: Cinemateca Portuguesa-Museu do Cinema

Coordination CinEd Germany: DFF – Deutsches Filminstitut & Filmmuseum e.V. in cooperation with the German Film Academy Berlin: Sebastian Rosenow, Christine Kopf, Katja Hevemeyer, Karin Schyle

Educational coordination: Nathalie Bourgeois

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WHY THIS FILM TODAY?

“Happiness is not always fun”. (*From the intro to Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*)

“I am not at all what you think I am”. (James Baldwin in the film *Meeting the Man: James Baldwin in Paris*)

Without a doubt, Rainer Werner Fassbinder is one of the most significant filmmakers in German film history and a representative of *New German Cinema*. During his short life, he filmed 40 motion pictures, two television series and three short films in addition to writing 24 plays. *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* is an exceptional masterpiece of its time and, according to the authors, one of Rainer Werner Fassbinder's best films. This film marked Fassbinder's first success at international film festivals and won both the FIPRESCI – the International Film Critics Prize – and the prize from the ecumenical jury in Cannes in 1974. Fassbinder describes society in the young Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) with extreme accuracy in this film. He mercilessly criticises the suppression of the recent National Socialist trauma in an incomparable manner. He shows how racist structures and the *Blockwart* (a block leader in Nazi Germany) mentality continue to exist unchanged and without reflection in German society. The protagonist, Ali, is one of the economic migrants (called *Gastarbeiter*, which means “guest workers”) who were invited to work in the FRG through the recruitment agreements concluded between 1955 and 1973. The romantic relationship between Emmi and Ali constitutes a two-fold taboo breach in this narrow-minded society: As a couple, they are marginalised by their social milieu not only because of their considerable age difference but also because of their different cultural backgrounds, which society considers inappropriate for a couple.

By choosing the older woman Emmi as a protagonist, Fassbinder also radically undermines the typical depiction of women in mainstream film. He creates a perceptive and very realistic image of a strong working woman who in no way corresponds to the commercially marketable ideals of beauty. By doing so, he gives his protagonist a strong voice representing an unconventionally nuanced female position. Throughout the dramatic love story between Emmi and Ali, the film addresses topics such as racism and marginalisation and analyses the social mechanisms behind them. These analyses can definitely be applied to the present and contribute to a better understanding of the balances of power in European society.



TECHNICAL DATA

Year: 1973/1974

Country: Federal Republic of Germany (FRG)

Runtime: 93 minutes

Format: Color - 1 : 1,85 - 35mm

Budget: approx. 260,000 DM (German Marks)

World premier: 5 March 1974 at Filmtheater am Lenbachplatz, Cinemonde in Munich

Director: Rainer Werner Fassbinder

Assistant director: Rainer Langhans

Screenplay: Rainer Werner Fassbinder

Producer: Rainer Werner Fassbinder

Production company: Tango-Film (Munich)

Director of photography: Jürgen Jürges

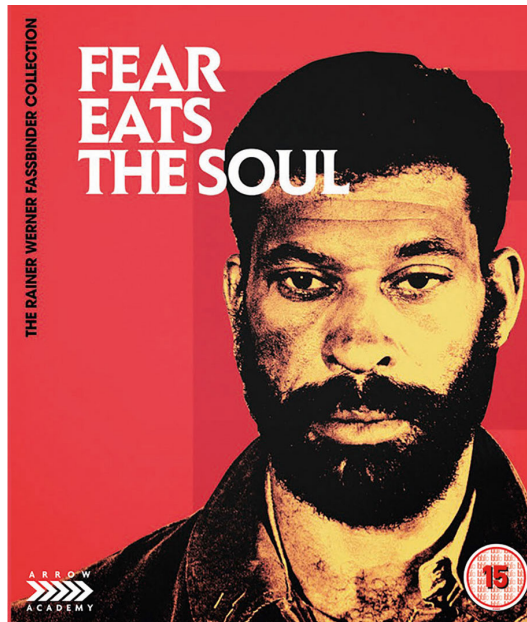
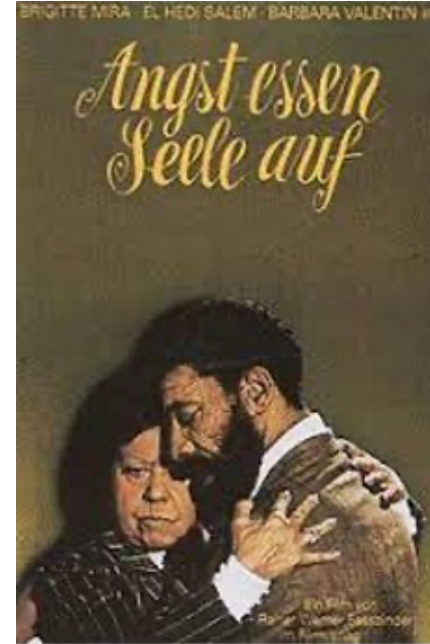
Editing: Thea Eymész

Sound: Fritz Müller-Scherz

Set design: Kurt Raab

Cast: Brigitte Mira (Emmi Kurowski), El Hedi ben Salem m'Barek Mohammed Mustafa (Ali), Barbara Valentin (Kneipenwirtin Barbara), Irm Hermann (Krista), Elma Karlowa (Frau Kargus), Anita Bucher (Frau Ellis), Gusti Kreissl (Paula), Doris Mattes (Frau Angermeyer), Margit Symo (Hedwig), Katharina Herberg (Mädchen in der Kneipe), Liselotte Eder (Frau Münchmeyer), Peter Gauhe (Bruno Kurowski), Marquard Bohm (Herr Gruber), Walter Sedlmayr (Lebensmittelhändler Angermeyer), Hannes Gromball (Ober), Hark Bohm (Arzt), Rudolf Waldemar Brem (Automechaniker), Karl Scheydt (Albert Kurowski), Peter Moland (Chef in der Autowerkstatt), Helga Ballhaus (Yolanda), Elisabeth Bertram (Frieda), Rainer Werner Fassbinder (Eugen, Kristas Mann), Kurt Raab (Automechaniker)

FILMPOSTERS



Frames and
Symmetry

Bourgeoisie
and Voyerism

Exclusion
and Loneliness

Urban Space in
the Federal Republic



Guest Worker Migration

Balances of Power

KEY WORD FOCUS – THE EMPTY PUB GARDEN ON A RAINY DAY

FRAMES AND SYMMETRY

Fassbinder constructs his images in an aesthetically stylised manner and according to graphical principles. Frames and framing elements such as doors, trees, passages, and the like structure his imagery. He also uses window screens and railings to create and demarcate areas within images. These structural elements create visual commentary on the relationships between the figures in the image. Some of the shots are static, and image compositions are often based on strict symmetries.

BOURGEOISIE AND VOYEURISM

Not only the voyeuristic, hostile regards from the group of waiters in the pub garden but also the looks from the neighbours, Emmi's colleagues, and her family members, who are also arranged as a fixed group, threaten Ali's and Emmi's living space. As in many of his other films, Fassbinder sharply criticises bourgeois society here. He examines the value systems and control mechanisms adopted from the National Socialist period against the background of German history.

EXCLUSION AND LONELINESS

"Happiness is not always fun" Fassbinder opens the film with these words and gives his spectators an inkling of what is in store for them. It portrays the love story of an intercultural couple with a large age difference, a relationship that should not exist in the eyes of society. Both people flee from their loneliness into a form of togetherness that results in their exclusion from their social milieu (family, neighbourhood, working environment). Emmi has already experienced rejection by her social milieu during her first marriage to a Polish forced labourer. Ali also knows he has nothing to expect but racism and exclusion in German society. He embodies the other and, at the same time, is aware that people abuse his body as an object onto which they can project both their hatred and desire.

URBAN SPACE IN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC

Urban space (in this case Munich) is unimaginable without traces of German history. However, public spaces and

cities in the Federal Republic are changing – among other things, as a result of the migration initiated by the *Anwerbeabkommen* (recruitment agreements between Germany and Turkey as well as other Southern European countries from 1955 to 1973). The traditional „German“ pub is turning into a place where the so-called guest workers socialise. The restaurant where Hitler used to eat is now an Italian osteria. History has also left its mark on family biographies. For example, Emmi's family name, Kurowski, reflects the suppressed period of the *Fremdarbeiter*, „alien employees“.

GUEST WORKER MIGRATION

The film *Katzelmacher* (1969), in which Fassbinder himself plays the role of the economic migrant, had already addressed what is referred to as guest worker migration. The story of Emmi and Ali appears as an intermezzo in his film *The American Soldier* (1970). In *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* (1974) Fassbinder concentrates on the psychological and social problems of economic migrants. Racism, exclusion, otherness and loneliness take centre stage in the film and are represented by the character Ali.

BALANCES OF POWER

The relationship between Emmi and Ali takes a turn in the second part of the film. The balance of power between the two of them shifts. Emmi acquires the superior position of mainstream society and, as a result, is accepted by her social milieu once again. Ali, an economic migrant and person of colour, is alone again, unsettled and adrift in German society.

SYNOPSIS

A LOVE THAT SHOULD NOT EXIST

It is raining outside. Emmi Kurowski, a cleaning lady who is about 60 years old, enters a pub in Munich after the end of her work day. Several men are standing at the counter with two pub girls. They are drinking beer and listening to Arabic music. The pub girls encourage Ali, a Moroccan guest worker, to dance with Emmi, who is at least 25 years his senior. They talk to one another while dancing, and in

the end Ali accompanies Emmi home. After drinking a few cognacs at her kitchen table, he spends the night at her flat. They talk a lot the following morning, get on well and suddenly feel less lonely. However, Emmi's neighbours stare hostilely, her colleagues gossip, the grocer refuses to serve Ali, and the landlord dislikes the purported subtenant. The two of them marry in defiance of the resentment surrounding them. When Emmi shares the news with her children, they reject their mother's relationship completely and in bewilderment – her son Bruno even kicks in her television out of rage. At first, Emmi puts on a brave face, but then she breaks down crying in front of the inert group of staring waiters in the rainy, empty pub garden. Emmi and Ali decide to travel to a place where they can be completely alone.

TURNING POINT: EMMI'S RE-SOCIALISATION

After Emmi and Ali return, everyone appears to have accepted their relationship: Their neighbours could use a strong man in the building. The grocer has realised he cannot get by without Emmi's patronage, owing to the competition from the new supermarket. Her son needs someone to look after his child. Emmi's colleagues, who are even allowed to touch Ali's muscles, realise to their surprise that he is not as dirty and lazy as they imagined foreigners to be. Furthermore, they have a new foreign colleague they can badmouth, and the result is that Emmi is re-integrated into the group of cleaning ladies.

OF COURSE IT WON'T WORK. SO WHAT?

The more the external problems disappear, the more Emmi and Ali become estranged. Ali cannot cope with the fact that Emmi exhibits him to her colleagues yet refuses to cook couscous for him. He enjoys couscous and unpretentious affection from the pubkeeper Barbara. Ali stops coming home and gambles away his money. Finally Emmi seeks him out in the pub, and they dance together again. Emmi promises him all kinds of freedom and asks him to come back. Ali collapses in her arms. In the hospital, the doctors say Ali has a gastric ulcer, the "guest worker sickness". Emmi sits crying at his sickbed.

