

**Merle Kröger**

# PANORAMA

**Translated by  
Rubaica Jaliwala**



On August 30, 1983, a film is shot at Adalbert Street 85 in Berlin-Kreuzberg. The street starts at Kottbusser Tor and runs right through Neues Kreuzberger Zentrum, a curving New Kreuzberg Center.\* block of high-rise buildings, which at this point defines the neighbourhood for just under a decade. It is called NKZ, which also fits Nach-Kriegs-Zeit, because buildings like this were Post-war era. built in the gaping holes of the destroyed city as the promise of a new era. After this modernist upturn, the street is dotted with Wilhelmenian style buildings at Berlin eaves height. Crumbling plaster. Bullet holes here and there. At the Oranien Street intersection, Adalbert finally loses significance to the lively shopping street, which takes away its last breath. Then Adalbert cuts Naunyn Street, Waldemar Street, a few meters down to Bethaniendamm and then crashes into the Wall. The Wall is a reference to the Berlin Wall. Sheep at the children's farm stare at graffiti.

**Turks out!**

The corner house with the number 85 is at the intersection of Adalbert and Naunyn. The ground floor shutters are down, bashfully hiding the fact that OTTO Bettwäsche is no longer sold here. A few years later, this

OTTO was the name of the shop that sold bed linen and had shut down like many other small enterprises in the city.

\*Translator's notes

corner becomes the territory of the 36Boys, a gang from the blocks, which fill up the war wastelands. Still in 2003, when shooting a film at this corner, a couple of guys grab our camera. Long negotiations – do you have us on it – no, we don't – what do you have – you can have a look, here – okay, delete this – okay, we'll delete it – spinning wheels – off around the next corner. In fact, my own story criss-crosses right through the middle here. Down at Kotti, the joint with the best Lahmacun, beside the Mevlana mosque. Snack on the way to my Kungfu Dojo, industrial loft, backyard, fourth floor. A basement fish shop. Favourite bars over three decades: Oranienbar, Bierhimmel, Roses. In the summer of 1981, I must have fallen asleep at the table in a pub called Squatters-Corner, further down at Heinrich Square. My elder sister took me to Berlin in a VW Beetle, alternating between a day retracing Christiane F. and David Bowie – my choice – and a day on the trail of rebellion and the emerging squatters' movement – her choice.

Slang for Kottbusser Tor, which is a central traffic junction in the entire area.

Christiane F. was Germany's most famous heroin addict of the time. She lived on the streets from the age of 13 and later wrote the autobiographical book *The Story of Christiane F.*

Old German postal codes comprised four digits and were prefixed with the letter "S" for South, "O" for Ost/East, "W" for West, etc. This area in Berlin Kreuzberg

Every street in SO36, that's still the nickname of the neighborhood, conjures up a

**memory, a story, a face. I have to rid myself of them first, clear my head for this film, which is shot in the summer of 1983 in the Adalbert Street 85.**

was thus SO36. Although German postal codes are numeric today, consisting of five digits, e.g. 10999 for this area, it is still popularly referred to by its historical postal code SO36.

**It begins with a scene in the stairway: A woman, visibly agitated, rings a bell and waits. A man appears in the image beside her. Like her, he is a person of colour, that's what we'd say today, back then it was still: foreigner. This word has been pissing her off since she arrived in Hamburg years ago. The man says something incomprehensible. There is tension in the air, palpable, loud breathing on the soundtrack. Finally the door is opened. The woman, the man, then someone else, finally the cameraman, enter an apartment. Another woman appears fleetingly in the image, short hair, white blouse, she has let us – the audience – in with them. We enter a living room. People appear in it as if in a choreography: a young girl, barely more than a silhouette, an older woman wearing a headscarf calls out a name: "Sultan!" She stands up, crosses paths with a boy of about seven, who touches his ear, then drops backwards onto the sofa. The older woman goes into the adjoining room,**

comes straight back, disappears from the image, followed by another woman. Her traditional, countrified clothing makes her look older than she perhaps is. She is wearing a grey diamond-patterned cardigan. The wallpaper beside her head is pink with white flowers, which look quite real.

She shakes the hand of the visitor. “Do you know what happened in court today?”, the visitor asks softly, barely audible. “Almost nothing at all?”, is the answer.

A man’s voice off-screen begins a long explanation in Turkish – the man from the hallway? A translator?

The woman lets out a soul wrenching cry, then another, slumps. The others are instantly by her side, the older woman, a man. They turn her on her back, untie her headscarf. Her loud crying drowns out all the other sounds.

Cut.

The woman, held by her relatives, is now sitting on the floor, swaying back and forth. Her crying has turned into a lament. The family tries to calm her down.

Another cut.

The entire group, further away now, as if the camera has retreated to the entrance of the room. The wailing woman is the center, others join in.

**The man closes the windows and opens instead the smaller windows above. The casual action makes me wonder if he is trying to prevent the woman from jumping out the window.**

**This disturbing film scene, shot on August 30, 1983, is a Pietà of the modern moving image. It alone tells of unspeakable suffering, of the death and loss that women have been crying out their souls for over centuries, perhaps even millennia. It tells of a violence that leaves us powerless, full of rage.**

**Where and when does this story begin? With the German labour recruitment agreement of October 30, 1961 for guest workers from Turkey? With the arrival of a 19-year-old Indian woman in the Federal Republic on May 9, 1964? With the labour recruitment ban in 1973? With the refusal of Turkish guest workers to return to their former home country? With the refusal of an Indian NDR journalist to return to her former home country? With the coup d'état of September 12, 1980, by means of which the Turkish military assumes power? With the German Bundestag's vote of no confidence on October 1, 1982, which led to a change of government?**

NDR – Norddeutscher Rundfunk or North German Broadcasting is a public radio and television broadcaster based in Hamburg. NDR is a member of the ARD, a joint organization of regional public service broadcasters in Germany.

I assume my right as the author to decide. I select a point at which the story begins. With thrillers, it is crucial to start with a dramatic moment, so that the reader is shackled to the story, an inappropriate term for a genre that deals with violence.

