A transboundary cinema : Tunç Okan’s trilogy of im/migration

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A Transboundary Cinema
Tunç Okan's Trilogy of Im/Migration

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Summary

Tunç Okan is an independent emigrant filmmaker born in 1942 in Istanbul, Turkey. He started his filmmaking career in 1974 with his film *Otobüs* (The Bus), which he made in Sweden, and partly in Germany. A dentist by training, Okan's cinema career started in 1965 after winning an acting competition organised by a popular film magazine. He achieved considerable fame after starring in thirteen films in a period of less than two years. Quitting his acting career in Turkey's popular commercial cinema industry *Yeşilçam* in 1967, which he accused of anaesthetising society, Okan immigrated to Switzerland the same year. His debut film *The Bus* was followed by only three other films to date: *Drôle de samedi* (Funny Saturday, 1985), *Mercedes mon Amour* (The Yellow Mercedes, 1992), and *Umut Üzümleri* (Grapes of Hope, 2013).

As an independent filmmaker who produced a limited number of films with considerable time gaps between them, his cinema has thus far received little attention. To this day, little has been written about Okan and his films, and what has been written is predominantly in Turkish. In this study, I intend to remedy this and provide a study of his films, particularly the first three of them, which I call the *Trilogy of Im/migration.* Although neither the filmmaker nor any film critic has so far referred to these three films as a trilogy, these films are sufficient-

ly unified by their dystopian narratives, themes, and their search of home and identity to constitute a trilogy. In this trilogy, each film corresponds to a different stage of migration, namely the departure, the (dis)integration, and the return. Okan's debut film corresponds to the first phase of the phenomenon, with its focus on the workers' illegal journey to Sweden; the second film, *Funny Saturday*, corresponds to the phase of (dis)integration, and the third film, *The Yellow Mercedes*, to the phase of return.

Okan is not a "typical" Turkish film director. Only half of his films take place in Turkey, and even those films feature parts that were shot abroad. More importantly, he is not a filmmaker who uses themes, cultural icons, stereotypes, narrative strategies, and filmic aesthetics that have typically been used by filmmakers in Turkey. He is also not a filmmaker who has attracted the attention of international critics. His cinema is a cinema *in-between*; it is a cinema of tensions and competing identities, visions, and interests. It invokes a split reception in the viewer. On one hand, his films can be read in relation/reaction to tendencies in national/Turkish cinema, and on the other hand, in relation to international, particularly European, arthouse cinema. Given this, the best way to understand and appreciate his works is to read Okan's films in dialogue with developments in both Turkish cinema and European (art) cinema, for his "signature" derives influences from a variety of sources in these cinemas.

Okan is neither a one-issue director nor a filmmaker who restricts himself to one format or genre. On the contrary, his films are always on the *road*, sometimes literally; his third film, *The Yellow Mercedes*, is a road movie, and *The Bus*, though not being a road movie in the strict sense, generously exploits the conventions of the genre. Figuratively, all of Okan's films are in search of new ways of expression. Indeed, they are the products of this very search. This constant search motivates him to challenge, and often cross, many established conventions and boundaries of cinema. Okan's cinema is what I call

"transboundary cinema". I define transboundary cinema as a cinema that transgresses boundaries, be that national, cultural, political, aesthetic, generic, or still, others yet to be defined. Okan's cinema crosses not only political and national boundaries but also the boundaries between cultures, languages, genres; between independent and commercial filmmaking practices; between writing, acting, and directing. His cinema flows through the vast and fertile territory of European film landscape, and creates his own cinema—a cinema that is nourished by rich and diverse springs and streams, and one that crosses many boundaries.

This study is divided into four chapters and a conclusion. The first chapter provides a general biography of Okan, followed by an analysis of the filmmaker's cinema in terms of its relation to Turkey's mainstream commercial cinema, in which I will demonstrate that Okan is an independent filmmaker and an *auteur*. The second chapter focuses on Okan's debut film, *Otobüs* (The Bus). *The Bus* follows the dystopian adventures of a bus full of would-be illegal workers from rural Turkey who are abandoned at the most central public square of Stockholm, Sweden, by an international human trafficking ring. It is effectively an unorthodox road movie. It not only combines many conventional elements that are associated with different genres and film aesthetics, ranging from film noir to absurd comedy, into a road movie, it also tests the very limits of the road movie itself, which is already considered to be the most flexible film genre. The third chapter focuses on Okan's second film *Drôle de samedi* (Funny Saturday). *Funny Saturday* is consists of a collage of various interconnected short films. Originally made in Switzerland, in French, featuring well-known French and Swiss actors, the film was quickly dubbed into Turkish. However, the strategy Okan employed during the dubbing process exceeds the conventional limits of linguistic film translation practices, as he does not only translate the dialogue of the film from one language to another, but completely rewrites some of the dialogues in a way that causes some of the

characters to gain qualities they do not possess in the original version of the film. The fourth chapter focuses on Okan's third film, *Mercedes Mon Amour* (The Yellow Mercedes). The film revolves around a Turkish *Gasterbaiter* (guest worker) working in Germany, whose ultimate dream is to return to his village in central Anatolia with a newly bought automobile. Like Okan's debut film, *The Yellow Mercedes* is a road movie in which the filmmaker continues to explore new possibilities of storytelling by combining different road movie conventions and aesthetic approaches. The trilogy's last film is also the first film that Okan made in his country of birth, Turkey. Observing this, I compare in this chapter *The Yellow Mercedes* to two other road movies made in Turkey, namely Zeki Ökten's 1979 film *Sürü* (The Herd), and Gören's 1982 film *Yol* (The Road), and investigate why Okan's film has failed to generate much international attention while these two other road movies did.

Samenvatting
Tunç Okan is een onafhankelijke filmmaker met een migratieachtergrond, geboren in 1942 in Istanbul, Turkije. Hij begon zijn filmcarrière in 1974 met zijn film *Otobüs* (The Bus), die hij deels in Zweden, en deels in Duitsland maakte. Opgeleid als Tandarts, begon Okans filmcarrière in 1965, nadat hij een acteerwedstrijd won. Hij verwierf grote bekendheid doordat hij in minder dan twee jaar tijd in dertien films speelde. In 1967 stopte hij met zijn acteercarrière in Yeşilçam, de populaire commerciële filmindustrie van Turkije. Hij beschuldigde de industrie ervan dat zij de Turkse samenleving verdoofde en in slaap bracht. Hetzelfde jaar emigreerde hij naar Zwitserland. Tot nu toe produceerde Okan nog drie andere films: *Drôle de samedi* (Funny Saturday, 1985), *Mercedes mon Amour* (The Yellow Mercedes, 1992) en *Umut Üzümleri* (Grapes of Hope, 2013).

Omdat hij werkt als onafhankelijk filmmaker, en er een aanzienlijke tijd tussen het verschijnen van de films zit, hebben zijn films tot nu toe weinig aandacht gekregen. Er is weinig over hem, en zijn films geschreven. Dat wat er is geschreven is voornamelijk in het Turks. Met deze studie wil ik deze leemte vullen. Ik zal mijn aandacht voornamelijk richten op de eerste drie films, die ik de im/migratie trilogie zal noemen. Alhoewel niemand, inclusief de filmmaker, deze films ooit als trilogie

heeft bestempeld, is er voldoende grond om deze films als zodanig te benoemen. Wat deze films verenigd zijn de dystopische verhalen, de thema's en de zoektocht naar huis en identiteit. Elk van deze films representeert een ander aspect van de migratie ervaring, namelijk: het vertrek, de (des)integratie en de terugkeer. Okans debuutfilm film laat het vertrek zien, *Funny Saturday* is een verbeelding van (des)integratie, en *The Yellow Mercedes* is een illustratie van terugkeer.

Okan is geen 'typische' Turkse filmregisseur. Slechts de helft van zijn films speelt zich af in Turkije, en zelfs deze films bevatten delen die in het buitenland zijn opgenomen. Maar belangrijker, hij maakt geen gebruikt van thema's, culturele iconen, stereotypen, narratieve strategieën en stijlen die veel gebruikt worden door Turkse filmmakers. Zijn films hebben ook geen aandacht getrokken van internationale critici, wat van zijn cinema een 'cinema in-between' maakt. Zijn films zitten vol spanningen, conflicterende identiteiten, visies en belangen. Ze zorgen voor een gespleten ontvangst bij de kijker. Enerzijds kunnen zijn films bekeken worden in relatie tot en als reactie op de tendensen in de nationale/Turkse cinema, en anderzijds in relatie tot internationale, met name Europese, arthouse cinema. De beste manier om zijn werk te begrijpen en de waarderen is dan ook om de films te lezen als een dialoog tussen ontwikkelingen in zowel de Turkse cinema als de Europese (kunst) cinema. Okans 'signatuur' is beïnvloed door bronnen uit beiden cinema's.

Okan is geen 'one issue' regisseur, en hij beperk zich ook niet tot een vorm of genre. Integendeel, zijn films zijn altijd 'onderweg', soms ook letterlijk; zijn derde film, *The Yellow Mercedes*, is een echte roadfilm en hoewel *The Bus* geen roadfilm in strikte zin is, maakt hij ook hier flink gebruik van de conventies van het genre. Okan is in zijn films voortdurend op zoek naar nieuwe manieren van expressie, zijn films zijn producten van deze zoektocht. Het is ook deze zoektocht die hem motiveert om gevestigde conventies en grenzen uit te dagen, en te overschrijden. Ik definieer Okans cinema als *transboundary cine-*

ma. Met *transboundary cinema* bedoel ik een cinema die grenzen overschrijdt, zoals nationale, culturele, politieke, esthetische, of andere nog niet gedefinieerde grenzen. Okan overschrijdt in zijn cinema niet alleen politieke en nationale grenzen, maar ook de grenzen tussen culturen, talen, genres; tussen onafhankelijke en commerciële filmpraktijk; tussen schrijven, acteren en regisseren. Zijn cinema stroomt door het uitgestrekte en vruchtbare grondgebied van het Europese filmlandschap en creëert zo een geheel eigen niche – Het is een cinema gevoed door diverse en rijke bronnen en stromen, een die vele grenzen overschrijdt.

Deze studie is onderverdeeld in vier hoofdstukken en een conclusie. Het eerste hoofdstuk is een algemene biografie van Okan, gevolgd door een analyse van zijn cinema in relatie tot de commerciële cinema van Turkije, waarin ik zal aantonen dat Okan een onafhankelijke filmmaker en een auteur is. Het tweede hoofdstuk focust op zijn debuutfilm, *Otobüs* (The Bus). Dit is een dystopische avonturenfilm over een bus vol illegale arbeiders, afkomstig van het platteland van Turkije, die door een internationale ring van mensensmokkelaars wordt achtergelaten op het meest centrale openbare plein van Stockholm in Zweden. *The Bus* is een onorthodoxe roadfilm. In deze film combineert Okan veel conventionele elementen die worden geassocieerd met verschillende genres en stijlen, variërend van film noir, absurde komedie tot roadfilm. Daarnaast test het de grenzen van de roadfilm zelf, een genre dat al wordt beschouwd als het meest flexibele filmgenre dat er is. Het derde hoofdstuk focust op Okans tweede film *Drôle de samedi* (Funny Saturday). *Funny Saturday* is een collage van verschillende korte films, die onderling met elkaar verbonden zijn. Hoe wel de film oorspronkelijk werd gemaakt in Zwitserland, met bekende Franse en Zwitserse acteurs, werd de film snel in het Turks nagesynchroniseerd. De strategie die Okan tijdens het nasynchronisatieproces hanteerde overschrijdt de conventionele grenzen van het vertalen, aangezien hij niet alleen de dialoog van de film vertaalt, maar sommige dialogen volledig her-

schrijft. Sommige van de personages verwerven op deze manier kwaliteiten die ze niet bezitten in de originele versie. Het vierde hoofdstuk focust op Okans derde film, *Mercedes Mon Amour* (The Yellow Mercedes). De film draait om een Turkse Gasterbaiter (gastarbeider) die in Duitsland werkt. Zijn ultieme wens is om terug te keren naar zijn dorp, gelegen in het centrum van Anatolië, in een gloednieuwe auto. Net als Okans debuutfilm is *The Yellow Mercedes* een roadfilm waarin de filmmaker doorgaat met het verkennen van vertelmogelijkheden door conventies van het genre te combineren met verschillende stilistische benaderingen. De laatste film van de trilogie is tevens de eerste film die Okan maakte in zijn geboorteland Turkije. Dit in overweging nemend, vergelijk ik in dit hoofdstuk *The Yellow Mercedes* met twee andere roadfilms gemaakt in Turkije, namelijk Zeki Ökten's film *Sürü* (The Herd) uit 1979 en Gören's film *Yol* (The Road) uit 1982. Ik probeer hier een antwoord te vinden op de vraag waarom Okans film niet zoveel internationale aandacht heeft gegenereerd als deze twee films.

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I would like to take this opportunity to thank those without whom this work would not have been possible.

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Introduction

On 27 August 2015, Austrian highway patrol noticed a refrigerated lorry parked on an emergency lane on the A4 autobahn near the country's border with Hungary and Slovakia. Reporting the vehicle to the police station over the radio, the patrol officers were informed that the lorry had been there for the last twenty-four hours. Expecting to find nothing more than a broken vehicle, and annoyed at having to leave their air-conditioned car on this hot summer day, the officers decided to stop and inspect the Hungarian registered lorry. The vehicle's doors were not locked, yet there was nobody around. Finding nothing interesting in the cab, they decided to check the lorry's refrigerated trailer. Unlike the cab, the trailer was locked. While checking the doors, the officers noticed an unusually heavy odour coming from the trailer. There were also stains on the asphalt formed by a liquid slowly leaking from the trailer. The trailer was covered with images of chicken and various other poultry products. The officers were now sure that they were about to find something unpleasant in the trailer but what they did not know was that they were about to discover one of the most haunting incidents of the country's post-World War II history. Unaware of what was awaiting them in the trailer, they radioed the station, informed their superiors about the situation, and asked for assistance. A few minutes later, a team of specialists arrived at the scene, put on their protective white

overalls and masks, and began their work. When they broke open the trailer's locked doors, they were hit by a sickening scene. The trailer was packed with decomposing human bodies. Seventy-one of them. Men, women, children. Even a toddler. These were the bodies of illegal migrants from Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan desperately trying to reach Western Europe. The horrifying discovery, which Reuters reported as "the worst of its kind", quickly made it into the headlines of news broadcasts all around the world, shocking millions of people.[1] However, just like the tragic image of the dead Syrian toddler found on the Mediterranean shore, the shock lasted only a couple of days before fading away among other no less horrifying news items coming from around the world, particularly from Syria and Iraq. When I saw the news, I was gathering information about Tunç Okan's 1974 film *Otobüs* (The Bus), which follows the experiences of nine illegal immigrants from Turkey, abandoned in an old bus in Sweden. Seeing the news, I remember thinking about the plausibility of a Turkish saying that roughly translates to "history is nothing but repetitions".[2] It was some forty-one years after *The Bus* came out, but not a lot seems to have changed for those who have no other choice but to leave their country in the hope of finding a better life. Hit by this upsetting reality, I was once more convinced of the necessity to introduce Okan's films to academia, and, hopefully, to a wider international audience, which until now seem to be largely unaware of their existence. Although forty-one years is a long time in the time-scale of human life, *The Bus* has retained its relevance and actuality in an age where everything, even—or perhaps particularly—the most horrifying things are forgotten after their fifteen minutes of fame. This is one of the many reasons why I want to look at Okan's cinema in this study. I want to do this not only because *The Bus* is one of the earliest films focusing on human trafficking and im/migration, but also because his subsequent two films continue to explore the issue of im/migration from different but complementary perspectives.