II – THE FILM

CONTEXT

THE RECRUITMENT AGREEMENTS

The economic upturn that was taking place in the young Federal Republic, which is referred to as the Wirtschaftswunder (economic miracle), resulted from a quickly developing industry and led to a growing need for workers. To compensate for the lack of labour, which became even more severe after the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961, the Federal Republic of Germany concluded recruitment agreements called *Anwerbeabkommen* with Italy (1955), Spain and Greece (1960), Turkey (1961), Morocco (1963), Portugal (1964), Tunisia (1965) and Yugoslavia (1968) from 1955 to 1968. These agreements regulated the work stays for foreign employees. The workers recruited through these agreements had temporary work stays that were bound to their employment contracts and were called *Gastarbeiter* (guest workers) in the Federal Republic. From the end of the 1950s until the end of the recruitment in 1973, approximately 14 million economic migrants came to the Federal Republic. However, many of the foreign workers remained and brought their families over later on.



UNEMPLOYMENT AND XENOPHOBIC SENTIMENTS

The number of unemployed persons in the Federal Republic doubled from 1.1% to 2.6% between 1972 and 1974, with overt xenophobia increasing as a result. In light of the oil crisis and increasing unemployment, recruitment was stopped completely in the year 1973. In order to promote migrant workers' readiness to return

to their home countries, return bonuses (colloquially referred to as get lost bonuses) were issued starting in 1984. Fassbinder addresses these xenophobic sentiments, which were culminating at the time, in *Katzelmacher* (1969) and *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* (1974).

THE OBERHAUSEN MANIFESTO AND NEW GERMAN CINEMA



Various groups of young filmmakers that were demanding a reformation of cinema had formed in the mid-1950s and at the beginning of the 1960s. That is how the *Nouvelle Vague* emerged in France and *Free Cinema* in England. These groups made demands for a politically and aesthetically radical cinema that, instead of lulling spectators, would force them to critically address social issues and political grievances. In Germany, on the occasion of the *8th Oberhausener Kurzfilmtage* (Short Film Festival Oberhausen) in 1962, a group of filmmakers formed around Peter Schamoni, Alexander Kluge, Edgar Reitz, and others. It declared war on non-political domestic film under the motto *Papas Kino ist tot*, meaning *Papa's cinema is dead*. The Oberhausen Manifesto marks the beginning of New German Cinema and a turning point in film culture in the Federal Republic after the Second World War. From that point on, cinema was supposed to challenge spectators, forcing people to think and denounce social injustices, instead of serving as an entertaining diversion. Cinema's purpose was to question and change the world. As authors and artists, filmmakers were supposed to take on an important role through their search for expression. The manifesto resulted in the establishment of the *Kuratorium junger deutscher Film* (Young German Film Board) in 1965 as the commissioned sponsoring institu-

tion. This financial support made numerous productions and the German *Autorenkino* (*film d'auteur*) possible. Rainer Werner Fassbinder was one of the most important directors of New German Cinema, and he helped the movement achieve its international breakthrough.

28. 2. 1962

Der Zusammenbruch des konventionellen deutschen Films entzieht einer von uns abgelehnten Geisteshaltung endlich den wirtschaftlichen Boden. Dadurch hat der neue Film die Chance lebendig zu werden.

Deutsche Kurzfilme von jungen Autoren, Regisseuren und Produzenten erhielten in den letzten Jahren eine große Zahl von Preisen auf internationalen Festivals und fanden Anerkennung der internationalen Kritik. Diese Arbeiten und ihre Erfolge zeigen, daß die Zukunft des deutschen Films bei denen liegt, die bewiesen haben, daß sie eine neue Sprache des Films sprechen.

Wie in anderen Ländern, so ist auch in Deutschland der Kurzfilm Schule und Experimentierfeld des Spielfilms geworden.

Wir erklären unseren Anspruch, den neuen deutschen Spielfilm zu schaffen.

Dieser neue Film braucht neue Freiheiten. Freiheit von den brancheüblichen Konventionen. Freiheit von der Beeinflussung durch kommerzielle Partner. Freiheit von der Bevormundung durch Interessengruppen.

Wir haben von der Produktion des neuen deutschen Films konkrete geistige, formale und wirtschaftliche Vorstellungen. Wir sind gemeinsam bereit, wirtschaftliche Risiken zu tragen.

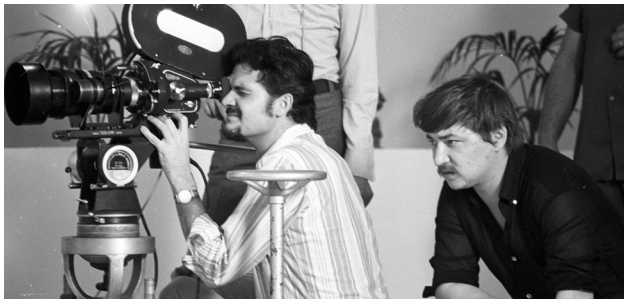
Der alte Film ist tot. Wir glauben an den neuen.

Bodo Blüthner	Walter Krüttner	Detten Schleiermacher
Boris v. Borresholm	Dieter Lemmel	Fritz Schwennicke
Christian Doermer	Hans Loeper	Haro Senft
Bernhard Dörries	Ronald Martini	Franz-Josef Spieker
Heinz Furchner	Hans-Jürgen Pohland	Hans Rolf Strobel
Rob Houwer	Raimond Ruehl	Heinz Tichawsky
Ferdinand Khittl	Edgar Reitz	Wolfgang Urchs
Alexander Kluge	Peter Schamoni	Herbert Vesely
Pitt Koch		Wolf Wirth

THE AUTHOR RAINER WERNER FASSBINDER

CONFLICTED AND ECCENTRIC – REBEL AND WORKAHOLIC

Rainer Werner Fassbinder's life and art were shaped by great contradictions. He was openly bisexual and married twice. He was a rebel who consumed an exorbitant amount of drugs, yet at the same time he was a completely organised workaholic and visionary. Between 1966 and 1982 he realised 41 films, two television productions, three short films and two television series – alongside numerous theatre productions. From the social impacts of the *Wirtschaftswunder* (the German post-war economic miracle) to the suppressed traces of the NS past and a film about the *Rote Armee Fraktion* (the West-German far-left terrorist organization RAF), he confronted bourgeois German society with all of its fears and taboos. He was torn apart and celebrated by critics as his work polarised and triggered fierce debates. Fassbinder was definitely one of the most prominent and controversial artists in the Federal Republic of Germany, owing to his oeuvre and personality.



CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE IN POST-WAR GERMANY

Rainer Werner Fassbinder was born on 31 May 1945, shortly after the end of the war, in Bad Wörishofen. He grew up in Munich as the only child of a translator and doctor. When Rainer Werner Fassbinder was six years old, his parents divorced, and he remained alone with his mother. However, she frequently needed to stay in the hospital due to her tuberculosis. He had a difficult time in school. “My mother was in the hospital, and my

father was not there. So it was completely up to me whether or not I went.” (1) He spent a lot of time at the cinema and was aware of his bisexuality early on. When his mother re-married in 1959, Fassbinder went to a boarding school in Augsburg. However, he soon stopped attending that school and moved to be with his father in Cologne, where he went to evening school. He returned to Munich when he was 18 to take acting lessons at Fridl Leonhard Studio from 1963 to 1966. That is where he met the actress Hanna Schygulla, who would later become a star under his direction. In 1966 and 1967, Fassbinder filmed his first two short films, *The City Tramp* and *The Little Chaos*.

“I DID NOT GO FROM THEATRE TO FILM; I WENT FROM FILM TO THEATRE” (2)

He failed to pass both the state acting exam in Munich and the entrance examination at the recently founded German Film and Television Academy Berlin. He approached film as an autodidact. Fassbinder never committed himself to one medium in his oeuvre. He created films and radio plays, produced for television, and frequently wrote and staged works for the theatre as well.

DISSOLVING THE BOUNDARIES BETWEEN ART AND LIFE

With his colleagues, including Peer Raben, Kurt Raab and Hanna Schygulla, he worked on *action theatre* parallel to various commitments for film and television. Later, he founded the *Antitheater* (anti-theatre) and began to write and stage pieces for it himself. The troupe lived together and experimented with dissolving the boundaries between art and life. For everyone involved in what was often referred to as the “Fassbinder family”, collaboration was marked by quarrels and inner dependencies. Fassbinder created his figures from this intense mixture of life, love, and work; they were often closely tied to his personal view of the companions surrounding him.

(1) Töteberg, Michael RWF, p.20

(2) RWF, Kinofilme I, p. 9

INTENSE PRODUCTIVITY AND FIRST SUCCESSSES

Despite his excessive lifestyle, Fassbinder was extremely productive and soon achieved his first successes: With his filming of the play *Katzelmacher*, created in 1969, he won the *Fernsehpreis der Akademie der Darstellenden Künste* (television award from the Academy of Performing Arts) and the *Filmbänder in Gold des Bundesfilm-preises* (the German Film Award's golden film ribbons) in 1970 for screenplay, direction and production. After the bankruptcy and disbandment of the Antitheater, he founded the production company Tango-Film and produced several motion pictures that received international attention for the first time: *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant* (1972), *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* (1974), and *Fox and His Friends* (1974). In addition, he staged productions at Zadek's in Bremen, in Bochum and in Frankfurt on the Main, where he – as a controversial author and intendant – managed the theatre named Theater am Turm for one season (1974/75). Formally speaking, Fassbinder's films demonstrate his connection to the theatre through their often-theatrical denouements, static tableaux or references to the “estrangement effect, a stylistic device used in epic theatre invented by Berthold Brecht in order to create a reflective distance between characters and the spectator” [alienation effect]. (see p. 12 Bertolt Brecht and the estrangement effect. However, cinematic influences, such as Western elements, can be seen in his plays and theatrical productions as well. Fassbinder's work can thus be classified in the style of New German Cinema, which also included such well-known directors as Wim Wender, Werner Herzog, Volker Schlöndorff, Werner Schroeter, Margarethe von Trotta, and Helma Sanders-Brahms.

THE FASSBINDER FAMILY AND RELATIONSHIP WITH EL HEDI BEN SALEM

Fassbinder's first international popular success was *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* in 1974. After that, he received increasingly large budgets and worked with famous stars. Nonetheless, he remained loyal to his initial troupe: Hanna Schygulla, Irm Hermann, Kurt Raab, Ingrid Caven, Peer Raben, Harry Baer, Barbara Valentin and El Hedi ben Salem. They continued to play roles in his films. Fassbinder met El Hedi ben Salem in Paris. After their meeting, they had an intense romantic relationship, and ben Salem contributed to several motion pictures. (PICTURE_05a) Fassbinder wanted to have ben Salem near him on set constantly, which is why ben Salem occasionally also worked as a prop master and unit manager. Later, two of his sons, Abd El-Kader and Hamdan, were even brought to Germany. In 1974 El Hedi ben Salem was reported to have been involved in a knife fight and had to flee to France as a result. He robbed a jewellery store there, was arrested and died in 1977 in prison. (see p. 12 INTERVIEWS) Fassbinder, who learned of ben Salem's death much later, dedicated his last film, *Querelle*, to his romantic relationship with ben Salem in 1982. Rainer Werner Fassbinder himself died at a very young age on 10 June 1982 in Munich. His concurrent consumption of cocaine, alcohol and sleeping tablets presumably caused his death.