I begin to fictionalize into reality. Hamburg. A cold, clear January night. In an old apartment, behind stately Hanseatic facades, a quiet neighbourhood near Rothenbaum Road, the telephone rings. The woman is huddled deep under the covers. Perhaps she is alone this night, perhaps not. It doesn't matter. Winter in Germany depresses her time and again, paralyses her thoughts and movements. The icy cold that creeps through every crack in the window frightens her. The phone rings. A sigh escapes from under the blanket. A friend, actually he's more than a friend, had called the Hamburg winter a long wail. Nothing penetrates through this wail. No human warmth.

The phone rings. She gets up finally and answers. "Foreigner whore!" whispers a male voice. "Get out of this country and return to the jungle from which you crawled out!"

The first time, she had even asked who it was. Answered back. Like she replies to every single letter from the audience, irrespective of whether



it's abusive, one of the usual know-it-alls, praise for her journalistic work or about a German child being named after her again.

“My husband and I often admired you on TV. Now we actually have a little girl and everyone is asking us where the name is from.”

Although she moves the receiver away from her ear, she hears the venom continue to spew: “Aren't there any German men left who can appear on television-” The words echo up to the high ceilings, filling the silence in her head, drifting like swathes through the cold moonlight streaming in. She takes a step towards the bed, then decides to go to the kitchen to make herself a coffee. Sleep is gone.

“Of course my husband and I would be interested in knowing what the name Navina means.”

As a writer, I have to decide at this point if she, Navina Sundaram, gets a new name. How far may I take her into my fiction? To what extent am I beholden to the fiction her memory has processed for her? Since a few years now, I've become her archivist, the custodian of these memories. I wander through the impressions, the traces she has left behind. I'm not quite ready to draw her completely into my fiction. Once she is a character, my character, there will be no turning back. And this

text should maintain the balance. The ball stops in mid-air, in the space between research and novel.

On January 19, 1982, the deputy editor-in-chief, Peter Gatter, moderates the magazine “Panorama” on First German television. “In a parliamentary party ruling today, the CDU declared that the breaking point vis-à-vis foreigners has been reached. Here, in the editorial office, we thought: A foreign journalist working here in Germany can see this from a different angle.”

Launched on June 4, 1961, „Panorama“ was the first political television magazine in Germany, broadcast every week by a different ARD editorial office.

Cut.

Navina Sundaram smiles at Peter Gatter, and begins her commentary with the words: “A good 4.5 million foreigners live in the Federal Republic. I am part of this statistic.”

She reports on asylum seekers, on their situation between waiting and hoping, condemned to inactivity. She reports on the political climate in a country where it is feared that immigrants will take jobs away from Germans. She counters the argument that asylum seekers cost the German state too much money. 13.30 Mark per citizen per year – too much for the attainment of a fundamental human right?

Two weeks later, the federal government, still under chancellor Helmut Schmidt of the SPD, takes a decision: From now on, policy will be geared towards effectively limiting the influx of foreigners, strengthening their willingness to return home as well as improving the economic and social integration of the foreigners living in the Federal Republic.

When she is asked, and this happens more and more often lately, how she gets along as a foreigner in Germany, she usually shrugs it off with a laugh. "I'm a first-class immigrant. I'm better off than most."

The next question inevitably is: "And when are you going back?" Usually, she does not respond to this at all, prefers to light a cigarette.

She smokes. A lot.

Is she really okay? Better than the woman, who will be called "Sultan!" 18 months later in the film shot at Adalbert Street in Berlin-Kreuzberg? The woman who lives in a three-room apartment with two sofas and too many people, who is perhaps having tea at this moment with her little brother, who has been staying with her since a year? He's all grown up now, too serious for his age, but for her, he remains the little one. After all, twenty years separate them. The little brother applied for asylum in Berlin last September, he can't go back

to Turkey, there's no getting around that. Perhaps they are talking about the pending letter of approval from the authorities, which still hasn't arrived.

Or about their other brother, who lives in Paris.

“Maybe you'd rather go to France-”

He interrupts her and takes her hand. “Don't worry, Sultan. The letter will arrive.” He gets up to tend to the tiled stove, which is always kept burning. The tea is turning cold. It's getting dark outside.

A Berliner Kindl neon sign lights up over the bar across the street.

These neon signs of the local beer brand were shining at nights all over the city at most corner bars in Berlin.

The siblings entered my story from the public television archive, which has until now been inaccessible to the public. They are still sketchy characters, especially the sister. So let's start with the brother: he is at once known and unknown. His name is Kemal Cemal Altun. The name is inscribed on a monument in Berlin. The name has been inscribed in history. Has written history. The person behind the name remains in semi-darkness, strangely without contours. As if no one really knew him. He was deprived of life, banished from a life in which he could have met someone, made friends or fallen in love like other 22-year-olds. Instead, his name is archived in innumerable documents: on applications, in official and unofficial

letters, on petitions and court orders, in newspapers, on leaflets, banners, in poems, songs, dedications.

When I write this novel, I will have to try to fill in the gaps. But for the moment, I want to leave it at that: I know nothing about the person Kemal Cemal Altun. And even less about his sister, who is called Sultan. Left in limbo. Stop the film. Freeze the image.

While the cold sweeps through the country and stirs up anti-immigrant sentiments, Navina Sundaram is shooting one reportage after another. Calls at night, work during the day. Best to stay in the office an hour longer. She reports on the research of the Greek sociologist Georgios Tsiakalos, who is trying to prove in Bremen that prejudices against foreigners are not innate. She reports on a former SS doctor, and edits the German version of "Auschwitz and the Allies". She films binational families for whom anonymous death threats and car sabotages are commonplace.

She no longer waits until a colleague from the editorial office says that they want to look at a topic with different eyes. She proposes the topics herself, fights to push them through at the weekly editorial conference.

On May 14, 1982, she receives a letter. “I’ve just been reading in the **Hamburger** Hamburg Teachers’ Newspaper **Lehrerzeitung,**” writes one, “what nasty attacks you have been subjected to in the past months. I am shocked that such things are possible (again) in our country. You should know that there are also people – a minority I assume – in the Federal Republic who appreciate your work; one or the other will also wish, as I do, that you don’t “work more behind the scenes”. Much as I understand that you are afraid of receiving threats again, I, for one, would be happy to see reportages from you and with you in PANORAMA.”

The situation in the editorial office has evidently come to a head. Has she herself asked to be less in the public eye? Or is NDR toying with the idea of banishing her to invisibility for her own safety?