Okan is an independent emigrant filmmaker born in 1942 in Turkey. He started his filmmaking career in 1974 with his debut film *The Bus*, which he made in Sweden, and partly in Germany. He completed the film some seven years after he quit his short but hectic acting career in Turkey's popular commercial cinema industry, *Yeşilçam*. A dentist by training, Okan's cinema career started in 1965 after winning an acting competition organised by a popular film magazine. Starring in thirteen films in a period of less than two years, he achieved considerable fame. In 1967, Okan quit his career in Yeşilçam, which he accused of anaesthetising society, and immigrated to Switzerland.[3] His debut film *The Bus* was followed by only three other films: *Drôle de samedi* (Funny Saturday, 1985), *Mercedes mon Amour* (The Yellow Mercedes, 1992), and *Umut Üzümleri* (Grapes of Hope, 2013).

As an independent filmmaker who produced a limited number of films, with considerable time gaps between them, his cinema has thus far received little attention. To this day, little has been written about Okan and his films, and what has been written is predominantly in Turkish. There are only a couple of works available in English that pay some attention to Okan and his cinema, beyond just mentioning him and his films, particularly *The Bus*. Ersan İlal's article "On Turkish Cinema", Dina Iordanova's article "The Bus", and Hamid Naficy's book *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking* are the most significant of these works. İlal's article, which was included in the book *Film and Politics in the Third World*, is the earliest of these works. After providing a general introduction to Okan and his debut film *The Bus*, Ilal names Okan as one of the filmmakers who belong to Turkish "cinema in exile".[4] Iordanova's article, which was included in the book *Moving People, Moving Images: Cinema and Trafficking in the New Europe*, is one of the most recent works that give significant attention to Okan's debut film. In the article, Iordanova writes that the film offers "an outlandish encounter between a timid Middle East and a corrupt West".[5] Though troubled by a number of factual inaccuracies, Iordanova's work is

the earliest academic work in English that focuses extensively on any of Okan's films. Hamid Naficy's influential book is perhaps the most well-known among these works. Giving considerable attention to Okan and his film *The Bus*, Naficy explicitly describes him as exilic, and *The Bus* as an example of exilic and, therefore, of *accented* cinema. Furthermore, Naficy lists Okan among filmmakers like Erden Kıral, Tuncel Kurtiz, and Tevfik Başer who supposedly constitute "Turkish cinema in exile".[6] Though no source is cited in this particular section of the book to back up this claim, given his references to the scholar elsewhere in the book, Naficy seems to have taken the idea of "Turkish cinema in exile" from İlal. None of the three studies just mentioned offer an extensive study of Okan's cinema beyond the filmmaker's debut film.

Despite both İlal's and Naficy's assertion that Okan is an exilic filmmaker, it is doubtful as to whether Okan can be considered an exilic individual. Exile, as Naficy himself puts it in his book, is traditionally understood as "banishment for a particular offence, with a prohibition of return".[7] In this particular definition, there are two aspects to observe: the aspect of banishment, which, according to the Oxford dictionary, means "send[ing] (someone) away from a country or place as an official punishment", and the aspect of prohibition of return.[8] Okan's migratory experience meets none of these two aspects, for Okan has never been forced—directly or indirectly—to leave his country of birth. Instead, he chose to move to and live in other countries. Furthermore, there has been no juridical or political obstacle hindering Okan from returning to Turkey, had he chosen to do so. Given these facts, it is inaccurate to consider Okan as an exilic filmmaker.

In distinction to İlal, Naficy also erroneously considers Okan among the "filmmakers belong[ing] to the large Turkish population in Germany", despite the fact that Okan had been a long-time resident of Switzerland when he made *The Bus*.[9] It is true that at one point in his migratory history Okan lived in

Germany; however, this was a rather short stay. He only stayed in Germany for a couple of months, then moved to Switzerland, the country where he lived for more than three decades before finally moving in 2004 to his current country of residence, France.[10] Furthermore, Okan's residency in Germany was long before he started his directing career.

Given his semi-nomadic life, one might wonder whether diaspora as a form of displacement is a more suitable category for understanding Okan's experience of living in countries other than his country of birth, as one can argue, his experience of displacement, at least at first glance, shows more resemblance to the diasporic experience than the exilic one.

Diaspora is a complex and fluid concept. One of the most comprehensive definitions of the term is offered by William Safran in his "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return". In his attempt to distinguish diaspora from other ethnic communities and emigrant groups, Safran lays out a set of six criteria, which include retaining "a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland", belief that the community is not "—and perhaps cannot be—fully accepted by their host society", and maintenance of the idea of return to an original homeland.[11] As Safran observes, these qualities, including the idea of return, are present in the Turkish communities (especially among the first generation guest workers) living in Europe, particularly the one in Germany, thus enabling one to consider these communities as diaspora.[12] It is doubtful, however, as an individual who is arguably part of this Turkish diaspora living in Europe, that Okan shares these collective ideas. In a relatively recent interview he gave to a newspaper in Turkey, Okan stated that he has never cut off his ties with his country of birth, and he defined himself as "a Turk living in Europe".[13] This does not mean, however, that Okan sees himself as not fully accepted by the societies of the countries in which he has been living for more than half a century.[14] On the contrary, Okan sees himself as fully accepted by, and integrated into these host soci-

eties. This view can be found in the same interview in which he identifies himself as "a European Turk".[15] Even more telling than this remark, Okan stated in another interview that he does not see himself as fully part of the community of Turkish guest workers, which constitute a big part of the Turkish diaspora in Europe.

> In part, I am one of those workers of *The Bus*, because I am part of the group of foreign workers living in Europe for years. On the other hand, both because of the origin of my social class, and my achievements in terms of upward mobility in the class structures of the societies among which I lived in Europe, I am, to some degree, a member of the group that is in opposition to the group of those workers.[16]

These remarks provide us with a certain level of clarity about Okan's understanding of himself in relation to the societies of the countries he migrated to, and the Turkish communities living in these countries. There is another point that distinguishes Okan's position even more: unlike the majority of the members of the Turkish communities in Europe, Okan has never expressed any desire to return to Turkey. This fact makes it rather difficult to consider Okan as a diasporic individual because the desire to return—regardless of its feasibility—is considered by many as the touchstone that distinguishes an emigrant from a member of a diaspora.[17]

These observations suggest that Okan can neither be considered an exilic nor a diasporic individual. *Exilic* and *diasporic cinema* are the concepts, along with the *ethnic cinema*, offered by Naficy in his attempt to map his *accented cinema* concept. Naficy defines the accented cinema in opposition to what he calls *the dominant cinema* and writes: "If the dominant cinema is considered universal and without accent, the films that diasporic and exilic subject make are accented."[18] The accent in Naficy's ac-

cented cinema "emanates not so much from the accented speech of the diegetic characters as from the displacement of the filmmakers and their artisanal production modes."[19] Exile and diaspora as distinct forms of displacement play an important role in the construction of Naficy's concept.[20] Establishing that Okan is neither an exilic nor a diasporic filmmaker makes it difficult to follow Naficy in considering Okan's films as part of accented cinema. However, it should be pointed out that Okan's films do share certain similarities with films whose creators are genuinely exilic or diasporic. Naficy observes a number of recurring features that he considers to be characteristics of films made by exilic and/or diasporic filmmakers. These are:

> fragmented, multilingual, epistolary, self-reflexive, and critically juxtaposed narrative structure; amphibolic, doubled, crossed, and lost characters; subject matter and themes that involve journeying, historicity, identity, and displacement; dysphoric, euphoric, nostalgic, synaesthetic, liminal, and politicized structures of feeling; interstitial and collective modes of production; and inscription of the biographical, social, and cinematic (dis)location of the filmmakers.[21]

Naficy further adds to these features that the best of the accented films are concerned with, and reflect upon the conditions of exile and diaspora, and of cinema. They do so:

> by expressing, allegorizing, commenting upon, and critiquing the home and host societies and cultures and the deterritorialized conditions of the filmmakers. They signify and signify upon cinematic traditions by means of their artisanal and collective production modes, their aesthetics and politics of smallness and imperfection, and their narrative strategies that cross generic boundaries and undermine cinematic realism.[22]

It is obvious that *The Bus*, as well as Okan's other films, demonstrate many of these features. Okan's films have fragmented, multilingual, and critically juxtaposed narrative structures; they have lost characters; their subject matters involve journeying, identity, and displacement; they have dysphoric, nostalgic, and politicised structures of feeling; some of his films—particularly *The Bus*—are produced collectively with the voluntary contributions of a number of individuals. Even though they are not directly concerned with exile or diaspora, Okan's films do refer to conditions of displacement. They do so by commenting upon and critiquing both the home and host societies, and their cultures. His films also refer to the cinematic practices that are typically employed by exilic and diasporic filmmakers, particularly through their artisanal and collective production mode, their aesthetics, political orientations and imperfections, and their narrative strategies that cross generic boundaries. Obviously, some of these features, such as artisanal and collective production mode, and experimental narrative strategies, are not unique to exilic and diasporic filmmakers, as they are present in many European (art) films, such as, as we will discuss in the coming chapters, in the films from the French and Czechoslovak New Waves. What makes films of exilic and diasporic filmmakers, and for that matter, those of Okan, distinct is their political orientations and their preoccupations with displacement, whether it is in the form of exile, diaspora, or im/migration. However, as Okan's films, and films such as Pietro Germi's *Il Cammino della speranza* (The Path of Hope, 1950), and Rainer Fassbinder's *Angst essen Seele auf* (Ali: Fear Eats the Soul, 1974) make it clear, Naficy's concept, due to the particular importance it gives to the displacement of the filmmaker, is too narrowly defined, and is unable to make justice to those films which feature similar qualities but are not the creation of displaced filmmakers. For this reason, I see a need for a new term to further the discussion.

A *Transboundary* Cinema

Okan's films are products that can best be studied in relation to both the mainstream popular cinema of Turkey, Yeşilçam, in which Okan started his cinema career, and in relation to certain European filmmakers and cinema movements that have influenced his cinema. Naficy's accented cinema concept ultimately focuses too much on Hollywood cinema, and for this reason, it is ill-equipped to study the cinema of filmmakers like Okan, whose works have little to do with Hollywood. Okan's cinema requires a different approach and a vocabulary which will enable one to study his cinema in relation not only to Hollywood, but to a diverse group of personal cinemas and cinema movements.

Okan is an eclectic filmmaker; his cinema is in constant flux. As I will demonstrate in the following chapters, Okan's cinema is inspired by a diverse group of filmmakers and cinemas. In his films, one can find markers of, inspirations from, and references to a great variety of European filmmakers, ranging from Wim Wenders to Jacques Tati, Jean-Luc Godard to Jack Clayton, and cinema movements from Italian Neorealism to the Czechoslovak New Wave, French New Wave to British Free Cinema influenced New Wave kitchen-sink dramas. Although his films feature recurrent themes relating to im/migration, being the cinema of an independent filmmaker Okan's cinema proves to be a difficult one to categorise because of the many neatly employed inspirations from, and references to, diverse sources. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why it has thus far received so little attention.

Okan is not a "typical" Turkish film director. Only half of his films take place in Turkey, and even those films feature parts that were shot abroad. More importantly, he is not a filmmaker who uses themes, cultural icons, stereotypes, narration strategies, and filmic aesthetics that have typically been used by filmmakers in Turkey. He is also not a filmmaker who has attracted the attention of international critics. His cinema is a cinema *in-between*; it is a cinema of tensions and competing iden-

tities, visions, and interests. It invokes a split reception on the viewer. On one hand, his films can be read in relation/reaction to tendencies in national/Turkish cinema, and on the other hand, in relation to international, particularly the European, arthouse cinema. Given this, the best way to understand and appreciate his works is perhaps to read Okan's films in dialogue with developments in both cinema of Turkey and European (art) cinema, for his "signature" derives influences from a variety of sources in these cinemas. Okan's own words, identifying himself as a "European Turk" could be seen as legitimisation, and encouragement to discuss his works in relation to both cinema of Turkey and European (art) cinema.

Okan is neither a one-issue director nor a filmmaker who restricts himself to one format or genre. On the contrary, his films are always on the *road*, sometimes literally; his third film, *The Yellow Mercedes*, is a road movie, and *The Bus*, though not being a road movie in the strict sense, generously exploits the conventions of the genre. Figuratively, all of Okan's films are in search of new ways of expression. Indeed, they are the products of this very search. This constant search motivates him to challenge, and often cross, many established conventions and boundaries of cinema. Okan's cinema is what I call "transboundary cinema". The proposed concept finds its inspiration from a geographical term, the transboundary river. "A transboundary river is a river that crosses at least one political border, either a border within a nation or an international boundary."[23] Like a transboundary river, Okan's cinema flows through the vast and fertile territory of European film landscape, and creates his own cinema—a cinema that is nourished by rich and diverse springs and streams, and one that crosses many boundaries. Transboundary cinema transgresses at least one boundary, be that national, cultural, political, aesthetic, generic, or still, others yet to be defined. Okan's cinema crosses not only political and national boundaries but also the boundaries between cultures, languages, genres; between independent and commercial film-

making practices; between writing, acting, and directing. The transboundary cinema can be an alternative to Naficy's accented cinema concept in approaching Okan's cinema because, being an independent emigrant filmmaker, Okan does not speak any cinematographic language that does not belong to him and/or with an accent, instead, he creates his own language with different grammar rules and vocabulary some of which is inspired or adapted from diverse group of filmmakers and cinemas.