El Hedi ben Salem and Rainer Werner Fassbinder

THE FILM IN THE AUTHOR'S FILMOGRAPHY

ENCOUNTER WITH DOUGLAS SIRK

In 1970 the film museum in Munich showed a retrospective of Douglas Sirk's work, which Fassbinder attended. He was profoundly impressed and described his impressions in a detailed essay (3): "You break down at the cinema. You understand something about the world and what it does to you." His encounter with Sirk triggered a complete re-orientation in Fassbinder and made him critically rethink his work to date with the Antitheater troupe. Under the influence of Douglas Sirk, Fassbinder began taking his figures and characters seriously. "I have found someone who makes art in a way that made me realise what I have to change about myself." What he admired about Sirk was that he "loved people instead of despising them, as we do". Fassbinder once said that Sirk, whom he also met in person and venerated from that time on, had allayed his fears of becoming profane.

PORTRAYING THE DOMINANT CIRCUMSTANCES TO OVERCOME THEM

The films from this period, including *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*, thus mark a turning point in Fassbinder's filmography. The essential and melodramatic elements of Sirk's figures and the simple, almost naive fairytale narration that succeeded in entrancing the public must have impressed him in particular. "Sirk said that film is blood, tears, violence, hatred, death and love. And Sirk made films – films with blood, tears, violence, hatred; films with death and films with love". Some of the changes triggered by Sirk's influence can be detected in an interview carried out before *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* was shot:

"I can imagine that the films I will shoot for the cinema in future won't be quite as pessimistic. For example, I have material for a film that is actually a tragedy, but the film mustn't develop in that direction: It's about an older German lady who is about sixty and a young Turkish guest worker. They marry, and one day she is murdered. No one knows who the murderer is – whether it's her husband or one of his Turkish colleagues. I have already used the story once in a film. It's told in one single long

shot where the chambermaid is sitting on the bed. But I don't want to tell the story as it unfolded. I want to give the young Turk and the old German the chance to live together. Earlier, I certainly would have told the story the way it actually is. That is to say, that the old woman dies because society won't let an old woman and a young guest worker live together. But now it's more important for me to show how people can fight back and still manage, somehow. Now I believe that if you simply reproduce these depressing conditions, you reinforce them. That is why it is better to portray the dominating circumstances so transparently that people become aware of them and to show that they can be overcome". (4)

LABOUR MIGRATION, GUEST WORKERS AND OUTSIDERS IN FASSBINDER'S FILMS

The theme addressed above appears for the first time in *The American Soldier* (1970). In a monologue, the chambermaid tells of the love between a guest worker and a cleaning lady. This version ends with the cleaning lady Emmi being murdered and the perpetrator, perhaps her husband, getting away because all Turks are supposedly named Ali. In *Katzelmacher* (1969), Fassbinder places the Greek Jorgos at the heart of a small-town society that is fixated on money (and plays the role himself). Little is told about Jorgos, who becomes an object and functions as the foreign or the other that the viciously fighting individuals can use to define themselves as a community. They project their fears upon him; they now no longer need to articulate these fears but, instead, allow them to culminate in diffuse attributions. In that manner, the figure of the guest worker turns into a rapist and communist who is known for poor hygiene. *Whity* (1970) tells the story of the illegitimate child of a white landowner and his black cook – another outsider. The entire film revolves around the protagonist, Whity, who is unable to defend himself against injustices. He understands his situation but hesitates to act. The marginalisation of and contempt for migrant workers, minorities and outsiders

are frequently themes in Fassbinder's oeuvre. He mercilessly analyses the mechanisms of social repression and suppression in post-war society. Fassbinder's films after 1970 are formally oriented towards melodramas, and in these works he seeks to address a wide audience without denying personal obsessions or dulling his criticism.



Katzelmacher, 1969 (Fassbinder plays the Greek Jorgos)

(3) RWF, *Imitation of Life*, Über die Filme von Douglas Sirk, 1971

(4) From Christian Braad Thomsen: *Die Ästhetik der Hoffnung*. Rainer Werner Fassbinder über Die bitteren Tränen der Petra von Kant, Acht Stunden sind kein Tag, Welt am Draht und ein Projekt, aus dem Angst essen Seele auf werden wird. In: Robert Fischer (Publ.): *Fassbinder über Fassbinder*. Die ungekürzten Interviews. Frankfurt on the Main 2004. pp. 257-265: p. 263f.

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY



Rainer Werner Fassbinder at work

This Night (1966) (short film, lost)
The City Tramp (1966) (short film)
The Little Chaos (1967) (short film)
Love is Colder than Death (1969)
Katzelmacher (1969)
Why Does Herr R. Run Amok? (1970)
Whity (1970)
The American Soldier (1970)
The Merchant of Four Seasons (1971)
The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant (1972)
Jail Bait (1972)
Bremen Freedom (1972)
Eight Hours Don't Make a Day (miniseries, 5 episodes) (1972–1973)
World on a Wire (1973, two-part television film)
Nora Helmer (1974)
Ali: Fear Eats the Soul (1974)

Martha (1974)
Effi Briest (1974)
Fox and His Friends (1974)
Like a Bird on a Wire (1974)
Mother Küsters' Trip to Heaven (1975)
Fear of Fear (1975)
I Only Want You to Love Me (1975)
Satan's Brew (1976)
Chinese Roulette (1976)
Women in New York (1977)
Germany in Autumn (anthology film) (1978)
The Marriage of Maria Braun – FRG trilogy, part 1 (1978)
In a Year of 13 Moons (1978)
The Third Generation (1979)
Berlin Alexanderplatz (miniseries, 14 episodes) (1980)
Lili Marleen (1980)
Lola – FRG trilogy, part 3 (1981)
Veronika Voss – FRG trilogy, part 2 (1982)
Querelle (1982)

INSPIRATIONS

BERTOLT BRECHT AND THE ESTRANGEMENT EFFECT (ALIENATION EFFECT)

The *estrangement effect* (*alienation effect*) is a theatrical stylistic device Bertold Brecht developed in epic theatre. An action is interrupted by comments or songs so that the spectator's identification with the acting figure is completely destroyed. The goal of this stylistic device is to avoid tainting the spectator's judgement and emotional influences. This device creates a distance between the spectator and what is being portrayed, and this distance makes it possible for the spectator to critically reflect upon and recognise complicated interrelationships.

NAIVE SOCIAL DRAMA WITH FAIRYTALE TRAITS COUNTERACTED BY THE ALIENATION EFFECT

In the tradition of Brecht's *alienation effect*, the figures in *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* function as examples of certain types in their social environment and have little psychological depth. At the same time, however, they have a somewhat archetypal quality similar to fairytale figures. Fassbinder was well aware of this: "I believe that the simpler stories are, the truer they are ... Although the relationships are much more complex, of course – I'm fully aware of that. Nonetheless, I believe that every spectator needs to complete them with their own reality." (5)

MARGINALISATION OF A LOVE REJECTED BY SOCIETY

All that Heaven Allows (Douglas Sirk, 1955) surely provided the structural model for *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*. The plots are parallel – almost identical – and connect Sirk's Hollywood melodramatics with the contemplation of everyday reality in Germany.



(5) From an Interview with Hans Günther Pflaum in the publication «Film-Beobachter», February 1974

RACISM IN EVERYDAY LIFE

In terms of its thematic focus, *Imitation of Life* (Douglas Sirk, 1959) was also a source for Fassbinder where racism in film and everyday life is concerned. Relationships and



class relations are its main themes, and they are surrounded by racial conflict – much as is the case in *Whity* as well

WESTERN INSPIRATION

Fassbinder was a fan of Westerns and constantly drew inspiration for his work from American Western films. This influence is clearest in *Whity* (1970). In addition to many common themes, such as marginalisation, contempt and racism, *Whity* contains several scenes that Fassbinder took up again in *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*. The pub scene in *Whity* is structured similarly to the pub scene at the beginning of *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* (see "Analysis of a sequence", p. 19). There is a physical distance between the outsider, *Whity*, and the guests at the saloon and the cowboys at the counter. *Whity* and the others exchange looks, just like the outsider Emmi and the guests in the pub. The influence of the Western genre is unmistakable in both scenes.



INTERVIEW WITH

HANS GÜNTHER PFLAUM

IN *FILM-BEOBACHTER ON ALI: FEAR EATS THE SOUL*, FEBRUARY 1974 (6)

RAINER WERNER FASSBINDER:

I believe that the simpler stories are, the truer they are; the common denominator for many stories is then one story that is so simple. If we had made the figure of Ali even more complicated, the spectators would have had an even more difficult time handling this story. If this figure had become even more complex, it would have greatly damaged the childishness of this relationship between Ali and Emmi. In its current form, the story is as naive as the people it concerns. Although the relationships are much more complex, of course – I'm fully aware of that. Nonetheless, I believe that every spectator needs to complete them with their own reality. And spectators have that opportunity when a story is so simple. I think people need to find their own opportunities to take responsibility. You can certainly proceed in a strictly ideological manner, but I feel that is not terribly relevant for the broad public. [...] They have the opportunity to, or they are even forced to, withdraw from this story – not to the film's disadvantage, but for the benefit of their own reality. That is what I think is most important. At some point, films need to stop being films and stories and need to start coming to life so people start questioning themselves and their own lives. I believe this film forces everyone to examine their relationships to dark-skinned and older people because the love between these two people comes across as so clear and pure. That is something I believe is quite essential. You simply cannot be simple enough.

(6) <https://www.viennale.at/de/film/angst-essen-seele-auf-0>

HANS GÜNTHER PFLAUM:

On the other hand, this simplicity has an unbelievably provocative effect. For instance, when Ali is sitting in Emmi's flat, we see the large, lonely and empty flat and a small, lonely woman, and Ali tells her about his room where six people live. We automatically ask ourselves whether Ali shouldn't move in with Emmi.

RAINER WERNER FASSBINDER:

Yes, we wanted to try to keep it so simple that the spectator's reaction is always, "Actually, a lot of things could have been possible". I do not believe people cannot change. It's also part of the film's structure that people say yeah, a little differently, that could be a bit better. And if you keep thinking, it could always be a bit better. I am not capable of making a big ideological plan. That is not my task. Other people have more training and are better suited for that job. What interests me are these little possibilities, because I know about them and also consider them to be interesting.

STATEMENTS FROM CONTEMPORARIES ABOUT FASSBINDER AND HIS WORK

"Rainer Werner Fassbinder was the heart of New German Cinema because he was the movement's staunchest narrator; because Fassbinder was both more naive and less biased, freer of scruples and more imaginative than many of his colleagues when grappling with despised, tabooed or forgotten topics, as well as suppressed traditions of German and American cinema, in his work; because he was neither shy of trivial matters nor afraid of sentimental material; because he rediscovered and revitalised the melodrama, the labyrinth of right and wrong, of strong and stifled feelings and emotions – but not to the tune of old, run-down Hollywood's cinema organ. Instead, he did it with the laconism, subtlety and intensity of sentiment of someone who has been hurt".

Wolfram Schütte, *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 19 June 1982



"It is precisely because he produced in such a self-destructive manner and exposed his innermost world to the outside that all of the rough edges and all of the abysses beneath the porous surface of his films have remained visible and give an impression of this disorderly, extremely sentimental and yet extraordinarily professional life. In a way that is difficult to name, fantasy and reality have mixed in the life work he catapulted onto the scene; below the surface, every single film is a testament to the restless search for his own identity".

Peter Buchka, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 11 June 1982

"I saw Fassbinder only three times, most recently at Viktualienmarkt (a daily market and square in Munich). He went in there quickly as though he wanted to be seen and forgotten at the same time. He was wearing jeans and a short little shirt, and of course he was smoking. I turned around after him. I felt as though I were a grandpa dabbling about his everyday business. I'd have liked to have a beer with him, but I didn't think it was appropriate. He seemed like someone you must not hold back".

