

From:

Pinar Tuzcu

»**Ich bin eine Kanackin**«

Decolonizing Popfeminism –

Transcultural Perspectives on Lady Bitch Ray

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Pinar Tuzcu explores rapper Lady Bitch Ray's performance and particularly her use of the term *Kanackin*. She combines issues of popfeminism and postmigration through speculative methodology and invites us to forget prescriptive definitions by proposing paradoxicality as a source to diversify our concepts of feminism. By means of Situational Analysis, her study works through the contradictory forms of positioning that occurred in group discussions with Turkish-German university students about Lady Bitch Ray's music videos. In this book, Tuzcu argues that these contradictory forms of positioning bear traces of emergent discourses that reach beyond Western-centric descriptions of feminism in Germany.

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Table of Contents

Introduction | 7

“Ich bin ’ne Kanackin” | 29

Beyond Sexual Explicitness—Resistance Through Insistence | 31

Feminism’s (M)others | 38

Kanack_in—Pluralizations and Queerings | 41

Translingualizations | 49

Productive Paradoxes | 55

Situational Analysis of the Group Discussions | 63

Situational Analysis—Maps, Gaps, and Traps | 65

 Shaping Discourses, Knitting the *Not Yet* | 67

 Linking Theoretical Sensitivity with Self-Reflexivity | 73

Grounded Theory in Multilingual Research—In-Vivo Coding and
Transcultural Translation | 75

 Translanguaging the Coding Process | 77

 In-Vivo Coding—Living in Translation | 80

Situating the Group Discussions | 84

 Informant Participants—the Knowledge
 that is (not) Power | 87

 The Unsaid in the Said; The Said in the Unsaid
 —Digressions and Silences | 89

The Project Map: A Trefoil Knot | 92

Not Yet A Code—Transcultural

Locational Feminism | 95

Turkishness, or Where on Earth? | 95

“Looking one’s Parents in the Eyes” | 96

From Duisburg to Istanbul—Transcultural Geographies | 106

Germanness—the Second Person ‘I’ | 119

Sexual Emancipation and Its Cultural Limits

—*Özenti Olmak* | 119

Almost the Same but Not Quite | 127

Feminism—Aposiopetic Positioning | 134

Pointing at the Limits of Existing Discourses | 145

A Question, Not Yet an Answer | 150

Conclusion | 153

Bibliography | 159

Images Cited | 189

Introduction

“What the eff,” a colleague of mine muttered half-jokingly after watching Lady Bitch Ray’s music video for “Du Bist Krank.” Sitting in a group of five, we found ourselves googling around, digging for more information about the artist. Our debate got energized when we found out that she has Turkish cultural background and pursues an academic career. Revolving around questions of today’s feminism and pop culture, the discussion awkwardly languished and stalled when it came to issues of migration and cultural difference. It was this moment that generated my interest in the central questions dealt with in this book project: How does the current form of popfeminism in Germany animate and materialize issues related to a history of migration? More specifically, how can one situate Germany’s *Neuer Feminismus* in a postmigration condition? Rather than providing a single concrete answer to these questions, this study seeks to trace and map out the discursive dynamics at play in the process of relating these topics. Being guided by the discursive entanglements emerging in the group discussions I conducted, I analyze how Lady Bitch Ray’s performance embodies forms of a transcultural popfeminism.

Coming from working-class parents who migrated from Sivas (Turkey) to Bremen (Germany), and having grown up in Gröpelingen, which is known as a working-class district, Reyhan Sahin became a controversial media figure with her pseudonym Lady Bitch Ray in 2006 after posting a series of porn rap songs on her MySpace site. Her

refusal to remove her sexually explicit rap songs and pin-up-like images cost her her job at Radio Bremen where she was working as a radio host. Having lost this job, she created her own internet pay-per-view talk show *Kleine Fische, Große Fische*, hosting male rappers and ridiculing their glorification of hypermasculinity and misogyny by parodically reversing gender-stereotypical sexual objectification. She reached a larger audience with her role as a witty, self-assertive prostitute in Özgür Yıldırım's 2008 film *Chiko*. After the film's release she was invited to *Schmidt & Pocher*, a popular late night TV talk show. In this show, she presented her vaginal secretion in a small transparent balm container to one of the hosts. This triggered further media attention and her interviews appeared in numerous major German newspaper outlets. In response to the media's increasing interest and recurrent highlighting of her cultural background, she said in one of her early interviews with the daily boulevard paper *Bild*: "I am neither German nor Turkish; I'm a female Kanack" (Ich bin nicht Deutsch nicht Türkisch, ich bin eine Kanackin) (Lady Bitch Ray 2009).