Trilogy of Im/migration

Although Okan made a total of four films to date, in this study I will mainly focus on the first three of these works, because these three films are unified by their dystopian narratives, their search for home and identity, and their focus on, and questioning im/migration, mobility, and modern human's problematic relationship with commodities; they thus constitute a trilogy. In this study, I refer to this trilogy as the *Trilogy of Im/Migration*. Okan's fourth and most recent film, *Grapes of Hope*, positions itself differently in comparison to the trilogy in terms of its subject matter, cinematographic aesthetics, and classic narration. It is a feel-good comedy that follows the inhabitants of a small central Anatolian village in their struggle to create, and later take back, a vineyard on a barren patch of land after it was unjustly confiscated by the corrupt local bureaucracy and given to a local businessman. Adapted from the prominent Turkish social realist Fakir Baykurt's novel *Kaplumbağalar* (The Tortoises), *Grapes of Hope*, unlike Okan's previous films, follows a classical linear narration which resorts to schematic narration devices to deliver a neat resolution. While there are some eleven and seven years, respectively, between his first, second, and third films, Okan's fourth film was completed some twenty years after his third, *The Yellow Mercedes*. This is another reason why I prefer to keep Okan's fourth film out of the scope of this study.

This study is divided into four chapters and a conclusion. In the first chapter, I will provide a general biography of Okan, followed by an analysis of the filmmaker's cinema in

terms of its relation to Turkey's mainstream commercial cinema, in which I will demonstrate that Okan is an independent filmmaker and an *auteur*.

In the second chapter, I will focus on Okan's debut film, *The Bus*. *The Bus* follows the dystopian adventures of a bus full of would-be illegal workers from rural Turkey who are abandoned at the most central public square of Stockholm, Sweden, by an international human trafficking ring. It is effectively an unorthodox road movie. It not only combines many conventional elements that are associated with different genres and film aesthetics, ranging from film noir to absurd comedy, into a road movie, it also tests the very limits of the road movie itself, which is already considered to be the most flexible film genre.[24] After looking at how Yeşilçam, European, and Hollywood cinemas approach the road movie genre, I discuss *The Bus* in relation to road movies like Michelangelo Antonioni's *Professione: Reporter* (The Passenger, 1975), Wim Wenders' *Alice in den Städten* (Alice in the Cities, 1974), John Ford's *The Grapes of Wrath* (1940), Germi's *The Path of Hope*, and Şerif Gören's *Yol* (The Road, 1982). Of all road movies, I choose these works because some of these works are the European road movie contemporaries of Okan's film, while others—being neither European nor its contemporaries—share certain important similarities with it.

In the third chapter, I focus on Okan's second film *Funny Saturday*. *Funny Saturday* is a fragmented film, that consists of a collage of various interconnected short films. One of the episodes of the film is a loose adaptation of Swiss author Friedrich Dürrenmatt's short story "Die Wurst" (The Sausage) from the perspective of an immigrant couple, while one of the others is an adaptation of Turkish humorist Aziz Nesin's short story "Mu ni?" (What is this?). Beyond undoubtedly demonstrating his strong will to explore new ways of storytelling, Okan's second film is also home to a unique cinematographic experiment, as there are two different versions of the film, in two different languages, with slightly different montages. Originally, the

film was made in Switzerland, in French, featuring well-known French and Swiss actors. However, it was quickly dubbed into Turkish, and interestingly enough, screened in Turkey as a Turkish film with a slightly different montage before it was screened in anywhere else. Obviously, there is nothing unusual about dubbing a film into another language. What is not usual is the strategy Okan employed during the dubbing process, which exceeds the conventional limits of linguistic film translation practices. During the dubbing process, Okan not only translates the dialogue of the film from one language to another, but completely rewrites some of the dialogues in a way that causes some of the characters to gain qualities they do not possess in the original version of the film. Okan does not merely translate the film into Turkish, but he *Turkifies* it.

Funny Saturday is also an unusual comedy film, in that it oscillates between slapstick, dark comedy, and the grotesque. Therefore, in addition to focusing on Okan's unusual experimentation, I continue to apply the comparative approach used in the previous chapter. In this chapter, I compare Okan's film to several slapstick and dark comedy films from Turkey, Switzerland, Czechoslovakia, and France. Among these films are Kartal Tibet's 1981 film *Davaro*, Semih Evin's 1950 film *Sihirli Defne* (The Magical Treasure), Jiří Menzel's 1969 film *Skřivánci na niti* (Larks on a String), Jan Němec's 1966 film *O slavnosti a hostech* (A Report on the Party and Guests), Rolf Lyssy's 1978 film *Die Schweizermacher* (The Swissmakers), Claude Goretta's 1973 film *L'Invitation* (The Invitation), Claude Faraldo's 1972 film *Themroc*, Luis Buñuel's 1974 film *Le Fantôme de la liberté* (The Phantom of Liberty), and Jean-Marie Poiré's 1982 film *Le père Noël est une ordure* (Santa Claus Is a Stinker). With these comparisons, I aim to demonstrate the *in-between* character of Okan's film, as well as investigate the transcultural and transnational aspects of his cinema.

The fourth chapter focuses on Okan's third film, *The Yellow Mercedes*. Like his second film, his third is also a literary adaptation. It is an adaptation of Turkey's celebrated author

Adalet Ağaoğlu's 1976 novel *Fikrimin İnce Gülü* (The Delicate Rose of My Desire).[25] Both the novel and the film revolve around a Turkish *Gasterbaiter* (guest worker) working in Germany, whose ultimate dream is to return to his village in central Anatolia with a newly bought automobile. Like Okan's debut film, *The Yellow Mercedes* is a road movie in which the filmmaker continues to explore new possibilities of storytelling by combining different road movie conventions and aesthetic approaches. The trilogy's last film is also the first film that Okan made in his country of birth, Turkey. Observing this, I compare *The Yellow Mercedes* to two other road movies made in Turkey, namely Zeki Ökten's 1979 film *Sürü* (The Herd), and Gören's 1982 film *The Road*, and investigate why Okan's film has failed to generate much international attention while these two other road movies could. In addition to these two road movies, I also compare *The Yellow Mercedes* to the well-known British 'kitchen-sink' film, Jack Clayton's 1959 film *Room at the Top*, as well as Okan's own road movie, *The Bus*.

Notes

[1] https://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-hungary-trial/four-jailed-for-life-over-death-of-71-migrants-in-hungarian-truck-idUSKCN1TL0LX. Accessed on 10 December 2019.
[2] "Tarih tekerrürden ibarettir". Translation mine.
[3] Demirkol, Altan. "Türk Sineması İki Yüzlü Kişilerin Elinde…" Diyen Tunç Okan Sinemayı Bıraktı…", *Milliyet*, 19 March 1967. 6.
[4] İlal, Ersan. "On Turkish Cinema". 125.
[5] Iordanova, Dina. "The Bus". 119.
[6] Naficy, Hamid. *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001. 257 and 191 respectively.
[7] Ibid. 11.
[8] "Banishment". *Oxford dictionary of English*. New York: Oxford Uni. , 2010. 128.
[9] Naficy. 191–192
[10] Luxembourgeus, Tayfun. *Eşeğin Oğlu: Tunç Okan ile Sineması, Yaşamı ve Hayatın Anlamı Üzerine Bir Söyleşi*. Istanbul: Doruk. 2020. 213.
[11] Safran, William. "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return", 83–84.
[12] Ibid. 86.
[13] Okan, Tunç. "21 yıl sonra yeniden Tunç Okan". *Hürriyet*, 17 February 2013.
[14] Safran. 83.
[15] Okan, Tunç. "21 yıl sonra yeniden Tunç Okan". *Hürriyet*, 17 February 2013.
[16] "Ben, hem o otobüsteki işçilerden biriyim bir parça, yıllardır Avrupa'da yaşayan işçi grubundayım. Bir açıdan da, hem kendi sınıfsal kökenimden, hem de Avrupa toplumu içinde vardığım sınıfsal aşamadan dolayı bir yerde ben onların karşısındaki grubun içindeyim". Translation mine.
Dorsay, Atilla. *Yüzyüze*. Istanbul: Çağdaş Yayıncılık, 1986. 107–108.
[17] Kenny, Kevin. *Diaspora: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. 61.
[18] Naficy. 4.
[19] Ibid. 4.
[20] Naficy's *accented cinema* is a problematic concept in several aspects but mainly due to its Hollywood-centric position. For further reading one can look at "Locating migrant and diasporic cinema in contemporary Europe" in Berghahn and Sternberg. Ed. *European Cinema in Motion*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010. pp. 12-49. and "Speaking in tongues: Ang Lee, accented cinema, Hollywood" in. *Theorizing World Cinema*. Nagib, Lucia, Chris Perriam, and Rajinder Dudrah, eds. London, UK: I B Tauris, 2011. pp.129-144.
[21] Naficy. 4.
[22] Ibid. 4–5.
[23] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transboundary_river. Accessed on 20 February 2020.
[24] Ebert, Roger. *Roger Ebert's Movie Yearbook, 2002*. Andrews McMeel Pub., 2001. 641.

[25] At the moment, Ağaoğlu's novel is not available in any other languages but Turkish and German. The book was translated into German as *Die Zarte Rose Meiner Sehnsucht*.

Chapter I

A Metamorphosis: From Commercial Movie Star to Independent Auteur

Tunç Okan's cinema career is an unusual one. It begins with acting in one of the most productive national commercial cinema industries in the world and stretches all the way to directing as an independent filmmaker in a time when making independent cinema was almost unthinkable. In this chapter, I look at the process that created a pioneer independent *auteur* from a commercial movie star. I will do this by dividing my analysis into three different yet interconnected sections.

In the first section, I provide a general biography of Okan, which will be helpful to contextualise his cinematographic career and offer some useful insights into it. In the following section, I look at the very concept of independent cinema and focus particularly on the independent filmmaking practices within the commercial cinema industry of Turkey, Yeşilçam. In this section, I try to locate Okan's cinema in relation to both independent and Yeşilçam film production practices. The main question of the section is the following: Can Okan be considered as an independent filmmaker, and if so, why? Independent cinema, not necessarily, but quite often, can also be an indication of a personal vision in cinema. For this reason, in the third section, I will explain if Okan can be considered an 'auteur', and if so, on what grounds.

A Life with Surprising Turns

Tunç Okan was born Mehmet Celal Kulen in Istanbul on 19 August 1942. Kulen spent most of his childhood attending different schools in different cities in Turkey due to his father's job at the state-owned, now-defunct, textile production company *Sümerbank*. One can speculate that the experience of living in many different places scattered around a big and diverse country like Turkey have helped Okan create nuanced portrayals of his characters and Turkish society in his later career. After continuing his primary and secondary education in different cities, Kulen graduated from Istanbul University as a dentist in 1963.[26] Following his graduation, his life took an unexpected turn for a dentist. This was thanks to Cengiz Batuhan, a cameraman, whom he met during his compulsory military service in Istanbul. In 1965, Batuhan convinced and encouraged Kulen, who was a tall and good-looking man, to apply to an acting competition that was organised by one of the most popular and influential paparazzi-like cinema magazines of the time, *Ses*. The award for the competition was a contract that gave the winner the chance to act in ten feature films and share the leading roles with already established film stars like Tuncel Kurtiz and Türkan Şoray. Kulen was chosen as the cover star of *Ses* magazine and won the competition. At the time, he was only twenty-three years old.[27] Giving actors catchy, easy-to-remember stage names had been one of the long-standing traditions of Yeşilçam. Upon winning the competition, Kulen followed this tradition and chose *Tunç Okan* as his stage name. He was introduced to the public with this new name.

Competitions similar to the one that kick-started Okan's cinema career were not unusual practices at the time; on the contrary, they were common and vital events for Turkey's popular cinema during much of the 1960s and the early 70s. Such competitions, which were often a weird hybrid of beauty, modelling, and acting contests organised by popular cinema magazines and newspapers alike, provided significant help for the in-

dustry in finding new faces out of which they could create star figures. The mainstream popular cinema of Turkey was a cinema that was based on a star system much like Hollywood. During this period, Yeşilçam was producing around 200 films annually. In 1966, this remarkable pace of production placed Turkey at fourth place in the world in terms of production numbers with 229 films, following Japan, India, and Hong Kong.[28] In the 1960s, mainstream cinema was enjoying its golden age; film production and the demand for these films were booming. Television broadcasting, which started in 1968 in the country, was limited to big cities like Istanbul and was not accessible for the majority of the public. Cinema, along with the state-owned and controlled radio, was one of the most popular forms of entertainment for the masses. Finding new faces while continuing to exploit existing stars was a necessity for a popular cinema like Yeşilçam for several reasons. First of all, the movie stars were the biggest cost of film productions during the period. Second, one of the unique characteristics of Yeşilçam was that every film star was associated with a certain type of character. As film critic Engin Ayça noted, no change was tolerated by the loyal audience, not even the slightest change in the dubbing voice of the character.[29] Under this set of conditions, the film industry needed the continuous creation of new star figures, primarily to reduce film production costs, and thus increase the profit, while also preventing the audience from getting bored of the same faces.

Okan made his first appearance as an actor in Ülkü Erakalın's 1965 film *Veda Busesi* (Farewell Kiss) in which he played a leading role with the iconic Turkish actress Türkan Şoray.[30] *Farewell Kiss* was followed by two other films in which Okan appeared in the same year, and ten more in the following year. This very high number of film appearances in a period of less than two years made him famous and placed him among the top five movie stars of the period, together with stars like Ayhan Işık and Yılmaz Güney.[31]

During this period Okan not only worked as an actor, but he also contributed to the 1966 film *Karanlıkta Vuruşanlar* (Fighting in the Dark) as a scriptwriter in which he appeared in one of the leading roles.[32] Despite his contribution to some other films' scripts, just as *Fighting in the Dark*, all thirteen films in which Okan appeared were mediocre commercial films, and none of them deserve further consideration in the context of this study. The same could be said for most of the films produced during the entire Yeşilçam period. I will elaborate on this later in the chapter.

