

Chapter 8

Istanbul through Migrants' Eyes

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Cinema is a vital yet relatively untapped source that can be used to study Istanbul from many angles. While it entered Istanbul earlier (Nezih Erdoğan, Chapter 7), domestic cinema became a vibrant institution within the social and economic life of the city only from the 1950s onwards. Transformations in the city, including rural-to-urban mass migrations, housing problems, and class encounters, have all proved to be rich issues for films to draw on. The theme of migration is especially prominent across popular genres such as melodrama and comedy. If we were to make a list of 'migration films', Halit Refiğ's *Gurbet Kuşları* (Birds of Exile, or Birds of Nostalgia, 1964) and Nuri Bilge Ceylan's *Uzak* (Distant, 2003) would be among the earliest and latest most well-known examples of internal (rural-to-urban) migration films.¹ Migration was formative in the rapid growth of Istanbul in the second half of the twentieth century so much so that contemporary Istanbul can be considered a 'city of migrants' with most of its adult population born elsewhere in Turkey. Although no longer the driving force of the city's population growth, migration remains central to cultural imagination. How do these two films reflect the changes that occurred in the city in the forty years that separate them? Situating the films within the history of Turkish cinema, this chapter analyses the framing of the city, in particular of key buildings and vistas. Furthermore, it examines how ideas of the rural/provincial and urban are woven into articulations of national identity and citizenship.

Birds of Exile works within mainstream depictions of the figures of the migrant and the urbanite, the country and the city, aiming to reveal Turkey's social reality as the director sees it. A family of older parents, three grown up sons (Kemal, Selim and Murat) and a daughter (Fatma) arrives in Istanbul in search of fame and riches, but they lose everything and the daughter who has drifted into prostitution kills herself; they return home. *Distant*, on the other hand, opts to destabilize a clear duality between the migrant and the urbanite, and rather, points to the complexity of social and psychological relations under the impact of economic globalization. Unable to find work at home, a young man (Yusuf) arrives in Istanbul to find a job. He stays with an older relative (Mahmud) and finds both his relative and the city unwelcoming.

Both *Birds of Exile* and *Distant* feature 'entry to Istanbul' scenes that set the

stage for the main characters' relationship with the city as outsiders, and both close with scenes that show their characters' displacement. That they are out-of-place as migrants is necessarily the directors' interpretation and in line with dominant discourses within Turkey on rural-to-urban migration, which tend to overlook the fact that the Turkish Republic is shaped very much by migration. In the early decades of the Republic, this was mainly forced migration determined by state policies to homogenize the population. In the post World War II period, demographic growth and economic developments led to another type of migration, from the countryside to urban centres. Until the 1950s Turkey had remained a rural society with only 20 per cent of its population living in cities; by the 2000 census, however, 80 per cent was urbanized due to internal migration (Kirişçi, 2008). The squatter settlements that the migrants built (called *gecekondu*, literally 'constructed over night') in cities became important mobilization sites for political parties and since the 1980s, as some of these squatter settlements developed into fully-fledged municipalities, they came to be associated with Islam-identified parties. This economically-driven internal migration had a profound effect on the shape and culture of cities and gave way to a verbose discourse about 'integrating migrants' within Turkey and to anxieties of the