This study focuses in depth on her feminization of the label 'Kanak'—a label which embodies processes of otherization as well as politics of resistance set in Germany's postmigration scene—and analyzes the links between contemporary popfeminist activism and politics of cultural difference. The first chapter maps out these links by focusing on Lady Bitch Ray's employment of the term *Kanackin* by drawing on her interviews and her recently published book *Bitchsm: Emanzipation, Masturbation, Integration* to situate her performance with regard to both transnational and locationally specific feminist histories. This chapter aims at illuminating the shortcomings of existing definitions of what is called *Neuer Feminismus* to expand its meaning towards notions of transculturality by referring to queer and migrant feminist histories in Germany. The second chapter elaborates on this study's use of decolonial methodologies and Situational Analysis in connection with the empirical data gathered with three group discussions. This chapter pays particular attention to the necessity of trans-cultural translation with respect to the participants' shifting positions in

their interpretation of Lady Bitch Ray's music video. These shifting positions and the resulting discursive entanglements are the main concern of the third chapter, which presents an in-depth empirical analysis of the group discussions.

In this book, I use the term *postmigration* to describe a process of social change in relation to an ongoing history of migration rather than a consequence of it.¹ It is important to note that postmigration does not necessarily designate the condition of a subject that lives with the direct effects of having migrated. Neither does it merely designate the condition of coming from a family with a migration experience. In contrast to these particularizing notions, my use of postmigration refers to a cultural conjuncture that reshapes and transforms the question of belonging at large. Being a migrant and living in a postmigration condition are as related to one another as being a non-migrant and living in a postmigration condition. Therefore, I do not use the term as a proper name such as 'postmigrant' to describe an individual or a group. That is to say, rather than denoting a subject, in this study, postmigration refers to the conditioning of positionalities in relation to changes in modes of cultural attachment, not only affecting "people who are [or have been] themselves directly 'on the move' but also the locales in which they settle, converting them to translocational spaces, thereby affecting in different ways all who live within these spaces" (Anthias 2008: 11). Similar to Homi Bhabha's description of the term postcolo-

1 The term postmigration is not a widely used concept in migration studies in Germany. It finds a rather different use in the field of psychology, where it is often opposed to pre-migration to describe particular behavioral, psychological, and attitudinal changes of migrants. In this sense, it is employed to observe the psychological impact of migration on individuals or groups and carries with it connotations of pathologization, summarized with terms like 'postmigration disorder' or 'postmigration trauma'. In my study, however, the term describes how migration changes the sociomaterial worlds it touches, be it directly or indirectly, including the worlds of those who seem to have not changed their place of living.

nial, here the prefix *post* points to the “shifting, strategically displaced time,” bringing into play a history of migration alongside and within the present yet also “touching the future on its hither side,” signposting the potential of emergence of future cultural politics of belonging and dynamics of attachment (Bhabha 1994: 18; 35). With this dimension of futurity, it also accentuates unpredictability. The label ‘guest worker’ embodies this conspicuously. Instead of returning to their departure country, as it was largely expected and narrated, many stayed and preferred to build a life in a place in which they have invested economically, bodily, affectively as well as intellectually, and artistically. The contemporary postmigration condition is a situation in which this kind of unforeseeability of the effects of migration should be taken as constitutive of the ongoing and the not-yet present.

Furthermore, in this work, *Neuer Feminismus* indicates the emergence of particular forms of popfeminism in contemporary Germany. The term *Neuer Feminismus* has appeared in the media and scholarly texts since around 2006. The most comprehensive collection of essays written on *Neuer Feminismus* as a particular turn of feminism in Germany was collected in the November 2008 issue of *Feministische Studien*. As the editors of this collection remark in their introduction, although most authors of this issue assert that there is a need for a new kind of feminism, questions as to “what is to be understood under ‘new’ and what kind of feminism are we talking about” remain unanswered (Casale, Gerhard, and Wischerman 2008: 9). In this issue, *Neuer Feminismus* is characterized as media-oriented, transnational and as a demand posed by “women of the new generation” (ibid: 9). Transnationality stands here largely for an adaptation of a US-based popfeminism existing since the 1980s. However, with particular focus on Lady Bitch Ray, I claim, rather than just a belated copy of US popfeminism, *Neuer Feminismus* is responding to and emerging with a particular historical and discursive juncture in a postmigration condition. Though it certainly shows transnational inspirations (including the US), it is nevertheless crucial to take note of its production of culturally different feminist positionalities in Germany. In other words, *Neuer Feminismus*

does not only come into being by means of transnational references, but is itself also a product of locationally specific processes of transculturation.

I am aware of the vagueness of the term and of its risk of inscribing a temporal linearity by means of an old/new binary. Crucially, however, my conceptualization of Neuer Feminismus suggests an abandonment of the rhetoric of generationalism.² That is because “the old ones do not always have to give way for the new [and] the new do not have to completely break with the old” (Halberstam 2012: 2). Feminists who apply a generationalism to the history of feminism, in Jack Halberstam’s words, run the risk of being “more Freudian than Freud himself” since they get trapped in simplistic quasi-oedipal narratives involving a struggle for symbolic matricide; in this logic independence comes only with a radical rejection of one’s mother’s ideals (ibid: 3). As I discuss in chapter one, this logic is often applied to analyses of Neuer Feminismus. Since it relies on heteronormative relations and ideas of familial bonds at the basis of national homogeneity, it inevitably excludes queer (and) migrant feminist histories and present interventions. I content that, rather than a generational shift playing out in transmissions of and reactions to feminist sentiment in a continuous mother-daughter dynamic, the newness in Neuer Feminismus is a conceptual shift that comes about through a reconfiguration of feminist politics in relation to changes in Germany’s cultural cartographies.