In 1967, just two years after his first film appearance, Okan announced his surprising decision to quit his acting career in Yeşilçam in a highly critical interview that he gave to the then-popular and respected daily newspaper *Milliyet*. In the interview, the actor accused Yeşilçam of being escapist, and of anaesthetising society.

> Turkish cinema today is an entertainment apparatus that is harmful to Turkish society. Every year around 250 films direct society to fighting, robbery, making money without working. These films, with their disgusting exploitation of feelings, anaesthetise people and prevent the Turkish public from understanding the real conditions that they live in. This is one of the worst things that can be done to Turkish society, the majority of which is poor.[33]

Okan's decision to quit his acting career was neither the result of a reflex nor of momentary anger; on the contrary, the decision was the result of many disagreements and disappointments he experienced during his short Yeşilçam career. While Okan was making good money as one of the most famous and important movie stars of the period, he was neither happy nor satisfied with the way in which things were done in Yeşilçam. Less than six months into his acting career, Okan started voicing his disagreements and disillusions with the mainstream cinema. In a short article he wrote for the cinema magazine *Sinema 65*, he

calls the mainstream cinema in Turkey "the underdeveloped cinema of an underdeveloped country".[34] In the article, Okan likens Yeşilçam to a big river in high flow and writes "[p]eople who want to do something, even those who have the power to change things, cannot change the direction of this river, they follow the flow albeit floundering. The flow rests on deeply rooted economic reasons".[35]

Hearing such a critique from a commercial movie star who just started enjoying the glamorous benefits of his fame and stardom may have come as a surprise for some, maybe even more so than his subsequent decision to quit acting at the beginning of a promising career. However, when considered within the context of the country's cinema of the period and the discussions surrounding it, Okan's critique becomes rather less surprising.

The 1960s, especially the mid-60s, were the scene of heated and highly politicised debates about almost all aspects of life in Turkey. This was thanks to the progressive constitution of 1961, which came into force after the coup d'état that overthrew the oppressive right-wing *Demokrat Parti* (Democrat Party) government on 27 May 1960. Though undoubtedly an anti-democratic move, the coup d'état is referred to as a "revolution" by some due to its relatively progressive outcome.[36] Commissioned by the military junta, and put together by a group of respected academics, intellectuals, and experts, the new constitution guaranteed many fundamental democratic rights and freedoms, such as freedom of expression and freedom of association, while restricting the power of the executive branch. Even though it did not bring any direct change to the industry, the new constitution, and the ensuing period provided the cinema with a "suitable spiritual climate", as film scholar Âlim Şerif Onaran noted.[37] This climate certainly affected the cinema and mobilised politicised discussions about it. These discussions soon evolved into groupings with different political leanings and motivations. Okan's critique, which he voiced in the magazine article, is a

product of this sociopolitical atmosphere.

Shortly after quitting his acting career in Yeşilçam, Okan moved to Germany to learn German, and later immigrated to Switzerland, where he continued his education and earned a doctorate in dentistry from the University of Bern in 1980.[38] In 1973, Okan did something unexpected and returned to cinema as an actor in Barbro Karabuda's television film *Barnet* (Baby). The film is an adaptation of a story of the same name by Yaşar Kemal. Made in Sweden, the film is noteworthy because it is the first film in which Okan appeared as an actor since he quit his acting career in 1967.[39] Not long after his reappearance as an actor in *Baby*, Okan returned to cinema as a director with his debut film *Otobüs* (The Bus) in 1974. Based in part on a real-life story that Okan read in a newspaper, the film follows the experiences of nine illegal migrants from rural Turkey who are driven to Sweden in a crumbling bus by their fellow countryman, a human trafficker, with the promise of finding a job. *The Bus* is one of the earliest films that focus on human trafficking from the perspective of the people who are being trafficked. Okan is concurrently the scriptwriter, editor, producer, and one of the leading actors of the film.

Okan's debut film was screened at prestigious film festivals and received several international awards, among which are *The Human Rights Film Festival Award* in Strasbourg, and the *Don Quijote Award* given by the FICC (International Federation of Film Societies). Despite its considerable international success, the film could not be screened in Turkey until 1977 due to a ban imposed on the film by the country's national censorship board with the pretext that it was misrepresenting and humiliating Turkish society. *The Bus* could be screened in the country freely only after the ban was lifted by a court in 1977. Though it was released with only a few copies, the film was screened for almost a year and enjoyed a lot of attention from critics and public alike.[40]

Okan released *The Bus* once more in Turkey in 1984

with a new editing. This new version of the film is 69 minutes long, 15 minutes shorter than the 84 minutes long original version.[41] Okan cited his curiosity to see the reactions of a new generation of audience to the film as his motivation to re-release the film, and stated that the film's topic was much more suitable to the day's sociopolitical atmosphere.[42] Looking retrospectively, the re-release of the film gives an impression of an attempt to remind the audience of Okan, as well as gain a financial leverage for the filmmaker's upcoming film project, *Funny Saturday*, which was already in the pipeline by then.

In 1985, some eleven years after *The Bus*, Okan completed his second film *Drôle de samedi* (Funny Saturday) in Switzerland. It follows interesting, insignificant, and seemingly unconnected events taking place in a small Swiss town, Neuchâtel, from the perspective of a young couple during an ordinary Saturday. Okan stated on several occasions that he considers the film as the continuation of his previous film.[43] He is again concurrently the scriptwriter, editor, and one of the leading actors of the film.

In 1986, Okan appeared in Sinan Çetin's movie *Prenses* (Princess) as one of the leading actors. The film marks an important point in Okan's cinema career as it is his first film appearance under the direction of a director other than himself since his own directing career started in 1974. *Prenses* is also the first movie featuring Okan that is made in Turkey since his decision to quit acting in the commercial cinema industry of the country in 1967. In 1992, Okan completed his third film *Mercedes mon Amour* (The Yellow Mercedes), which follows a Turkish guest worker's dystopian journey from Munich to his hometown in rural Turkey.

Although neither the director nor any film critic has so far referred to these three films as a trilogy, in my opinion, these films are sufficiently unified by their dystopian narratives, themes, and their search of home and identity to constitute a trilogy. In this trilogy, each film corresponds to a different stage

of migration, namely the departure, the (dis)integration, and the return. Okan's debut film corresponds to the first phase of the phenomenon, with its focus on the workers' illegal journey to Sweden; the second film, *Funny Saturday*, corresponds to the phase of (dis)integration; and the third film, *The Yellow Mercedes*, to the phase of return. For this reason, I prefer to call these films the *Trilogy of Im/migration.*

Independent Cinema

Independent cinema "does not have one singular [or fixed] definition that applies [to] all cases".[44] Any definition of independent cinema is necessarily contextual, meaning that it is limited to a certain place and time, and valid, therefore, only for this specific place and time. "Certainly, work outside the mainstream industry can signal independent" cinema; however, this does not change the fact that the definition of any *mainstream* cinema itself is necessarily contextual and thus bound to a specific place and period.[45] For this reason, any attempt to define independent cinema should take the dominant local film production structure of the given country or place, and its established practices in a given time, into consideration. Following this principle, I will try to define the independent cinema in Turkey for the period during which Okan entered the industry in relation to the dominant local film production structure of the country, Yeşilçam. In order to be able to comprehend what independent cinema has been in the context of Turkey's cinema, I will start my search by investigating the *dependencies* of the country's mainstream cinema of the period.

Although the history of Turkey's cinema can be traced back to 1896, or possibly to an even earlier date, the popular cinema of the country has a shorter history. The history of Yeşilçam starts with a significant event, to which acclaimed film director and critic Halit Refiğ refers as "the first and only positive thing that the state has ever done for the cinema of the country since the declaration of the Republic".[46] This significant event is a tax reduction made in 1948, favouring local filmmak-

ers against imported films. The tax adjustment turned cinema into a profitable business for the first time in the country's history and opened the way for many new film production companies, directors, and actors to enter the field, which, in turn, transformed individual filmmaking efforts in the country into a complex industry in a relatively short time.

After its independence from the Ottoman Empire, and the subsequent declaration of the Republic, the newly established state of Turkey decided on a cultural policy, which at its core was aiming to modernise and westernise society. To achieve its cultural policy targets, the state established and backed cultural institutions like theatres, operas, and ballets, which the founding fathers of the Republic (they were all men) believed to be the fundamental institutions of Western culture. While establishing and promoting these institutions, the state had never formulated any official cultural policy concerning cinema. Prominent filmmaker Atıf Yılmaz comments on this situation with an interesting anecdote concerning the opera in his hometown Mersin, a south-eastern Mediterranean city. According to Yılmaz, the budget allocated to the opera in the city for the remake of a French opera piece was so big it could not be exhausted if one would fly all those who are interested in opera in the city to Paris, pay their tickets for the original performance, and give them pocket money.[47] Halit Refiğ criticises this now-absurd-looking preference of the newly established regime by pointing out that cinema had been the "illegitimate child" of the Republic, and what it achieved, it did so despite of the state.[48] Until the early 1990s, the only involvement of the state in cinema had been through taxation and censorship. Although it never formulated any cultural policy concerning cinema, the state was quick to establish a highly elaborate taxation and censorship policy to regulate the field. The first censorship regulation of the country was introduced in 1939, and it was heavily inspired by the cinema regulations of Mussolini's fascist Italy. As Onaran points out, the censorship regulation gave the state total control over every

stage of the film production, from script to screen, through its police apparatus.[49] The regulation had been in force until as late as 1986, with only minor changes.[50]

Many of the new film production companies that emerged after the tax regulation were located in a street named Yeşilçam in the Beyoğlu district of Istanbul. In time, the name of the street became synonymous with the popular cinema of the country itself. Yeşilçam was not only a synonym for the country's popular cinema, but it also signified a particular way of film production, distribution, consumption, and a film aesthetic.

Yeşilçam had strong references to Hollywood, not only in its name, which literally means "The Green Pine", but also in its method of production, star system, and classical narrative strategies. Yeşilçam "was modelled on Hollywood. To produce was the principal aim. The star system, the capitalistic mode of production, distribution and exhibition were its trademarks".[51] However, unlike Hollywood, Yeşilçam did not have an established institutionalised studio system with sufficient technical infrastructure and necessary economic capital that could circulate and be reinvested in cinema. Yeşilçam was based on the economic capital of private investors who gathered their capital through different businesses and saw cinema as yet another form of investment. Profits made from the cinema were very rarely reinvested. This meant that the popular cinema of the country—in addition to strict censorship—had to face problems in the areas of finance, technical infrastructure, and distribution to exist and prosper. Under these harsh circumstances, Yeşilçam developed its unique *Bölge İşletmeciliği Sistemi* (Regional Enterprise System) which solved both financing and distribution problems all at once.

According to the *Regional Enterprise System*, which was originally created at the beginning of the 1950s to distribute films around the country, the country was divided into six regions. These regions were then shared between distributors, each representing a film production company. These distributors

would buy the films from the production companies and distribute them to the movie theatres in their respective regions. Production companies were extremely dependent on the income that they would get from the distributors to be able to continue their film productions. In this system, which at first glance does not seem to be any different from other film distribution models, the distributors' mission was unique, as they acted as mediators between the movie theatres and the production companies. Regional distributors, in addition to distributing films and collecting revenues from the movie theatres, were also tasked with monitoring the reactions of the audience and reporting them to their respective production companies. Based on these reactions, distributors ordered tailor-made films to be produced within a specific genre, using specific themes, and featuring specific movie star(s). Production companies, which almost always lacked their own financial capital, did not have a choice but to produce films according to the instructions provided to them by the regional distributors. Because of this unique economic model, filmmakers and film stars of Yeşilçam did not have much cinematographic flexibility and creative freedom. Thanks to the *Regional Enterprise System*, film production in the country boomed in quantity, but the technical and artistic quality of the films failed to follow suit.

Struggling with extremely restrictive production codes, film production companies developed interesting and, at times, strange practical solutions to this system to catch up with the ever-increasing demand of the market. I will provide two examples of these solutions, which I think will give a clear idea of the extent to which these unorthodox practices could reach in film production during this period.

The first example is noted in the memoirs of prominent poet and writer Attila İlhan, who also wrote screenplays for the industry. While visiting one of the major film production companies' office, İlhan notices an unusual chart on a table. Seeing some film names and notes about them in the chart, he asks about them. The answer is surprising: "We are writing down popular scenes of commercially successful films. We are going to

make a film by gathering these scenes together".[52]

The second example is provided by film archivist and critic Agâh Özgüç. Özgüç writes that some filmmakers were shooting more than one film at the same time, using the very same film set and actors. The filmmakers were doing so without informing the actors. Due to the highly fragmented and non-linear production model used in film production to reduce the cost, the actors did not have much of a chance to understand what was going on. While the actors thought that they were acting in one specific film, which they were paid for, they were unknowingly acting in another film as well, obviously without being paid. Noting the incident, Özgüç writes that there were some actors in Yeşilçam who did not know the exact number of films they had performed in.[53]

This was the general condition of the popular cinema to which Okan entered in 1965, and contributed to until his emigration in 1967. Okan left Yeşilçam with a lot of disagreements and disillusions, but this did not change anything in the industry; it continued pursuing business-as-usual. More than 200 films were produced annually during much of the 1960s. New faces and new stars entered the industry almost every day. The cogwheels of Yeşilçam continued to spin ever faster. This went on uninterrupted until the 1970s.

Tight censorship regulations had been one of the most important factors behind the low creative and artistic quality of the films made in Turkey. Filmmakers avoided every possible film topic or cinematographic approach that could cause the film to fail in censorship control. This attitude limited Yeşilçam cinema to family melodramas, usually developing around sexless characters and apolitical love stories. Yeşilçam predominantly produced melodramas, focusing on heterosexual love stories whose characters often belonged to different social classes, yet the notion of class was very vague and apolitical. I will elaborate on this in one of the following chapters.