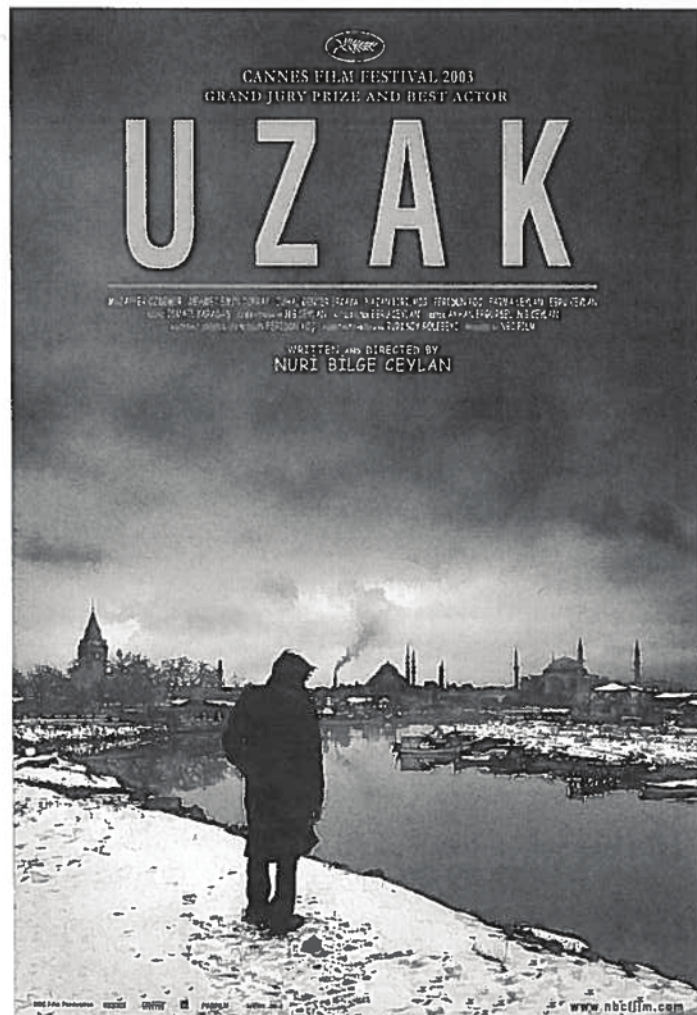


Figure 8.1. *Distant* film poster.
(Source: www.nbcfilm.com.
Courtesy of NBC Film)

'provincialization' of the city in Istanbul (Erman, 1998, 2001; Şenyapılı, 2006), paralleling debates in migrant-labour receiving countries in Europe about foreign migrants. Just as the social-realist cinema of migration in Germany which has paternalistically dealt with the problem of the integration of foreigners, Turkish cinema has frequently taken on the issue of migration showing that migrants are culturally different from urbanites (Göktürk, 2002a). Turkish migration-to-Istanbul films have targeted a national audience consisting of both the urbanites and migrants and thus tended to straddle a fine line between selling images of Istanbul and participating in a civilizing process, simultaneously training their characters in urban behaviour and showing how they are able to resist the temptations of the city.

A Cinema Made in Istanbul

Domestic cinema was a late bloomer in the cultural and economic life of the city. Production expanded from a few films per year before World War II to several hundred in the 1960s to scale back down to the tens in the 1990s. In the immediate post-War period, Turkey aligned itself with the Western block; and America replaced Europe as the paradigm of modernity. Along with popular magazines and imported consumables, Hollywood promoted American lifestyles and star culture. By the 1960s, however, domestic products and a nascent domestic star culture were able to translate and rival that of Hollywood. During the heyday (1960–1975) of Turkish cinema referred to as *Yeşilçam*,² production consisted predominantly of melodramas and comedies; and its audience of families (Abisel, 2005; p. 200). The medium became the major public entertainment that reached mass audiences in urban centres with half of the national audience concentrated in Istanbul (Coş, 1969a, b).³ Box office figures gradually picked up until the mid-1970s when a series of factors including the nation-wide spread of TV undermined its sway (Scognamillo, 1998).

Starting in the 1990s but especially in the 2000s domestic production was on its feet. The deregulation of state-controlled TV and radio, partly driven by the neoliberal agenda of privatization and partly encouraged by the EU's pressure to reform and democratize (Çatalbaş, 2000), led to the rise in private channels and created work for directors who could then use their earnings to fund their films (Simpson, 2006). By 2006 domestic films accounted for more than 50 per cent of box office takings. European funding schemes such as Eurimages encouraged multinational co-productions, helped to improve production values and supported distribution, thus rendering Turkish films more visible on an international stage (Göktürk, 2002a, b; Dönmez-Colin, 2008, pp. 216–218).

Yeşilçam and its audience practices may be defunct but by no means dead. The 1990s witnessed the return of *Yeşilçam* films and a matching proliferation of *Yeşilçam*-inspired TV dramas on private channels, *Yeşilçam*-inspired blockbusters in cinemas as well as the emergence of revalorizing studies on *Yeşilçam*

films growing out of communication faculties at private universities that have been opened in ever-increasing numbers since the 1990s.⁴ In a Turkey strained by neoliberal economic restructuring and troubled by the rise of sectarian identities, this popular and scholarly interest arose from a re-evaluation of the way identity issues have been dealt with in Yeşilçam films. Within local film studies, Yeşilçam films have recently been interpreted as 'narratives of resistance' (Erdoğan, 1998, 2006) as well as 'our imaginary homeland' (Bayrakdar, 2004). Perhaps the most evocative description of the memory work old films do in the present comes from the novelist Orhan Pamuk who writes in his memoir:

In the 1950s and 1960s, like everyone, I loved watching the 'film crews' all over the city – the minibuses with the logos of film companies on their sides; two huge generator-powered lights; the prompters, who preferred to be known as *souffleurs* and who had to shout mightily over the generator's roar at those moments when the heavily made-up actresses and romantic male leads forgot their lines; the workers who jostled the children and curious on-lookers off the set. Forty years on, the Turkish film industry is no longer ... they still show those old black-and-white films on television, and when I see the streets, the old gardens, the Bosphorus views, and the broken-down mansions and apartments in black and white, I sometimes forget I am watching a film; stupefied by melancholy, I sometimes feel as if I am watching my own past. (Pamuk, 2005, pp. 32–33)



Figure 8.2. *Birds of Exile* film poster. (Source: *Artist Sinema Dergisi*, 1964).

