Imaginaries Out of Place

Imaginaries Out of Place:
Cinema, Transnationalism and Turkey

Edited by

Gökçen Karanfil and Serkan Şavk

CAMBRIDGE
SCHOLARS
PUBLISHING

Imaginaries Out of Place:
Cinema, Transnationalism and Turkey,
Edited by Gökçen Karanfil and Serkan Şavk

This book first published 2013

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN (10): 1-4438-4133-1, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-4133-7

In memory of Serhan Mersin

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All articles in this edited volume revolve around two central concerns, mobility and cinema, and their relationship to Turkey marks their point of convergence. This is a book about the ways in which the flow of people, ideas, and cultures has resulted in a particular form of Turkey-related cinema that disrupts and subverts the conventional ways of thinking about 'Turkish cinema'. Indeed, the realization that there is this particular form of cinema -which puts one in an awkward position in one's attempt to understand (and teach) national cinema (for that matter, anything about *the national*)- has been our initial point of departure for this book. One of us has been teaching, for the past few years, courses on Turkish cinema and the other, courses on theories of nationalism and the media. This book was our attempt to rethink and contemplate the ways in which new forms of mobilities and hybridities have made it extremely difficult, and at times impossible, to conceptualize anything as 'national'. Therefore, this book consists of articles that shed light on what we have come to refer to as 'Turkey related cinema', each article taking its own unique perspective on the subject.

This edited volume can be seen as the descendent of a compact conference on cinema held at the Izmir University of Economics in April 2011. Titled "Topographies of 'Turkish Cinema': Hybrids, Hyphens and Borders", the conference was aimed at bringing together scholars from around the world whose research interests coincided with issues of cinema related in one way or another to Turkey. In this respect, we would like to take this opportunity to thank both the Izmir University of Economics and the Heinrich Böll Stiftung Foundation in Istanbul for making this conference possible through their financial contributions. While the conference was a starting point for the emergence of this book, it is our contention that to see this volume as simply a *book of proceedings* would do injustice to the effort put into the articles by their authors. We believe that this book deserves to be deemed a publication in its own right for a number of reasons. For one, the articles in the book are not limited to conference presentations; the book consists of a number of invited articles as well. Secondly, not all but only selected presentations from the conference have been included here, and only after having been rewritten by the contributing authors. Finally, the book brings together articles that

deal with what again, we should like to refer to as Turkey-related cinema, from a wide variety of perspectives.

We received valuable contributions from many colleagues in the process of editing this book, though there are some that we should mention here. First and foremost, we are grateful to the authors who have contributed to this book project with their chapters. Needless to say, this book would not have been possible had it not been for them. We should also like to take this opportunity to thank Simone Mumford for providing us professional help with the English editing of the articles included in this book. We are indebted to Professor Sevda Alankuş for all her support and for being the most understanding dean throughout our endeavors to put this volume together. We would like to thank Professor Robert Cardullo for the invaluable scholarly advice he generously shared with us, and for his enlightening tips about the world of publishing. We thank Professor Nezih Erdoğan for sharing his experience and giving feedback regarding this book in our exchanges over cups of coffee. Finally, we thank Cambridge Scholars Publishing for taking on the publication of this book.

During the period in which this book was being prepared for publication, we were greatly saddened by the news of our colleague Serhan Mersin's passing away. Serhan Mersin and Pınar Yıldız had written an article for this volume titled "Transforming Hospitality: Forming New Transcultural Fields in Turkish Cinema". Unfortunately, Serhan could not see the publication of this book. We publish this book in memory of Serhan, a dear friend and a young colleague who will be sadly missed.

Gökçen Karanfil
Serkan Şavk
August 2012 / İzmir

AN INTRODUCTION FROM THE EDITORS

GÖKÇEN KARANFIL AND SERKAN ŞAVK

Introduction chapters for compiled volumes are usually expected to draw a framework and exhibit the common encompassing theoretical background for the chapters in the book. Since this volume does not aim at a particular approach but rather tries to scrutinize the multi-faceted position of its subject matter, we choose to skip this convention of drawing a theoretical framework in our introduction. What we aim to accomplish with this short introduction instead is to highlight some milestones and benchmarks from the story of this book's evolution, and share the underlying motives behind its publication. We hope that this in turn, will prove fruitful for offering the reader an insight as to a variety of contexts within which this collection of essays may be read, without being too imposing on the reader's imagination.

The story of this book starts in our classrooms. One of us teaching courses on theories and sociology of communication, the other on Turkish cinema and film production for the past few years, in our collegial chats we have come to realize that the difficulty of contextualizing the cases of migrant, diasporic and transnational cultures and cinemas in our lectures was becoming a recurring theme in our discussions. It soon became clear to us that while there were a variety of factors that rendered these themes hard to grasp for our students, the primary factor was the students' habit of trying to define or understand most everything within the context of nationally-oriented dichotomies – a pattern of thinking which is still prevalent in public culture as well. This realization was what led us to organize a conference titled *Topographies of 'Turkish cinema': Hybrids, hyphens and borders*, held on April 21 and 22, 2011 at İzmir University of Economics. This book is a descendant of this conference.

This compilation was put together with an aim to point at the possibility of multiple readings. This is why we have avoided from the start, the idea of grouping or categorizing the chapters under sections and subsections. We were concerned that such a grouping would mean underlining a "more appropriate" or a "proper" way of reading the

chapters in this book and forming a linear link between them. Contrarily, we should like to think that these chapters respond to and connect with each other at different levels on a multi-faceted manner. A careful reader will quickly realize that the book includes chapters from a variety of different ideological, methodological and academic perspectives. The book does not adhere strictly to, say, a modernist approach - or any other specific paradigm at that. As the editors, we believe that this diversity enriches the compilation. For more or less similar reasons we have preferred to employ a modest table of contents in terms of organizing the chapters. We believed that this would enable the reader to better appreciate the interrelated nature between them.