At the beginning of the 1970s, Yeşilçam started showing

signs of stagnation. Classical family-oriented Yeşilçam consumers, predominantly women and children, stopped going to movie theatres.[54] This sudden change can be explained by a combination of factors, among which were the sharply deteriorating economic conditions, the insecurity of public spaces due to increasing political violence gripping the country during much of the 1970s, and the increased accessibility of television, which gradually covered the entire nation in the 1970s.[55] Television provided a cheaper and safer entertainment alternative for families who were already pressed by political and economic instability, while also providing new visual aesthetics thanks to foreign TV serials and films for an audience that was beginning to get tired of Yeşilçam.[56] The number of film productions in Yeşilçam and the revenue they generated began to decrease. The film industry reacted to the disappearance of the classic Yeşilçam audience by producing sex comedies and erotic films. These films are commonly referred to as "seks filmleri" (sex films), and the period during which they boomed as "seks filmleri furyası" (sex films boom).[57] These often low-quality films were both cheap to produce, since most of them were made using 16 mm cameras, and successful in attracting the male audience to movie theatres. Some of these films, especially those made in the late 70s, such as Ülkü Erakalın's 1976 film *Yengen* (Sister-in-law) and Savaş Eşici's 1979 film *Enişte* (Brother-in-law), go beyond being erotic comedies, as they feature extended scenes of characters having sexual intercourse and show everything but close up images of genitalia; thus, they can be considered soft pornographic films. Agâh Özgüç notes that four of the films made in this late period, Naki Yurter's 1979 films *Öyle Bir Kadın Ki* (She is Such a Woman) and *İyi Gün Dostu* (A Fair-Weather-Friend), and Yavuz Figenli's 1980 films *Gece Yaşayan Kadın* (The Woman Who Lives in the Night) and *Şeytanın Kölesi* (Satan's Slave), go beyond and feature scenes that would be considered hard-core pornography today.[58] These erotic and pornographic films provided the industry with cash flow and kept it afloat until the military coup d'état on 12

September 1980.

The popular cinema of the country was deeply affected by the military coup and the social crisis it brought on; censorship was tightened even more. Although there were not many of them to begin with, a number of films that were deemed to be politically and/or ideologically undesirable by the military junta were banned, while some of them, such as Halit Refiğ's Kemal Tahir adaptation *Yorgun Savaşçı* (Tired Warrior, 1979), were destroyed together with all their copies. Sex comedies and pornographic films, which were booming during the 1970s, were also banned and quickly disappeared from the movie theatres. Under these circumstances, certain filmmakers, such as Halit Refiğ, Şerif Gören, and Zeki Ökten, who were able to produce politically aware and critical films during the 60s and 70s while some other filmmakers were producing sex comedies and pornographic films, chose, or rather were forced, to make apolitical films again.

Commercial film producers started producing *arabesk* (arabesque) films. Arabesque films were named after arabesque music, a kind of popular music that is a hybrid of Turkish and Arabic lyrics and rhythms. Arabesque had been a music genre which was overlooked and suppressed by the establishment and cultural elite, and it was denied broadcasting by the state television and radio until 1986, for it was deemed to be leading the listeners to "desperation and fatalism".[59] Arabesque films were musical-like films featuring famous arabesque music singers who sang their songs in the film in parallel with the highly tragic, melodramatic plot, which very often revolved around internal migration and urbanisation problems.[60] In some cases, the arabesque singers sang all the songs from their album during one film. It would not be an exaggeration to refer to these types of films as extended music videos with melodramatic plots.

During the 1980s, consumption of cinema films quickly moved from movie theatres to homes thanks to increased accessibility of video technology, gradually transforming the cinema

audience from families to individuals. While continuing to produce films for the theatres, the popularity of video cassettes as film consumption medium encouraged film production companies to establish branches focusing on video production and distribution. Many of the films produced in the period have never been screened in theatres and were solely available on video. The period also saw the transfer of almost all films produced during the Yeşilçam era on video as they were marketed to the Turkish workers living abroad. These workers and their families, who live mostly in Europe, and particularly in Germany, had been a group of potential consumers which until then could not be reached by Yeşilçam. Video technology provided a new and important additional source of income for the industry, which, in time, replaced the regional enterprises that were no longer able to provide the industry with necessary cash flow.[61]

Thanks to video technology and untapped audiences abroad, Yeşilçam managed to survive once more, but only until 1987, the year in which the first civilian government following the military coup made changes to the international commerce regulations and allowed foreign companies to establish businesses in Turkey. Following the deregulation of the film market, major US film companies, such as Warner Brothers and United International Pictures, started to open offices in the country. At first, these companies were just doing video business, but in time they started film distribution as well, which was more profitable. Finally, by 1989, the film market fell under the total control of foreign companies. Local filmmakers were unable to distribute and screen their films.[62] The era of Yeşilçam had finally come to an end; local film production decreased to around ten films a year, and the film market was dominated by Hollywood films during much of the 1990s.[63] With the absolute domination of foreign film producers and distributors over the national cinema market, one of the oldest and quantitatively most productive national cinemas of the world had collapsed surprisingly fast.

Yeşilçam Era Independent Filmmaking Attempts

Filmmakers with independent filmmaking intentions in Turkey had to solve four key issues to reach their goals during the Yeşilçam era: financing, production (technical), distribution, and censorship. Filmmakers often lacked the necessary financial and technical means to make their films. Even if they could overcome these obstacles, they would still have to face the issues of censorship and distribution. If the adventures of any filmmaker and his/her independent film were to help one to better grasp how challenging the situation was for independent filmmakers in the period, there is no better example than the adventures of Metin Erksan's 1965 film *Sevmek Zamanı* (Time to Love). *Time to Love* was financed independently and produced entirely by its director Erksan. The film even managed to pass the strict control of censorship, but it could never be screened in theatres due to distributors' refusal to distribute the film, which they deemed commercially unviable. As a result, the film could only reach an audience when it was released as a DVD in 2007, some forty-two years after it was produced.

Aware of these problems and the challenging conditions—or learning them the hard way like Erksan—some independent filmmakers tried interesting ways to reach their goals by making remarkable 'deals' with the commercial producers. For example, directors like Erksan and Halit Refiğ made special agreements with powerful producers like Hürrem Erman and Türker İnanoğlu to direct commercial films for these producers in exchange for a film in which the director's creative independence would not be hindered.[64]

Another independent cinema pioneer of the period was Yılmaz Güney. Güney followed a different path than Erksan and Refiğ to achieve the cinema he dreamed of. Unlike the first two independent filmmakers, Güney started his cinema career as an actor. Indeed, he was a very popular movie star at the time. During his acting career, Güney also worked as a scriptwriter and assistant director in various films. Gathering enough economic

capital and experience, he gradually moved into directing. Like Erksan, Güney's cinema suffered mostly from distribution problems. Big distribution companies, in agreement with some movie theatre owners, did not want to distribute or screen Güney's early urban western films in big cities like Istanbul due to the films' rural working-class male target audience, who were considered to be unfit for the posh or family-oriented movie saloons.[65] While this was the case in big cities, Güney managed to create and solidify a big group of loyal followers in rural Anatolia thanks to the popularity he established as an actor. Following his 1970 film *Umut* (Hope), which is considered by many to be Güney's best film, thanks to positive reviews they received from film critics, festivals, and institutions like *Sinematek* (Cinematheque), his later works broke the distributors' blockade and were screened in big cities, as well. Unlike his previous works, Güney's latest film *Duvar* (The Wall, 1983), which was made entirely in France, had been banned in Turkey due to its unfavourable portrayal of the country. At that time, Güney was in a position that he could have easily solved the distribution problems, had the film passed the censorship in Turkey.

Like Güney, Okan started his cinema career as an actor; and like him, he was involved in other parts of the filmmaking process, such as scriptwriting, before he started directing his own films. Unfortunately, the similarities between the two filmmakers continued after Okan's directing career started. Like Güney, he suffered from distribution problems more than anything else. Interestingly, like Güney's latest film, Okan's debut film *The Bus* was made in Europe and, like *The Wall*, it could not be screened in Turkey for some time due to a ban imposed on the film with the claim that it humiliated and misrepresented the country.

Despite sharing some similarities with previously mentioned independent cinema pioneers, Okan's independent cinema distinguishes itself from those filmmakers in almost all four key steps of independent film production. While Erksan, Refiğ, and Güney gathered their economic capital through working in

the industry, Okan financed his films with the savings that he had gathered from his work in dentistry. Cinema has never been a money making business for Okan. In an interview he gave recently, without expressing any regret, Okan stated that he never made money with his films.[66]

Unlike other filmmakers, Okan produced all his films outside the Yeşilçam production system. He produced his first two films abroad, in Sweden and Switzerland, respectively. His third film was made in Turkey, but at the time of production, the classical Yeşilçam and its production mechanism were no longer in existence; it had already collapsed and disappeared in the late 80s. He certainly did work with some actors and technical crews who once worked for Yeşilçam, but he remained free from possible influences and traps of the Yeşilçam's production system.

Beyond all these important advantages that granted him independence, he also enjoyed one significant privilege, which other independent filmmakers in Turkey did not benefit until the late 1980s: creative freedom unrestricted by censorship. As Okan openly stated, it would not have been possible to make his films in the way that they were made, if he had lived and made films in Turkey.[67]

According to Yannis Tzioumakis, "independent filmmaking consists of low-budget projects made by (mostly) young filmmakers with a strong personal vision away from influence and pressures from the few major conglomerates".[68] Okan's cinema demonstrates all these characteristics. When he completed his first film as a director, Okan was only thirty-two. *The Bus* was a low budget film, which was financed entirely by Okan's own savings and borrowings, and it was made completely outside of any established film industry.

In parallel with Tzioumakis, Chris Holmlund suggests that independent film distinguishes itself with its "social engagement and/or aesthetic experimentation —a distinctive visual look, an unusual narrative pattern, a self-reflexive style".[69] Although Holmlund makes his observations with independent

cinema in the United States in mind, his observations perfectly apply to Okan's cinema given that all three films centre on the same social issue, namely im/migration, and each of them provides a particular approach to the matter, while at the same time unceasingly pursuing his filmic and aesthetic exploration. Okan's personal life experiences as an immigrant also find their conspicuous reflection in his cinema. Having observed these facts, one can certainly assert that Okan is an independent filmmaker.

Despite living in Switzerland for more than three decades, and making his first two films while living in the country, Okan has never been recognised as a Swiss filmmaker by the country's authorities and film circles, and never received any support for his films.[70] Interestingly, despite living and making the first two of his films abroad, Okan is generally considered a Turkish filmmaker by film circles and public alike in Turkey. Okan's first film, *The Bus*, and his third, *The Yellow Mercedes*, got their inspirations from—and revolve around—issues concerning Turkey and Turkish people. They predominantly feature Turkish im/migrant actors and crew members, most of which are amateurs. Okan's second film, *Funny Saturday*, revolves around a series of local events taking place in the Swiss city of Neuchâtel, and features predominantly Swiss actors (both amateur and professional) and crew members. Although at times they feature dialogues in Swedish, German, and English, *The Bus* and *The Yellow Mercedes* were mostly shot in Turkish, while *Funny Saturday* was shot entirely in Swiss French. Given these facts, one could think of Okan as both a Swiss and a Turkish filmmaker. Such a conclusion enables one to consider Okan one of the independent cinema pioneers of both Turkey and Switzerland, especially if one takes into account that he provides some of the earliest examples of independently financed and produced films in both countries.

Okan as Auteur

Although independent filmmakers often demonstrate some qualities attributed to auteurs, there is no automatic, direct, or natur-

al connection between independent filmmaking and auteurship. Not all independent directors are by definition auteurs; nor are all auteur directors necessarily independent. However, some directors are both independent and auteurs. Okan is one of them.

The *auteur* polemic, which started with French filmmaker and critic Francois Truffaut's polemical essay "Une certaine tendance du cinéma français" (A certain tendency in French cinema) published in French film journal *Cahiers du Cinéma* in 1954, can be understood in three stages: Truffaut's argument that distinguishes the *metteurs en scène* from the *auteurs*, the *Cahiers du Cinéma*'s position that attributes signature styles to several filmmakers working in the Hollywood studio system, and Andrew Sarris' *auteur theory*.[71]

In his groundbreaking essay, Truffaut divides French film directors into two groups: *metteurs en scène* and *auteurs.* "For Truffaut, the metteur en scène (literally "scene-setter") merely adapts existing works of literature, or works within the given formula, whilst the true auteur uses cinema to express personal insight".[72] According to Truffaut, a metteur en scène is a director who simply adds pictures to the scenario, and many of the French directors—including the directors of the so-called *Tradition of Quality* films—are indeed metteurs en scène. Directors of *Tradition of Quality* films, among which Truffaut mentions Claude Autant-Lara, Jean Delannoy, René Clement, Yves Allégret, and Marcel Pagliero, were established directors in the mainstream commercial cinema of France at that time; and they often filmed scenarios that were written by different scriptwriters, or adapted works from literary sources following tried and proven formulas. These filmmakers had no more ambition than to be faithful to the scripts that they were given to film. The *auteurs*, on the other hand, are the directors who do not just visualise the scenarios written by someone else; they often write their own scenarios and dialogues, "invent the stories they direct", and "bring something genuinely personal to [their] subject[s] instead of merely producing tasteful, accurate but lifeless rendering of the original

material".[73]

The purport of Truffaut's thought-provoking article was that a filmmaker could be called an *auteur* in case s/he bears responsibility for the entire film, from start (the script) to finish (directing and editing). In the wake of his essay, critics from *Cahiers du Cinéma* started to use the term 'auteur' differently. Many of the *Cahiers du Cinéma* contributors were followers and admirers of Hollywood cinema. In time, these writers started *discovering* that some Hollywood directors, such as Nicholas Ray, George Cukor, Alfred Hitchcock, and Howard Hawks, represent personal visions in their films through their unique, recognisable styles, and mises-en-scène, even though they did not write their own scripts and operated in much more restrictive production codes of the Hollywood studio system.

In his essay titled "Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1962", American film critic Andrew Sarris took the polemics of *Cahiers du Cinéma* critics into a new domain and presented his take on the matter under the rubric of "auteur theory" with a strictly defined set of criteria. Until Sarris's controversial article, the discussions concerning the auteur polemic had never been considered a theory, as "the writers of *Cahiers du Cinéma* always spoke of 'la politique des auteurs'".[74] As the choice of nomenclature indicates, *la politique des auteurs* was considered as something other than a theory. Truffaut's essay had instigated the so-called 'la politique des auteurs', and its principal objectives were twofold: first, it "was meant to define an attitude to cinema and a course of action", and second, to prove that cinema is an "adult art" form, which allows personal expression no less than other established art forms such as painting and literature.[75]

In the essay, Sarris stipulates that a film director must demonstrate three distinct qualities in order for him/her to be considered as an auteur: technical competence, distinguishable personality, and ultimately, "the interior meaning".[76] Sarris' "theory" and criteria were predominantly concerned with filmmakers who worked in the film industry of the United States.