Films, especially old films recycled on TV channels, perform as devices of 'prosthetic memory' (Landsberg, 2004). In addition, the relevance of these films for the present comes from their presentations of alternative perspectives or voices that other kinds of documents and hegemonic representations may not readily reveal. In fact, it is this aspect of films around which the 'cinematic city' literature has evolved since the mid-1990s in the US and UK. Much of this literature (Clarke, 1997; Penz and Thomas, 1997; Shiel and Fitzmaurice, 2001; AlSayyad, 2006; and others) attempts to bring to light the 'counter discourse' offered by films (Fitzmaurice, 2001).

Owing partly to their directors' takes on the city, and partly to their low budgets, *Birds of Exile* and *Distant* both use location shootings and amateur actors. In both, but especially in *Distant*, many details are autobiographical, incorporating elements of personal, class, and national experiences. Refiğ's (1934–2009) principal artistic and ideological inspiration self admittedly comes from literature (Türk, 2001, p. 14). Narrative structure dominates his film which tries to reach out to a wide national audience. The siblings take turns to voice their partial versions of the story. In contrast, forty years later, Ceylan (1959–) approaches cinema as an extension and development of his prior pursuit in photography, practising an extremely low-budget cinema free of corporate bonds and commitments that would be screened internationally at film festivals to a specialized audience. Action or scripted dialogues are stripped to bare essentials. Subplots (of the dying fish, the trapped mouse, and the overhauled ship) are used to express the characters' inner worlds. My analysis of the two films in the following sections follow their directors' emphasis, respectively on plot and cinematography.

Open Vistas in *Birds of Exile*

As portrayed in *Birds of Exile*, in 1960s Istanbul, social differences are marked by where the characters live, but public spaces enable encounters across social groups. Refiğ's migrant characters initially display prowess participating in the consumption of the city. They join the urbanites in *flânerie* as they stroll in the boulevards and parks, and socialize in cafes, patisseries, film theatres, and night-clubs. The city provides a stage for leisurely exploration. They can easily change their looks, but not their neighbourhood. Where the migrating family settles, in the historic peninsula with cobbled narrow roads and timber houses in decaying neighbourhoods, is clearly a space for the urban poor. The areas where Kemal's fiancé Ayla and Fatma's boyfriend live, in the northern, 'European' part with wide asphalt streets and modern concrete buildings, are the domain of the affluent middle classes. And with its churches as well as disreputable establishments, Beyoğlu/Pera is for non-Muslim minorities. Finally, there is another, 'other' Istanbul, of the squatter settlements, where rootless peasants take refuge.

When the family arrives by train at the Haydarpaşa Train Station, the camera

Figure 8.3. *Birds of Exile*, composite image of video frame captures. The family settles in a historic but impoverished neighbourhood in the historic peninsula with decaying wooden houses and cobbled, crooked streets.



Figure 8.4. *Birds of Exile*, video frame capture. The view from the old house to the north where the siblings desire to live.



Figure 8.5. *Birds of Exile*, video frame capture. Neighbourhood in the northern part of the city with modern concrete apartment buildings and asphalt wide roads.



keeps to their eye level. The characters fill the frame. The camera captures the siblings' distracted attentions, mesmerized by the view. The opening scenes establish the differences between the family and the figure of Haybeci (tramp) as they all get on the ferry to cross from Haydarpaşa to the historic peninsula. Haybeci tries to evade paying for both the train and the ferry. He further reasons with ticket collectors that he is a citizen of this country and is entitled to a free ride. The family looks down upon Haybeci with disapproval and pity. Yet they share similar dreams of wealth and prestige, and utter similar proclamations of symbolic conquest; they come to 'become shahs to Istanbul'. Both the family and Haybeci look in awe at Istanbul's silhouette, which the latter characterizes, stereotypically, as an immoral woman, as a whore (*kahpe*), predictive of the emotional-erotic cause of the failure of the family to succeed in the city – the association of the city with a seductress is a trope well established in cinema.