To move into a greater depth of field for analyses of popfeminism in Germany, I suggest supplementary narratives are needed to complement the focus on sexual explicitness as the singular characteristic and

2 Therefore, in this work, I do not use terms such as ‘first wave’, ‘second’ or ‘third wave’ feminism, since these too heavily suggest a logic of generationalism. Neither do I use ‘first’, ‘second’ or ‘third generation’ to describe the (grand)children of migrants born and/or raised in Germany. By this, I do, however, not propose a tabooization of the term ‘generation’, since there are of course moments when its meaning remains ambiguous or when it can be employed as strategically straight-forward.

exclusive performative trademark. As I show in chapter one, the issue of sexual objectification of women in pop culture has dominated both sides, affirmative and critical, in the debate on what popfeminism fights for, or fails to fight against. This rhetoric tends to exclude those who do associate with feminism but do not affirm or see sexual explicitness as a core principal of emancipation. With this in mind, my study highlights transculturality as a conceptual supplement to thicken the description of Neuer Feminismus, and aims to position popfeminism in an intimate dialogue with decolonial critique so as to situate contemporary feminist practices in Germany in the current postmigration condition.

The term transculturation was coined in the 1940s by the Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz to explain the asymmetric interdependency of cultures, or, more crudely, to explain how cultural interaction is way more complex than what the terms ‘integration,’ ‘assimilation,’ and ‘acculturation’ can tell us. According to Encarnación Gutiérrez Rodríguez, transculturation “raises the question of the colonial imperialist and economic links between Europe and other parts of the world by focusing on the impact of these histories on everyday culture” and by “tracing interdependencies between current processes of migration and European history” (Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2010a: 116). With this in mind, transculturation, in this study, figures as an essential concept referring to the relational entanglements between histories of migration and current forms of popfeminism in Germany.

For some critics, the issue of how gender and sexuality play out in pop culture, of whether there is potential subversiveness or a mere imposition of consumerist lifestyles also points to the political possibilities popfeminism has to offer—or, from another perspective, the lack thereof. Most often, popfeminism is seen as symptomatic of postfeminism, which is used as an umbrella label to criticize the backlash against feminism occurring in the late 1970s and 80s. This view portrays postfeminism as inherently postpolitical, as an ironic remainder or a commodified leftover after the death of feminism, or just a parody of feminist achievements. Accordingly, pop culture at large becomes

the site in which this parody of feminism plays out most forcefully (McRobbie 2009; Faludi 1992; Modleski 1991). In her critique of post-feminism, Tania Modleski claims, for instance, that there is no need to look for the image of femininity *in* pop culture because pop culture as such already *represents* dominant ideas of femininity, with all its stereotypical characteristics of passivity and unbridled consumerism (Modleski 1991). Similarly, according to Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra, “[p]ostfeminist culture’s centralization of an affluent elite certainly entails an empathic individualism [and] elevates consumption as a strategy for healing those dissatisfactions that might alternatively be understood in terms of social ills and discontents” (Tasker/Negra 2007: 2). In Angela McRobbie’s view, postfeminism becomes little else than a “daughter’s revenge,” that is, a depoliticized style-mania of ‘spoiled’ though witty ‘girls’ comfortable with the vacuous utopia of neoliberal consumerism and, in fact, complacently celebrating the achievements of Western feminism (McRobbie 2009: 40). Moreover, as McRobbie writes, the postfeminist shift signals a “re-colonising mechanism in contemporary popular culture” which “re-instates racial hierarchies within the field of femininity invoking, across the visual field, a norm of nostalgic whiteness” (ibid: 43). This is why Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra call post/popfeminism “white and middle class by default” (Tasker/Negra 2007: 2).

For others, however, it is quite the opposite: postfeminism is “a product the interventions of women of color and lesbian theorists into the feminist debate, as it takes into account the demands of marginalized and colonized cultures for a non-ethnocentric and non-heterosexual feminism” (Genz/Brabon 2009: 121). As Ann Brook claims, postfeminism is not about “a depoliticization of feminism, but a political shift” expressing “the intersection of feminism with postmodernism, post-structuralism and post-colonialism, and as such represents a dynamic movement capable of challenging modernist, patriarchal and imperialist frameworks” (Brooks 2002: 4). Similarly refuting the perception of pop culture as the sphere of mere reinforcement of gender inequalities, bell hooks writes, pop cultural politics enables feminism to open itself

to a “critical dialogue with the uneducated poor [and] the black underclass,” since pop culture itself “may very well be ‘the’ central future location of resistance struggle, a meeting place where new and radical happenings can occur” (Hooks 1990: 31).