Partly for this reason, but more importantly, due to the fact that Sarris' arguments are not relevant for discussing Okan's status as an auteur, I will not articulate further on Sarris' arguments. However, I would like to mention one particular line of argument in Sarris' essay which I find noteworthy, because it connects to the matter I will discuss in this section. While laying down the fundamentals of his theory, Sarris argues that "American directors [are] generally superior to foreign directors", at least in regards to the second premise of his theory "[b]ecause so much of the American cinema is commissioned, a director is forced to express his personality through the visual treatment of the material, rather than through the literary content of the material".[77] According to Sarris, in this regard, Cukor is superior to Bergman due to the fact that Bergman is "free to develop his own scripts" while Cukor "works with all sorts of projects", and he is restricted by strict production codes, hence "has a more developed abstract style than" Bergman.[78] In his book *The American Cinema: Directors and Directions 1929–1968*, Sarris further articulates his line of argument around a list of filmmakers who made films in the United States, whom the critics compiles under the rubric of "pantheon directors". The list includes names such as Charles Chaplin, D. W. Griffith, Orson Welles, Buster Keaton, John Ford, and Howard Hawks.[79] According to Sarris these so-called "pantheon directors" are "the directors who transcended their technical problems with a personal vision of the world".[80]

Sarris' theory has not only taken the auteur polemic to somewhere else than where the *Cahiers du Cinéma* writers originally intended, but has also turned it into a personal polemic on the other side of the Atlantic following the harsh response of Pauline Kael to Sarris' writings.[81] While this was the situation in the US, British film theorist Peter Wollen brought a new perspective to the auteur discourse with his article "The Auteur Theory" by studying two of Sarris' "pantheon directors", Ford and Hawks, but in a different light than Sarris did.

In the article, after grouping the auteur critics into two schools—"those who insisted on revealing a core of meanings, of thematic motifs, and those who stressed style and *mise en scène*"—Wollen proceeds to write that the "work of the *auteur* has a semantic dimension, it is not purely formal; the work of the *metteur en scène*, on the other hand, does not go beyond the realm of performance, of transposing into the special complex of cinematic codes and channels a pre-existing text".[82] Having observed these, Wollen proposes that works of an auteur should be studied not only through resemblances and repetitions, but also through differences and oppositions on the thematic plane.[83] Following his own suggestion, Wollen proceeds to provide two concrete examples to his approach by his studies of Hawks and Ford's films. For Hawks, Wollen observes that even though Hawks "has worked in almost every genre", all these films "exhibit the same thematic preoccupations, the same recurring motifs and incidents, the same visual style and tempo".[84] According to Wollen, Hawks achieves "this by reducing the genres to two basic types: the adventure drama and the crazy comedy".[85]

Adopting Wollen's approach one can observe that Okan demonstrates an approach in his trilogy that is comparable to that of Hawks'. Just as Hawks transforms his films, whatever their genres might be, into adventure dramas and crazy comedies, while keeping the same thematic preoccupations, motives, and visual styles, Okan uses different genres and film aesthetics, as diverse as road movie, social realist drama, slapstick comedy, and the grotesque, while continuing to explore the same thematic preoccupations of im/migration and modern human's problematic relationship with commodities. Such an approach can be observed most clearly in *The Bus* and *The Yellow Mercedes.* In these films, Okan, on one hand, makes road movies with a serious undertone; on the other hand, he ultimately reverts to a combination of slapstick/grotesque/absurd comedy, but whether his films are serious or absurd, they revolve around the themes of im/migration and commodity fetishism.

Concerning John Ford's films, Wollen observes that "the system of opposition" is much more complex than those of Hawks, since instead of transforming his films into two "broad strata of films there are a whole series of shifting variations" in Ford's films.[86] Observing these shifting variations, Wollen suggests that in these cases one needs "to analyse the roles of protagonists themselves, rather than simply the worlds in which they operate".[87] By doing so Wollen discovers several reappearing sets of oppositions in Ford's films. Even though these "antinomies can often be broken down further", the most relevant sets of oppositions in Ford's films are "garden versus wilderness, ploughshare versus sabre, settler versus nomad, European versus Indian, civilised versus savage, book versus gun, married versus unmarried, East versus West".[88] According to Wollen, of these antinomies, the one between the garden and the wilderness is the master antinomy in Ford's films.[89]

There are two reappearing themes in Okan's trilogy: im/migration and human's problematic relationship with commodities, whether it is in the form of fascination, obsession, or fetishisation. In his debut film, Okan follows the journey of a group of illegal migrants from an underdeveloped country to post-industrial Sweden. In his second film, *Funny Saturday*—at least in the Turkified version of it—Okan follows the adventures of an immigrant couple from Turkey on a regular Saturday in a small Swiss town. In his third film, Okan follows the long journey of a so-called Turkish guest worker from Germany to his rural village in central Anatolia, driving his newly purchased automobile. As one can see, im/migration and im/migrants are recurring themes and features in Okan's trilogy.

Concerning humankind's problematic relationship with commodities, one can observe that, in his debut film, the illegal migrants are, in essence, nothing other than people lured by market capitalism and its colourful promise of a life abundant with commodities. This is openly expressed by the human trafficker, who drives the migrants from Turkey to Sweden, when

they stop by a roadside lake to have a pause before their arrival to Stockholm. Upon noticing that passengers have nothing other than a piece of stale dry bread left to eat, he consoles the migrants by reiterating the promise: "Never mind. You will start working tomorrow anyway. There is plenty of food here. You will be like pigs in ten days".[90] In *Funny Saturday*, the promise of life abundant with commodities is not only communicated through words, but vividly visualised, as the couple in the film does nothing more than try to purchase goods and services the entire day, walking around in a literal marketplace. Okan's third film is the story of a worker who has a fetishistic attachment to a commodity, the automobile. This attachment is perfectly encapsulated by the film's original French title *Mercedes mon Amour*, which translates to *Mercedes, My Love*.

Wollen posits that "the lesser *auteurs*…can be defined… by a core of basic motifs which remain constant, without variation. The great directors must be defined in terms of shifting relations, in their singularity as well as their uniformity."[91] Bearing Wollen's argument in mind, one could argue that the shifts in themes from film to film in Okan's trilogy bear comparison to the shifts in John Ford's *My Darling Clementine* to *The Searchers* to *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*. This is because neither the theme of im/migration, nor the theme of humans' problematic relation to commodities, is a constant one in Okan's films. Okan's debut film is concerned with illegal migration, human trafficking, as well as illegal migrants' fearful interactions with the locals. In his second and third films, Okan's focus shifts away from the issues of illegal migration and human trafficking to the legal im/migrants and their relationship with the locals. Although he follows the stories of im/migrants in all three films, the stories are concerned with different phases of the im/migration process. While focusing on the actual action of migration and the migrants' first interactions with the locals in *The Bus*, in *Funny Saturday*, Okan looks at the relationship between the long-established immigrants and the locals. In *The Yellow Mercedes*, he

focuses on a migrant worker's journey to his home country and the worker's relation to his countrymen.

Just as it is with the theme of im/migration, the relationship between the individuals and commodities is not constant, but a shifting one in Okan's trilogy. In the trilogy, one can observe not one but at least four different relations between the characters and commodities: unfulfilled desire, intoxication, resistance, and disillusion. The illegal passengers of the bus travel to Sweden with the hope of achieving a life abundant with commodities. However, they either die or are caught by the police before reaching their goal. On the other hand, the bus driver seems to be hypnotised by the commodities he acquired in Europe. For instance, he keeps praising his new camera, with which he takes photos of the passengers before he abandons them. The couple in *Funny Saturday* resists the allure of the market and the commodities they see during the day, and returns home without purchasing anything. The main character in *The Yellow Mercedes* gradually discovers that the automobile for which he dumped his lover and friends cannot give him the happiness, recognition, and respect he sincerely believed it would bring.

Given these observations, one can conclude that Okan is an auteur comparable to both Hawks and Ford in the light of Wollen's notion of the auteur. Even though Okan makes his films in diverse genres and cinematographic approaches, without exception, he is concerned with the same recurring central themes: im/migration and modern human's complicated relationship with commodities. Furthermore, beyond demonstrating thematic continuities, unlike Hawks, Okan shifts his focus in every film and examines different aspects of these themes. In this regard, Okan's authorship is much more comparable to that of Ford's. Though shifting, these thematic continuities in his films, particularly in his first three films, enable one to consider these films as a trilogy. Beyond thematic continuities, Okan's first three films are also united by their dystopian narratives and multi-layered structures that evoke a split reception, as Okan's films are inspired by diverse sources in European (art) cinema. In the fol-

lowing chapters, I will not only consider the trilogy against the background of the Turkish (film) context, but also against a European one.

Notes

[26] "Tunç Okan", *Ses.* Istanbul: Tifdruk Matbaacılık, 30 January 1965. 3.
[27] Sekmeç, Ali Can. *Altın Portakallı sanatçılar*. Konya: Antalya Kültür Sanat Vakfı, 2013. 290.
[28] Özön, Nijat. *Karagözden sinemaya: Turk sineması ve sorunları.* Ankara: Kitle Yayınları, 1995. 388.
[29] Yeres, Artun. *65 Yönetmenimizden Yerlilik, Ulusallık, Evrensellik, Geriliminde Sinemamız.* Istanbul: Donkişot Güncel Yayınlar, 2005. 14.
[30] Arslan, Güliz. "20 Yıl Aradan Sonra Yeniden Tunç Okan…"
[31] Luxembourgeus. 29.
[32] Evren, Burçak. *Aktör: Tuncel Kurtiz*. Ankara: Altın Koza Yayınları, 2008. 110. and Scognamillo, Giovanni. *Türk Sinema Tarihi*. Istanbul: Kabalcı Yayınevi, 2003. 344.
[33] "Bugün Türk sineması, Türk halkına karşı zararlı bir eğlence vasıtasıdır. Her yıl 250 kadar film Türk halkını kavgaya, soyguna, avantadan para kazanmaya yöneltmekte ya da aşağılık bir his istismarı ile insanı afyonlamakta ve Türk halkının içinde bulunduğu durumu kavramasına engel olmaktadır. Bu yirminci yüzyılda memleketin çoğu fakir olan halkına yapılabilecek en büyük kötülüklerden biridir.' Translation mine.
Demirkol, Altan. "Türk Sineması İki Yüzlü Kişilerin Elinde…" Diyen Tunç Okan Sinemayı Bıraktı…", *Milliyet*, 19 March 1967. 6.
[34] "Geri kalmış ülkenin geri kalmış sinemasıydı bu". Translation mine.
Okan, Tunç. "Aktörlük Türk Sineması Ben" in *Sinema 65.* Istanbul: Nov.—Dec. 1965, Vol.11–12. pp.12–15. 13.
[35] "Arada bir şeyler yapmak isteyenler, hattâ buna gücü olabilenler, bu hızlı akan ırmağın seyrini değiştiremiyorlar, ırmağın içinde bata çıka gidiyorlardı. Çok köklü olan ekonomik nedenlere dayanıyor bu gidiş". Translation mine.
Ibid. 13.
[36] Akgün, Seçil. *27 Mayıs: Bir İhtilal, Bir Devrim, Bir Anayasa.* ODTÜ Yayıncılık, 2009.
[37] Onaran, Âlim Şerif. *Türk Sineması*. Ankara: Kitle Yayıncılık, Vol. 1. 1994. 103.
[38] Dönmez-Colin, Gönül. *The Routledge Dictionary of Turkish Cinema*. Oxon, UK: Routledge, 2013. 242.
[39] Daponte, Kosta. "İsveç TV'si çekimine Başladığı Yaşar Kemal'in "Bebek"ini İlkbaharda Yayınlayacak". *Cumhuriyet*, 21 July 1973. 5.
[40] Luxembourgeus. 78.
[41] Raw, Laurence. "The Turk Abroad: Otobüs (1974)", 274.
[42] Pekşen, Yalçın. "Otobüs" filminin her şeyi Tunç Okan: Diş çektik, film yaptık", *Cumhuriyet.* 3 November. 1984. 7.
[43] "Tunç Okan'ın yeni filmi", *Cumhuriyet*, 31 October 1984. 5.
[44] Baltruschat, Doris, and Mary P. Erickson. "The Meaning of Independence: Concepts, Contexts, and Interpretations", 6.
[45] Ibid. 6.
[46] Türk, İbrahim. *Halit Refiğ: Düşlerden Düşüncelere Söyleşiler.* Istanbul: Kabalcı Yayınevi, 2001. 89.