In the final sequence shot at the same location, the parents and one of the sons, Murat, defiantly make their way back but a new family arrives dubbed by the same utterances of symbolic conquest. The narrative comes full circle. The camera switches to a high angle that represses the newcomers within the frame, implying their insignificance in this big city. The choice of the Haydarpaşa Train Station as location is significant. As a type, the train station is a symbol of modernity where time is regulated and classes come together. Specifically, however, this train station is the terminus of railways from Anatolia. It was built (1906–1908, by German architects Otto Rittner and Helmuth Cuno) as a link in the Berlin-to-Baghdad railway. It represented an important stage in the incorporation of the Ottoman Empire into the economic system of Western powers. Through its location, projecting into the sea from Kadıköy across the Bosphorus, towards the historic peninsula, the station framed the city from a distance and became the site of departure in many literary and cinematic works. By choosing to introduce his characters through this historically loaded location, the director points to the *resemblance* of their experience to other real and imaginary migrations.

The most didactic discussion on migration takes place in the memorable sequence where the medical students, Kemal and Ayla, discuss their future in the Maçka Park. They decide to get married, but Ayla wants to go to America. The recently constructed Istanbul Hilton Hotel is selectively placed between the characters in the frame. The use of the Hilton Hotel (1951–1955, by the American firm SOM in collaboration with Turkish architect Sedad Eldem), designed to frame the city from its location in Maçka Park (Wharton, 2001), features an important commentary on Turkey's political alliances at the time. By taking Ayla to the *gecekondus* (squatter) settlements, Kemal convinces her not to go to the US for graduate study, but rather to stay in Istanbul and 'mend [their] own home'. The home Kemal shows Ayla is not Anatolia but the *gecekondus* in Istanbul.

The *gecekondus* neighbourhood looks like a post-disaster settlement, laid out in



Figure 8.6. *Birds of Exile*, video frame captures. Haybeci (tramp) rises from rags to riches. Although he arrives in Istanbul without even a train ticket, by the end of the film, he becomes a *gecekondü* neighbourhood entrepreneur taking the train back to Kayseri to shepherd in more migrants.



Figure 8.7. *Birds of Exile*, video frame capture. Kemal and Ayla decide to get married. The director places the Hilton Hotel selectively between them to show their disagreement on their future and going to America.



Figure 8.8. *Birds of Exile*, video frame capture. By taking Ayla to the *gecekondu* (squatter) settlements next, Kemal convinces her to rather stay in Istanbul.

order, unpeopled, and unplanted. Over the shoulder shots frame the characters looking over to the neighbourhood from a distance, but neither the characters nor the camera enter this space of deprivation. Istanbul with its complex geographies and histories contrasts deeply with the *geceköndü* without reference, identity or history. The squatter settlements function as the antithesis of the city. The future lies in Kemal and Ayla, the educated intellectuals. They want to unite for a shared future, but America, iconically represented by the hotel, stands between their conflicting ideals of conformity and service, reflecting Refiğ's 'anti-migration and anti-Western theories' (Dönmez-Colin, 2008, p. 59).

One apparent effect of urban modernity is the encounter between different classes in public spaces and institutions. In one exemplary sequence, Ayla criticizes Kemal for tipping a beggar on the street. She conflates being poor with being a migrant and argues migrants come to the city to take advantage of the urbanites – speaking out her class prejudices without individual assessment or questioning. She will need to be 'enlightened' about migration first by her father and then by her fiancé. Along with Ayla, the audience is also taught that – following the nationalist myth of a migratory nation – rural-to-urban migration is part of Turkish national identity since, according to nationalist lore, Turks migrated to Anatolia from central Asia and are a migratory nation. Yet, Refiğ's approach to the migrant is not sympathetic. He uses, he says, the 'story of a family, which has migrated from a small provincial town to Istanbul in order to benefit from the opportunities of the city whose soil and stone they regard as golden, without contributing anything from themselves' (Refiğ, 1971, 2003) to garner public opinion against what he sees as 'pillaging'. Both in the film and in such statements the director later made, the dependency of the formal sector to the informal one, the vitality of cheap labour provided by rural-to-urban migrants to the more affluent urbanites, go unmentioned. Personal reasons are cited for migration and the supposed failure of migrants in the city as opposed to class relations and social inequalities.