“Dear Sir,” she writes back, “I would like to thank you for your kind and encouraging words. I do not know for sure whether the minority that writes nasty things to me speak for a silent majority or whether the minority that – like you – expresses its shame about it represents the majority.”

On June 28, 1982, Interpol Ankara asks the German authorities to arrest a man wanted for the murder of a former minister, closely linked to

the fascist Grey Wolves, on the basis of existing extradition treaties between Turkey and Germany. This was preceded by an interrogation with the asylum seeker Kemal Altun by the German immigration authority, during which he reported false accusations against him in Turkey, which had caused him to flee the country. This information was passed on by the immigration authority to the Federal Criminal Police and from there to Ankara. A week later, Kemal Cemal Altun, who lives with his sister at Adalbert Street 85, is arrested. Turkey immediately issues an extradition request.

In this summer of 1982, Navina Sundaram appears less often on television. She has disappeared “behind the scenes”. When she shoots a film, it is abroad. In Copenhagen, she films a treatment center for victims of political torture.

Is it the fear of racist attacks or the worsening political climate that drives her to India? Is it a coincidence that the last reportage German television audiences see of hers the following winter is on overcrowded women’s shelters, which gives victims of domestic violence sudden, brutal visibility in the news? Set precisely on January 2, 1983, when the editors are still nursing their New

Year's hangovers and briefly hand over media power to a woman.

Barely two weeks later, she speaks from Madras, in a lecture to Indian documentary filmmakers: "Just as the Group of 77 (representatives of the so-called Third World) are pressing for a New World Economic Order, similarly demands are being made for a New World Communication Order. It has been generally recognized that for the most part, till now information was only flowing from one direction to the other. To be precise, from the West to the East, from the industrial nations to the developing countries, and that the content of this information, intentionally or unintentionally, was prejudiced, biased and in fact strengthening a neo-cultural colonialism."

This neo-cultural colonialism, she knows, has to be cut off at the roots. These roots are buried deep in the far north, and she is one of very few people from the south who have access to it.

On September 9, November 8, December 16, 1982, and on February 10, 1983, the Court of Appeals in Berlin extends Kemal Cemal Altun's detention pending deportation, followed by an approval notice from the Federal Government. Germany



has a new chancellor, Helmut Kohl, and a new Minister of the Interior, Friedrich Zimmermann. He is considered a “killer dog“. So is the senior judge at Berlin’s Court of Appeals, Karl-Heinz Meyer. Friedrich Zimmermann is seeking a stable relationship with the Turkish military regime to swiftly implement the repatriation agreements of former guest workers. In return, the regime is demanding detailed information on Turks living in Germany and swift extradition of the Turkish asylum seekers in custody pending deportation.

They are unable to reach the brother in Paris because he has been officially granted political asylum. Thus the efforts are concentrated on the one in Berlin. Without further ado, the charge against him is lowered from murder to obstruction of justice, so the German government can be certain he won’t face torture or the death penalty in Turkey.

On March 6, 1983, Helmut Kohl is officially elected chancellor in early elections. Friedrich Zimmermann remains Minister of the Interior. The election campaign has been dominated by issues of unemployment and foreigner policy.

All over Europe, starting from Berlin and Paris, a wave of solidarity rises with Kemal Altun, a

deportation prisoner in custody for eight months. It surges into the German Foreign Ministry at the last moment on March 15, when the deportation is to be carried out. It is suspended.

On April 22, 1983, chancellor Kohl travels to London for talks with the newly re-elected Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. Either during their conversation or six months earlier at a meeting in Bonn, the sentence is uttered: "Over the next four years, it will be necessary to halve the number of Turks."

On June 6, 1983, Kemal Cemal Altun's pending application for political asylum is approved by the Federal Office for the Recognition of Foreign Refugees in Zirndorf. On June 16, the Court of Appeals in Berlin extends his detention on the grounds that: "Even if the persecuted person were to be incontrovertibly recognized as entitled to asylum, it wouldn't impede his extradition to the Turkish authorities."

A day later, on June 17, 1983, the 30th anniversary of the uprising in the GDR, a demonstration passes the building in Adalbert Street where Kemal's sister Sultan lives with her family. Conservative associations have called for a march through Berlin-Kreuzberg to launch the so-called "Return Home

The uprising of June 17, 1953 was led by workers in East Berlin, who rose in protest against government demands to increase productivity. In West Germany, this uprising was celebrated by anti-communist, conservative circles.

**Campaign". The aim is to persuade Turks living in Germany to leave the FRG. Letters in Turkish are sent and distributed asking for understanding that chancellor Kohl, in the interest of the nation, must halve the number of foreigners in Germany by having them return home. The march is followed by a counter-demonstration that results in street fighting with the police. Writing on an advertising column: "Kreuzberg remains in anti-fascist hands! No supporter of Löwenthal can come in!"**

**Journalist Gerhard Löwenthal is a co-founder of the association "Conservative Action", which uses vigilantes to combat left-wing protest movements and regularly calls for demonstrations at Berlin's zonal border on June 17 and August 13, the anniversary of the construction of the Wall. The detour to Kreuzberg to persuade a few Turks to return home probably just happened to be on the way.**

**In civic life, Gerhard Löwenthal, grandson of Holocaust victims, is editor-in-chief and presenter of the political "ZDF-Magazin", where he openly represents anti-communist and right-wing positions in the public Second German Television.**

**"I've always taken a stand!"  
interjects the Indian reporter**

„ZDF-Magazin“ was a West German television news magazine, which ran on ZDF from 1969 to 1988. It was known for its conservative and anti-communist views which gave rise to controversial reactions from audiences.

looking back from 2018. “And I still do! I’ve always resisted saying: on the one hand – on the other. I have a point of view! Otherwise, let someone else make the film. When I watch a film, I want to know: Where does the person stand? There was also a decidedly right-wing point of view – I don’t know if you remember Gerhard Löwenthal?”

I vaguely remember a man in suit, black and white of course, because we didn’t have colour TV back then, flickering across the screens every week, popular with the grandparents, tacitly tolerated by the parents, loudly boycotted by the rebellious sister. A boring, opinionated man with large, teardrop-shaped glasses, who regularly says things that seem more and more absurd the older we get. I put on my headphones, put on a mixtape, and look out the window. Fehlfarben: „Geschichte wird gemacht. Es geht voran!“

Fehlfarben is a German new wave band. Lyrics from their most popular song: “We’re making history. Things are on the move.”