I believe that, especially in the contemporary network age, it is difficult, if not impossible to uphold either of the polarized views, as popfeminism is necessarily both, participating in a hegemonic and marginal discourse at once. Most crucially, it has to be noted that there is no such thing as one kind of popfeminism. There are varieties and differences in terms of politics and feminist positioning. The central question is therefore: who gets to define popfeminism? For the art and politics of interpretation are always-already imbricated with the object to be interpreted. In short, reading and analyzing popfeminism participates in its practice. Part of popfeminism’s whiteness is created by white lenses of interpretation (and in some cases no less so by self-proclaimed critically white lenses). It matters what examples we choose and with what kind of discourses we entangle these examples in. Or put it differently: Who are those popfeminists? Is it Madonna or Lil’ Kim? Lady Gaga or Nicki Minaj? Lily Allen or M.I.A? Charlotte Roche or Lady Bitch Ray? While all these figures can certainly be associated with established aesthetics of popfeminism, it is nevertheless crucial to place them in a greater analytic depth of field to see the different forms of popfeminism and the discursive fields of action they occupy. The issue hereby is not to point to marginalized ethnic identities as exceptions in their creation of differences, but to processes of how feminist positions emerge relationally, stretching distances and traversing differences between various popfeminist practitioners. In fact, as Kimberly Springer observes, “studies of postfeminism have studiously noted that many of its icons are white and cited the absence of women of color, but the analysis seems to stop there” (Springer 2007: 249). Hence, this study aims at not stopping short, but at expanding the meaning of current popfeminism in Germany, namely Neuer Feminismus, and at looking for the types of exclusion resulting from stopping short.

To make matters worse, one could even say that postfeminism is itself a thing of the past, as the term seems to be strangely outdated, as if it is stuck in the debate of whether the project of feminism as such is still alive. ‘Postfeminism’ seems out of sync with our queer times marked by “the withering away of old social models of desire, gender, and sexuality” and the emergence of “potent new forms of relation, intimacy, technology, and embodiment” (Halberstam 2012: 25). The relevant question raised by this situation is not whether feminism is dead or alive, but rather how feminist subjectivities can be diversely and transversely embodied and proliferated. Postfeminism as a label does not quite capture currently circulating forms of feminist politics that engage with gender, sexuality, and embodiment across multiplicities of “onto-epistemological” frameworks (Barad 2007). After all, “[f]eminist embodiment [...] is not about [...] a reified body, female or otherwise, but about nodes in fields, inflections in orientations, and responsibility of difference in material-semiotic fields of meaning” (Haraway 1997: 121). According to Rosi Braidotti, these transversal feminist subjectivities are animated by “a complex and articulate notion of ‘embodiment’” inherent in a “living and lived body, as well as the idea of a transgenerational, nonlinear memory of one’s belonging” (Braidotti 2013: 130). Rather than relying on distinct categories of difference and their intersections, the issue of producing a feminist subject concerns how “their interaction and their shifting relations emerge as more significant than any identity they may actually engender” (ibid: 129–130). What is at stake in analyzing these embodied categories is therefore not the difference between them, but the relational conditions that make the appearance of differences possible.

If postfeminism’s social critique has worked with and brought forth notions of intersectionality, today’s post-queer, transcultural, new materialist forms of feminist critique shift towards issues of entanglement and interference “to rethink race, sexuality, and gender as concatenations, unstable assemblages of revolving and devolving energies, rather than intersectional coordinates” (Puar 2007: 195). While it has been powerfully expanding the scope of feminist inquiry, intersectional

thought is limited due to its analytical reliance on distinct, pre-existing social categories in the explanation of social privileges and disadvantages. Although the intersectional approach is definitely helpful to draw the outlines of complex positional maps, we need other approaches to give us further insight into the multi-dimensionality of these maps. This means, in order to make sense of how these positionalities come into being, we need more intricate “genealogies of the [...] contingent structural relations of power” (Barad 2001: 99).

Since positionalities and their corporealities are produced within multiply entangled webs of difference, categories that do not seem to play an immediate representational role should not be treated as external but seen as part of the dynamic multidimensional formation of what ends up to be framed as representation. “Identities are not separable, they do not intersect,” Barad assures us; “rather identity formation must be understood in terms of the topological dynamics of iterative intra-activity” (ibid: 99). Employing Barad’s model in her critical reflection on intersectional thought, Nina Lykke asserts that the idea of intersectionality has to be broadened to processes of *intra-action*. In contrast to interaction, which “is something that takes place between bounded entities, clashing against each other but not generating mutual transformations [...] intra-action refers to the interplay between non-bounded phenomena which interpenetrate and mutually transform each other while interplaying” (Lykke 2012: 208). Given that categories are always already relationally intertwined, primary analytic focus is not only to be laid on points of intersection, but also on the convoluted patterns of interplay.

In this respect, attention to complex relational conditions offers ways to map out not only linkages, but also those discursive dynamics that render certain positionalities unlinkable and, in fact, unthinkable because they are not (yet) intersecting. Those unrepresented and unrepresentable positionalities might be externalized because they are rhetorically avoided, taken ironically, or contradictorily, due to gaps, traps, and dead ends in the existing discourses. Therefore, as Evelien Geerts and Iris van der Tuin write, we need “an onto-epistemological

understanding of the emergence of both hierarchical power relations and relations that are subversive because they cannot be understood along the lines of a restrictive power hierarchy” (Geerts/van der Tuin 2013: 177). For positionalities become mutually exclusive when the existing framework renders certain linkages ineffable.