As mentioned above, the primary aim of this book is to remind the reader the need for new/alternative ways of reading the "national", with a particular emphasis on Turkish cinema. We are convinced that without a contestation towards the concept of national cinema, any discussion generated on Turkey-related migrant, diasporic and transnational cinema will remain incomplete. When we look at the literature on European cinema, we can see that this issue of contesting the "national" has been an important component of the academic discussions for some time now. However, a limited number of publications and research put aside, this issue still remains neglected to an important extent within the literature on Turkish cinema. Nejat Ulusay's chapter eloquently fills this void by going beyond the modest limits of a book chapter. In his chapter A *Transformational Experience within the Contexts of "National" and* "*Transnational*", he gives a panorama of the shift that Turkish cinema has experienced during the last 20 years. To this aim, he underlines the role of four different facts: i-) Rise of local box-office films, ii-) emergence of a "New Turkish cinema" integrated to the global/transnational art-house cinema, iii-) films by hybrid identities and their relation to Turkish cinema and iv-) minority cinemas in Turkey.

The contribution of the post-structural literature is as crucial as the critique of the idea of national cinemas to the study of migrant, diasporic and transnational identities and their cultural products. Most of the chapters in this volume utilize the approaches and vocabularies developed by post-structuralist philosophers. Deploying Derrida's concepts of conditional and unconditional hospitality, in their chapter Serhan Mersin and Pınar Yıldız question the capacity of Turkish cinema to form transcultural fields for instance. On a similar line, Diğdem Sezen's work is strongly connected to most of the other chapters in the volume with its vocabulary, approach and subject. Relying on Deleuze and Guattari, she

compares the ways women are represented in the films of first and second generation migrant filmmakers.

Starting with the labor migration in 1960s there has been a major influx of migration from Turkey to Germany. Today, with the numbers reaching nearly five million, Germany accommodates the largest Turkey-related population by far in comparison to any other country. With such high numbers of migrants, Germany has become a country where issues of migration have been most hotly debated within the context of discussions on "New Europe". Turkey, being at the sending end of this migratory flow, has also always considered Germany as the primary host-land of Turkish expatriates. Be it in public discourse or the mainstream media, Germany has always been recognized as a central figure in Turkey anytime there has been an agenda related with issues of migration. As an extension of this discourse, Turkey-related cinema(s) of diasporic subjects and their relation to cinema in Turkey, weather in the academia or in popular culture, have almost always been debated with references to Turkish-German filmmakers, and their films. Perhaps in line with this tendency in the literature, there are chapters in this collection as well that focus on what we can refer to as Turkish-German cinema. Deploying the concept of "habitat" as her core terminology, Ayça Tunç Cox, in her chapter, compares the construction of space in the films of second and third generation Turkish-German filmmakers for instance. Rob Burns in his chapter concentrates on the films of Turkish-German filmmakers who have started their feature filmmaking career in 1990s. By doing so he demonstrates how the films of these young directors can be differentiated from the "cinema of the affected" approach which has been used to describe the previous generation. In addition to this primary contribution in this piece, as a side note, the reader is also offered a historical panorama of Turkish-German cinema thanks to the detailed and retrospective structure of Burns' article.

While it may be argued that the auteur theory has lost its initial popularity in film criticism, as a methodology analyzing particular filmmakers and their cinemas is still widely continued. When it is the cinema of a migratory subject that is in question, the emphasis on the filmmaker becomes more prominent. In this respect, Jessica Gallagher elaborates on Thomas Arslan films. In her article, Gallagher points out the similarities between first and second generation migratory subjects with reference to spatial limitations by using the Deleuzian notions of space.

Tunç Okan can be regarded as an early example of Turkey-related filmmaker and his cinema as migrant/diasporic/transnational filmmaking. Tunç Okan shot his films between 1970s and early 1990s, which means

that his career as a filmmaker took off long before the new generations from *gastarbeiter* families had started becoming visible with their feature films in 1990s. Even though in many cases he is regarded simply as a Turkish filmmaker living abroad, his life story and films go beyond this limiting description. In this sense Tunç Okan has always been an important cinematic figure for "Turkish cinema". Drawing mainly on Derridean vocabulary, Senem Duruel Erkılıç and Hakan Erkılıç focus in their chapter, on the relation between culture, space and belonging by analyzing the characters in Tunç Okan films.

Another director oriented chapter in the book is *At Home in the New Germany?: Local Stories and Global Concerns in Yüksel Yavuz's* Aprilkinder *and* Kleine Freiheit. In this chapter Christina Kraenzle interprets these two films as a third alternative besides "cinema and duty" and "pleasures of hybridity".

When too much emphasis is put on a certain set of questions and arguments, there is always the chance that other questions or concepts might be forgotten or neglected – no matter how closely they may be related with the core of the subject. It is our contention that "heimat" is one such concept. Despite the fact that migration, diaspora and transnationality are shaped in relation to notions, assumptions and imaginations of homelands, it is not very uncommon for the concept of homeland to be left out of the equation. Özgür Yaren's chapter becomes an important contribution to this volume within this context. Reflecting on a wide range of films, in his chapter Özgür Yaren exhibits the role of wedding scenes as metaphors of homeland.

The co-authored chapter by Kevin Smets, Philippe Meers, Roel Vande Winkel and Sofie Van Bauwel focuses on the film going practices of the Turkish diaspora in Antwerp. Based on the results of a wider research carried out in the city of Antwerp, the authors of the article utilize the conceptualization of bridging and bonding. While the majority of the literature on Turkey-related cinema focuses on films and filmmakers, this chapter depicts a portrait of audience practices. The audience/reception focus of this research coupled with its methodological preference in using quantitative and qualitative methods such as audience survey, in-depth interview, focus group and participant observation together, make it a rare work not only in this volume but also in the whole literature on Turkey-related cinema.