The second effect of rapid urbanization and growth is the proliferation of consumption practices in the city. Before straying off the path, the daughter, Fatma goes to the cinema, to patisseries, and to a dance party. In order to pursue these newly acquired habits, she systematically lies to her family as to where she has been. There are, of course, agents through which the city's threats are mediated and they are usually women without morals. It is the single, working woman next-door, who opens Fatma's eyes. For her brother Murat, it is the woman from the *pavyon* (bar). Murat falls in love with an independent and self-willed woman, Naciye, thinking she is an Istanbulite, but finds out that she works as a prostitute, and is in fact herself a migrant from his own hometown. She prefers her immoral life in Istanbul to an impoverished one in the provinces as Murat's wife. Another figure of the immoral woman is that of the competitor Greek mechanic's wife, with whom Selim has an affair. She seduces him to follow her on the streets of the city's 'European' quarters against the backdrop of

a church. Selim soon discovers her attentions were driven by a plot to sabotage the family's car repair workshop. The city which is introduced as a whore seems to turn its women into whores.

The choice of the locations and characters is reflective of concurrent antagonisms towards the Christian-Greek (*Rum*) community and a critical one that needs dwelling on although this affair is but a subplot in the film. Following the exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey in the 1920s, the population of Istanbulite *Rums* dwindled considerably. The enmity between the two countries led to officially-orchestrated mob violence directed primarily at Istanbul's *Rum* community on 6–7 September 1955. In 1964, the year *Birds of Exile* was released, the *Rum* in the city without Turkish citizenship, about 12,000 of them, were deported from Turkey with two day's notice, as retaliation against Greece, because of the plight of Turks in Cyprus. The *Rum* population of Istanbul dwindled from about 100,000 in 1960 to 7,000 in 1978 and 1,500 in 2004 (Kirişçi, 2008, p. 183). *Birds of Exile* seems to support the 'Turkification' of the city by depicting the *Rum* woman as a saboteur.

In *Birds of Exile*, not only do characters migrate or discuss migration but also the newspapers report on the many facets of the phenomenon, all within the diegesis. The sudden sharp increase in the population is accompanied by a rapid rise in housing development. Wooden houses in the historic peninsula are abandoned to a transitory lower middle class while the upper classes opt to live in the newer modern concrete apartments in the northern part of the city. While the film demonstrates all these transformations, it also reflects the anxieties urban modernity engendered through new class encounters and consumption practices. Not only wooden houses but also the cultural integrity of Westernized, urbanite classes appear to be crumbling. In this way, *Birds of Exile* is permeated by a nostalgia in the guise of socialism sometimes and nationalism at others.

Bounded Horizons of *Distant*

In *Distant*, anxiety manifests itself via bounded horizons. The film is predominantly shot indoors and lit by diegetic lighting. The framing of characters within window or doorframes emphasizes the physical limits of spaces and the feeling of entrapment. The camera opts for a distant framing and deep focus. It rarely assumes the characters' point of view, avoiding viewer-character identification. When the characters are outdoors, the camera focuses on them in medium shots. Spatial characteristics are given through city sounds – wind, waves, horns, dog barks. Although Ceylan's camera avoids the aestheticizing pans of the city's scenery, when it does step outdoors, it aestheticizes the mundane everyday, reproducing the city as photographs.

Yusuf arrives in Mahmud's street on foot. This is not a glamorous establishing shot of Istanbul seen from the train station but a bleak view onto a commonplace unpeopled streetscape defined on the sides by contiguous apartment buildings



Figure 8.9. *Distant*, film still. Mahmud and his lover in the living room. (Source: www.nbcfilm.com. Courtesy of NBC Film)



Figure 8.10. *Distant*, DVD frame capture. Yusuf arrives in Mahmud's street. (Courtesy of NBC Film)

– hallmark of Istanbul's urbanization in the post-War period. He walks up the narrow street on which his cousin Mahmud lives. The medium long shot on the narrow and deserted street displays him dwarfed by the surrounding buildings. Yusuf has to stand around on the street the whole day to wait for his host. While clearly he is seeking to establish human contact during this time, he remains unsuccessful to the point of irritating residents. He does not know what to do or how to behave in public space. This figure, of the country bumpkin, is a staple character and loaded figure in many popular comedies (played most memorably by Kemal Sunal and İlyas Salman in Turkish cinema). There is also a great deal of dark humour in the staging of interactions in *Distant*.

the world and yearns to meet a woman. Yusuf's repeatedly failed attempts in both employment and love contribute to the feeling of spatial containment. The docks are abandoned. The only ship he encounters is overturned, a ruin of sorts. His imagination of Istanbul as a gateway to the world soon bleaches into whiteness.

In *Distant's* Istanbul, in what is now a city of migrants, the differences are subtle; they are not read necessarily through contrasts in the looks of the characters or the geography they inhabit, but through the movement and performance of people in space. Paralleling the subtleness of differences, colours are desaturated. Ceylan allows the viewer to make finer distinctions of intensity. In this city, there is no one who can be identified as a rural type from his looks; there are no squatter settlements.