Situating Lady Bitch Ray’s feminist politics in the current popfeminist scene in Germany, in chapter one, I focus specifically on her toying with terms, concepts, and positions constructed as mutually exclusive. Analytically, I am less interested in extrapolating her ‘intention’ than in tracing the discursive contradictions emerging in her performance. In the first chapter, I argue that it is by means of these contradictions and ambivalences that she challenges the existing framework of feminism in postmigration Germany. In my attempt to make sense of these dynamics of contradiction, I explore the transcultural dimension formed in her performance by analyzing how she dis- and re-entangles ethnically coded terms of ‘emancipation’, and poses questions as to who is entitled to represent ‘emancipation’. Her performance opens up ways to discuss certain notions of emancipation bound up with ‘Germanness’ and discursively opposed to ‘Turkishness’. Her way of dealing with the established categories of belonging displays how and under which conditions a feminist positionality is (not) ‘properly’ embodied. This is how her performance animates a diverse set of feminist conceptions of emancipation and moves through transcultural feminist geographies and their somatic signs. Her emphasis on her ‘Turkishness’ functions hereby as a form of self-marking which runs against discourses of ‘integration’ and ‘assimilation’. With this in mind, in the first chapter, I conceptualize her markers of ‘Turkishness’ as manifesting a *deliberate failure of passing*.

In my analysis of her paradoxical mode of positioning, I draw on what Walter Dignolo has described as “epistemic disobedience” (Dignolo 2009). According to Dignolo, epistemic disobedience is a reworking of the concepts attached to Western modernity by “de-linking” them from their Eurocentric, secular-modernist interpretations (Dignolo 2007). In my analysis, Lady Bitch Ray de-links ‘emancipa-

tion' from Western feminist paternalism and recasts it ambiguously, enabling multiple possible meanings which are seemingly paradoxical in practice. She brings together different forms of feminism despite, or, because of the resulting rhetorical contradictions. In fact, her sexual explicitness thereby operates by no means as an unquestioned support of Western feminist notions of emancipation, or an outright plea for sexual promiscuity. Rather it creates rhetorical tensions and ambiguities, calling for practices of *conceptual promiscuity*.

A pioneering artist of what came to be called Neuer Feminismus, Lady Bitch Ray forms a popfeminism that engages openly with questions of transculturality. What makes her performance particularly powerful is the fact that her rhetoric evokes the black, migrant and queer feminist interventions of early 1990s usually written out of the history of German feminism. Gleaning concepts and perspectives from scholars and activists engaged in pushing feminism in Germany beyond ethnocentric understandings of gender politics, I see Lady Bitch Ray's feminism as a project of *translingualization*. A central aspect in this is her employment of the words 'bitch', 'hure', and 'oruspu', which, in her use, reappropriate forms of racialized, gendered, sexualized or otherwise injurious speech. Tracing the genealogies of otherization and reappropriation of these terms, chapter one shows how she activates a feminism that is transnational yet at the same time locationally specific.

Following Susan Stanford Friedman's theorization of locational feminism, in this study, I foreground the specificities of Germany's contemporary cultural landscape and the ways they are shaped through migration. "A locational approach to feminism," Friedman writes,

"incorporates diverse formations because its positional analysis requires a kind of geopolitical literacy built out of a recognition of how different times and places produce different and changing gender systems as these intersect with other different and changing societal stratifications and movements for social justice. Locational feminism thus encourages the study of difference in all its manifestations without being limited to it, without establishing impermeable borders

that inhibit the production and visibility of ongoing intercultural exchange and hybridity.” (1998: 5)

This view on locationality is therefore far away from the celebration of national borders and so-called ‘local’ subjects, distancing itself from the anxiety surrounding the terms locationality and local. These terms produce a sense of skepticism, if not suspicion, as they are often perceived to be redrawing borders and seal off particular environments from their outsides. On the contrary, in the postmigration era, a locational approach provides perspectives on how the translocal is always already present within the local. For a feminist position, then, the politics of location and locationality can be employed against sweeping generalizations of what feminism is supposed to be or supposed to have developed from. As Stanford Friedman puts it, “feminism seldom arises in purely indigenous forms, but, like culture itself, develops syncretistically out of a transcultural interaction with others” (ibid: 5).