[47] Yılmaz, Atıf. *Hayallerim, Aşkım Ve Ben*. Simavi Yayınları, 1991. 25
[48] Türk, İbrahim. *Halit Refiğ: Düşlerden Düşüncelere Söyleşiler.* 179.
[49] Onaran, Âlim Şerif. *Sinematografik Hürriyet*, Ankara: İçişleri Bakanlığı Tetkik Kurulu Yayınları, 1968. 149.
[50] Esen, Şükran K., *Türk sinemasının kilometre taşları: Dönemler ve Yönetmenler.* Istanbul: Agora Kitaplığı, 2010. 43.
[51] Dönmez-Colin, Gönül. *Turkish Cinema: Identity, Distance and Belonging.* London: Reaktion, 2008. 39.
[52] "Bunlar ne? dedim. İş yapan filmlerin beğenilen sahnelerini yazıyoruz, bu sahneler bir araya getirilip bunun filmini yapacağız'dediler". [sic] Translation mine. Quoted in Tunalı, Dilek. *Batıdan Doğuya, Hollywood'dan Yeşilçam'a Melodram: Zihniyet Ve Kültür Etkileşimleri Çerçevesinde Yeşilçam Melodramı'na Bakış.* Ankara: Aşina Kitaplar, 2006. 222.
[53] Özgüç, Agâh. *Bir Sinema Günlüğünden Aykırı Notlar.* Istanbul: Dharma Yayınları, 1992. 25.
[54] Türk, İbrahim. *Senaryo Bülent Oran.* Istanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2004. 200–201.
[55] Çankaya, Özden. *Bir Kitle İletişim Kurumunun Tarihi: TRT, 1927–2000.* Istanbul: YKY, 2003. 77.
[56] Esen. 134–135.
[57] Özgüç, Agâh. *Türk Sinemasında Cinselliğin Tarihi.* Broy Yayınları, 1988. 116.
[58] Ibid. 118–119.
[59] Wiktorowicz, Quintan. *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004, 283.
[60] Burçak Evren, "Arabesk Olayı ve Sinema", *Gelişim Sinema Dergisi*, January 1984. 14.
[61] Abisel, Nilgün. *Türk Sineması üzerine Yazılar.* Istanbul: İmge, 1994. 109
[62] Tunç, Ertan. *Türk Sinemasının Ekonomik Yapısı 1896-2005.* Istanbul: Doruk, 2012. 149
[63] Pösteki, Nigar. *1990 Sonrası Türk Sineması: 1990-2005.* Istanbul: Es Yayınları, 2005. 32
[64] Akser, Murat. "Turkish Independent Cinema: Between Bourgeois Auterism and Political Radicalism", 135.
[65] Özgüç, Agâh. *Arkadaşım Yılmaz Güney: Bir Dostluğun Öyküsü.* Broy Yayınları, 1988. 30–31.
[66] "21 Yıl Sonra Yeniden Tunç Okan". *Hürriyet*, 17 February 2013.
[67] Avcı, Ümran. "Ahmet Mekin'i atlayıp çocuğa ödül verdiler", *HaberTürk*, 20 April 2013.
[68] Tzioumakis, Yannis. *American Independent Cinema: An Introduction.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2006. 1.
[69] Holmlund, Chris, and Justin Wyatt. *Contemporary American Independent Film*. London: Routledge, 2005. 2.
[70] Luxembourgeus. 83.
[71] In fact, Truffaut was not the first one to start the auteur discussion. Some six years before Truffaut's essay, another French film critic, Alexandre Astruc, in his…

essay “The Birth of a New Avant-Garde: La Camera-Stylo” made a similar observation and wrote that “the cinema is quite simply becoming a means of expression, just as all the other arts have been before it, and in particular painting and the novel.”
Astruc, Alexandre. "The Birth of a New Avant-Garde: La Camera-Stylo." 17.
[72] Aitken, Ian. *European Film Theory and Cinema: A Critical Introduction*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2001. 133.
[73] Truffaut, François. "A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema”, 15-16. and Buscombe, Edward. “Ideas of Authorship”, 77.
[74] Buscombe, Edward. “Ideas of Authorship”, 76.
[75] Ibid. 76. and Bazin, André. “De la Politique des Auteurs”, 25.
[76] Sarris, Andrew. “Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1962”, 43.
[77] Ibid. 43
[78] Ibid. 43.
[79] Sarris, Andrew. *The American Cinema: Directors and Directions 1929-1968*. Dutton, 1968. 39-81
[80] Ibid. 39.
[81] In her article “Circles and Squares” Pauline Kael questions in a sharp and ridiculing tone Sarris’ “auteur theory” and convincingly dismantles his premises one by one.
[82] Wollen, Peter. *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972. 78.
[83] Ibid. 93.
[84] Ibid. 81.
[85] Ibid. 81.
[86] Ibid. 94.
[87] Ibid. 94.
[88] Ibid. 94.
[89] Ibid. 96.
[90] “Boşverin ya. Nasıl olsa yarın işe başlıyorsunuz. Yemek bol, on günde domuz gibi olursunuz”. Translation mine.
[91] Wollen. 104.

Chapter II

The Bus: A Film on the Road

Okan made his debut as a director in 1974 with the feature film *Otobüs* (The Bus). *The Bus* revolves around the experiences of nine illegal migrants from Turkey—a largely pre-industrial country at the time— in the modern, post-industrial European capital Stockholm. They are abandoned in an old crumbling bus by their fellow countryman, the bus driver, at the most central public square of the city, *Sergels Torg*, without money and travel documents. The driver turns out to be a human trafficker working for an international human trafficking gang. Being stuck both in a bus, and in a country unknown to them, to which they travelled illegally, the abandoned passengers wait hopefully but fearfully in the bus until their basic needs do not allow them to do so any longer. When they open the door and decide to leave the bus in search of food, water, and toilet, the city responds by opening the Pandora's box, unleashing all its evils onto them. Until they are discovered by the police at the end of the film and forcefully removed from the vehicle, the only secure place known to them in this foreign country, the passengers go through a number of challenging experiences. While some of the passengers make it to the end, others either die, or are caught by the police over the course of the film.

The Bus is a road movie, albeit an unorthodox one. The road movie has never been a popular genre in Turkey's more

than a century-old cinema. *The Bus* is one of the very few road movies the country's cinema has ever produced, and furthermore, it represents a turning point in the country's cinema's approach to the genre. *The Bus* represents a total rupture, not only with the few road movies that preceded it but, more importantly, with Turkey's popular cinema of the period, as a whole. *The Bus* is a forerunner that influenced and radically transformed road movies succeeding it, such as Ökten's *The Herd* (1979), and Gören's *The Road* (1982), both of which are better known internationally than *The Bus* itself.

Okan's debut film is not a well-known film in Turkey, and even less so in Europe. In this chapter, I take this as my starting point and try to answer the following questions: In what sense is *The Bus* an unorthodox road movie, and how does it relate to the Turkish and European (art) road movies of the period? In order to find answers to these questions, I use a comparative approach. After looking at how a road movie is defined both in Hollywood and European contexts, I examine how *The Bus* can be read against the background of the road movie genre defined by these two different traditions, and explain why *The Bus*, as an unusual road movie, has not received the attention it deserves. In this examination, the film's fluid quality will be given particular attention because, even though road movies are known to be transgeneric, by making a road movie that features very little actual journeying, and using elements that are commonly associated with distinct and seemingly incompatible genres, Okan brings the already flexible limits of the genre to a breaking point.

The Bus has so far received little attention and has been left largely unstudied. Other than a very few rudimentary texts that provide an introduction to the film, not much has been written about it. In this chapter, I intend to remedy this and provide a close reading of the film; by doing this, I will explain why the film has been largely ignored.

An Unwelcome Debut

The Bus is an independent film, financed with the personal savings and borrowings of Okan, a Turkish émigré to Switzerland at the time. Okan got his inspiration from a real-life event reported in a newspaper article published some ten years before the film's completion. Apart from a short episode that takes place in Germany, which was added to the film a couple of years after the film's initial completion and public screening, *The Bus* was shot entirely in Sweden with the participation of predominantly Turkish im/migrant amateur actors and crew, many of whom were found through newspaper announcements.[92]

The Bus met its first audience and some of its future distributors at the Cannes Film Festival in France, though not as a part of the festival's official programme, but through private screenings.[93] Despite being the debut film of an unknown and inexperienced director, *The Bus* was subsequently screened at several prestigious international film festivals, where it garnered significant positive reactions. It won several awards, such as the Special Jury Prize at the Human Rights Film Festival in Strasbourg (France), the Don Quijote Award given by the FICC (International Federation of Film Societies) at the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival (then Czechoslovakia, now Czechia), and the Best First Film Award at the Taormina International Film Festival (Italy). At the International Film Festival of Santarém (Portugal), *The Bus* competed with Akira Kurosawa's Oscar-winning 1975 film *Dersu Uzala*, and received the Best Film Award.

Despite the recognition and success at international festivals, *The Bus* could not be screened in Turkey until 1977 due to a ban imposed on the film by the censorship authority that was active at the time. In its official report, the *Film Kontrol Komisyonu* (Film Control Commission) claimed that the film misrepresents and humiliates Turkish society. In an effort to legitimise its decision to ban the film, the commission cites fifteen different arguments. In one of these, the commission refers to a scene in which

some of the characters are seen, first, urinating into a frozen lake, and later, dining. The commission finds this scene "incompatible with the customs and traditions" of the Turks because the characters start dining "without washing their hands".[94] Furthermore, the commission refers to the same dining scene and claims that the film is "making fun of the diet of the Turks" because the passengers eat "only stale dry bread and onion".[95] Additionally, the commission refers to the scene in which the driver of the bus panics and escapes from the police shortly after entering central Stockholm. According to the commission, the scene is unacceptable because the driver "turns right and enters" into a specific part of the city "despite the traffic signs" prohibiting him to do so.[96] The report claims that the scene represents "Turks as not obeying the traffic rules".[97] Owing to these and other no less absurd arguments, the film was not only barred from screening in Turkey but also from export, for almost three years until the commission's decision was revoked by a court.

Despite the commission's ruling, the film could, fortunately, be screened in many countries, such as France, the Soviet Union, Iran, Czechoslovakia, and Italy, while it was still banned in Turkey. In these countries, *The Bus* received diverse reactions. In Switzerland, according to the publicity brochure of the film, it met a destiny similar to the one in Turkey, and was banned.[98] Even though the brochure and, more importantly, an article

published in the French newspaper *Le Monde* suggest that the film was banned in Switzerland due to its content, a recent book on Okan made it clear that this was not really the case. The film, at least technically, had never been banned in Switzerland, but neither could it be screened freely in the country due to the bureaucratic reluctance to recognise the film as a Swiss production.[99] According to Okan, Swiss authorities refused to recognise the film as a Swiss production and demanded it to be imported to the country even though the film was financed, produced, edited, and distributed in Switzerland by a Swiss company, Helios Film, owned by Okan himself. Okan is convinced that the Swiss authorities' reluctance was the result of racist and xenophobic attitudes in the country's cinema circles, just like the fact that he has never been recognised as a Swiss filmmaker, despite having been long recognised as a Swiss dentist, and a citizen.[100]

> I had lived in Switzerland for a very long time, and I made all four of my films while I was living in that country. Indeed, I still work in Switzerland, but they have never accepted me as a Swiss director. They have not given a penny to help me with my cinema. All my requests for support were turned down. I could never become a Swiss director. (…) However, I was easily recognised and accepted as a successful dentist. I never had a problem with this matter. As a doctor, no one ever told me 'you are a foreigner'. They still don't. When this doctor wants to make art, however, even if he carries a Swiss passport, the ones who distribute the resources for support, or the bureaucrats who make decisions on this matter cannot accept this reality. (…) After all my experiences, I can say with certainty that there has been Swiss racism against a Turkish director.[101]

Despite the risk of a possible jail sentence if caught, Okan smuggled his film into Turkey in a handbag to avoid the country's tight film import regulations. The film was welcomed by

many critics and audiences alike once the ban was lifted and it was freed from censorship. However, recalling its experience in Switzerland, the film also created confusion regarding the question as to whether the film could be considered a Turkish film, or not.[102] In the eyes of the Film Control Commission officials, there was no doubt that *The Bus* was a Turkish film since they put it through the censorship control as such. However, several film critics and national film festivals along with the Tashkent International Film Festival refused to recognise the film as a Turkish film.[103] Considering the fact that there had been other films preceding *The Bus* that were made abroad yet were still considered to be Turkish films, it can be argued that one of the causes of the confusion was the unspecified identities of the film's characters. On top of this, one can add the film's unusual narration and filmic aesthetic as possible reasons. The language of the extremely limited dialogues, unspecific dialects, generic appearances and conducts suggest that the illegal travellers are likely from some rural part of Turkey, or possibly Kurdish, as argued by film scholar Iordanova.[104] But the characters do not show any features that are specific enough to sustain any of these claims. Furthermore, in an interview he gave in 1977, Okan states that the "Turkishness of the passengers is a coincidence" thus making the possible national or ethnic origins of the passengers irrelevant for the film.[105] In the publicity brochure of the film, Okan returns to this question and further articulates his position, stating that the illegal passengers are "the villagers of the Third World who hope to become foreign workers in a consumer society", arguing that they could have very well been Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, or Arab rather than Turkish, and this would not have changed anything in the film.[106]

Despite the intention of the now-defunct Swedish film distribution company Europafilm AB, *The Bus* could not be screened in Sweden. One of the emigrant amateur actors of the film, Hasan Gül, who still lives in Sweden, confidently asserts that this was due to threats of a bomb attack from the anti-mi-

grant extreme right-wing groups active in the country at the time.[107] Noting the strong public support enjoyed by the leftist political movements and governments at the time in Sweden, Gül reasons that the company's decision not to screen the film must have come after a calculation that a physical attack that might have been carried out by the threatening extremists would have been too big a risk to take for the sake of a low-budget independent debut film by an unknown filmmaker.[108]

Irrespective of its characters' possible national or ethnic origins, *The Bus* is an important film for cinema history, as it is one of the earliest films that focus on the question of illegal migration and human trafficking. Other films that share this focus are films like Anthony Mann's didactic propaganda film *Border Incident* (1949), which looks at the illegal workforce migration from Mexico to the United States from the perspective of two undercover police officers who are tasked to bring down a human trafficking mafia, Pietro Germi's 1950 Neorealist film *Il Cammino della speranza* (The Path of Hope), which follows the illegal journey of a group of poverty-stricken Sicilian villagers to France with the hope of finding a better life, and the anti-communist informant Elia Kazan's 1963 America-glorifying film *America America*, which follows an Ottoman Greek in his unceasing struggle to immigrate from the crumbling Ottoman Empire to Kazan's idealised USA.[109] Furthermore, *The Bus* is one of the earliest of rare films that was made by an im/migrant focusing on im/migration. Okan shares this quality with another Istanbulite, Elia Kazan. *The Bus* offers an interesting look at the issues of moving, mobility, migration, trafficking, borders, and border crossing long before these issues were of popular interest for cinema or academia.

A Turkish Road Movie

Although it features very little actual journeying, given that the journey does not reach its end-point when the bus halts at an unintended location, there are good reasons to read *The Bus*

against the background of the road movie genre.

The road movie is not a common genre in Turkey's cinema. There are only a handful of road movies made in the country's cinema history. The majority of these films were made after the production of *The Bus.* I could only find three road movies that precede Okan's film, namely Atıf Yılmaz's 1958 film *Bu Vatanın Çocukları* (This Land's Children), Osman F. Seden's 1959 film *Düşman Yolları Kesti* (The Enemy Has Blocked the Roads), and Nevzat Pesen's 1964 film *Hızlı Yaşayanlar* (Those Who Live Fast). In the only written source on the subject, film archivist Agâh Özgüç does not consider the first two of these films as road movies, and marks Pesen's film as the first and the only road movie made in Turkey before 1974.[110] Yılmaz's film follows the journey of two messengers on horseback tasked with delivering a secret message to Mustafa Kemal during Turkey's War of Independence. In the film *The Enemy Has Blocked the Roads*, which has a similar storyline, Osman F. Seden focuses on the dangerous journey of a military officer who travels to Anatolia from Istanbul, which is under occupation of British, French, and Italian forces, in order to deliver vitally important documents during the War of Independence. Nevzat Pesen's film distinguishes itself from these two preceding films with a different storyline. *Those Who Live Fast* is not a war film; it follows the daily struggles of four pickup truck drivers who deliver newspapers to rural Turkey for rival newspaper companies.