It is through a short business trip made to an idyllic Anatolian landscape that the urban-rural dichotomy is spatially established. The rural landscape is bright and beautiful in its simplicity and expanse. Mahmud is tempted to photograph, but cannot bother to step out of the confines of his car to do so, continuing habits he developed in the city. Inside his flat, Mahmud either stares out of his window or at his TV and computer monitors. His study is well stocked in books or music CDs, but he does not read or listen to music; he watches only news, fashion TV, porn, or Tarkovsky videos. His conversations with old friends reveal he entertained becoming a Tarkovsky-like film director in his youth, but has yielded to commercial work and abandoned his ideals over time – an example of the 'new type of urban intellectual ... created in the 1980s with the social and economic changes and the hegemony of the neo-liberalist world view' (Dönmez-Colin, 2008, p. 200, following Algan, 2004; Akbulut, 2005, p. 28). In this sense it is important that Mahmud is an advertising photographer and working in creative industries, adding a self-reflexive dimension to the role of the filmmaker in the city.



Figure 8.13. *Distant*, DVD frame capture. Mahmud watching TV. (Courtesy of NBC Film)

Mahmud's city is constrained to interiors. When he does go out, he drives. In relation to this self-containment in interiors, Ceylan explains, '... in the city, if you have the opportunities and if you earn enough money you begin to be reserved. Firstly, you don't like to want something from others and in return you begin not to give anything to others. So you start to live in your own apartment like a prison' (Wood, 2004). Mahmud has adapted to the ways of city life very well but also suffers from some of its neuroses, namely agoraphobia.

Agoraphobia is not only the fear of open spaces as the word's etymology suggests, but also of the crowds, of being alone in public spaces, of entering new spaces, as well as of leaving the homely and the familiar. It was originally labelled as a neurosis in the late nineteenth century in response to certain behaviours the big city engendered (Phillips, 1993; Vidler, 2000). Like its counterpart *flânerie*, agoraphobia is a distinct reaction to urban modernity. The agoraphobic's recourse to the home is an attempt to protect his/her private sphere threatened by new market forces. Immobility becomes an antidote for anxieties stemming from accelerated transactions in the market place. It makes the sufferer housebound. Mahmud resorts to agoraphobic immobility as a way of protection from social interaction. The use of *mise-en-scène* and framing further the feeling of socio-spatial anxiety.

At the beginning of *Birds of Exile*, when the family reaches the rented flat on the second floor of a crumbling wooden house on a sloppy street in the historic peninsula, the siblings feel outside (modern) Istanbul. They desire to be in the picture that their window frames, in the northern part of town, in one of the modern, concrete apartment buildings there. Forty years later, it is a flat in one of those modern buildings that Ceylan occupies. The large windows of his study



Figure 8.14. *Distant*, DVD frame capture. Mahmud's window frames a nondescript view of concrete apartment buildings with the carcass of the Park Hotel in the distance. (Courtesy of NBC Film)



Figure 8.15. *Distant*, DVD frame capture. Mahmud by the water bank. Images of Mahmud by the water with the city in the distant background have been used on the covers of several recent books on cinema including Türkoğlu *et al.* (2004) and Suner (2010). (Source: www.nbcfilm.com. Courtesy of NBC Film)

frame a nondescript view of rooftops. Mahmud does not contemplate the view with admiration, but on the contrary, with apprehension. On the water bank, he stares at a distant historic peninsula reduced to a postcard silhouette.

Mahmud's solitude by the water bank against a background of Istanbul in silhouette mediates a particular idea of the city – isolated and in ruins. In different film posters and film scenes that feature versions of this Istanbul silhouette, three pre-Republican period landmarks dominate the skyline of the city in the distance: the Galata Tower, Hagia Sophia, and Süleymaniye Mosque. In the poster, these monuments are arranged in geographically and topographically impossible configurations. A strange quality emanates from these images of a distant silhouette of the city in the background, and a lonely man in the wintry foreground. These images mirror not only the individual's (Mahmud's) isolation but also the bounded-ness of the city's horizons. Where Mahmud stands is some 'provincial' water bank.