Feminism’s constitutive transculturality and its interrelation to migration is emphasized by Donna Gabaccia, who writes in her *From the Other Side*: “American womanhood had changed significantly as immigrants became American women, so that the female American models confronting immigrant women today are far different from those of the past” (1994: xv). For Gabaccia, this view does not assume an asymmetrical ‘successful’ integration model of those women who immigrated to the US, but rather tries to express how ‘immigrant women’ have “repeatedly challenged the American notion of biological difference in both its ‘racial’ and its ‘sexual’ varieties” (ibid: xii). Thus, “as foreign woman crossed over from the other side, they did not simply adjust to American life—they redefined the meaning of American womanhood” (ibid: xxiii). In fact, transculturality is hereby not simply a result of two cultures meeting by means of migration. For migrants did not just carry homogenous ethnic identities into a new setting, but brought also with them diverse “female traditions found within their native cultures” (ibid:, xi). In a postmigration condition, then, the emergence of new positionalities is a result of multiply converging his-

tories (including various forms of feminism). In her *Cartographies of Diaspora*, Avtar Brah writes with respect to the experience of Asian and black female migrants and their children in the UK: because of its creation of new positionalities, migration has “challenge[d] the idea of [a] continuous, uninterrupted” Britishness (1996: 195). In this sense, a transcultural locational perspective focuses on migrants and their non-migrant children as agents within processes of transculturation, bringing about re-appraisals of what counts as ‘local’.

Especially since the late 1950s and early 1970s, when the first wave of migrant workers and intellectuals arrived, they became not only a substantial part of the German economy, but also transformed the meaning of Germanness.³ The resulting positional entanglements urge us “to rethink our understanding of contemporary West German culture and feminist models of minority discourse” (Adelson 1993: 128). From a transcultural locational feminist perspective, then, “[a] rigorous discussion of feminist positionalities—and of the function of positionality in contemporary feminist discourse—reveals historicized and racialized constructions of gender as well as engendered and racialized construction of German history and national identity” (ibid: 127). And the politics of Neuer Feminismus, particularly (but not exclusively) Lady Bitch Ray’s, display the emergence of these kinds of transcultural locational feminist entanglements. In fact, Lady Bitch Ray’s toying with the word ‘Kanackin’ vividly animates these entanglements by intertwining specific colonial histories, postwar migration experiences, strategically essentialist migrant, and queer feminist interventions in Germany. Through this kind of diffraction, it sheds light on the enmeshed and messy trajectory of feminism in Germany, signaling what Susan Stanford Friedman refers to as feminist politics “beyond gender” (Stanford Friedman 1998: 18). According to Friedman, “moving beyond gender does not mean forgetting it, but rather returning to it a newly

3 For a comprehensive cultural analysis of this, see Gutiérrez Rodríguez 1999; for a literary analysis, see Adelson 2005; and for a detailed historical overview, see: Chin 2007.

spatialized way,” that is, a locationally-specific way (ibid: 18). Focusing on the links between the Anglo-American and the German feminist debate, Gudrun-Axeli Knapp has referred to this locational return as a form of “reclaiming baggage” which she describes as

“a time-consuming activity, resembling the psychoanalytical process of ‘*Erinnern, Wiederholen, Durcharbeiten*’. In the field of theory it works by remembering, by historicizing, contextualizing and comparing with respect to both levels: the so-called ontological level dealing with questions of ‘what is’ and the epistemological level of how we look at it. And, in a self-reflexive move, it would take up the question of how both of these levels are interrelated in contemporary culture and society and how they shape one’s own conditions of proposing.” (2005: 260)

With this in mind, in this study I claim that it is not enough to focus on sexual explicitness in analyses of popfeminism. For the contemporary postmigration condition requires a focus on the transcultural entanglements produced by current popfeminist politics in Germany.

As I show in chapter three, in the group discussions I conducted with Turkish-German university students, forms of positioning emerged that delinked or cut across binary discourses and thereby marked a potential for more expansive understandings of what feminism is or ought to be. In my interpretation of the participants’ interpretation of Lady Bitch Ray’s music video, this potential materialized in the gaps of discourses, being animated more with the unsaid than with the said. Analyzing the participants’ shifting attachments, their critical, I conceptualize the points of the discussion at which participants shifted in between negating and affirming Lady Bitch Ray’s feminism as *aposiopetic positioning*. It describes the moments when the discussion is detoured, paused, or became silent, and when the available language was not trusted because it would place the speaker into reductionist positional molds. This sense of insufficiency of the available discourse became particularly evident in one participant’s use of aposiopesis, a figure of speech which leaves the sentence unfinished

and creates a present absence: “I love feminists, but if this is feminism...” This aposiopetic phrase is a variant of “I’m not a feminist but...,” which is a form of positioning that marks an ambiguous rhetorical sliding along the boundaries of a feminist standpoint (Griffin 1989). Rather than just rejecting feminism wholesale, it can create the potential to make a feminist statement without cornering oneself in the assumed dogmas and orthodoxies associated with the history of feminism. According to Beverly Skeggs, the phrase ‘I’m not a feminist but...’ “may display a refusal to be fixed into place as a feminist” or indicate “the inability to position oneself as feminist because of confusing and contradictory messages about what feminism really is” (Skeggs 1997: 142). As I discuss in the third and last chapter of this study, as a Turkish-German living in Germany, Selin (a participant) avoids the language that would trap her into a cliché image of ‘Turkishness’, namely being insistent on traditions incompatible with feminism.