Herbert Achternbusch, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 10 December 1982

"As an actor, director and producer of large and small films, Rainer Werner Fassbinder constantly lived under the compulsion of having one film follow another, driven by the necessity of creating a coherent oeuvre portraying Germany in its entirety – as he saw it".

Jack Lang, *Werkschau*, 1992.

III – ANALYSIS



1 – Opening title: "Happiness is not always fun."
(00:00:15–00:01:36)



2 – Emmi and Ali meet in the pub. The first dance.
(00:01:27– 00:09:05)



8 – Emmi and Ali in front of and in the registrar's office. "You know what my name is now? – A very long name... – Emanuela ben Salem M'Barek Mohammed Mustapha". Emmi calls her children.. (00:38:02– 00:39:32)

3 – Emmi invites Ali to her place. However, the neighbours stare jealously and gossip that Emmi is together with a foreigner. (00:09:06–00:14:01)



4 – After several cognacs, Ali spends the night at Emmi's place. They talk a lot and have breakfast together in the morning. (00:06:55–00:08:07)



5 – Emmi and her cleaning crew are in a stairwell. Her colleagues deplore women who get involved with foreigners. Emmi becomes frightened. (00:22:29–00:25:17)



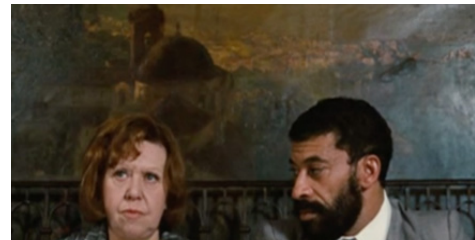
8 – Emmi and Ali in front of and in the registrar's office. "You know what my name is now? – A very long name... – Emanuela ben Salem M'Barek Mohammed Mustapha". Emmi calls her children.. (00:38:02– 00:39:32)



11 – The grocer who has been serving Emmi as a customer for over 20 years refuses to serve Ali. Emmi expects an explanation from him. (00:46:05–00:50:40)



6 – Emmi visits her daughter and admits to having fallen in love with a younger Moroccan. The daughter's husband expresses racist opinions, and the daughter is amused. (00:25:17–00:28:16)



9 – The newly wedded couple indulges in a wedding meal in the restaurant "where Hitler used to eat". Now it is an Italian restaurant. Neither of them is familiar with the cuisine, and both simply order the most expensive dishes on the menu. (00:39:33–00:43:22)



12 – A friend visits Emmi and encounters Ali as well, who is in his bathrobe. Domestic life is taking its course, and they share their income. "We'll be rich, Ali, and we'll buy ourselves a little piece of heaven". The colleague who visits unexpectedly and is introduced to Emmi's new husband is horrified. (00:50:41–00:54:00)



7 – Their relationship grows stronger. The landlord wants to get rid of the purported sub-tenant. Emmi claims she wants to marry Ali. Ali approves of the idea. They go to the pub to celebrate. (00:28:17–00:28:01)



10 – When Emmi shares the news with her children, they reject their mother's relationship bewilderedly – her son Bruno even kicks in her television out of rage. (00:43:33–00:46:04)



13 – Ali invites his Arabic friends to his home. They drink, listen to music and play cards. The neighbours call the police. (00:54:01–00:57:37)



14 – Emmi and her colleagues are taking their midday break. The others exclude Emmi and ignore her. The neighbours consider her marriage to Ali to be indecent, but the landlord does not see anything indecent about it. (00:57:38–00:59:58)



15 – Ali and Emmi are sitting alone in an empty, rainy pub garden. Emmi breaks down crying in front of the inert group of staring waiters. Ali and Emmi decide to go out of town. (00:59:59–01:03:05)



16 – Emmi and Ali return from their holiday. Suddenly, everyone is friendly. The grocer has realised he cannot do without Emmi's patronage, after all. Emmi tasks Ali with helping the neighbours. (01:03:06–01:06:58)



17 – Emmi's son comes to visit because he needs someone to care for his child. Emmi does not want to cook *couscous* because she thinks it's time for Ali to adapt. Ali is unhappy. (01:06:59–01:10:52)



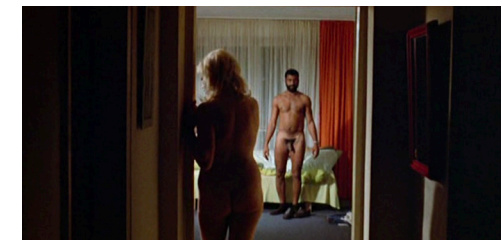
18 – Ali goes to Barbara's place and wants her to cook couscous for him. He has an affair. He comes home drunk. Emmi leaves him lying in front of the door. They do not speak during breakfast the next morning. (01:10:53–01:16:01)



19 – The cleaning crew has a new colleague: Yolanda is a cleaning lady from Yugoslavia. Emmi is accepted again, and now the new colleague is excluded. (01:16:02–01:18:22)



20 – In Emmi's sitting room. Emmi presents Ali to her colleagues. Her colleagues are even allowed to touch his muscles and soft skin. Ali goes away. (01:18:23–01:21:13)



21 – Ali is at Barbara's place again and stays the night. Emmi waits for Ali. (01:21:14–01:22:55)



22 – Emmi looks for Ali at the car repair shop. Ali's colleagues make fun of Emmi. (01:22:56–01:25:22)



23 – Ali gambles away his money at the pub. Since all of his money is gone, he has his friend collect money from Emmi at home. He slaps himself in the WC. (01:25:23–01:27:30)



24 – Emmi comes to the pub and has Barbara put on the record *Du schwarzer Zigeuner* [You Black Gypsy]. Ali asks Emmi to dance. Ali collapses in her arms. (01:27:31–01:30:47)



25 – Ali is in the hospital. The doctor says that Ali, like so many guest workers, has a gastric ulcer. Emmi sits crying at his bedside. (01:30:48–01:33:00)

SOUND: LANGUAGE AND MUSIC

DIFFERENCES CREATED BY LANGUAGE AND ACCENTS

Ali is the only character in the film who speaks broken German. His lack of German skills is the origin of the film's German title *Angst essen Seele auf*, literally "fear eat the soul". The title is based on an Arabic saying that Ali mentions in a conversation with Emmi. Instead of using the proper conjugation, "eats", which Emmi notes and corrects in the scene (chapter 4, the breakfast), Ali uses the plural form "eat" here. The only expression Ali says in Arabic is *kif-kif*, which roughly translates as "it doesn't matter". Not only the broken German Ali speaks and the title, which draws upon a stereotypical "foreigner talk" he has been assigned, reference Ali's linguistic and "cultural background" and reinforce his exoticisation; the Arabic expression *kif-kif* does so as well and adds a bit of depth. These devices underscore his foreignness and cultural otherness once again.

Ali speaks German with his Arabic colleagues, or they answer in German. It may have been a pragmatic production decision to forego the sub-titles for cost reasons or leave them out for the convenience of the film's audience. Moroccan guest workers speaking German amongst themselves probably does not correspond to real circumstances and, therefore, is likely confusing to German-speaking spectators of colour whose family biographies involve stories of migration. Whether or not it was intentional, Fassbinder either ignores the existence of another native language in Germany and its use in everyday life or does not take it into consideration seriously. Even if Fassbinder intended the invented "foreigner talk" to be an estranging device, it deprives the non-German figures of a certain complexity because they can express themselves only as stereotypical imitations of the views of mainstream society.

DEFINING SPACE WITH ON-SCREEN MUSIC

The term on-screen music refers to the use of music whose source is located in the image in films. That means in the film scene it is clear where the music is coming from or how it is being made. *Off-screen music*, on the other hand, refers to music or sound effects whose source cannot be identified through the actions on screen and which the artistic direction has superimposed on the scene. Only *on-screen music* coming from a jukebox, or a radio is used in *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*. The type of music and the language in which the songs are sung are used as devices to define spaces or to create something akin to an additional semantic space in the physical space concerned.

THE ARABIC SONG (AL ASFOURIYEH BY SABAH)

The film begins with an Arabic song (Al Asfouriyeh by Sabah), which can be heard in the intro. This device leads spectators astray at first because the music they assume to be off-screen music (whose source cannot be seen in the image) turns out to come from the jukebox in the opening scene. Spectators are made keenly aware of the music when it is referred to as "foreign music" during the first exchange between the pubkeeper, Barbara, and Emmi. The Arabic song is based on an oriental scale and reinforces the otherness of the space.

When Ali's colleagues visit him at home, they listen to a different song in Arabic. As a result, Emmi's flat becomes a place where Ali and his guests can feel at home. When the neighbours complain to the police about the volume, two policemen demand that Emmi turn the music down. This scene strengthens the alliance between Ali and Emmi at the same time as it makes their social marginalisation clear once again: Now this marginalisation is making even their own flat seem smaller.

DU SCHWARZER ZIGEUNER BY PAUL DORN AND HIS DANCE ORCHESTRA

The song *Du schwarzer Zigeuner* [You Black Gypsy] by Paul Dorn and his dance orchestra from the year 1933 plays on the jukebox during both dance scenes at the opening and end of the film. In the opening scene, the jealous pub girl purposely chooses this song to offend and marginalise Ali with its racist title. However, Ali and Emmi unexpectedly embrace and reinterpret it as a romantic dance song. The song's text addresses a yearning and loneliness with which both of them identify. This very loneliness, which comes from their social stigmatisation (Emmi because of her age, Ali because of his origin), is what unites them as a couple. At the end of the film, Emmi and Ali dance again to the same song. This time, the pubkeeper "pushes" the song on the jukebox upon Emmi's request. Here the song functions as a leitmotiv that underpins the endurance of Emmi's and Ali's love.

IMAGERY: COMPOSITION, LAYERS AND SHOTS

MIRRORS AND REFLECTIONS

In shots in Fassbinder's films, the camera frequently shows the characters in or via mirrors. This perspective makes it possible to give the figures a psychological depth, for example, in order to show an identity crisis, uncertainty or fear, and also to generate additional sub-texts. In *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*, the mirrors primarily illustrate Emmi's and Ali's inner identity conflicts. In the last pub scene, Ali goes to the WC and slaps himself in front of the mirror after having gambled away his money (1:26:29, picture 1). He feels guilt towards Emmi or regrets that some things in his life have gone wrong without his intending them to do so. He punishes himself in an intimate moment. The gaze in the mirror transforms the spectators into the only voyeuristic witnesses. They are expected to pass their own judgement on Ali. In this way, Fassbinder uses mirrors to create intimate moments on the one hand and, at the same time, a distance spectators can use to reflect upon their perception of the characters and, as a result, grapple with their own prejudices.



1

MIRRORED ARRANGEMENT OF SCENES

Another noticeable aspect of the overall structure of the film is the mirrored arrangement of the scenes. The reflection/mirror scenes are also arranged in this manner. After her first night with Ali, Emmi contemplates herself in the WC mirror (20:09, picture 2). She is uncertain whether a young man will accept her body despite her age. Ali opens the door and greets her: "Good morning!" His confirmation acknowledges her female body. Later, as a mirrored pendant to this scene, Ali can be seen in the shower (51:50, picture 3). The spectator's gaze falls upon his naked body – once again via the mirror. This time it is Emmi who opens the door: "You're very beautiful, Ali..." Ali grins, aware of his own (desired) body. Ali's body, which mainstream society stigmatises or defines as exotic, is also accepted by Emmi.