She is waiting for my answer. “Yes, ah-”, I say. Whenever she looks at me this way, I feel that I haven’t done my homework. At such moments, I curse the thought of having become her archivist. I long for autonomy. For fiction. I want to write a novel.

On July 10, 1983, the German Minister of the Interior Friedrich Zimmermann gives the news

magazine “Der Spiegel” an interview. “We have 4.6 million foreigners in the Federal Republic of Germany, 1.7 million of them are Turks,” the minister clarifies. To the question whether workers from Spain and Italy can come in unlimited numbers and if this would not be a discrimination against the Turks, he answers: “They come from a different cultural background, and on a larger scale. It makes a huge difference having 1.7 million Muslims here, who in reality don’t want to live here in the long run, don’t want to integrate, also don’t want to become German citizens, but arrive with an obvious desire to make money and then go back.”

To actively support those willing to return home, on July 21, 1983, Friedrich Zimmermann writes a letter to his colleague in the Ministry of Justice. In it, he asks, in the interest of good cooperation with Turkey in the area of policing, that the federal government’s approval notice of February 1983 be declared enforceable, so that Kemal Cemal Altun’s deportation can be carried out without delay.

But wait – isn’t there a positive asylum decision?

On August 25, 1983, the first day of a unique trial in the history of the Federal Republic of Germany takes place before the Berlin Administrative Court.

Six police squad cars are parked in front of the building. Even in the building, extensive security measures are in place. The Federal Commissioner for Asylum, reporting directly to the Minister of the Interior, is suing the Federal Office for the Recognition of Foreign Refugees. Although Kemal Altun is only a minor figure in this trial, because here one federal authority is suing another, he is being heard for the first time. The judges request documents, want to form their own opinion of the political situation in Turkey and what awaits him there in the event of deportation.

Navina Sundaram, who has been following the case closely since her return from India, plays her card in the "Panorama" editorial office. She is determined to report on the case. With other eyes. From a different perspective. Call it what you like! She gets the assignment. Activates her networks: camera team in West Berlin. Who's going to put me in touch with the lawyer? With the family?

On Thursday, August 25, 1983, Navina Sundaram and Kemal Cemal Altun meet for the first and only time in their lives. I imagine there must be a photo in which they can both be seen. He next to his lawyer, his eyes wandering over the faces behind the cameras, stops short on the woman with

the very long dark hair, one of the few female journalists among men. She is wearing a striking red dress. Person of color, he would conclude today, but in 1983, he thinks: a foreigner? Perhaps he is suspicious, suspects her of being a reporter for Turkish television. Perhaps his lawyer has just informed him that First German Television will be reporting on his case, at prime time. Does this news give him renewed hope? Or is he too exhausted from waiting for the waiting to end and at the same time from the fear, every time the cell door is unlocked, that it will now end and he will be taken to the airport.

He looks so young, she thinks perhaps. She tries to block out the excited buzzing around her. Or: He is so thin, so pale after a year in the detention cell. Perhaps she is also a bit disappointed by his obvious despondency. This is the revolutionary who opposed the Turkish military junta as a schoolboy and fled via the Balkan route to East Berlin, and from there to the free western part of the city? One who defends himself, who doesn't simply accept the way he is treated here in the Federal Republic? He went all the way to the European Union's International Court of Justice. Because of him, she might think, thousands have taken to the streets all

over Europe? Formed chains, sang songs of protest?

Perhaps he notices that the other press people are watching her as well, surreptitiously from the side or with undisguised curiosity. Her face is well known in the Republic. Imported from India to Hamburg by public German television and stayed. The first foreigner in the newsroom. No one without a German passport has penetrated so far into the center of television power. She is not content to report on South Asia and occasionally anchor “Weltspiegel” magazine when the editors-in-chief are on vacation. She’s been around long enough to capture the mood of the country. To put it into words.

“Weltspiegel” or “World Mirror” is a television program on ARD. Correspondents’ reports from its foreign studios worldwide are broadcast every Sunday at 6:30 p.m.

She notes. “Kemal Cemal Altun is led into the courtroom in handcuffs. Until the trial began, no one really knew if Altun would even attend the trial, because he was threatened with extradition to Turkey.”

She signals the cameraman to pan over the first row of visitors.

“Kemal Altun’s brother was called as a witness on the first day of the trial. The former member of parliament and member of Ecevit’s Social Democratic Party, which has since been banned, has been granted political asylum in France.”



Beside the brother sits the man who closes the windows in the film, next to him the sister Sultan from Adalbert Street. Next to her is the young woman we also know from the film scene. Sultan seems tense, alert, her brief glance at the press is difficult to interpret: skepticism perhaps about the motives for the attention, or simply irritation at the whirring and clicking of the cameras. At this moment, she might sense the dilemma between the image her brother embodies and the actual person. In 1983, icons are in fashion amongst the left: A poster of Che Guevara is seen hanging in most shared flats and many children's rooms, in some Angela Davis or Sophie Scholl, Mumia Abu Jamal is just becoming trendy.

Little is known about the further course of the trial's first day. Only the left-wing daily newspaper "tageszeitung" comments, acknowledging a day later, "that the judges of the 19th chamber did all the work for the trial that the Federal Ministry of Justice and the Berlin Court of Appeals, which have been pursuing Altun's deportation for more than a year, did not find necessary." It was revealed, the report continues, that the Court of Appeals and the Federal Ministry of the Interior had tried all means possible to make this work more difficult.

Files were not passed on, documents from Turkey were not translated by official translators, whole parts of the text were missing. The judges have to schedule another day of hearings to process and request the missing documents.

Is Kemal Altun aware at this point that there is hope for the first time, that a German court can and will protect him from deportation? Or has he now become aware of his defenselessness, just when the arbitrariness of the authorities of a so-called constitutional state is exposed?