As for my use of language, I am very well aware of the hazardous moves involved in using distinct markers of belonging in an empirical analysis. After having introduced the major themes of my dissertation at conferences and other academic and non-academic occasions, I often encounter the same question, a question that points to the complexity of the cultural politics of belonging in postmigration Germany: why do I insist on Lady Bitch Ray’s Turkishness? Referring to the controversy and confusion around her performance (in the media and among feminist critics), in chapter one, I aim to address this question by asking: why does Lady Bitch Ray insist on her Turkishness?

In fact, the mere occurrence of the term ‘Turkishness’ in my analysis is often perceived as an essentializing gesture on my part. Though the use of such categories might be risky, I am nevertheless convinced that avoiding them is not always less risky, as this does not automatically guarantee a non-essentialist position. And using these loaded terms does not always mean that one unquestionably reproduces the categories at hand. In this respect, I treat these categories as “external attractors, stimulants or points of reference” (Braidotti 2013: 40). Ra-

ther than blacklisting certain terms, by analyzing and interpreting the group discussions, I present how, in a situated empirical setting, these categories come into being and are already under erasure, awkwardly supplementing one another and themselves.

Although contemporary cultural imaginaries in Europe deal with de-binarizations of ethno-cultural belonging in relation to migration (whether this is seen as a blessing or a curse), this condition does not necessarily bring about a disappearance of ethnicized vocabulary. The production of ‘Turkishness’ in Germany is a good example for this. After all, ‘Turkishness’ in Germany is intertwined with locationally specific histories and experiences of cultural difference. This is why a person born and raised in Germany but identifying herself as a ‘Turk’ or ‘Kurd’ (or whatever else) should not necessarily be perceived as radically renouncing ‘Germanness’, but as articulating a kind of ‘Turkishness’ or ‘Kurdishness’ that cannot be understood without its entanglement with ‘Germanness’ and other forms of ethnic marking in Germany.

These kinds of entanglements were acted out, directly and indirectly, in the group discussions I conducted. The participants dislocated and dispersed cultural markers, moving them from one locale to another, dynamically situating them in transcultural geographies that traverse nation-state borders. Their use of these markers does not necessarily entail an attachment to a specific geographic place but signifies forms of nomadic belonging that problematizes the rhetorical recourse to an originary territory. Therefore, I use Floya Anthias’ conceptualization of “translocational positionality” to map out the participants’ *territorial* movement. Anthias’ theorization effectively captures the relation between the construction of identity and its locations. As she writes, “translocational positionality addresses issues of identity in terms of locations which are not fixed but are context, meaning and time related and which therefore involve shifts and contradictions” (Anthias 2008, 5). Accordingly, “the focus on location (and translocation)” is crucial, since it “recognises the importance of context, the sit-

uated nature of claims and attributions and their production in complex and shifting locales” (Anthias 2002: 502).

The forms of attachment articulated by the participants by means of cultural markers can be compared to Avtar Brah’s notion of “diasporic space,” a space within which “multiple subject positions are juxtaposed, contested, proclaimed or disavowed” (Brah 1996: 208). This diasporic space is formed through “psychic investment in emotionally charged bonds with family and relations” (ibid: 43). As Brah argues, these relations come into being and are upheld through affective negotiation, and tend to get articulated in language through phrases like “not letting family down” (ibid: 78). In fact, in their debate on Lady Bitch Ray’s performance, the participants circled around issues related to familial bonds. The phrase that stuck out in one of the group discussions was *looking one’s parents in the eyes*, which hints at the affective links through which certain norms and values are negotiated and contested.

Drawing on Sara Ahmed’s reading of politics involved in the exchange and circulation of emotion, I further show that, rather than prescriptive, these norms and values are movable referents within a system of empathy. According to Ahmed, “emotions should not be regarded as psychological states but as social and cultural practices” (Ahmed 2004: 9). Analyzing feelings, she writes, can give us insight into how emotions take on a “form of cultural politics or world making,” which is always bound to an investment in “particular structures” (ibid: 12). With this in mind, I present how the participants constructed the family as an *affectively contested testing-ground*, a site in which ideals of morality and their practices are assessed via politics of emotion. It is a site in which what is right and what is wrong is becoming defined.

Moreover, I show how the discussants moved between distancing themselves from Lady Bitch Ray’s politics and finding points of identification. This became apparent in their switching between personal pronouns. They moved back and forth between referring to the German-Turkish youth as *they* and *we*. In their search for a way to under-

stand Lady Bitch Ray's performance, being born and raised in Germany was, at times, seen as the reason for her excessive use of sexual explicitness (and implied desires for 'assimilation'). However, the question was also to what extent they could uphold such a view, since they themselves were also born and raised in Germany. This conceptual confrontation became particularly apparent in the exchange between two participants. Their conversation shifted from an argumentative distance—from talking *about* Lady Bitch Ray, marked by the pronoun *she*—to the direct dialogical proximity of the *I* and *You*, when one participant confronted the other: "I am also born and raised here. What are you trying to say?" In my interpretation, this moment encapsulates the participants' ambiguous rhetorical construction of 'Germanness', which is turned into what Yoko Tawada, a German-Japanese poet, has called *the second person I*. Rather than being secondary and therewith distanced, 'Germanness', I argue here becomes an at once intimate and detached positionality.