2



3

DISTANCE AND REALISATION IN THE MIRROR

One last mirror appears in the final scene in the hospital. Ali shares the fate of many other guest workers and is lying as though dead in his bed owing to a chronic, untreatable gastric ulcer. After the discussion between Emmi and the doctor, the camera turns to the mirror hanging on the wall. Reflected and arranged in a line from this perspective, Ali and other (guest worker) patients can be seen lying in their sickbeds (chapter 25, time code: 01:31:56, picture 4). This perspective in the mirror creates something akin to an infinity effect, as the spectator associates endlessly consumed "worker material" with it as well. The protagonist Ali becomes a motionless extra in this context. In this manner, the doctor's social analysis of the situation of the guest workers is visualised and, from a distance, generalised as a realisation.



4

SYMMETRY IN THE ARRANGEMENT OF SCENES

The film's dramaturgical structure is based on a symmetric arrangement of the individual scenes, which are reflected around the turning point at the pub garden scene. The mounting exclusion by different social groups (neighbours, family, colleagues, the grocer) is built up in the first half of the film. With Emmi's emotional breakdown, the pub garden scene constitutes the dramatic climax and, at the same time, the turning point of the film (chapter 15, time code: 59:59-1:03:05, picture 1). Their holiday is not shown; it is an empty space that allows the turning point to seem all the more abrupt. In the second half of the film Emmi's re-integration into mainstream society takes place through the same stages (neighbours, the grocer, colleagues, family). Camera shots, motifs and settings are repeated in correlating scenes, and the couple's process of coming together and falling apart is examined relentlessly. The opening scene in the pub, for example (chapter 2, time code: 01:27-09:05, picture 2), is nearly repeated and mirrored with the same dance scene, the same music and the same camera shots in the pub scene at the end (chapter 24, time code 1:27:31- 1:30:47, picture 3). The scene with Emmi's colleagues at work (chapter 14) reappears (chapter 19), and the scene with Ali and Emmi's circle of friends in the flat (chapter 13) also has a pendant: the scene when colleagues visit Emmi and get to touch the exotic man (chapter 20).



1



2



3

IMAGE SYMMETRY AND TABLEAUS

Sometimes the shots are positioned statically, and the image composition is often based on a strict symmetry (see ANALYSIS OF A FRAME, chapter 09, the wedding meal). The society that is observing the outsiders is constantly portrayed as a static group tableau. The threatening gaze of society becomes even sharper owing to the fact that these groups are often shaped like arrows with their points aimed at the people they are observing (see chapter 15, at the pub garden, 59:59-1:03:05 or chapter 02, the meeting, time code: 1:27).

FRAMING AND GRILLES

Fassbinder constructs his images in an aesthetically stylised manner and according to graphical principles. Frames or framing elements such as doors, trees, passages and the like structure his images. He also uses window screens and railings to create and demarcate areas within the image. Grilles form separations between figures or fence them in: One of the neighbours entrenches herself behind a window grille and watches Emmi and Ali in the stairwell. When their colleagues exclude them, Emmi and later Yolanda sit alone at work in the stairwell behind the banister posts as though they were locked in. These structural elements create visual comments on the relationships between the figures in the image and society's voyeuristic gaze.



THEATRE AND FILM – DOORS USED AS ENTRANCES TO WORLDS

"Fassbinder's film is like a theatre play, written and staged in scenes. That why it would be more appropriate to use the term 'scene' instead of 'sequence' when referring to a unit of space and time." Entrances through doors at the beginning of scenes (see chapter 2, Emmi's first appearance at the pub), exits at the end of scenes (see chapter 2, Emmi and Ali exit at the end of the scene) and entrances in the middle of scenes (see chapter 10) underscore this theatrical character.

(7) (in Michael Töteberg (ed.): Fassbinders Filme. Bd3. Frankfurt on the Main 1990. pp. 52-56

ANALYSIS OF A SEQUENCE: THE FIRST ENCOUNTER

(Chapter 2, time code: 01:27-09:05)

THE ACTION

The door opens, and Emmi Kurowski enters the pub. Several men are standing at the counter with two pub girls. They are drinking beer and listening to Arabic music. Emmi remains standing next to the door, then takes a seat at the table beside the door and, uneasily, orders a cola. One of the girls changes the music and challenges Ali to dance with the “old girl” after he brushes her off. Ali asks Emmi to dance and takes her to the dance floor, past the gazes of the others. While the two of them dance to *Du schwarzer Zigeuner* [You Black Gypsy] (8), they talk to one another. Ali accompanies Emmi past the counter and the gazes of the others back to her table, sits with her and also pays for her cola. They leave the pub, and he accompanies her home. The scene ends with the camera freezing on the pubkeeper, Barbara, who remains behind.

CAMERA AND CUTS: FROM WESTERNS TO MELODRAMAS

The first shot is a long shot across a line of tables and beyond into the room Emmi enters using the door at the very back (picture 1). It is followed by a reverse shot of the group at the counter, which stares at the entrant excludingly and is statically arranged as a tableau (picture 2). The next image is a close-up of Emmi. Here, Fassbinder uses a shot/reverse shot montage to underscore the distance between Emmi and the group. This device evokes saloon scenes from Western films. Barbara breaks away from the tableau and goes over to Emmi. The camera does not follow her, as expected. Instead, it focuses on Ali, who is standing at the counter. Then there is another reverse shot to Emmi’s table, where Barbara arrives (picture 3). This time, Barbara disappears from the image frame when the camera moves towards Emmi’s face. Emmi is looking at Ali. This two-fold focus and exchange of gazes make it clear that the plot ahead is going to concern Emmi and Ali.

When the couple goes to the dance floor, the retreating camera initially keeps Emmi and Ali firmly in view. However, when they pass the staring group, the camera pans to the group and remains pointed at it for a moment. Only when the camera cuts to a different perspective are Emmi and Ali, who have already reached the dance floor, visible. The spectator sees them over the tables – and part of the jukebox to the left – as though having taken on the voyeuristic perspective of the others (picture 4). Only in the next shot is the camera close to the others and lets the spectator forget their gazes. During the dance, the tense Western atmosphere changes to a budding melodrama for a moment when the camera remains close to Emmi and Ali (picture 5). Nonetheless, the camera keeps cutting to the group at the counter, which observes and rigidly stares at the dancing couple. (picture 6). At

(8) The word “gypsy” has been written out in full here in order to provide complete information. This word is a term imposed by mainstream society and is loaded with clichés. Most members of the minority group reject it as discriminatory. The Sinte and Romani people never used this term to refer to themselves. Instead, the designation “gypsy” is one that is inseparably connected to racist connotations that, reproduced over centuries, have consolidated to form a comprehensive, aggressive image of an enemy that is deeply rooted in the collective consciousness. Remember: This word must not be spoken aloud in order to avoid racist reproduction.



1



2



3



4



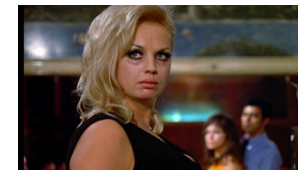
5



6



7



8

the end of the dance scene, Emmi and Ali return to the table where Emmi had been sitting alone, running the gauntlet as they walk past the gazes again. The camera is already at the table, so their approach through the tunnel-like arrangement of the pub is visible. From this moment on, Emmi and Ali are the outsiders in the room together (picture 7). The final stare from the pubkeeper, Barbara, hints at her jealousy and also reflects her surprise at Ali’s decision to accompany Emmi home (picture 8).

CONSTRUCTING SPACE THROUGH LIGHT AND MUSIC

The Arabic music playing in the pub reinforces the otherness of the space. During the first exchange between Barbara and Emmi, the latter comments on the “foreign music”. This remark connotes this space as being alien or exotic for Emmi. The song *Al Asfouriyeh* by the Lebanese star singer Sabah describes an unhappy woman in her loneliness and her yearning for an absent man whom she loves: “My misery is so great it stretches to the moon”. The song’s title *Al Asfouriyeh* literally means “the place where the wild birds meet”, but it is also used in the sense of “the place where the insane are” to poetically avoid using the harsh term “asylum”.

The hit song *Du schwarzer Zigeuner* [You Black Gypsy] by Paul Dorn and his dance orchestra from the year 1933 also addresses the pains of love. The pub girl purposely chooses the racist title to insult Ali and marginalise him. However, the dance incorporates Emmi into a fate she and Ali will share from now on, which is to say stigmatisation and exclusion from mainstream society. Despite its racist title, the song's text can be considered a reflection of the Arabic song from the beginning. This song also addresses loneliness and the unfulfilled yearning of a lover. "[...] I want to beguile my heart with music and wine, / You black gypsy, you know my pain, / And when your violin weeps, so does my heart". This very loneliness and the shared fate of ostracism are what bring the two together.

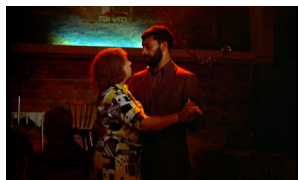
Just as the music defines the space, the light – which is partly artificial – also delineates the area and thus creates different zones. During the dance, the red stage light floods across the dance floor that completely surrounds the two people. They appear to be separated, as though they were in another room protecting them from the excluding gazes and the hostile stares of society. Suddenly, an intimate space of trust develops, one where Ali can describe his experiences with exclusion.

FURNISHINGS – TRACES OF CONTEMPORARY HISTORY AND TRANSFERENCES

The poster of the Turkish singer Gül Nihal (picture 9), the image above the dance floor portraying the Maiden's Tower surrounded by the sea and Istanbul's old town (picture 10), as well as the large painting with a view of the Bosphorus (picture 11), indicate that the scene is being shot in a pub frequented by Turkish migrants (Çağlayan in Breisacherstr. 30 in Haidhausen in Munich, now a pizzeria). There is an Oriental wall carpet portraying a scene of dancing people and musicians behind the table where Emmi has taken a seat. The arrangement of tables and chairs indicates that it may once have been a rustic pub whose interior has now been modified to suit the new guests. In this regard, it is similar to the Italian Osteria (see chapter 09, page 20), which used to be Hitler's favourite restaurant and has also changed as a result of migration. The songs in the jukebox also demonstrate the overlapping traces of the National Socialist past and the contemporary presence of migrants.



9



10



11

ANALYSIS OF A FRAME: THE WEDDING MEAL

Chapter 9, time code: 00:40:22



THE RESTAURANT

After their wedding at the registrar's office, Emmi and Ali go to a restaurant. They want to celebrate properly with a wedding meal. Before they enter, Emmi explains: "This is where Hitler used to eat, from 1929 to '33. I've always wanted to come here". However, it has now become an *Osteria Italiana*, as the sign above the door indicates.

THE COUPLE DURING THE WEDDING MEAL

In the next shot we see the two of them sitting alone next to each other at a table decked with a white tablecloth in the restaurant. The red wedding flowers lie on the table in front of Emmi and Ali as if they were on a grave. The chairs across from them are empty. A landscape painting Carl Wuttke produced around the year 1890 in the Romantic style provides the background. A couple of gold lampshades illuminate the scene from above like Canterbury bells. The image is taken using a long shot. Both a door frame and a dark green curtain hanging in it frame the couple so Emmi and Ali appear squeezed in and fixed in place. The massive, dark wooden panelling with clothing hooks – which could be used to hang up traditional bavarian Gamsbart hats – to the right and left in the foreground conveys a heavy "old German" atmosphere. This decoration kindles associations of a regulars' table and German *Gemütlichkeit*, or "cosiness", yet contrasts strongly with the emptiness of the atmosphere. The greenish colour of the overall image reinforces the oppressive atmosphere and sense of loneliness, which is anything but cosy.