Navina Sundaram conducts an interview on the lawn in front of the courthouse. Her interlocutor is Percy MacLean, a judge in the first asylum chamber of the Berlin Administrative Court. In conversation with the NDR journalist, he argues against Altun's deportation on a strictly legal basis. Not a word is said about the criminal charge he has already filed against four prosecutors and political officials on July 27 in the name of the human rights organization Amnesty International. An organization with which Navina Sundaram is closely associated and on which she has reported several times. The charge, preparing abduction under Section 234 of the Criminal Code, reads: "There is an urgent suspicion against the four accused that they deliberately

and intentionally cooperated in forwarding strictly confidential information from Mr. Altun's asylum application to the persecuting state Turkey, and informing it of the refugee's whereabouts. In addition, they even initiated an extradition request on the basis of which there is now a serious risk that Mr. Altun, despite his recognition as a person entitled to asylum, will be forcibly taken to Turkey and subjected to political persecution there."

The journalist and the judge both withhold their personal opinions during the interview so as not to preempt the legal process, which they hope will have a positive outcome. It is interesting to note that Percy MacLean traces his politicization back to a trip to India in the late 1960s, while Navina Sundaram, who was living in Hamburg at the time, is molded by the progressive, political discourse in Germany.

In 2018, they both talk about the Kemal Altun case again, but not with each other. "This very case," Percy MacLean recalls, "was seen by civil society as an example that you cannot dismantle the fundamental right to protection from political persecution! A connection was made to the time of fascism, and it was formulated quite clearly at the time that the right to asylum was a result of our fascist past.

**You cannot imprison someone who asks for protection from political persecution! That was an unforgivable sin the judiciary committed back then.”**

**The sin, as is so often the case, once committed, finds its continuance. In June 1993, the federal German Right of Asylum is finally subverted and de facto abolished by the so-called third-country regulation, which stipulates that asylum seekers entering via a safe third country can only apply for asylum there. In those years, two German states have become one. Asylum seekers and people of non-German origin are increasingly becoming victims of arson attacks, pogroms and everyday racism. Navina Sundaram, who feels a growing alienation from her adopted home in Germany, takes up a temporary position as ARD correspondent in India. Soon after her arrival in Delhi in September 1992, the destruction of the Babri Mosque in Ayodhya by Hindu nationalists triggers the most devastating pogrom since Indian independence. This culminates in the so-called Bombay riots in early 1993 and changes the face of the secular, multi-ethnic state forever. Behind the riots, directed primarily at Muslims, are the political advocates of a Hindu state.**

ARD is a joint organization of Germany's regional public-service broadcasters. ARD also operates a national television network called Das Erste (The First German Television) and ZDF or Das Zweite (The Second German Television).

“And you know—” she gives me one of those probing looks again in 2018. “—that the ideology of the BJP and the RSS are modeled on fascism. They’ve copied this right down to the uniforms. It’s the same mess! “You go from Germany to India, where this is now manifesting in astounding ways.” And so she returns, once again, to Hamburg.

However, we are still in 1983, it is August 30. Navina Sundaram is sitting in the editing room in Hamburg. She has managed to cut down the complexity of the Kemal Altun case to the required 2 minutes and 40 seconds for the political magazine, a journalistic feat considering the legal terminology and the international political situation, which has to be presented in simple terms. She places her interview with the judge at the back. So the audience first gets an impression of perhaps the best-known deportation prisoner of the Republic on trial here.

The phone rings. I imagine she is displeased about the disturbance. It’s the day of the broadcast, the report still has to be approved. Perhaps she has even given instructions that only urgent calls may be put through.

It rings. She answers. On the other end is the cameraman from Berlin, with whom she shot at

the courthouse on the previous Thursday. His name is George Peter Boulwood. The British journalist founded the production company Cintec in West Berlin in 1973 to tackle political and social themes. Although Cintec works exclusively for broadcasters from the FRG and other Western countries, its focus lies on the GDR. So Peter Boulwood is on the phone and says, “Did you hear? Kemal jumped out of the window in the courtroom. He’s dead.”

A death in front of rolling cameras. Press photographer Elke Bruhn-Hoffmann, working for international press agencies like AP, captures Kemal Cemal Altun’s suicide on analog film. Four photos show the split-second sequence of events.

Behind the interpreter’s back, Altun turns to the open window.

He places his right foot on the windowsill.

He pulls himself up by the window frame.

He jumps off before the interpreter can reach him.

The fifth photo shows Altun’s body from above. He is lying on the grass just outside the courthouse, roughly where journalist Navina Sundaram conducted the interview with Judge Percy MacLean five days earlier. An ambulance is at the scene a few minutes later. Doctors and paramedics perform resuscitation. At 9:20 a.m., he is pronounced dead.

**“And then you’re sitting there: Oh God, what now?”**

**The shock is palpable even today: for her, for others involved. It is followed by immediate pressure from the newsroom: “We have to do something about this!” The emotions are overwhelming: anger, sadness, outrage. She wants to get that across, the emotional factor. Contact the family and the lawyer right away. Get on the plane to Berlin.**

**In the early afternoon, she is sitting on one of the two sofas at Adalbert Street 85 in Berlin-Kreuzberg. Sultan, the sister is not there yet. She works during the day.**

**“And they said: We haven’t told her yet. None of us will tell her. The authorities would have to tell her or someone from the court. But we don’t want to be the bearer of bad news. So there I was in that situation, and then I said: Yes, I’ll do it. Not realizing what I was getting myself into.”**

**On August 30, 1983, a film is shot at Adalbert Street 85 in Berlin-Kreuzberg. The film is broadcast the same evening at 9:45 p.m. on First German Television’s “Panorama” magazine. It is 2 minutes and 20 seconds long, during which time it was cut twice. The sound is synchronous, there is no commentary or music. It is followed by a statement**

from Kemal Altun's lawyer, Wolfgang Wieland, who is visibly struggling for composure as he describes the course of events in the courtroom. The five photos, which by this time are circulating around the world, are overlaid. The lawyer concludes with the remark that one cannot prevent someone determined to end his life from doing so. Politically, however, he sees the responsibility with the authorities, who have exerted tremendous extradition pressure. He ends with the demand for an immediate stop on extradition to Turkey.

After that, the coverage of the trial is shown, which had been sitting ready on the editing table, only the commentary is slightly changed. This is followed by the interview with the judge, which now, in light of the events, seems strangely unemotional. Between the two parts, which were filmed on the day of the broadcast and five days earlier and accordingly aired contrary to their actual chronology, there are a few seconds of black image on the archive tape that NDR now has in its holdings. A black image depicting the ghostly resurrection of Kemal Altun, who has just ended his life.