Chapter 3 ends with the participants' conception of Lady Bitch Ray's feminism. I explore the participants' rhetorical moves in their search for answers to the question of what Lady Bitch Ray's politics is about, for, and against. In this part, I argue that the participants' paradoxically positioned answers to this question outlined a potential for a not-yet-existing transcultural feminist discourse. This potential emerged from the contradictory entanglements and the gaps and traps occurring in the search for position vis-à-vis Lady Bitch Ray's politics and feminism at large.

In dealing with discursive absences, methodologically, this study engages in a form of "deliberate unlearning" (Savage 2011: 81). It works with empirical data at hand in a way that it seeks to problematize the readily available analytic vocabulary. Deliberate unlearning, as David Beer writes in *Punk Sociology*, is about re-opening, questioning, and rearranging "our established ways of working and [...] our established ideas and concepts" and "see[ing] potentially new or mutated ways of doing sociology and being sociologists" (Beer 2014: 41). With this in mind, my aim is, on the one hand, to situate and ground my own

perspective, and, on the other, give the material enough room to move and make me move beyond my perspective. For that, one needs to take on the risks of revisiting, questioning, and unlearning the concepts, terms, and understandings that one takes for granted.

A guiding motto of this study is therefore borrowed from a statement written on an artwork by Jimmie Durham: “I forgot what I was going to say.” My approach aims to be open to experimentation and improvisation—not as off-the-cuff inventiveness, but in the sense of letting the process interfere with the limitations of the initial framework. This approach is of particular value in the sociological field of identity politics and migration, because the methodological frameworks of sociology tend to reinscribe binaries between the West and its others. In fact, the very language of analysis is shaped by “the social norms, structures, and values characterizing the so-called Western societies as a universal parameter for defining what modern societies are” and what its empirical subjects represent (Gutiérrez Rodríguez /Boatcă/Costa 2010: 1). European migration studies, as Encarnación Gutiérrez Rodríguez has pointed out, often presents itself “in a managerial language, embedded in methodological nationalism, classifying and quantifying migrants and post/migrants and targeting these groups as objects of governance” (Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2010d: 30). “[T]rans-cultural translation” bears a methodological potential to question this hegemonic discourse, since it foregrounds the productive exchanges and the interplay between empirical data and the language available to represent them (ibid: 17-36). Since my research is situated in a trilingual framework—German, Turkish and English—the issue of translation takes on a particularly prominent role. In my interpretations, I aim to deal productively with the existing layers of untranslatability in order to engage with the participants’ critical and creative use of the available linguistic repertoire.

In quantitative terms, three group discussions could be considered as not ‘enough’. However, reviewing these three discussions, I realized that they provided more than enough material for a productive empirical study. In fact, my sense of saturation with regard to the collected

data is formed by a politico-methodological understanding, which stands against the over-accumulation of data on the basis of an assumption that sheer quantity brings about a greater quality and the selection of a specific set with rigid lines drawn between productive and unproductive, consumable and not consumable data. Instead of this quantity paradigm, there is the possibility of efficiently using of the data at hand (and their always-already-existing density and thickness), by not simply discarding parts of the data and turning them into “wasted knowledges” (de Sousa Santos 2004). Indeed, I sensed that a further collection of data would have inevitably led to a de-privileging of the purportedly unproductive moments within the already collected set. From this emerged my decision to treat those moments in which the group discussion participants contradicted themselves, went off topic, or remained awkwardly silent, as primary points of analysis.

Grounded Theory is, in this respect, allows the researcher to work closely with the empirical material through processes of coding: initial coding, selective coding and theoretical coding (discussed in chapter two). These coding processes provide ways to create thick categories with a relatively low amount of collected material. However, Grounded Theory is also limited by its orientation towards *what is said* and, therefore, what is directly represented in the data. In order to methodologically engage with the gaps and silences and to ground what remained unsaid, I use *Situational Analysis*. Developed by Adele Clarke, Situational Analysis combines the basic principles of Grounded Theory with a deconstructionist methodology. In chapter two, I elaborate on how Situational Analysis’ use of maps makes it possible to pay attention to absences and emergences. The chapter closes with a presentation of the maps that emerged from the data gathered in the group discussions.

It is crucial to note that it was not merely my political predisposition and initial choices in terms of research strategies, but primarily the data themselves—with all their absences and inconsistencies, and the resulting moments of reconsideration, consternation—that pushed this study towards a decolonizing approach to methodology. After all, de-

colonizing means to scrutinize the representational force of the available discourses and work for possibilities of “alternative ways of knowing,” interpreting, representing (Tuhiwai Smith 2007: 166). To sense alternative ways of understanding and participate in their potential emergence, this study seeks to be attentive to the categories and social worlds that did not make it into language, or did not pass from one language into another—attentive to the entangled constructions of presence and absence, to what is there, what is not there, and what is within the knot, knit into the ‘not’.