We have suggested previously that the literature on Turkey-related migrant and transnational cinema has to a great extent been dominated by studies on Turkish-German cinema. While we do think that this is a valid statement, we also believe that it is an incomplete one. This domination in

the literature is in fact two-fold. In addition to the abundance of studies on Turkish-German cinema there is also a particular focus on filmmakers, such as Fatih Akın, Kutluğ Ataman and Ferzan Özpetek. Due to their fame, popularity and hotly debated auras, these directors and their films stand out in the literature and are regarded as perfect representatives of Turkey-related migrant cinema. While we acknowledge the prominence of these cinematic figures and the contributions studies on their cinema make to this field of research, we also believe that research on cinematic experiences and products of less prominent figures will also be telling for a better understanding of Turkey-related migrant cinema. Daniela Berghahn's contribution to this book becomes very important within this context. By focusing on the films of Sülbiye Günar, Ayşe Polat and Züli Aladag, Daniela Berghahn reminds us in her chapter, the importance of other migrant and hybrid identities. Based on Bakhtinian notions of "dialogism" and "dialogic imagination", Berghahn criticizes the oppressive Turkish patriarch stereotype in these films.

As a sum up, compiling articles from a wide range of perspectives, each attempting to tackle diverse issues regarding the concepts of Turkish cinema and what we choose to refer to as Turkey-related cinema, this volume aims at opening pathways to new discussions in this area of research. We believe that its originality and contribution prevails in the new sets of questions introduced in its chapters. We hope that *Imaginaries Out of Place* will enrich existing debates around the issues of cinema and transnationalism with a particular focus on Turkey.

A TRANSFORMATIONAL EXPERIENCE WITHIN THE CONTEXTS OF "NATIONAL" AND "TRANSNATIONAL": THE CASE OF TURKISH CINEMA

NEJAT ULUSAY

The concept of national cinema has been on the agenda of film studies for some twenty years. Since cinema is considered a powerful medium in terms of re-presenting reality, the study of filmic representation, which itself is deeply a social and a cultural phenomenon, becomes an immediate task in the age of global media and multiple identities, both of which have emerged as challenging concepts in relation to the "national". Questions of self-definition and the range of cultural representations of a particular national cinema, therefore, appear as two major aspects in any discussion dealing with this issue. While the first of these is concerned with signifying practices or modes of representation, covering such elements as thematic concerns, narrative construction and stylistic approaches, the latter includes the ways in which a national cinema represents those in the margins of a given nation.

The transformation that Turkish cinema has experienced in terms of production practices, modes of representation, and stylistic approaches within the last two decades would be an interesting case in point. In my view, this process has four major aspects: First is the box-office success of some domestic films, which has brought a new 'golden age' to Turkish cinema. Second is the institutionalization of "art film", which has become a vehicle for providing international acclaim for the new Turkish cinema. Third, hybrid representations featured in the films of Turkish-German directors, as well as in Ferzan Özpetek's "Italian" films appear as challenges to the fixed definitions of not only German and Italian national cinemas, respectively, but also to Turkish cinema. Finally, the growing visibility of the Kurdish identity in the mode of realistic depictions in films, as well as the works of Turkish-Cypriot director Derviş Zaim,

would arguably represent the emergence of new ethnic, regional or "other" cinemas.

In this article, I focus on these four aspects of this transformation in Turkish cinema by touching on such issues as the transnational dimensions of Turkish popular and art cinemas, the current situation of Turkish-German cinema, and the rise of a new cinema within the margins of Turkish cinema.

Domestic popular cinema: a new 'golden age'

Turkish cinema enjoyed a heyday of popular genres, the huge popularity of star names and box-office success in its own market throughout the 1960s and the early-1970s. This was followed by a long standing crisis, during which very few films were produced and attendance and the numbers of movie theaters rapidly decreased. The crises deepened as major Hollywood companies entered into the Turkish market to distribute their brand new blockbusters in the second half of the 1980s. The market share of domestic cinema dropped to around 1–2% in the early-1990s. This crisis, which continued almost two decades, finally came to an end in the mid-1990s, when a new wave of Turkish films such as *İstanbul Kanatlarımın Altında* (*Istanbul, Under My Wings*, Mustafa Altıoklar, 1995) and *Eşkıya* (*The Bandit*, Yavuz Turgul 1996) performed well at the box-office.

Since then, the film industry has shown a gradual improvement. Recently, budgets for production have risen to an average of $15–20 million (Özkan, 2010: 60), which means that the audience is finally able to access domestic films of good technical quality. It should be mentioned that Turkish cinema's recent success owes much to the television and advertising industries, both of which have transnational connections. Additionally, Turkish films have benefited from a growing overseas market, particulary European countries, where there are close to 4.2 million ethnic Turks. Indeed, just as the Indian and Chinese diasporas that have made Bollywood products and martial arts films exportable not only to neighboring Asian and African countries, but also to the West, the Turkish diaspora's demand for popular Turkish films, which would otherwise be consumed only in their own market, has provided a transnational market for domestic popular cinema. It is worth remembering that in the 1960s and the early 1970s, during the first "golden age" of Turkish cinema (also called the "Yeşilçam period"), it was mainly the population of Anatolian cities and domestic migrants from rural to urban centers who comprised the mass audience of domestic films.

The year 2010 is the brightest in the recent history of Turkish cinema. According to the European Audovisual Observatory report, "[L]ooking outside of the EU, Turkey remained the leading European country in terms of national market share, with Turkish films taking 53% of total admissions in 2010." (http://www.obs.coe.int). While the box-office reached its peak, the number of domestic films distributed was 66 (the number of foreign films distributed was 177). The box-office income in 2010 was 188 million TL (*Radikal*, 30.12.2010), the best result within the last 20 years. It is interesting to note that the box-office list of top ten films is dominated by domestic productions. While the first three hit films are Turkish, only two Hollywood productions made it to the list: *Inception* (Christopher Nolan, 2010) and *The Twilight Saga: Eclipse* (David Slade, 2010) each which had audiences of approximately equal size, around one and a half million. The most popular film of the year, *New York'ta Beş Minare* (*Five Minarets in New York*, Mahsun Kırmızıgül, 2010), on the other hand, attracted approximately 3.5 million (*Radikal*, 30.12.2010).