Of particular relevance here is Orhan Pamuk's discussion of Istanbul in his memoir. He argues a collective form of nostalgia for the lost empire that marks Istanbul. Its landscape of ruins is the bearer of this nostalgia rather than the subject which contemplates it. Rather than empire nostalgia, I would like to dwell on the notion of 'provinciality' that Pamuk raises and which has a resonance with *Distant*: 'After the Ottoman Empire collapsed, the world almost forgot that Istanbul existed' (Pamuk, 2005, p. 6). The remains of a glorious and bygone past that *Distant*'s silhouette feature and the distance of the character to the city, together, correspond to the personal loss of artistic ideals that seem to have brought him to the city in the first instance. Province, here, is not simply a geography but a sense of belonging – and simultaneously of exclusion.

A Provincialized City?

Despite lacking references or flashbacks to the past, both *Birds of Exile* and *Distant* are marked by anxieties of change and imbued by nostalgia. Comparison of the geographies depicted by the two films suggests that, from Refiğ to Ceylan, Istanbul seems to have evolved from a modern city that lends itself to *flânerie* and class encounters in public spaces to an interiorized experience of bounded horizons and agoraphobic immobility. Ceylan's Istanbul is a globalizing city increasingly experienced as a dual city of image producers on one hand, and unskilled labourers on the other. The apartment is a protection from the city's pace, but the sharing of this secluded space enables the city to penetrate the interior, thereby annihilating its privacy and security. Throughout the films the camera iconically frames certain architectural pieces, vistas and buildings. In *Birds of Exile*, the choice and framing of Haydarpaşa Train Station and the Hilton Hotel, in *Distant*, the city's silhouette speak to the characters' predicaments.

Between the release dates of *Birds of Exile* and *Distant*, Istanbul expanded tenfold in population. The different takes on migration in these two films closely follow but also critique the larger realm of public discourse on the city. *Birds of Exile* parodies the assimilationist view of 1960s sociological studies. Earlier in the film, there seems to be a clear spatial and social separation between urbanites and migrants. This distinction paradoxically promotes disguise and misunderstanding. Provincial characters can easily change their looks and pass as urbanites. The siblings disguise their identities in their romantic relationships with the urbanites. When truth is revealed, they have to face the consequences. Haybeci on the other hand, never sheds his accent or bizarre looks but is able to climb up the economic and social ladder from a day labourer to a car park attendant, an antiques dealer and finally a squatter settlement entrepreneur – Refiğ documents a well established path to riches here. With all his opportunism and disinterest in imitating/adopting urbanite culture, he represents the much-feared image of the rural migrant. Yet, it is Haybeci that Refiğ allows to stay in the city, without assimilation but excluded. Unlike other educated and cultured characters, he recognizes mass migration as economic opportunity, and perhaps more significantly, as the future of the city. Haybeci and the earlier mentioned figure of Naciye, who prefers to work as a prostitute, create ideological contrast with that of the didactic intellectual, and enable alternative readings.

Refiğ and his generation felt, in the aftermath of Turkey's first *coup d'état* (1960), that the Turkish project of modernity had to be revised and took the initiative to give it a direction in serious journals such as *Yön* as well as using popular mass media. In *Birds of Exile*, Refiğ calls intellectuals into service. He shows the city for the nation and the squatter settlements as its problems (rather than the countryside). By substituting the city for the nation, he defines the citizen as an educated urbanite and suggests his/her commitments are not to the countryside but to the city. He does so, significantly, by excluding the Christian

minority. The educated ones (medical students Kemal and Ayla) are to remain while the unqualified (Selim) are to go into further exile, to Western Europe, as guest labourers, or back home (Murat and the parents). Refiğ privileges morality in the criteria of a communitarian model of urban citizenship. His urbanite characters are judged in relation to the work they do for the city and hence the nation. In contrast to Refiğ's anti-migration view, forty years later, Ceylan registers a city of migrants, asserting, '... most of the people living in Istanbul are originally from the country' (Wood, 2004). Ceylan's urbanite character manages to offend his country cousin enough to make him leave the flat but the film remains indeterminate about their future trajectories. In fact, the final scene by the water bank, in which Mahmud smokes the cheap cigarette Yusuf left behind and which he had scorned before, points to an opening.

In the 2000s, the criteria of citizenship in a globalizing Istanbul are dramatically transformed. Much of global city literature informs us that in the present era, capital and information can move across the world between global cities more readily than between cities and their provincial hinterlands. The global city engenders a new professional-managerial group/class to control and manage this capital. It produces and consumes services while also reproducing new groups of professionals. The other side of the professional-managerial class is that of unskilled labourers. A new political economy emerges between these two groups and the city emerges as a political arena where they compete (Işın and Wood, 1999, pp. 91–122).