On television, a black image is synonymous with antimatter, a black hole. Black image represents the death of media. In times of linear television,



this signifies: the sender no longer broadcasts, the receiver switches off or over.

In the archive, the black image denotes disappearance. Something was not recorded, lost, removed, deleted.

Thrillers deal with violence. This narrative is about state violence, about racist violence, about violence that affects the victim's psyche and causes it irreparable damage. It is about violence that has not yet transpired and still has an impact. It is about people who are silenced, relegated to invisibility. As an author, I'm working on the reconstruction of the disappeared.

In a classic thriller, the author is often, but not always, a white man, not quite young, with an active past in the intelligence service, as a profiler in the police, as a lawyer or in the army, in possession of knowledge that isn't available to the readership. This knowledge can be real or fictional, it doesn't matter. What's important is that there is non-knowledge, a mental black image that is fed with knowledge piece by piece, usually against chronology. The omnipotence of the narrator over the readers grows immeasurably, because he is the master of truth and lies, life and death. The readers are sheep that graze on the meadow of their everyday life and

let themselves be led here and there by the shepherd dog. Blind trust. Primal trust.

Patriarchal assumptions.

As an author, I have abandoned my training as shepherd dog. I rummage around, sometimes purposefully, sometimes haphazardly. I accompany you to abysses into which we stare and decide to jump over or seek another path. I lead you off the path, not knowing the destination. Tracks that run in the sand. Tracks that lead around in circles. Tracks that lead to yet other tracks. I blink, blinded by the sunlight. I am night-blind. Disoriented.

The broadcast tape of August 30, 1983, stored in the archives of German public television, is incomplete. "They're obliged to have a recording of every political program!" It still gets her worked up, 35 years later. "Everything from A to Z of every other „Panorama“ program is there. This one's not. Gone."

What's missing? Is the question with which every novel I write begins.

What's missing is a studio conversation that was broadcast live on August 30, 1983. Only fragments have resurfaced in newspaper and magazine clippings, reproduced in black and white. Disturbing snippets. The conversation was conducted between

the two parts of the broadcast that have survived. Exactly where a black hole gapes today. What is known is the presence of two journalists.

The deputy editor-in-chief of “Panorama”, Peter Gatter, has already appeared at another dramaturgical moment in this story. Even minor characters need an introduction! With him is Navina Sundaram, staffer in NDR’s current affairs department, special fields: Third World and foreigners. Because it’s expected of her and because she wants it.

Ironic laughter: “I am the voice of the South.”

It is not known if others have been present in the studio.

What is known is that Peter Gatter begins the studio conversation with three questions: “Navina, where did you get this material? Is it okay to broadcast this? Isn’t this wallowing in human suffering?”

Just before, a documentary film scene about a woman who learns of her brother’s death and breaks down was shown. Almost unedited. Uncommented. What is known is that, as is customary, this film scene was approved by the program director and the legal advisor of the NDR before it was aired.

What is available is a document dated August 31, 1983, that is, one day after the filming, with the

following wording: “I agree to the release of the film footage made of me in my apartment on August 30, 1983.” This is followed by a literal translation in Turkish and the signature of Sultan Dursun. Her first name is known to me from the film recording itself. I get her last name from the document, but I’m not sure I can use it. Only later in the process of writing a novel will it be decided if she wants to and should enter the story as a real person, if she will become a character, and what name she will receive. The fact that her name is also in official documents accessible today, and in press articles, doesn’t make it any better. It feels transgressive, and at the same time, it is important to me that she has a full name in this story.

What is available is another document, also dated August 31, with the heading: “Remark”. It describes the course of the shooting on one page, typewritten. At about the beginning of the second third of the page, I read: “Upon arrival, the relatives and neighbors present explained that Sultan Dursun didn’t yet know of her brother’s death, nor did anyone want to tell her for fear that she would “despise the bearer of the bad news for life”. They intended to watch the ZDF program “HEUTE” together with Sultan Dursun at

“Heute” or “Today” is the daily evening news program on ZDF.

7 p.m.; she would then have heard it on the news. After a very long conversation, Navina Sundaram offered to break the news to Sultan Dursun.” And further, near the end of the page, I read: “The extent of Sultan Dursun’s reaction was then somewhat unexpected for all involved and led to a certain helplessness and great dismay. A member of the team immediately called for an ambulance, which took Sultan Dursun to the hospital. As they took their leave, some relatives thanked the team for their help. The departure was around 4:45 p.m.”

The postscript follows on a second page: “The correctness of the facts described on the previous page can be confirmed by the following persons,” as well as the signature of the interpreter present at the shooting and a man with the same surname as Sultan Dursun, perhaps her husband or a relative.

What is known is Navina Sundaram’s response to the three questions with which her boss has opened the studio conversation. A side glance is allowed at those taking the minutes of the broadcast. The journalist Elimar Shubbe, editor-in-chief of the national-conservative “Deutschland-Magazin”, has founded an information service called “tele-control – Office for Program Monitoring”. It produces transcriptions of selected programs suspected of

representing left-wing tendencies. These transcriptions are used, for example, by conservative politicians to document the intellectual-ethical subversion and disintegration of federal German media. The following verbatim quote could therefore well have been abridged or deliberately taken out of context.

Navina Sundaram consequently replies: “This is certainly a difficult factor. But I think, especially in this situation involving extradition practice, asylum issues and foreigner policy, which is subject to such abstract dimensions, and what it actually means does not even reach the population, I think it is legitimate in this case to show it, to perhaps bring the people a little closer to the anguish that such a procedure can trigger.”

The publishers of “tele-control” do not limit themselves to the literal transcription in their circulars to the press, they also deliver background information which they consider relevant. This particular issue further cites the fact – but not its source – that after the broadcast about 350 calls were received by the television channel, of which about 60% were of the opinion that the channel had gone too far. With such a majority behind it, “tele-control” considers itself to be the voice of the people: “To this, we can only add a question to the NDR director Friedrich-

Wilhelm Rauker, an avowed Christian, as to what he has done to prevent a repetition of such practice.”

Now don't believe that a self-proclaimed political media information service would have no circulation in 1983. True to its intention, “tele-control” successfully sets “the tone for the show.” And the show gains momentum day by day:

“Callousness” (Rheinische Post).