It would also be useful to make a brief analysis on the composition of the films in the list. Let us start with two Hollywood blockbusters. *Inception* and *The Twilight: Eclipse* are examples of fantastic cinema, one of the major popular genres that has had a remarkable impact on the world. While *Inception* can be classified under the heading of some sub-genres of fantastic cinema such as "science fiction", "subconscious" or "puzzle films", *Eclipse* can be categorized as horror film. Both films mainly appeal to a young audience as the majority of filmgoers all over the world. With regards to domestic cinema, we can define the box-office hits as follows: *Çok Film Hareketler Bunlar* (*Comedy Ktichen: Holiday Recipes*, Ozan Açıktan, 2009) is the first Turkish comedy in the style of British-patented 'Monty Python'; *Yahşi Batı* (*The Ottoman Cowboys*, Ömer Faruk Sorak, 2009) is a western parody based on a "true story" as argued by the film's co-producer, screenwriter and star, Cem Yılmaz; *Recep Ivedik 3* (Şahan Gökbakan, 2010) is a comedy that evokes all the most vulgar and trash films in the history of world cinema; *Eyvah! Eyvah!* (*Oh My God! Oh My God!*, Hakan Algül, 2009) another, but a better quality local comedy with good performances; *Av Mevsimi* (*Hunting Season*, Yavuz Turgul, 2010) is an all male star Turkish *policier*, featuring Şener Şen and Cem Yılmaz. The last two films on the list, *Veda* (*Farewell*, Zülfü Livaneli, 2009) and *Dersimiz Atatürk* (*Today's Lesson is on Atatürk*, Hamdi Alkan, 2010) are historical productions focusing on the life of Atatürk. It can be argued, then, that the list partly reflects the ideologic trends in contemporary Turkey.

In terms of recent box-office figures I would like to draw attention to *Five Minarets in New York* and *Kurtlar Vadisi: Filistin* (*The Valley of the Wolves: Palestine*, Zübeyr Şaşmaz, 2010), the last film of the series *Kurtlar Vadisi* (*Valley of the Wolves*), which was released in the beginning of 2011 and soon became a box-office hit. Both of these films are blockbusters that cross national boundaries and attempt to deal with global conflicts. Shot on location in New York, İstanbul and Bitlis, *Five Minarets in New York* casts Hollywood actors and actresses, if not stars, Danny Glover and Gina Gershon. Although its producers are Turkish, *Five Minarets in New York* can be considered as a co-production between Turkey and the USA (in this case, Hollywood), for not only some leading players, but also many of the artistic and technical crews, in such deparments as cinematography, art direction, make up, special effects, visual effects and also stunts are American. As a big budget production shot for the wide screen, the film is generous enough in relation to supporting cast, action scenes, impressive location shots of New York and Istanbul. *Five Minarets in New York* tells the story of a leader of an Islamic organization and two Turkish anti-terrorist agents who are sent to New York City on a mission to find and bring him back to Turkey. On its website, the film's theme is mentioned as follows: "The story (…) challenges the recent-era Turkey and underlines America's paranoia with the Islamic world after 9/11." (http://www.newyorktabesminare.com). *Five Minarets in New York* repeats classical Hollywood formulas blended with features of Eastern melodrama: leading male figures within a story reminiscent of "buddy films"; chase scenes; fast cuts; a symphonic soundtrack which never ceases; emphasis on the importance of family; the influence of religious values upon daily life; revenge that appears within the context of feudal customs such as blood-feuds; and furthermore, the celebration of an international and interreligious marriage that brings a cosmopolitan appeal to the narrative. Within this context, a comment by the critic of a mainstream Turkish newspaper, Ömür Gedik of *Hürriyet*, is revealing: "I felt as if I was watching a Hollywood detective movie. Filming, shots, acting are all as competent as those made in Hollywood. I recommend that you should not hold back your tears in the end…" (http://www.newyorktabesminare.com). *The Valley of the Wolves: Palestine*, on the other hand, depicts the adventurous story of a James Bond-like Turkish hero, Polat Alemdar, and his team who go to Palestine to avenge the people killed on the Mavi Marmara (Blue Marmara) ship carrying humanitary aid to Gaza in the early summer of 2010. According to its web site, the film aims to draw "the attention of the whole world (…) to Palestine, where people are facing one of the biggest humanitarian

crises" (http://www.kurtlarvadisifilistin.com). After his previous box-office success, *Güneşi Gördüm* (*I've Seen the Sun*, 2009), which deals with the Kurdish question, Kırmızıgül widens his horizon and attempts, with *Five Minarets in New York*, to act as a mediator for a reconciliation between the West and Islam. *The Valley of the Wolves: Palestine*, on the other hand, intends to exploit the case of Mavi Marmara in order to generate a quick profit. While the former can be defined as pathetic, the latter is aggressive.

As the above analysis makes it clear, Turkish popular cinema is no longer simply domestic; it seeks to cross national boundaries in every sense.

The rise of "art film" and the inernationalisation of Turkish cinema

Another major aspect of the transformation that Turkish cinema has experienced is the emerging trend of art film production, which has introduced a "new Turkish cinema" integrated with the "global/transnational art cinema". Indeed, after the international rise of national cinemas such as the Korean, Taiwaniese, Iranian and Romanian cinemas in the recent past, Turkish cinema has become a center of interest in film festivals as the showcase of "art cinema". As Agnès Poirier of *The Guardian* newspaper wrote in 2008, Nuri Bilge Ceylan and Fatih Akın's films "got every film critic and cinephile talking about İstanbul and Turkish cinema, and looking out for the next film director from that part of the world." (2008)

"Art cinema", arguably a confusing concept in film studies, "describes feature-lenght narrative films at the margins of mainstream cinema, located somewhere between fully experimental films and overtly commercial products. (Galt and Schoonover, 2010: 6). According to Rosalind Galt and Karl Schoonover, because of the Eurocentric structure of the dominant history of art cinema, "the concept has been commonly linked with a narrow and reactionary version of the international, rather than with more expansive, radical, or controversial frames such as world cinema, postcoloniality, or globalization." (9). Galt and Schoonover prefer to use the term of "global art cinema" in their edited book of the same title.