The image is composed using a severe central perspective so that its mirror axis runs between the partners like a separating line. The vertical lines are taken up in the wooden wall panelling and in the slats of the empty chairs in front of the couple, which are reflected in the freshly waxed floor. The tables to the right and left in the vestibule are aligned in vanishing lines that also guide the spectator's gaze towards the centre. The image appears static. The bridal pair seems constricted, lonely and displaced in the empty room. Only the waiter, who stands in the door frame and is cut off at the left, breaks this symmetry and, like a gatekeeper, appears to have sole stewardship in this ambiance. Fassbinder presents the figures in isolation so that spectators can take in the action from a distance. Spectators are not supposed to identify with the figures but rather reflect upon them.

ANALYSIS OF A SHOT: THE EXCLUSION

Time code: 57:38–59:09

PLOT

Emmi and her colleagues are sitting in the stairwell and taking their midday break. Her colleagues are sitting on the windowsill, eating their sandwiches and discussing everyday matters. Emmi is sitting on the stairs across from them and asks them to pass a knife. However, the others ignore her. When she tries to participate in their conversation about a cancer check-up, Emmi's colleagues stand up, go down the stairs and find a different place – away from her. Emmi remains alone where she is.



THE SHOT AND THE CAMERA

The first image is structured as follows: Emmi's three colleagues are sitting close to each other on the windowsill to the left in the image. The colleagues on the windowsill occupy 2/3 of the image. Emmi is sitting on the stairs, across from them and at a distance, and is framed – almost hidden – by the grille formed by the banister. The camera is located in a hallway that runs parallel to the stairwell on the same floor. At first, it peers through the window next to the floor's entry to the stairwell. The image is framed by the window struts to the right and left. The camera then pans left along the window frame and the scuncheon, which takes up the entire image for a moment, and then points through the door and approaches Emmi. The camera reaches its final position when Emmi's colleagues disappear completely from the image, and it rests on Emmi. Then there is a cut, and the camera points towards the scene from below in the stairwell. The colleagues are visible through the grille, but Emmi's dress is cut off. The camera returns to its previous position. Emmi tries to take part in the conversation, whereupon her colleagues stand up and move to a location further down in the stairwell. The camera pans back past the door frame again and turns to follow Emmi's colleagues. It peers down into the stairwell through the window again. It cuts to Emmi, who, behind the banister, is framed by the balustrades and two massive red columns in the foreground. She has remained behind alone. She looks at her colleagues and then returns her attention to her sandwich.



ANALYSIS

This scene occurs at Emmi's workplace. Her colleagues constitute a group and stand for mainstream society. Emmi is confined behind the grate in the image, which is to say, she is excluded from this form of mainstream society. The camera tilts to the left and, in its final position, places Emmi in the centre. She is now free of the balustrades forming the grille. Her colleagues disappear from the image. In the shot showing Emmi's colleagues, who become visible through the banister, we see the women of mainstream society once again, who are confined by their fears and worries (in this case, the cancer check-up). Emmi stands up and gets the knife herself. She is independent of society's fears. She simply takes what she needs. Her colleagues feel threatened and go away. They continue to focus on their fears and want to go to the cancer check-up together, remarking, "I'd be scared alone". Emmi's exclusion is made clear one more time in the final image of the scene, when she remains confined behind the balusters. The massive columns in the stairwell seem like the unbreakable, constricting morals of mainstream society.

REPETITION

The setting of the stairwell with Emmi's colleagues is repeated in two other scenes in the film. Each time, the social constellation has changed considerably as a result of the plot, which is reflected by the corresponding shots of the camera. In the scene (see chapter 5, time code: 22:29- 25:17) that establishes Emmi's workplace for the first time, Emmi's colleagues issue a clear warning concerning exclusion. In the scene analysed here, Emmi is excluded (see chapter 14, time code: 57:38-59:09). Certain elements of this scene are then repeated in the later scene (see chapter 19, time code: 1:16:02- 1:18:22). However, the roles are distributed differently here: Their colleague Frieda has been fired and replaced by a new woman. Emmi has been included in the group again, and the new colleague, Yolanda, who is a migrant and "on a different pay scale", is excluded. In almost the same manner as in the previous scene in the stairwell, the camera passes the door frame again and follows the colleagues – this time, Emmi is with them – and tilts to peer down into the stairwell through the window. This time Emmi belongs to the group. The last shot is almost identical as well: Yolanda is sitting alone on the stairs behind the balustrades.



IMAGES ECHOING THE FILM: RESONANCES



Roman Pietà by Michelangelo (1498-1499)



Ali: Fear Eats the Soul Chapter 24



Maria after the Deposition from the Cross Wassili Perow



Hartz4 essen Seele auf (Unemployment money eats the soul) - graffiti at Leopoldplatz/Berlin-Wedding



Ali: Fear Eats the Soul Chapter 25

DIALOGUES BETWEEN FILMS:

ALL THAT HEAVEN ALLOWS (DOUGLAS SIRK, USA, 1955) AND ALI: FEAR EATS THE SOUL (1974)

In *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* Fassbinder surely wanted to create a memorial in honour of his fatherly model, Douglas Sirk, in general and his film *All that Heaven Allows* (1955) in particular. However, it would not be appropriate to refer to *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* as a remake of *All that Heaven Allows*. The inspiration that Fassbinder received from Sirk's film is nonetheless quite visible. The plot demonstrates certain parallelisms, as do the constellations of figures who are shunned by society because of their love and are now fighting to regain recognition from mainstream society

HOLLYWOOD'S DREAM FACTORY VERSUS POETIC REALISM

Instead of simply imitating Sirk's characters and the Hollywood settings, Fassbinder transfers the plot to 1970s Munich. The National Socialist period left its mark on this city, and the presence of economic migrants has influenced the cityscape and society. Fassbinder merely cites the Hollywood melodrama in some of the figures' attitudes. Examples include when Emmi breaks down crying in desperation at the door frame (see chapter 21) or in the dance scenes, when Ali and Emmi dance in the gleaming red light (in chapter 2 at the beginning and also in chapter 24 at the end of the film). Fassbinder's figures are deeply rooted in reality and, in a certain manner, realistically portray the narrow-minded working-class milieu in the FRG. In that manner, Fassbinder transfers the story from the private sphere of a Romeo and Juliet love story to a social and political sphere in which discrimination, marginalisation and exploitation can be clearly labelled, critically recognised and evaluated.

PORTRAYAL OF THE COUPLES

The widow Cary Scott (Jane Wyman) has just lost her husband, is stood up by her neighbour and doesn't really know what she is supposed to do in her large house. However, she still occupies a place at the heart of society with no material worries. She is an accepted person and appears to be very desirable among society's men, as evidenced by her getting not one but two marriage proposals one evening at the club. Ron Kirby (Rock Hudson) is a mere gardener, but he is extremely self-confident and independent. With his natural complexion, he also embodies glowing American beauty, and he seems to have his life in order. Douglas Sirk's lovers are good-looking, perfect Hollywood figures with whom the spectator identifies, meaning they can experience the intended catharsis without interruption. The two protagonists thus differ fundamentally from Emmi and Ali in *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*. Emmi is on the edge of society and clearly "past her best years". Ali is an outsider, and not of his own choosing: Rather, society sees him as a so-called "guest worker" and "dog", as he himself says, and treats him accordingly poorly. However, what definitely unites the figures from both films is their loneliness and aspiration to a happiness that transcends societal norms.

LOVE OVER COFFEE

Despite great differences, true love develops over coffee in both directors' films. Fassbinder must have been especially fond of this scene: "And because the friend cannot drink coffee with Jane, Jane drinks coffee with the extra. And at this point there is still just a close-up of Jane Wyman. Rock doesn't really have any significance yet. Once he becomes significant, he gets a close-up. That is simple and easy. And everyone understands it". In *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*, Ali and Emmi also drink a lot of coffee when they fall in love. It could be considered a reminiscence or perhaps even an homage to Cary's and Ron's first scene. Later on, we will compare several scenes or motifs that are in both films.



All that Heaven Allows



Angst essen Seele auf

THE TV

In *All that Heaven Allows*, Cary's children give her a television to keep her company in her loneliness. They show the television to Cary: "All you have to do is to turn that dial, and you have all the company you want right there on the screen. Drama, comedy, life's parade at your fingertips" (p. 24, picture 1). The camera slowly zooms in on the television, and Cary's reflection appears framed on the television screen. She is sitting across from herself, still a lonely widow who gave up the love of her life for her children (p. 24, picture 2). A new social achievement of the 1950s, the television constitutes Sirk's motif for loneliness in old age. This is the motif that fascinated Fassbinder: "After seeing that film, the last thing I wanted to do was visit small-town America. Here's what happens: At one point Jane says to Rock that she's leaving him because of the stupid kids and the like. Rock doesn't fight back much; after all, he has nature. And Jane sits there on Christmas Eve. The children are going to leave her and have given her a television set. You break down at the cinema. You understand something about the world and what it does to you." (9)

(9) Rainer Werner Fassbinder: *Imitation of Life*. Über die Filme von Douglas Sirk. In: *Ibid.: Filme befreien den Kopf*. Pub. by Michael Töteberg. Frankfurt on the Main 1984. p. 13.

Fassbinder adopted Sirk's television motif in *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*. Emmi also has a television standing in her sitting room. Her son destroys it in an uncontrollable fit of rage after she introduces her new husband (picture 3) (see chapter 10). One might think that there is a connection between this television set and the television in *All that Heaven Allows*, even if they are not identical. Emmi's destroyed television could be the television that Cary's son gave her 19 years earlier. Emmi's television has probably not been turned on in a while, since she decided a long time ago that television cannot replace a living husband. The television motif also creates an emotional bond between the sons of Cary and Emmi. Cary's son gives her the television in hopes of shackling her to her social role as an honourable widow. Emmi's son is furious that the television is not serving its function, after all, or has not protected his mother from shame. In the same manner, the television thus acts as a motif for conformity, passivity and adaptation in Fassbinder's film.



1 – All that Heaven Allows



2 – All that Heaven Allows



3 – Angst essen Seele auf

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN MOTHERS AND THEIR CHILDREN

Sirk focusses on the female figure in particular when portraying his conflict, which certainly also inspired Fassbinder, as he himself said: "Douglas Sirk's women think. I have not noticed that in any other director's work. None. Normally women always react and do things women do. Here they think. People need to see that. It is wonderful to see a woman thinking. It gives hope. Really". **(10)** In particular, there is a parallel in the scenes where the mothers admit their love to their children, hoping they will understand. However, in both films the children do not allow their mothers to take on a role beyond that of a mother or, in Sirk's case, a lady of society. While the dialogue in *All that Heaven Allows* almost takes place in passing and then culminates in the children's horror, Fassbinder composes his scene theatrically and extremely statically from the very beginning. The children are staggered in a tableau (picture 1), and the scene is built up with a shot/reverse shot montage until Ali enters the scene through the door. To emphasise the children's horror, the camera films each of their rigid faces in a close-up shot. Bruno destroys Emmi's television: "You shouldn't have done that, Mother. It's a disgrace. You can forget you have children. I want nothing to do with a whore". Cary's son also leaves the house foaming in rage, leaving behind an outwardly unyielding mother who is breaking down inside (picture 2). In contrast, Fassbinder's scene has a rigid organisation, and the mother breaks down crying on the sofa. Nonetheless, in complete contrast to Cary, Emmi never considers sacrificing her happiness for her children.