“The worst kind of voyeurism” (Christ und Welt).

“Merciless, shameless, greedy” (Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung).

“Violence was done to a woman blindsided by reporters dragging her feelings before an audience of millions.”

“They didn't even realize they were sacrificing a human being for the sake of disclosure.”

“To claim a connection between the causes of the suicide and the family's tears can only be seen as cynicism.”

“The reporter, however, is unmoved. There is talk of ‘stirring up’. Propaganda then, agitation.”

Verbose ammunition for the governing CDU party's spokesman, who claims that a television crew delivered the news of death to Altun's mother (the mother?!) and filmed her shock with icy coldness. “One who acts in such a way could have been in

school with Goebbels!” he exclaims. The ARD is accused of deliberately fuelling the domestic political situation!

Stop. What’s happening here? A political shift of discourse? What violence are we talking about? About which practice? About which victim?

Navina Sundaram is hardly aware of any of this. Two days after Kemal Altun’s suicide, the “ice-cold sensationalist reporter” flies to India to shoot a documentary film on the encounter between German and Indian artists in a remote cultural center in the Himalayas. Intense conversations ensue about cultural imperialism, inequality as a consequence of colonialism, as well as Eurocentrism in politics, philosophy, literature, art.

Back in Germany, the press pounces on Peter Gatter. Not proven, but widely criticized, is a post-script by Gatter in or about that disappeared studio conversation. Roughly summarized, he is supposed to have claimed: If a dog had been thrown from the sixth floor of the Berlin courthouse, the nation would have started howling sympathetically about its fate.

The NDR director does as he is told by “tele-control” and publicly criticizes the editorial staff,



combined with a demand for increased due diligence. He takes the matter to the Broadcasting Council. By the year 1983, the Broadcasting Council of the NDR is an independent supervisory body of about 30 people, predominantly from so-called socially relevant groups: Protestants, Catholics, Jews, craftsmen, civil servants, employees and farmers, associations for women's, youth and the Vertriebene, the trade union confederation, sports and employers' associations... What's missing? Official recognition that in the fall of 1983, the Federal Republic was already an immigration country and that immigrants had long since become a socially relevant group.

„Vertriebene“ here refers to Germans expelled during the war from what is now the Eastern Bloc, e.g. from Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, etc. mostly ultra-conservative or nationalist groups.

On October 29, 1983, after a controversial discussion, the NDR press office tersely announces that the Broadcasting Council has determined by majority vote that the “Panorama” reportage of August 30, 1983 on Kemal Altun’s death violates the NDR State Treaty. The German state press agency dpa disseminates this information with the addition: “A “Panorama” reporter team had given Altun’s relatives the news of his death at the time, after which his sister collapsed. For a long time, the camera was directed at the screaming and crying girl.”

This dpa report is further edited into shorter and longer articles throughout Germany and beyond.

What's missing? A look at the "screaming and crying girl". Just one background report in the Berlin newspaper "Die Morgenpost" of September 1, 1983, had depicted Kemal Cemal Altun's two sisters, Fatma Ipek (39) and Sultan Dursun (43), residing in Berlin Kreuzberg, Adalbert Street. Sultan Dursun, the woman in the film shot at Adalbert Street 85 on August 30, is thus 43 years old. She is reduced to a girl, a defenseless victim, degraded and de-politicized. She does not get a chance to speak, not in this article and not in any other.

What's missing? A fictional meeting between Navina Sundaram and Sultan Dursun set today, in which they together watch the footage shot on August 30, 1983 for the first time. Where does their memory take them emotionally, what had been their motives to bring this material to German TV screens? This meeting could be the storyline forming the framework of the novel, going through different atmospheric phases: politeness, embarrassment, grief, rage, depression, hope.

What's missing? A trace of the sisters of Kemal Altun and their families. They no longer live in the Adalbert Street 85. The gentrification of Berlin-

Kreuzberg does not stop at this street, which no longer ends at the Wall, but leads right into the new Berlin Republic.

What's missing? A political or ethical debate about this "Panorama" program. After the press release, NDR shuts the case with a rebuke to the editorial staff. Back from India, Navina Sundaram suggests to the director of the Catholic Academy in Ludwigshafen, who had written a critical yet sympathizing letter to her, that the program be used as an opportunity for a conference.

As point 1, she raises the question of journalistic ethics, referring to a piece of the television magazine "report", produced by the more conservative Bavarian broadcast station BR. This piece shows at length the image of an African woman, who, fleeing from hunger, tries to breastfeed her child in a camp. A woman who has no name, no right to privacy. A woman who serves only to illustrate the subsequent overlay asking for donations. Sundaram notes in her letter "that on one situation of desperation, namely in the Sahel zone, there is agreement, but on another in Berlin-Kreuzberg, the limits of decency have been reached."

"report" is an ARD television magazine on current political events and is televised every three weeks.

As point 2 of the conference, she proposes the topic of journalistic honesty. “All of us in this profession make a difference, manipulate, direct, orchestrate. We intervene, change and sell the resulting image as reality. This claim is at least contestable. If I had concealed the fact that I was the bearer of the news of death, which should have been delivered by the authorities long before, if I had first cut where Altun’s sister collapses and said in the commentary, quite factually-cool: that was the sister’s reaction when she learnt of Altun’s death, I think the backlash would have been only half as harsh.”

The conference, though, never takes place. Instead, a committed journalist loses credibility, a stigma is attached to her that she can no longer free herself from. Perhaps there is even a bit of schadenfreude mixed in with the criticism: She wanted to become a correspondent, to rise to the top tier of journalists, she wanted to be-

LIKE US.

She gradually disappears: from the First to the Third Program, from domestic political magazines, she is only allowed to report on Asia, then at some point no longer at all. She fights “behind the scenes” for more migrants in the media, gives lectures, focuses on the next generation. She fights her own invisibility.

What's missing? Kemal Cemal Altun. The brother, the student, the political activist, the immigrant. His future. On the evening of his death, 10,000 people march silently from SO36 to the Court of Appeals in Berlin. Although the media interest in the case is diminishing soon, it marks the beginning of a solidarity movement that is strong in Germany until today. Important initiatives like Pro Asylum, Asylum in the Church, refugee councils started here. An attack is carried out in the name of Altun, a book is dedicated to him, a square in Hamburg is named after him, a monument is erected on the spot where he died. But the man disappears behind his own image.