The "art film" is arguably a new concept in Turkish cinema, which lacks a tradition of "art cinema", with the exception of "socially realistic" films of the 1960s and early 1970s focusing on the social problems of cities and villages, including issues of class, domestic migration, unemployment, urbanization and worker's rights. It can be argued that film directors in the "national cinema" movement attempted to develop

their own styles in the 1960s. However, these directors, influenced both by the approaches of the "third cinema" movement, and by European art cinema were eventually forced by film industry circumstances to follow the mainstream.

Many factors have contributed recently to the establishment of an "art cinema" in a modernistic sense in Turkey; government funds, Turkey's involvement with the European co-production fund, Eurimages, international festivals, thematic television channels, the growing markets of video cassette and now CD technologies, the rise of film and television studies as a field at universities, a younger generation of filmmakers, many of whom are cinephiles, and the rise of digital media technologies which, as the *Dogme* directors rightly argued in 1995, have democratised film making. One of the most important agents in this process, however, is Eurimages, which provides financial support for the production, distribution and exhibition of films. For a period of 59 years, between 1931 and 1990, Turkey was involved in only 40 co-productions, with Greece, Iran, Iraq, Egypt, Lebanon and Italy. The majority of these were melodramas and adaptations from romance stories of the folk literature, as well as some action films and "spaghetti westerns". In contrast, since Turkey joined Eurimages in 1990, the fund has provided financial support for over 60 feature films within 20 years. Eurimages has a certain mission described by Mike Wayne, "Eurimages has a cultural remit, seeking festival awards, critical praise and perceived contributions to cultural life from the films it funds." (2002: 13). The internationally acclaimed directors of the so-called "Turkish new wave" include Nuri Bilge Ceylan [*Uzak* (*Distant*, 2002), *İklimler* (*Climates*, 2006), *Üç Maymun* (*Three Monkeys*, 2008)], Semih Kaplanoğlu [*Yumurta* (*Egg*, 2007), *Süt* (*Milk*, 2008), *Bal* (*Honey*, 2010)] and Reha Erdem [*Beş Vakit* (*Times and Winds*, 2006), *Hayat Var* (*My Only Sunshine*, 2008)], *Kozmos* (*Cosmos***,** 2009). These award-winning films at Cannes and Berlin film festivals are Eurimages funded international co-productions by directors known for their trilogies and inspired by the masters of minimalist art cinema, namely Robert Bresson and Andrey Tarkovsky.

With regards to the internationalisation of Turkish cinema by means of the rise of art filmmaking, I would once more refer to Galt and Schoonover, who argue Iranian or Romanian cinemas emerge from specific material historical circumstances and cannot be reduced to a critical or distributive cycle. The new Romanian cinema, for example, emerges at the same moment that Romania joins the European Union: The cinematic and geopolitical institutions interconnect in a temporally and materially legible manner (2010: 13).

It is worth remembering that in the post–1980 era a discussion of domestic film within the terms of "art cinema" in Turkey has become widespread. The post-1980s has seen a significant change in the state's approach towards Turkish cinema. Since then, censorship has declined, and the Ministry of Culture started funding domestic films, and Turkey became a member of Eurimages. Those have been the consequences of the late-1980s changing macro-political concerns during the late 1980, one of which has been Turkey's application for membership in the European Union.

Turkish-German and Turkish-Italian cinemas

With regards to Turkey-related cinema, the most remarkable development is the emergence of a group of "immigrant filmmakers" in the late 1990s in Germany, where three million Turkish immigrants live. As a new cinematic movement, the so-called Turkish-German cinema has brought dynamism not only to the German cinema, but arguably to Turkish cinema in general. The films of Turkish-German directors are multilingual narratives, featuring German and Turkish, and sometimes English. These films reject negative stereotypes about immigrants, and they are concerned with identity and transgression of identity. According to Ursula Vossen, immigrant directors' films cannot be considered within the context of an ethnic cinema, but rather a multicultural one; they focus on the tension between traditional and modern, old and new, assimilation and foreignness, Turkish culture and German life (1999).

Fatih Akın is undoubtedly the leading figure of this cinema. Akın's films are set in Germany and Turkey (mainly in Hamburg and İstanbul), and they are in dialogue with "home" and the "host society". As Daniela Berghahn puts it, Fatih Akın's films feature "the blend of western and Turkish music, ethnic identity themes and references to an eclectic mix of cultural and cinematic traditions sampled from Hollywood, Europe and the 'Orient'" (2006: 144). It is worth noting that when his *Gegen die Wand* (*Duvara Karşı*/*Head-On*, 2004) won the 'best film' award in Berlin in 2004, both the German and Turkish media claimed ownership of the film, applauding it as a representative of the success of their respective cinemas. In the final analysis, however, I do not think that *Duvara Karşı* is a German or a Turkish film, but a 'Fatih Akın film', that represents everything representing him and his social and cultural milieus. What could be said about the position of Fatih Akın, as well as of other German-Turkish directors is that "a nation, whether a filmmaker's own or not, came to be no longer necessarily the base from which films are made and

distributed, and a national audience no longer necessarily the primary *destinatario*." (Newman, 1993: 70)

I would argue that such concepts as "diasporic cinema", "accented cinema", "immigrants' cinema", "German-Turkish cinema" or "the cinema of second generation", all of which have been so far used to define the "immigrants' cinema" are insufficient to explain the phenomennon properly. While there are few similarities between the styles of Turkish-German male filmmakers, differences are more obvious between the films of male and female Turkish-German directors. The films of female directors, almost all of which narrate the experience of immigration through mother-daughter relationships, however, have common features in terms of their thematic concerns and minimalist styles. Multiculturalism has been a natural feature of both male and female directors' films. Yet in these films, multiculturalism as has not been idealised and represented as a process without conflicts, and these filmmakers have never avoided expression of culturally different aspects of their identites. On the other hand, they refuse to become integrated with any specific culture. At this point, it is worth remembering that Fatih Akın and Mehmet Kurtuluş once said: "We are new Germans… Now, Gastarbeiter ("guest workers") is a concept of the past" (quoted in Yalçın-Heckmann, 2003: 308). Even a comment like this should not be considered as an appreciation of multiculturalism or the expression of a desire for integration. In fact, being 'new Germans' means being hybrid. As Göktürk and others rightly put it, "[S]econd generation immigrants like [Fatih] Akın have established affiliations across ethnicities that have transformed the image of what and who is German." (2007: 15).