1 – Angst essen Seele auf



2 – All that Heaven Allows

(10) „Filme befreien den Kopf“ – Imitation of Life – über die Filme von Douglas Sirk p.14

MIRRORS AND GRILLES

In *All that Heaven Allows*, Cary is constantly displayed as being visually confined in the richly decorated house, suffering behind window glass and framed by windowpanes. The figure of the woman in love who, as a victim of social notions, is sentenced to immobility appears as though she were painted and banished behind glass. Fassbinder's Emmi is also shown behind glass and framed by the mullions and transoms in the stairwell several times. Mirrors appear several times as important motifs in both Fassbinder's and Sirk's cinematic oeuvres. Several scenes in *All that Heaven Allows* show Cary through mirrors. An especially remarkable scene is when Cary's reflected image appears on the television screen. The camera zooming in on the reflective surface recalls the mirror that appears in the hospital scene in *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* (see chapter 25).



All that Heaven Allows



Angst essen Seele auf



All that Heaven Allows



All that Heaven Allows

FINAL SCENE AT THE HOSPITAL/SICK BED

Neither of the films really has a happy end, as Fassbinder laconically remarks in his essay on Sirk: "But now that she's there, there is no happy end, even though the two of them are together. Anyone who makes love so difficult for themselves cannot be happy later". However, he uses the illness to expand the final scene to a general social level. The stomach disease is a guest worker illness caused by the poor conditions these workers suffer; it cannot be treated and leaves no room for prospects of a happy end.

MUTUAL FRIENDSHIP

In any case, Fassbinder greatly admired Douglas Sirk. Douglas Sirk also had a profound friendship with the much younger artist. After Fassbinder's death he said: "Today I have lost a good friend and Germany a genius. I would never have thought that the evil day would arrive when I, so much older, would be writing these words of mourning for this thirty-six-year-old man. Fassbinder has left an amazing oeuvre of more than forty films. As magnificent in their form as in their theme, Fassbinder's films were for a long time controversial, and hopefully will stay that way. For only those things that can survive opposition, have the power of permanence".

A FILM AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

Ali: Fear Eats the Soul is a milestone in film history and, of course, inspired the work of many other filmmakers as a result. The following text discusses several examples that take up, further develop, contradict or critically question and debate the motifs in *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*.

IL POSTO (ERMANNO OLMI, ITALY, 1961) – PART OF THE CINED FILM COLLECTION

Olmi follows the young and shy Domenico from his peaceful community in the countryside to the hectic metropolis of Milan. This film, which belongs to late neorealism, demonstrates more formal than contentual similarities to Fassbinder's film. It also frequently features static image compositions, frames and reflections. The architecture in the offices and factory buildings frames and confines the figures in the film. The reflections of the shop windows and Domenico's gaze in the mirror represent a longing to improve one's own living circumstances in a world where the economic boom is ushering in far-reaching social changes. The calm yet powerful camera underscores the forlornness of people trapped between tradition and modernity. Like Fassbinder, Olmi gives his protagonists from the working-class clear contours instead of portraying them as part of the crowd. They become individuals with whom the audience can identify. The film is like a snapshot of life without a real beginning and end; it seems as though it would continue forever.



MIES VAILLA MENNEISYYTTÄ [THE MAN WITHOUT A PAST] (AKI KAURISMÄKI, FINLAND, 2002) – PART OF THE CINED FILM COLLECTION

Aki Kaurismäki portrays his protagonist minimalistically and artfully, yet with human depth in the reduced figural depiction. The protagonist has lost his memory and must now reconstruct everything from nothing. Kaurismäki's film also addresses love and social marginalisation. At



a metalevel, the gazes between the figures and their arrangement with respect to one another (and the entire space) tell more about the characters' real feelings and yearnings than many dialogues, as is also the case in *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*.

The camera lingers for a long time on these people, who often look like parts of paintings in their deliberately static arrangements.

FAR FROM HEAVEN (TODD HAYNES, USA 2002)

This film by Todd Haynes is unmistakably inspired by the Hollywood melodrama *All that Heaven Allows*. However, it also addresses the forms of discrimination based on skin colour from *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* in a variety of manners. The housewife, Cathy Whitaker, has an average life in an idyllic suburban home until she witnesses her husband's homosexual affair by chance. At the same time, she falls in love with the good-looking African American gardener. The drama takes its course. In terms of style and colour, the film resembles Technicolor from the 1950s. Haynes masterfully reproduces the constriction of small-town American ideas concerning morality and the feelings and yearnings it suppresses. It is an impressive moral portrait of how homosexuality and skin colour are dealt with, and its constellation of marginalised peripheral figures versus observing, moralising mainstream society strongly recalls Fassbinder's work



GEGEN DIE WAND [HEAD-ON] (FATIH AKIN, GERMANY, 2004)

In 2004, *Head-On* won the Golden Bear in the competition at the Berlinale. For the first time, the voices of the second generation are determining the direction of the discourse by moving a new post-migrant perspective on Germany as a country of immigration to the centre. In an interview, Fatih Akin observed: “We have a different view of German society. And, as a result, we have a different view of cinema as well. We have a second gaze, the one from our countries of origin. And we see the country through totally different eyes. We see things that other people no longer perceive. That makes our films different. That does not mean they are better; I am not talking about quality here. We simply contribute a different perspective.” (11) As accompanying material for a comparative

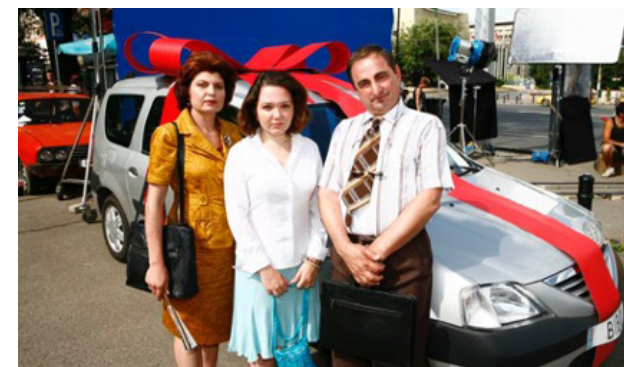


viewing of both films, we strongly recommend the extremely nuanced publication on the two films by Bettina Henzler and Stefanie Schlüter: *Perspektivenwechsel Methodische Vorschläge zum Vergleich der Filme **Angst essen Seele auf** (R.W. Fassbinder) und **Gegen die Wand** (Fatih Akin)*” (12)

CEA MAI FERICITĂ FATĂ DIN LUME [THE HAPPIEST GIRL IN THE WORLD] (RADU JUDE, ROMANIA, 2009) – PART OF THE CINED FILM COLLECTION

This debut film is every bit as absurd as it is realistic. The film, which is about the production of an advertising film, features sequences of actions that repeat in endless loops. In the parent-child relationship portrayed in this film, the mother does not occupy the central role as she does in Fassbinder’s film. Instead, the adolescent daughter who has won a car in a contest takes on this role. In exchange for the car, she has committed to participating in a commercial for the soft drink sponsor. Her parents want her to sell the car to realise their own life dreams with the money. However, the daughter wants to keep it to improve her status in her peer group. This object of contention

brings the true character of both the parents and the daughter, Delia, to light. The luxury item and object of culmination is not a television set as in *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*, but a car. Human relationships become honest only in the reflection of this object; the entire world seems to exist only in interdependence with the consumer world.



ALI IM PARADIES [MY NAME IS NOT ALI] (VIOLA SHAFIK, GERMANY, 2011)

In her documentary film, the film scholar and director Viola Shafik addresses the story of the actor El Hedi ben Salem by interviewing the individual team members of Fassbinder’s crew. She follows his life story to Northern Africa, where she seeks out his children, whom Fassbinder brought to Germany back in the day and who are now adults. *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* has been praised many times as a decisive statement against racism and as a reckoning with the bourgeois morals of the FRG. Viola Shafik asks what happens when we delve below this surface and, at one point, asks who this ben Salem actually was and how the constellations of power within the Fassbinder group were structured. In an interview, Shafik remarks: “The figures or the characters, so to speak, who appear in my film actually all think just as they did back then. They seem to be untouched by the general discourse and reluctance to openly show one’s own xenophobia that has developed in Germany in the meantime. And that is the very idea: Have we gotten rid of our xenophobia, or have we just learned to camouflage it better?” In any case, Fassbinder’s former colleagues do not refrain from making questionable statements in this film: “The children had to take two baths before they were presentable” or “The kids pissed in the corners, you know – they had to learn how to use a toilet in the first place”. It is definitely an important documentary film that takes a critical view of Fassbinder’s relationship with ben Salem.

(11) Michael Ranze: „Heimat ist ein mentaler Zustand“, Solino, Scorsese und die Globalisierung: Fatih Akin im Gespräch. In: epd-Film 11, 2002.

(12) https://mediarep.org/handle/doc/14951?locale-attribute=de_DE

ZHALEIKA (ELIZA PETKOVA, BULGARIA, 2016) – PART OF THE CINED FILM COLLECTION

Seventeen-year-old Lora lives in a picturesque mountain village in Bulgaria. However, she does not think it's all too idyllic there. Relatives and neighbours badmouth her behind her back because she does not behave the way they expect. She dresses the way she likes, loves whom she wants and acts as she pleases. A story of female emancipation is at the heart of this story, as is the case in Fassbinder's film as well. The protagonists of this coming-of-age film know they will have to go their own way after the death of their father at the latest. In this calm film, gazes and gestures carry the same weight as words, which makes the expressive piece fascinating on several levels.

**LOVING (JEFF NICHOLS, USA, 2016)**

This film also focusses on the socially scorned love between a black woman and a white man and is based on a true story from 1967. The couple, Richard and Mildred Loving, won a legal battle before the Supreme Court of Virginia that resulted in the repeal of the law forbidding mixed-race marriages. It is a romantic Hollywood production that celebrated international success at the festival in Cannes in 2016. This film could also be interesting in the context of Ali: Fear Eats the Soul because it vividly portrays social racism in America in the 1950s and 1960s.

**GET OUT (JORDAN PEELE, USA, 2017)**

Get Out is a satirical mystery horror thriller film that implies elements of comedy. A young and gifted African American photographer is going to be introduced to his white girlfriend's family. What apparently harmlessly begins at a garden party of the well-heeled white family develops into a gruesome secret as the film progresses. The film addresses everyday racism in the USA in an entertaining manner by imaginatively using conventions of the horror genre. It makes various references to questions of race in America, which encompass associations with the brutal slavery black people were subjected to, racial laws, police violence and the everyday racism lurking in the suburbs. Peele uses subjective camera work to include the spectator in *Get Out*, and he observes *that the film makes it possible for a white person to see the world through the eyes of a black person for one and a half hours*. The film is shot dynamically and, despite its blunt brutality (FSK 16, – rated for over 16 in Germany), is certainly worth experiencing.



RECEPTION: EXCHANGING VIEWS

LACONIC PARABLE: RAINER WERNER FASSBINDER'S FILM ALI: FEAR EATS THE SOUL
WOLFRAM SCHÜTTE, FRANKFURTER RUNDSCHAU, 27 JUNE 1974

"If we are to believe the international press, Fassbinder's *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* was the sensation at this year's film festival in Cannes. The English Guardian, a newspaper not exactly known for hot-headed judgements, even wrote that Fassbinder should have received the Palm (the main prize). That was impossible, however, because the film was not shown in the official festival programme. It honourably represented the Federal Republic for the first time since Kluge's success in Venice. [...]"

What is astonishing about this laconic film is not only Fassbinder's courage to address the sensitive topic but also his ability to recount this love story and its difficulties through the two main characters without false pathos, almost coolly, and yet full of sympathy so that no implausibility develops".