What's missing? A film by well-known director Raoul Peck. From 1982, Raoul Peck is studying at the German Film and Television Academy in West Berlin. He witnesses the events of August 30, 1983, experiences a climate of politically instrumentalized racism and xenophobia on the one hand, and peace movements, housing struggles and solidarity on the other. Looking back in 2017, he says: "I wanted to make a film on Kemal Altun's suicide. There were big demonstrations in Berlin because of the suicide of this young man, who was to be deported to Turkey. Funding for the film was rejected

at the time on the grounds that the reference to Germany was not visible. For me, it was like being barred from filming. I decided to leave after that.”

What’s missing? A narrative in which this reference is irrefutably established. The connection between a murder committed for political reasons by state institutions of the Federal Republic of Germany, a woman whose pain was unbearable, a vanished recording, a film that was never shot and a journalist of color who became invisible before everyone’s eyes.

As the author, however, I need to resist the wish to fill every gap, to fictionalize into completeness, to replace every black frame with an image. What’s known can be ticked off. We need to keep the black holes open, to collectively understand – what’s missing.

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numerous awards, including Best Crime Novel of the Year, the Radio Bremen Prize for Crime Fiction and the German Crime Fiction Prize.

*Maha Maamoun* is an artist, curator and independent publisher. Her work examines the form, function and currency of common visual and literary images as an entry point to investigating the cultural fabric that we weave and are woven into. She is co-founder of the Contemporary Image Collective (CiC) and the independent publishing platform *Kayfa ta*, and a member of the curatorial team of Forum Expanded (Berlinale), and the Akademie der Künste der Welt (Academy of the Arts of the World), Cologne.

*Ala Younis* is an artist and curator. She seeks instances where historical and political events collapse into personal ones. Her work looks into how the archive plays on predilections and how its lacunas and mishaps manipulate the imagination. She curated Kuwait's first pavilion at the Venice Biennale (2013). She is co-founder of the publishing initiative *Kayfa ta*, co-head of Berlinale's Forum Expanded, member of the Academy of the Arts of the World (Cologne), and co-artistic director of Singapore Biennale 2022. She is a research scholar at al Mawrid Arab Center for the Study of Art at New York University in Abu Dhabi.

## The Nomadic Curriculum — A Manual Series

The conceptual and practical basis of this series is the notion of the *nomadic curriculum*, developed and practiced within the *Whole Life Academy*— an experimental, collaborative research initiative that is developed within the framework of the long-term program *The Whole Life. An Archive Project*. The interdisciplinary, international *Whole Life Academy* is a network for ongoing collective research and reflection on archival positions, infrastructures and materialities.

The practice of the nomadic curriculum takes form in the movements, connections and networks between, within and around the archival contexts that continue to shape our present. The nomadic movement relates different methodologies of knowledge production with situated archival contexts. This form of activation functions as a meta-mobilization of the archival material: By applying a specific toolbox in diverse archival environments, the objects are set in motion and their status, conditions and milieu are correlated. This is the guiding principle of the *Whole Life Academy* in



both its long-term approach and its small-scale methods. Understanding archives as central instruments for the canonization of knowledge formations and worldviews and for the establishment and continuation of power relations, this nomadic curriculum takes up the archive as the space in which the material and non-material foundations of the present are created. The methods of the Academy destabilize the fixed archival structures using an approach that is in constant development, adaptation and flux. As nomadic thought gives primacy to the spatial and temporal specificity of a research matter, the nomadic curriculum seeks to produce adjusted and localized tools that can critique inherent hegemonic relations of archival knowledge, objects and institutional structures. At the same time, it becomes possible to productively imagine and derive the possibilities of future alternative frameworks for collective research and sharing.

It is particularly in the context of this constructive rendering of future alternatives that *The Nomadic Curriculum — A Manual Series* was conceived. How can this nomadic curriculum be expanded into other existing and potential pedagogical settings? What can this series propose in terms of a how-to

for archival research? What are the common elements of collective research and practice that form the foundation of such a curriculum? Such archival pedagogy encounters three different yet interconnected spaces of knowledge production.

In the first volume, *Awkward Archives. Ethnographic Drafts for a Modular Curriculum*, Margareta von Oswald and Jonas Tinius propose a manual for academic teaching and learning contexts. An ethnographic research approach is confronted with the demands of archival research as both disciplines challenge their inner logics and epistemologies. Through fieldwork and ethnographic tools and methods, both analogue and digital, the editors take various contemporary archival sites in Berlin as case studies to elaborate on controversial concepts in Western thought. Presenting as such a modular curriculum on archives in their *awkwardness*—in the tensions, discomfort and antagonisms they pose.

Beatrice von Bismarck unfolds her specific approach to the curatorial in dialogue with questions on the archival. Bringing together a variety of approaches and positions, the second volume, *Archives on Show. Revoicing, Shapeshifting, Displacing—A*

*Curatorial Glossary*, looks into curatorial practices that take up the archive in its contemporary relevance against its social and political potentialities. The book itself can be read as a curatorial exercise, forming constellations of texts, images and keywords in a printed exhibition format.

The third volume, *Howdunnit*, takes the literary as a space from which to think, practice, oppose, produce, unfold and contest archives. Within the narrative form of the “detective story,” Maha Maamoun and Ala Younis locate a site in which an archival approach can develop between documentary and fiction. Through investigative methods, *Howdunnit* offers a series of stories that bring the subjectivities of those who encounter archives to the forefront.

Together the three volumes offer a blueprint for archival thinking as a social practice inside, outside and between archives and their institutions.

## Howdunnit

With one foot in archival research and the other in crime literature, this series explores how these different modes of investigation converge and diverge. One can start with a body riddled with holes, the body may be an archive or the corpse of a neighbor. Forensic investigation is underway, but some crimes can only be unlocked through language. Sometimes language is the site of the crime, its perpetrator, victim or chief investigator. *Howdunnit* summons literary and archival research to the investigation of crime and how its narratives are constructed, obfuscated or dismantled, its gaps filled or purposefully left open, its evidence gathered, its cases closed or left to stare back at us across time.

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