Generally speaking, Turkish-German cinema and the "new queer cinema", which emerged in the early 1990s in North America have some common characteristics. While, the leading figures of the new queer cinema struggled to become visible and contributed to activist movements against medical disasters such as AIDS and social prejudices such as homophobia, parents of Turkish-German filmmakers, and directors themselves had to face problems such as racism and xenophobia. And yet these immigrants have also been discriminated against as "Almancılar" by their home culture. Both queer filmmakers and immigrant directors have served as voices of marginalized groups. Like the new queer cinema, Turkish-German cinema is a male dominated movement. B. Ruby Rich, who announced the emergence of the new queer cinema in 1992, wrote

> the new queer films and videos aren't all the same, and don't share a single aesthetic vocabulary or strategy or concern. Yet they are nonetheless united by a common style. Call it 'Homo Pomo': there are traces in all of them of appropriation and pastiche, irony, as well as a reworking of history with social constructionism very much in mind. Definitively breaking with older humanist approaches and the films and tapes that accompanied identity politics, these works [queer films] are irreverent, energetic, alternately minimalist and excessive. Above all, they're full of pleasure (1995: 165–166).

I would readily borrow Rich's above definition of the new queer cinema and use it for the Turkish-German cinema simply by replacing the terms, "queer films" and "immigrants' films". With regards to the final comment in Rich's definition quoted above, I would like to repeat the prominence of Fatih Akın. His films are not minimalist, but energetic, excessive and full of pleasure, as, in Raymond Williams' words, a "structure of feeling", of which Turkish cinema considerably lacks. For example, *Soul Kitchen* (2009), his very personal latest film, features almost everything related to pleasure: food, sex, friendship, music, and dance.

Turkish-German directors began their professional careers at the end of the 1990s. After more than a decade, it seems that the movement has come to a standstill. It can be argued that, apart from Fatih Akın and Thomas Arslan, the majority of the Turkish-German directors have not made feature films for a considerable length of time. While some have shot documentaries, most of them have been working fort the German television industry, directing television films and episodes for series, having given up on crucial issues such as multiculturalism and identity themes. For example, while Thomas Arslan narrates the regret of a thirty-something German woman in *Ferien* (*Vacation*, 2007), and directs a crime film with German characters, *Im Schatten* (*In the Shadows*, 2010), Buket Alakuş tells the story of an unsuccessful German musician in *Finnischer Tango* (*Finnish Tango*, 2008).

Towards the end of 2010, the Prime Minister of Germany, Angela Merkel claimed that in Germany multiculturalism had "utterly failed". Merkel was followed by France's President Nicolas Sarkozy, who himself is the son of a Hungarian immigrant, and British Prime Minister David Cameron also declared the policy of multiculturalism to be a failure. In order to understand whether the cinema reflects this view, the most appropriate course would be to consider a wonderful film, *Jerichow* (2008), by a leading German director, Christian Petzold. Directed with mastery by Petzold, who is the husband of Turkish-German documentary filmmaker Aysun Bademsoy, *Jerichow* features a sucessful small

businessman, a middle-aged Turkish man, Ali. This character is wonderfully portrayed by Hilmi Sözer, one of the leading actors of Turkish-German cinema, who has appeared in films like *Auslandstournee* (*Tour Abroad*, Ayşe Polat) and *Kanak Attack* (Lars Becker) both made in 2000. Ali runs a chain of snack bars, and offers Thomas, a discharged Afghanistan veteran, a job as his chauffeur and personal assistant. However, Thomas and Ali's neglected younger wife, Laura, soon become lovers. Loosely adapted from James M. Cain's famous novel *The Postman Always Rings Twice* published in 1934, the film is shot in location in nourtheastern Germany, a region from where the film takes its title, and where the recent economic crisis has made itself forcefully felt. *Jerichow* reverses the positions of the host and the immigrant, and represents its German characters as losers: a young man, dishonored by the military and suffering from unemployment; and a charming woman with a secret in her past. This cold, bleak, and heavy hearted film nicely observes the lack of human contact between the two communities -Turkish and German-, although its central character, Ali, exhibits sincere efforts to generate a kind of proximity between the three characters throughout the narrative. As *Jerichow* suggests, multiculturalism is in crisis.

Although his status as a filmmaker in Italy arguably is different than those of the German-Turkish directors, in his films, Ferzan Özpetek generates a kind of hybridity that springs from his multicultural identity formation which has been influenced by Turkish and Italian cultures, as well as by the contemporary gay sub-cultures. Mainly set in Italian cities, the films feature middle and upper middle class Italians, and in some cases Turkish immigrants, often portrayed by the director's favourite actress Serra Yılmaz. The soundtracks of his films consist of popular Italian and Turkish songs, and, as can be clearly observed in his last film, *Mine Vaganti* (*Loose Cannons*, 2010), Özpetek uses narrative elements of popular Italian and Turkish films made in the earlier periods of these respective cinemas. He reached international fame through the gay thematics of the majority of his films; and in terms of the representation of immigrant and sexual identities, he has come to prominence in contemporary Italian cinema. This appears as an important issue in that, as Derek Duncan points out, "[U]nlike many other western countries in recent years, Italy has not produced much gay-centred cinema." (2005: 102) I would also like to point out the difficulty of categorizing Özpetek's films, the ingrediants of which are a combination of "woman's film", queer cinema, European art cinema and postmodern melodrama, a mixed formula which sometime confuses the audience.