ALI: FEAR EATS THE SOUL, REVIEW
ROGER EBERT, 5 OCTOBER 1974, CHICAGO SUN-TIMES. (13)

"Although *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* was one of the first films by Fassbinder to make an impression outside Germany, his style was already formed and his confidence unshakable. In it, he creates an unlikely social situation and watches it, deadpan, through scenes of excruciating embarrassment and pain. An admirer of the soapy Hollywood melodramas of Douglas Sirk, he liked to add sudden, unexpected dramatic turns, and while in a lesser director they might seem like affectations, in a Fassbinder film they feel more like blows from the fly-swatters of the gods. [...] *Ali* is about an unlikely love that grows between a 35-ish Moroccan immigrant laborer and a 60ish cleaning lady, in a German city that seems to have left them both stranded and lonely. He is handsome and muscular. She is short and pudgy. They meet in a bar, in one of those Fassbinder scenes where silences and mutual embarrassments are stretched out until they pass through comedy and come out as weirdly constrained parody – a cross between TV soap opera and the paintings of Edward Hopper".

Fassbinder borrows from Sirk the technique of framing shots so stringently that the characters seem fenced in, limited in the ways they can move.

He'll lock Emmi (Brigitte Mira) in the foreground and Ali (El Hedi Ben Salem) in the

(13) <https://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/ali-fear-eats-the-soul-1974>

background in such a way that neither could move without leaving the frame, and make you aware of that: He's saying visually that they are locked into the same space, without choices. They remain motionless in his carefully composed visual settings while we absorb their dilemma and (gradually) the fact that he's calling attention to it. In the quietest of ways, Fassbinder is breaking his contract with the audience, which expects plausible fiction. He nudges us to get outside the movie and look at it as absurd, as black humor, as comment on these people so hopelessly trapped in their dreary surroundings and by their fates".

AT THE FILM FESTIVAL: 'ALI': FASSBINDER EXPLORE RACIAL PREJUDICE THE CAST
NEW TANNER FILM OPENS EMOTIONS
VINCENT CANBY, OCTOBER 07, 1974, NEW YORK TIMES (14)

One of the most encouraging things about Rainer Werner Fassbinder, the young German writer-director-actor, is his extraordinary productivity, not that productivity is much help to someone without talent. There's no question that Mr. Fassbinder, whose «Ali» was shown at the New York Film Festival on Saturday and yesterday evenings, has a great deal of talent, so much that he seems driven by it in the healthiest sense. [...] Mr. Fassbinder obviously works fast. He doesn't fool around getting things perfect. He tries something difficult, and if it works, fine. If not, he'll do it better the next time around. Shakespeare worked this way. So, I'm sure, did a lot of the people in Hollywood in what are called the good old days. Experience doesn't accumulate like dust. You simply can't sit around waiting for it to settle on you. You have to work to get it. Mr. Fassbinder is neither Shakespeare nor an old-time Hollywood type. In addition to his talent and tremendous energy, he has absolutely no fear that he might be off on the wrong track making a fool of himself. [...] I like *Ali* even more because it seems to take even greater risks. Its story is the cinematic equivalent of a piece of pop art. [...] The presence of the director is so dominant in Mr. Fassbinder's films that it's difficult to judge their individual parts. I'm not sure whether Miss Mira and El Hedi Ben Salem, who plays Ali, are especially good actors but they look right. Although they have their idiosyncracies they are primarily types. The entire film, in fact, has a kind of poster-like blandness to it, something that at times is made visual. When Emmi and Ali go outside, other people are seldom seen, unless they are characters in the film. There are no extras in the background to convince you this is photographed reality, which it most certainly is not. *Ali* is not an easy movie to warm up to. It's no May-December romance that tugs at the heart. It is, rather, another quite courageous attempt by Mr. Fassbinder to develop a film style free of the kind of realistic conventions that sentimentalize life's mysteries".

(14) <https://www.nytimes.com/1974/10/07/archives/at-the-film-festivalalifassbinder-explore-racial-prejudice-the-cast.html>

BEFORE THE SCREENING

REFLECTIONS AND FRAMES

- In which films you know do mirrors appear?
- What do they contribute to the film's narration?

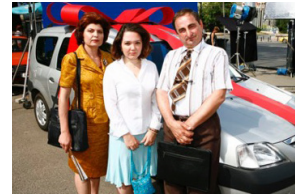
Mirrors always have a narrative and dramaturgical meaning, and you can find examples of them in different films, including the films in the CinEd programme. Comparisons of images and appropriate descriptions and interpretations can be discussed in this context. The figures' positions in space can also be examined: Are they free, or are they framed or restricted by framing elements?



COLOUR VERSUS BLACK AND WHITE

- How do colour films and black-and-white films impact you differently in terms of their atmospheres and visual sensations?

Here the photos or excerpts from films (from the CinEd programme) can be used to compare the dramaturgical effects of colour films and black-and-white films. The different types of colour choices (desaturated or saturated colours) can also be addressed. There are more muted colours and typical fashionable colours from the 1970s (e.g. green, brown, yellow and orange) in *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*. *The Happiest Girl in the World* uses bright colours that underscore the advertising nature of the film within the film (the colour of the lemonade, the red ribbon around the car).



THE TERM "GUEST WORKER" AND THE RECRUITMENT AGREEMENTS

Have you ever heard the term "guest worker"?

Who are guest workers, and why did they come to Germany and Europe? Why did they leave their countries of origin?

Do you know anyone in your family or circle of friends whose parents or grandparents came from another country or went to a different one? Why did they leave their country?

Here, we suggest providing a short introduction to the situation in the FRG and Northern Europe after the war, the reconstruction after the war, the lack of men who were capable of working and the "Wirtschaftswunder". We address the recruitment agreements, labour migration to Germany/Northern Europe, the reasons for emigration from Southern Europe and the consequences.

The recruitment contract with Morocco can also be mentioned here, or a connection can be made to the relationships the neighbouring countries France and England had with their colonies, which were breaking up after the war. The difference to the situation in Germany can be addressed here.

Some social and historical phenomena (e.g. accommodation in residential hostels, the so-called "black trains" from Turkey, the end of recruitment in 1973, the return bonus in 1984, the immigration ban for certain regions, social phenomena like the so-called "Kofferkinder" (literally "suitcase children", which is to say children whose parents went to work in Germany as guest workers and left them behind in Turkey), or right-wing extremist violence and attacks) can also be contextualised and addressed in greater detail using additional films. The respective immigration or emigration history of the countries in question needs to be addressed specifically and placed in the context of the students' family backgrounds.

AFTER THE SCREENING

ON THE AESTHETICS OF THE FILM

When did mirrors appear in the film? What is their significance for the film's narration?

Describe the moments in the film when the figures are framed by spatial elements.

What did you think about the atmosphere these elements created?

Some moments in the film appear to be stills. Describe one of these moments and the impression it made on you.

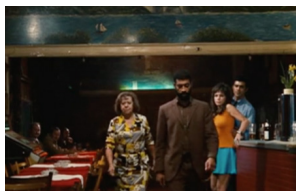
Here it is possible to discuss and elaborate on the aesthetic elements addressed earlier – reflections, frames and other striking pictorial elements – and their specific meaning in the film.

The main characters meet

Describe how Emmi and Ali met each other. What kind of images and sound or musical elements made this encounter especially vivid? Compare this meeting with the way couples meet in other films you know, such as films from the CinEd programme.

Using examples from different films in the programme, such as *The Man Without a Past* or *Il Posto*, is a good idea here.

Example photos or appropriate excerpts from films can be used as well.



"EL HEDI BEN SALEM M'BAREK MOHAMMED MUSTAPHA, I CALL HIM ALI"

- Why doesn't he use his real name? Why does he call himself Ali and accept everyone calling him Ali?

- A quick survey of the class: Does everyone use their real name? Are these names pronounced correctly?

- Why did Fassbinder call this figure Ali? Whom (which social group) does the figure of Ali represent?

ON FOOD CULTURE

Food is always an important part of well being. Ali misses the food he has been accustomed to since his childhood and may not always want to eat potato salad with roast pork and brown sauce. And not everyone likes green salads.

- What do you like to eat? Who can cook?

- Who knows how to cook couscous?

- Who can cook a dish you cannot eat in a restaurant (e.g. something your parents or grandparents have always cooked)?

- Who misses a dish you cannot find in Germany?

Choose several dishes, beverages or culinary terms that might be unfamiliar to the class and discuss what they are or mean together: (e.g. chateaubriand, lieblich, lahmacun, dolma, kimchi, well-done, digestive etc.)

PROVERBS

ALI: Don't cry, please. Why cry?

EMMI: Because I'm so happy and so full of fear, too.

ALI: Not fear. Fear not good. Fear eat the soul.

EMMI: Fear *eats* the soul. That's nice....

- Who knows proverbs in other languages and can explain them?

- Are there sayings people would not understand, even if we translated them into German or another language?

- Why can people not understand the proverbs, even if they understand the words?

EXAMPLES:

(German)

Perlen vor die Säue werfen. (Cast pearls before swine)

Liebe geht durch den Magen. (Love goes through the stomach.)

Wie ein Elefant im Porzellanladen. (Like an elephant in a porcelain store)

Den Wald vor lauter Bäumen nicht sehen. (You can't see the forest for the trees.)

(Arabisch)

ببعمل من الرز (One day honey and on another day onions)

بيعمل من الرز (Er/sie macht Zwiebeln aus dem Reis)

(Turkish)

Balık baştan kokar (The fish rots from the head down)

(Spanish)

En boca cerrada no entran moscas. (A closed mouth catches no flies)

ANALYSIS OF A SCENE: CHAPTER 20, ALI IS EXHIBITED (1:18:23- 1:21:13)

In Emmi's sitting room. Emmi presents Ali to her colleagues. They even get to touch his muscles and soft skin. Ali goes away.

- Why does Ali go away? Is he offended, upset or shy?
- What went wrong here? What should Emmi have done differently?
- Were Emmi and her friends nasty or just curious?
- Were their comments racist?
- Have you ever heard of ethnological expositions or human zoos? (see Carl Hagenbeck's ethnological expositions)
- Are there similar images or events today that exoticise or exhibit non-white bodies?

ANALYSIS OF A SCENE: CHAPTER 22, AT THE REPAIR SHOP (1:22:56 - 1:25:22)

Emmi is looking for Ali at the car repair shop. Ali's colleagues make fun of him: "Who's that, Ali? Your grandma from Morocco?" Ali laughs at the joke as well. Emmi is insulted and goes away.

This scene can be compared with chapter 20, "Ali is exhibited", and discussed using the same questions. What do these two scenes have in common? What is different?

COMPARING SCENES

CHAPTER 14, EMMI'S COLLEAGUES EXCLUDE HER (57:38- 59:58)

Emmi and her colleagues are taking their midday break. The others exclude Emmi and ignore her (see "Analysis of a shot"). The neighbours consider her marriage to Ali to be indecent, but the landlord does not see anything indecent about it.

CHAPTER 19, THE NEW COLLEAGUE (1:16:02 - 1:18:22)

The cleaning crew has a new colleague: Yolanda is a cleaning lady from former Yugoslavia. Emmi is accepted again, and now Yolanda is excluded.

- Compare the two scenes in the stairwell involving Emmi's colleagues.
- Exclusion of Emmi/the new colleague Yolanda
- How are these scenes similar?
- What is Fassbinder trying to achieve with this similarity?

IMAGE REFERENCES

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P. 28 top – Film still from *Zhaleika*, directed by Eliza Petkova, BGR/D 2016, used as a picture quotation.

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