In cities like New York or London, ethnic and racial minorities, youth and immigrants tend to constitute the latter group; and one may talk about a 'dual city' (Sassen, 2001). Members of each group may be working in the same building but may not encounter each other socially. In a globalizing city like Istanbul, because of the endurance of the cultural legacy of internal migration, conflicts between different groups may be played out in the private realm. The advertising photographer (Mahmud) who serves, and is part of, the creative industries and the professional-managerial class, and the unskilled labourer (Yusuf) can turn out to be country cousins. The basis of their cohabitation is kinship solidarity, characteristic of rural-to-urban migration in Istanbul. The two characters are forced to share the city and the flat but this leads to a sense of boundedness and consequent withdrawal.

Distant's engagement with migration is also a reflection of the endurance of migration as the prevalent trope through which the city and belonging to the city are conceptualized. Ceylan believes rural-to-urban migration is not marginal but the prevalent experience. In relationship to *Distant*, he explains, 'the subject matter is quite typical for Turkey. It happens to everybody' (Ceylan and Wood, 2004). The extent of stay in the city allows one character to condescend the other. The migrant is no longer marginal; and in what is now a city of migrants, the criteria for urbanite status depends on the inflow of newly arriving peasants. Ceylan does not romanticize or disapprove provinciality as a cultural

characteristic. Rather, he takes issue with the alienation and depersonalization the city engenders in the urbanite. Ceylan's film unpeels the myth of the urbanite and expresses a futility of intellectual emancipation promoted by Refiğ as well as a critique of its absolute reverse in the form of total detachment. While Mahmud (Ceylan's *alter ego*) tries to differentiate himself from his country cousin by his skill and lifestyle, he comes to realize provinciality – that is spatial confinement – is a state they share together. While Mahmud abandons reflexive engagement with the world around him through photography, Ceylan pursues film making as a form of critical practice.

The films register a shift in perception. Benefiting from opportunities in the city or in the countryside is equally contingent on access to global flows of capital. The 'right to the city' is no longer a given or earned liberty (by means of a work ethic as Refiğ proposes). Istanbul may be a trap, a 'mousetrap', in a 'Turkey [that] is from the small town of the world' (Ceylan in interview with Ögünç, 2003). Istanbul under snow represents Turkey's position *vis-à-vis* the world. It might be an unfit habitat for the migrant but, as a symbol in national imagination, it stands for the entrapment of Turkey in a globalizing world economy; perhaps its overlapping cluster of anxieties of entering the European Union, as well as not entering; of losing the small town innocence of a culturally and economically bounded nation-state.

Notes

1. *Birds of Exile* and *Distant* were selected among the best five films of the last forty years by Turkey's prominent Antalya Film Festival in 2003 on the festival's fortieth anniversary. *Birds of Exile* received the Antalya Film Festival's first Golden Orange in 1964 and *Distant* received the 2002 Golden Orange. *Birds of Exile* was part of the most 'ambitious' retrospective of Turkish cinema held at the Pompidou Centre in Paris in 1996. It was shown in 2000 at the annual London Turkish Film Festival, and in 2003, at the Annual New York Turkish Film Festival. After *Distant* received the Grand Prix at the 2003 Cannes Film Festival, its director Nuri Bilge Ceylan became an international name; the film has been shown in international festivals, in retrospectives of Turkish cinema and retrospectives of Ceylan's work abroad, and in art house cinemas around the world.
2. 'Yeşilçam' is named after the street on which film businesses concentrated. It translates literally as 'green pine', perhaps also an allusion to Hollywood.
3. It may be useful to cite some figures to get a sense of the increasing prominence of cinema. The number of cinema tickets sold in Istanbul per person was only 10.3 in 1940, 11.8 in 1950 but increased to 16.5 in 1960 and 23.6 in 1968. This meant that by 1968 on average everyone in the city went to the cinema twice a month. The number of film theatres increased accordingly. By 1968, Istanbul had 150 indoor and 260 outdoor film theatres (Coş, 1969a, b).
4. State universities' Communication, Radio, TV and Cinema departments have been critically studying Turkish cinema films since the early 1980s. The first annual conference on Turkish film research (*Türk Film AraTürk Film Arařmalarında Yeni Yönelimler [New Directions in Turkish Cinema]*) was held in Istanbul in 1999 at a private university. There has been a deliberate interest within Turkish film studies circles since then to analyze early films, and a small, but increasing effort, to make connections between cinema and the city (proceedings, Bayrakdar, 2001–2008). Some of the more local publications that take on cinema and the city include, but are not limited to Öztürk (2002) and Türkoğlu *et al.* (2004). Makal (1987) and Güçan (1992) are earlier works that concentrate on representations of migration to the city.
5. Nuri Bilge Ceylan Interview, *Uzak* DVD Commentary.

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