Minority cinemas

Turkish-German directors and Ferzan Özpetek cannot be considered makers of a minority or ethnic cinema, but as filmmakers who make their films within the realms of a global cinema, including German, Italian, and Turkish cinemas. With regards to ethnicity, it can be said that due to the recent recognition of the Kurdish identity by the political establishment, a kind of minority cinema dealing with this very issue, through more realistic approaches, has emerged in Turkey. In the "village films" made before the 1980s, however, the Kurds were usually represented as poor peasants, clashing with landlords or resorting to smuggling across the southeast borders of Anatolia in order to survive. These films attributed no ethnic identity to their protagonists, who simply spoke Turkish with a particular accent. The 1970s "young cinema" began to deal more seriously with the problems of region. Among the films produced by the movement, *Sürü* (*The Herd*, Zeki Ökten, 1978) stands out particularly with the way it represents the poverty and despair that the ordinary people of southeast Anatolia face. Written by Yılmaz Güney, who is considered the pioneer of "Kurdish cinema" by some critics, the film centres around a family of nomadic shepherds divided by a blood-feud. *Sürü* is remarkable for its observation of the harshness of the nomadic life, as well as for its representation of the leading female character. Traumatised by the death of her three children, she is unable to speak, and this turns into a metaphor of the ban on the Kurdish language, a motif which also runs through *Hakkâri'de Bir Mevsim* (*A Season in Hakkâri*, Erden Kıral, 1982) in which the village headman's wife remains silent throughout the film, as well as in *Eşkıya*, which features a leading female figure who refuses to speak.

In the 1990s, Kurdish identity and the Kurdish culture became the subject of a pair of films, *Siyabend ile Heco* (*Siyabend and Heco*, Şahin Gök) and *Mem-ü Zin* (*Mem and Zin*, Ümit Elçi), both made in 1991, and both adaptations of Kurdish folklore. The latter, for instance, was adapted from a tragic love story with the same title by a Kurdish writer, and featured actors of Turkish origin. *Mem and Zin*, was shot in Turkish, dubbed into Kurdish and shown with Turkish subtitles in its re-release. This was permitted due to political efforts to reduce the level of hostility and recognize the Kurdish population as an ethnic minority by the then coalition government. It is worth noting that it became one of the most popular films of that year.

Beginning at the end of the 1990s, Turkish cinema has seen an increasing number of films which focus on particular aspects of the Kurdish question. For example, while *Güneşe Yolculuk* (*Journey to the*

Sun, Yeşim Ustaoğlu, 1999) features a growing friendship between a Turkish and a Kurdish boy, both portrayed by Kurdish actors, *Büyük Adam Küçük Aşk* (*Hejar: Big Man, Little Love*, Handan İpekçi, 2001) narrates the story of a five year old Kurdish girl, who is adopted by her nextdoor neighbour, a retired judge, after her parents are killed. The latter also touches on the language question, as it appears as an obstacle to the communication between the old man and the little girl. Similarly, language as an obstacle is a central motif in a mockumentary with a sophisticated sense of humor, *İki Dil, Bir Bavul* (*On the Way to School*, Özgür Doğan and Orhan Eskiköy, 2008), in which a young primary school teacher from a western Anatolian town is appointed to teach Turkish to Kurdish students in a remote village in the southern Anatolia. In the last decade, several long and short films were produced by a Kurdish cultural institution, named Mesopotamia Cultural Center, established in İstanbul. They were all directed by the young Kurdish filmmaker Kazım Öz, who in his recent feature film, *Bahoz* (*Fırtına*/*Storm*, 2008) focuses on a group of leftist Kurdish university students concerned with identity politics in İstanbul. Another example would be *Min Dit* (*I Have Seen*, 2009), the first feature film of a Kurdish director, Miraz Bezar, living in Germany. Co-produced by Fatih Akın's Corazón International and shot entirely in Kurdish, the film is set in the southeastern city of Diyarbakır, and it is concerned with the survival struggle of two children, a brother and a sister, after their parents are killed. A recent award-winning film *Press* (Sedat Yılmaz, 2010), focuses on a group of young journalist in Diyarbakır in the early-1990s, struggling to publicize human rights violations. Finally, *Meş* (*Yürüyüş*/*Walking*, 2010) a film by Shiar Abdi, a Syrian filmmaker with Kurdish origins, but resident in Germany, is set in Mardin just before and after the coup d'etat of September–1980, and through the story of Xelio, a lunatic befriended by a group of children, it depicts the uneasy milieu of that era.

As the above makes clear, Kurdish-related cinema in Turkey has so far dealt with the issues of language and identity questions, and the depiction of the suppression of the Kurdish minority, the solidarity of children and youngsters in the face of the violence they witness and experience in their immediate social surroundings through, indirect narrations or in more open stories, depending on the political and social climates of particular periods. The films mentioned above are realistic and socially oriented "art films"; and they are in a sense examples of a historical cinema in that they are concerned with the recent history of Turkish politics and society.

Last but not least, I would like to focus on the films of Derviş Zaim, the Turkish-Cypriot filmmaker who is one of the leading names of Turkish

art cinema. Zaim's third feature film *Çamur* (*Mud*, 2003) can be considered as a first in many senses. First of all, *Mud* is an honest effort in the way in which it deals with the Cyprus conflict, at least in the history of Turkish cinema. Second, it is the first film focusing on the matter by a filmmaker who is a citizen of The Turkish Republic of North Cyprus, which has been officially recognised (but has been ignored, at the same time) only by Turkey. Third, *Mud* is the first feature film funded by Eurimages, and shot as an international co-production between Turkey, Cyprus and Italy, and screened in commercial cinemas. The film was seen by an audience of ten thousand in Turkey, a telling figure indicating the Turkish public's lack of interest in the Cyprus question. *Mud* is set in the present time, and apart from a single scene shot in Northern Cyprus, it is filmed in different locations in Turkey. Criticised for being over-loaded with metaphors, the film focuses on four Turkish-Cypriot characters living in northern Cyprus. *Mud*'s narrative, however, privileges Ali, who has lost his voice after a mysterious illness and, therefore, cannot speak, a metaphor of the externalization and isolation of Turkish-Cypriots, which links Zaim's film to the above mentioned productions featuring mute Kurdish characters.

In his last film, *Gölgeler ve Suretler* (*Shadows and Faces*, 2010), Derviş Zaim takes the subject of the Cyprus question further, and returns to the beginning of the conflict, the early-1960s. Entirely shot in Northern Cyprus, first of all and maybe for the first time, the film takes advantage of the wide screen format to reveal the wonderful topography of the island, especially the beautiful landscape of Karpaz. This picturesque description of the landscape not only provides a visually exciting material for the aesthetic concerns of the film, but also contrasts with the conflict between the two communities, the Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots, showing them as neighbours and the real residents of the island.

Like *Mud*, *Shadows and Faces* was produced by international funds, namely The Global Film Initiative and Cinelink of Sarajevo Film Festival, and more importantly, it features professional local actors and actresses from both sides of Cyprus in the leading roles. As this indicates, *Shadows and Faces* is artistically (but not financially) a co-production between the Northern and Southern parts of the island. Not only its players, but also the rest of its production team and creative crew are drawn from both sides of the island. It can be argued that there is a considerable overlap between casting and narrative strategies of the film in that Zaim tells the story of only the characters who are residents of the island, excluding all other national, ethnic or cultural identities in the narrative, even the British authorities who divided the island and were active at the time the story is

set. In terms of my purposes, another crucial aspect of Derviş Zaim's cinema is the way in which he uses traditional Turkish culture in his films. *Shadows and Faces* is the final film of the trilogy named "Traditional Turkish Arts" by the director himself. While miniatures are functional as transitional passages between particular sequences in *Cenneti Beklerken* (*Waiting for Heaven*, 2006), Zaim uses calligraphy in *Nokta* (*Dot*, 2008). In *Shadows and Faces*, Derviş Zaim exploits shadow play theatre called Karagöz and Hacıvat. The uncle of the leading young female figure, who disappears early in the film, operates a Karagöz and Hacıvat show, through which he gives messages of wisdom, expressing Zaim's own messages. This was exactly what the "National Cinema" adherents had wanted to do in the past, but had been unable to succeed. As I mentioned above, in the late 1960s, a small group of filmmakers initiated a debate over the condition of Turkish cinema. Led by Halit Refiğ, a director and critic, the "Ulusal Cinema" ("National Cinema") group were concerned with possible definitions of the identity in the Turkish cinema. Refiğ drew attention to the cinema's role in "the de-colonisation of culture", in a similar way to the "Third Cinema" theoretians. According to Refiğ, national arts were "vehicles of resistance and revolt for protecting national independence against the imperialist expansion of super powers". For the adherents to the 'National Cinema' thesis, the major concern was to maintain the national identity in the construction and features of a film. The ingredients that would make a domestic film national were in the literary heritage, that is, folk tales, legends, romance stories, the palace-oriented Ottoman classical literature, traditional performing arts such as Karagöz and Hacıvat, and Orta-oyunu, a theatrical genre once popular in Turkey. What is interesting in the case of Derviş Zaim is that, contrary to "National Cinema" adherents, he approaches both the traditional Turkish culture and Western cinematic conventions with no nationalistic impulses.

To conclude, I would say that within the last twenty years, the cinema of Turkey has seen an unprecedented transformation which has brought about new markets, new film making practices, new technologies, the involvement of local and global funding institutions into film making, new cinematic approaches, styles, and themes, and new generations of filmmakers dealing with contemporary and conflicting issues.

References

Berghahn, Daniela (2006) "No place like home? Or impossible homecomings in the films of Fatih Akın", *New Cinemas: Journal of Contemporary Film*, 4 (3): 141–157.

Duncan, Derek (2005) "Stairway to heaven: Ferzan Özpetek and the revision of Italy", *New Cinemas: Journal of Contemporary Film*, 3 (2): 101–113.

Galt, Rosalind and Karl Schoonover (2010) "Introduction: The Impurity of Art Cinema", in *Global Art Cinema: New Theories and Histories*, Rosalind Galt and Karl Schoonover (eds.), New York: Oxford University Press, 3–27.

Göktürk, Deniz, David Gramling, Anton Kaes (eds.), *Germany in Transit: Nation and Migration 1955–2005*, London: University of California Press, 2007.

Newman, Kathleen (1993) "National cinema after globalization: Fernando E. Solanas' *sur* and the exiled nation", *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, 14 (3): 69–83.

Özkan, Evrim Töre (2010) *İstanbul Film Endüstrisi*, İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları.

Poirier, Agnès (2008) "Why Turkish film delights the critics", *The Guardian*, February 26.

Rich, B. Ruby (1995) "Homo pomo: the new queer cinema", in *New Queer Cinema: A Critical Reader*, Pam Cook and Philip Dodd (Eds.), London: Scarlet Press), 164–167.

"Türk sineması son 20 yılın zirvesinde", *Radikal*, 30.12.2010.

Wayne, Mike (2002) *The Politics of Contemporary European Cinema: Histories, Borders, Diasporas*, Bristol: Intellect Books.

Vossen, Ursula (1999) "Otobiyografik öğeler" (Translator: Gülriz Ergöz), *Radikal*, 29 Haziran.

Yalçın-Heckmann, Lale (2003), "Kimlikler Üzerinde Pazarlık: Almanya'daki Farklı Türk Göçmen Kuşaklarının Medyadaki Yansımaları", in *Kültür Fragmanları: Türkiye'de Gündelik Hayat*, Deniz Kandiyoti & Ayşe Saktanber (Eds.), Translator: Zeynep Yelçe, İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 308-320.

Web Sites

http://www.obs.coe.int (accessed in March 10, 2011)

http://www.newyorktabesminare (accessed in December, 28, 2010)

http://www.kurtlarvadisifilistin.com (accessed in February 12, 2011)