Even though the journey, and being on the road, takes up a significant place in these films, all of them are typical Yeşilçam films. As explained previously, Yeşilçam represents a particular approach to cinema which not only mimics, but at times outright copies, classical Hollywood approaches. For this reason, it is sometimes referred to as "Turkish Hollywood". Yeşilçam is an escapist cinema. It relies heavily on easily identifiable, clear-cut good and bad characters, star figures, linear narration, and a neat resolution of conflicts, most often achieved by a happy ending. Like many Yeşilçam melodramas, these three

road movies revolve around classical Yeşilçam plots, and utilise classical narration strategies. This can be easily observed in Pesen's film. Like many Yeşilçam melodramas, Pesen's film develops around a love story as two of the drivers are in love with the same female character who works at a petrol station at which the drivers have a stopover every night. Like many other Yeşilçam films, *Those Who Live Fast* is also a star film, meaning that it relies heavily on a star figure—in this particular case, the iconic Ayhan Işık—both in the development of its story and its marketing. The film follows a linear narration leading to a typical happy ending with the marriage of Işık and his love interest after the driver's rival dies in a traffic accident. *Those Who Live Fast* surprisingly generates a kind of low profile social commentary in the background. It lightly touches upon class relations between workers and capitalists, as well as the hunger for speed and efficiency of modern times. This critical perspective, although light, is not typical of Yeşilçam melodramas. As explained in the previous chapter, the 1960s was the period in Turkey's cinema history that social realism became more common in films, thanks to the relative atmosphere of freedom granted by the new constitution. Made in 1964, Pesen's film can be observed to incorporate some of the social realist themes and attitudes of that period.

Despite being a film of a former Yeşilçam star, *The Bus* has little in common with either Yeşilçam cinema, or with the preceding road movies made in the country. It is boldly different from the preceding road movies made in Turkey, not only in its topic, but also in its narration strategy, and filmic aesthetic. Unlike Yeşilçam road movies, it is neither a melodrama, nor does it revolve around a love story. Furthermore, it does not have a clear storyline, and dramatic development in the classical sense, let alone a neat resolution of conflict, or a happy ending. Although it has relatively clear-cut good and bad characters, unlike Yeşilçam road melodramas, it is not a star film that takes shape around a star figure. This makes it difficult for the viewer to identify with any of the characters.

Another aspect, which sets *The Bus* apart from the pre-

ceding Yeşilçam road melodramas is the film's sociopolitically aware and critical attitude. In this regard, one could see *Those Who Live Fast* as an exception. However, it should be noted that Okan's film is much bolder than Pesen's film in its approach to, and critique of, the sociopolitical issues, such as workforce migration, human trafficking, alienation, and commodity fetishism, it addresses; and places them at its centre of focus. As stated by Okan on multiple occasions, he was only able to make his films thanks to the fact that he was financially independent and making these films in countries that were free from censorship.

The American Road Movie

Although there exist a number of important films that give considerable attention and space to journeying and/or being on the road, in his influential study *Driving Visions: Exploring the Road Movie*, David Laderman does not consider any film preceding Arthur Penn's 1967 film *Bonnie and Clyde*, and Dennis Hopper's 1969 film *Easy Rider* as road movie in "any deliberate or self-conscious sense".[111] Though recognising their importance as precursors in the development of the road movie genre, Laderman prefers to call these films—among the most notable of which are Mervyn LeRoy's 1932 film *I Am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang*, William Wellman's 1933 film *Wild Boys of the Road*, Fritz Lang's 1937 film *You Only Live Once*, and John Ford's 1940 Steinbeck adaptation *The Grapes of Wrath*—"social conscience films" instead.[112] For Laderman, these are not road movies because "the road becomes coded as a brutal necessity for survival and escape from oppression", and is "not glorified as an alternative lifestyle or freedom from society's conventions" in these works.[113]

Bonnie and Clyde, and more so *Easy Rider*, represent a radical departure from the preceding road movies. Penn's and Hopper's films distinguish themselves from the preceding works with their sharp social and political criticism, countercultural rebellion against conservative social norms, and the characters' distinct motivations to hit the road.[114]

Bonnie and Clyde, which predates *Easy Rider* by just two

years, follows the journey of two characters: a petty criminal on parole and a waitress bored to death by her job. The characters hit the road and start driving aimlessly after they decide to rob a grocery store, simply because they are bored. More than once, the couple encounters the chance to stop driving and return to their boring, but nonetheless safer, daily lives, however they choose to continue driving and robbing banks until they are violently killed by law enforcement officers.

Easy Rider revolves around two bikers who start their journey from an undisclosed location, which appears to be somewhere in Mexico, and hit the road aiming to reach a carnival in New Orleans on time, after successfully smuggling cocaine into the USA and quickly swapping it for cash. The bikers drive on empty highways—for many, the symbol of freedom—passing through picturesque landscapes surrounded by deserts and mountains. As one of the bikers declares at one point, their journey is "all about freedom". After reaching their intended destination and joining the carnival, the bikers continue driving aimlessly until they are shot and killed by a random *redneck* travelling in a pickup truck.

Bonnie and Clyde and *Easy Rider* share the quality of being on the road as a free choice. In these films, the characters "travel for travel's sake", and the travel functions "as an 'end' in itself" instead of serving a practical function.[115] This feature is much more pronounced in *Easy Rider* because, even though the characters decide to hit the road out of boredom and strong yearning for freedom and rebellion in the first place in *Bonnie and Clyde*, after their first robbery they are forced to keep on driving in order to escape the pursuing law enforcement officers. The characters in *Easy Rider*, on the other hand, are never forced to be on the road. They are on the road because they choose to do so. This condition is not previously employed explicitly in any other American film. Preceding films, without exception, revolve around characters who are forced to travel due to different circumstances, often of a social nature. For instance, while LeRoy's

and Lang's characters hit the road to escape from law enforcement officers with the hope of avoiding jail, Wellman's and Ford's characters travel due to poverty, with the hope of finding a better life.

The specific format that is epitomised by Penn's *Bonnie and Clyde* and Hopper's *Easy Rider* is the product of a new era in Hollywood, which emerged during the late 1960s.[116] The period between the late 1960s and 1980s is regarded as a special period in the US film history, during which a new generation of young filmmakers entered the industry and produced films that deviated from the classical norms of the Hollywood studio system established in the late 1920s that lasted until the late 1960s without much significant change. The period came after a series of factors brought the classical Hollywood era to an end. I prefer to call this period *New Hollywood*, following Thomas Elsaesser.[117] The classical Hollywood studios' failure to capture the attention of a new, young, and educated post-war generation, raising popularity of European and Japanese commercial as well as arthouse films, and the advent and popularity of television can be counted among these factors. Abandonment of the highly restrictive Motion Picture Production Code in 1968, which determined meticulously what a Hollywood film could and could not show since 1930, and the US Supreme Court antitrust case that ended the Hollywood studios' long-standing practice of owning their own theatres as well as holding exclusive rights to decide which theatres could screen their films, should also be added to the list. Much like *the* event that started the period, *the* event that ended the New Hollywood era is still a subject of debate. While some point to the release of Arthur Penn's 1967 film *Bonnie and Clyde* as *the* event that started the period, some others point out Mike Nichols' film of the same year, *The Graduate*, or the abandonment of the Production Code in 1968. Likewise, while some, such as Thomas Elsaesser, considers Roman Polanski's 1974 film *Chinatown*, Martin Scorsese's *Taxi Driver* (1975), and Robert Altman's *Nashville* (1975) as *the* films that ended the period, others

mark "the end of the period with the release of writer-director Michael Cimino's *Heaven's Gate* in 1980, one of the worst box office failures in the history of American cinema".[118] Despite the unsettled discussions surrounding it, the period is an important and influential event in the history of American cinema. What Laderman considers to be *the* road movie is one of the most important manifestations of this influence.

Although it emerged as a distinct genre in the late 1960s, what Laderman considers as the road movie is built on the elements created or perfected by many different classical Hollywood genres, such as the western, gangster films, film noir, screwball comedies, and family melodramas.[119] This can be observed both in *Bonnie and Clyde* and *Easy Rider*, as Penn's film openly recalls gangster films, while Hopper's recalls the westerns. Even though it corporates many different elements associated with different genres, what distinguishes the road movie from the preceding films, as Laderman observes, is the fact that the road movie develops around the core of "rebellion against conservative social norms", follows character(s) who travel due to free choice, and utilises "the journey as a means of cultural critique".[120] According to Laderman, the road movie genre begins only when the protagonist of *The Grapes of Wrath*, "Tom Joad's son comes of age as a hippie", hops on a motorcycle out of free will, and "recrosses America" in resistance to the conservative values in society, just like the characters in *Easy Rider*.[121]

On the European Roads

Although what Laderman considers as the road movie is often argued to be a "peculiarly American" genre "that catches peculiarly American dreams, tensions, and anxieties, even when imported by the motion picture industries of other nations", the most "distinctly American" features of the post-war American road movie, such as generic ambivalence, critical attitude, and aimless mobility are, in fact, "imported" and can be traced back to French New Wave cinema, particularly to Jean-Luc Godard's

1960 film *Breathless*.[122] The road movie in Europe is shaped by significantly different motivations, goals, figures, signifiers, and strategies. Europe offers a diverse body of road movies that have developed "alongside the Hollywood road movie, being influenced by and influencing it at the same time" thanks to the contribution of auteurs like Bergman, Antonioni, Wenders, Fellini, Godard, and Kaurismäki among others.[123]

> Generally speaking, European road movies seem less interested than their American counterparts in following the desperately rambling criminal exploits of an outlaw couple; or, in romanticizing the freedom of the road as a political alternative expressing youth rebellion. Rather, the exploration of psychological, emotional, and spiritual states becomes more important to the Continental drive. Overall the European road movie associates road travel with introspection rather than violence and danger. (…) The European road movie foregrounds the *meaning* of the quest journey more than the *mode* of transport; revelation and realization receive more focus than the act of driving. (…) Instead of emphasizing the high-speed, thrill-seeking driving typical of American road movies, these films emphasize introspection and reflection; passage through the landscape becomes an allegory of a lost soul seeking the meaning of life.[124]

As Devin Orgeron observes, many European road movies utilise the journey in such a way that the vehicle functions as a "sort of mobile psychoanalytic couch".[125] Ingmar Bergman's 1957 film *Smultronstället* (Wild Strawberries) is one of the most iconic examples of such films. *Wild Strawberries* follows the long car drive of an elderly professor from Stockholm to the southern Swedish city of Lund. The film is more concerned with the main character's journey into the past than the physical car drive itself, as the professor revisits memories and reflects upon his past experiences during the journey.

The vehicle of choice is another significant difference between the European and the New Hollywood road movies. In most New Hollywood road movies, as well as in some classical Hollywood ones, the characters use automobiles and motorcycles to travel, whereas in European road movies, the vehicle of choice is often "public transport (trains, buses), if not hitchhiking or travelling on foot".[126] Obviously, the vehicle of choice in a particular road movie can vary greatly depending on the specificity of the journey and the characters, however, unlike in Hollywood road movies, in European road movies, one cannot observe the same insistence on driving a private car or motorcycle. Hollywood's insistence on, or rather, obsession with the private car or motorcycle is an expected and understandable result of the myth of freedom that in part builds on the individualistic narrations of Western films. Indeed, this individualistic myth of freedom is not only central to the Hollywood road movie, it is also one of the founding myths of the United States of America as a nation, the so-called "land of the free". Hollywood is one of the most important channels through which this myth is maintained, re-interpreted, and disseminated. Furthermore, it should not come as a surprise to see the rise of road movies revolving around automobile or motorcycle driving individuals in post-war Hollywood given the fact that Hollywood is the popular cinema of a nation that built the Eisenhower National System of Interstate and Defense Highways network, and aggressively promoted car ownership in the post-World War II period.

New Hollywood road movies often revolve around rebellious or outcast characters who hit the road in their search for freedom. This is rarely the case in European road movies. European road movies often follow the journey of a rather ordinary person "who is on the move, often for practical reasons (for work, immigration, commuting or holiday-making)".[127]

An Unorthodox Road Movie

Although it features very little actual journeying, *The Bus* demonstrates many characteristic features of a road movie. Okan's de-

but film is also contemporaneous with some of the most distinct examples of road movies made in Europe, such as Wim Wenders' *Alice in den Städten* (Alice in the Cities, 1974), *Falsche Bewegung* (The Wrong Move, 1975), and *Im Lauf der Zeit* (Kings of the Road, 1976), and Michelangelo Antonioni's *Professione: Reporter* (The Passenger, 1975). However, *The Bus* is quite an unusual road movie and has very little in common with the European and New Hollywood road movies of its period.

As observed by both Laderman and Orgeron, European road movies, unlike the post-*Easy Rider* Hollywood ones, are often concerned with the introspection and retrospection of the characters. This is the case for all the European road movies named above. Antonioni's *The Passenger* follows the journey and the experiences of an Anglo-American journalist after he assumes the identity of a dead arms dealer who has connections with the rebels in the civil war in Chad. Despite the political background against which Antonioni forms his narration, *The Passenger* is more concerned with existentialist identity questions and retrospections of the main character than with the sociopolitical issues it takes as its background. The same observation is true for Wim Wenders's road movie trilogy. Although these films feature a certain level of political awareness and social commentary (mostly expressed through critical visual or verbal references to American colonialism, American cultural imperialism, and Germany's Nazi past) Wenders's trilogy is more concerned with the soul-searching and retrospections of the characters than the sociopolitical issues depicted in these films' backgrounds. One cannot observe a comparable utilisation, either of the journey or of the vehicle, in *The Bus.* Although in many respects it demonstrates characteristic features of the European road movie tradition, Okan's film distinguishes itself from this tradition with its open political orientation, critical attitude, and sociopolitical commentary.[128]

The Bus places its focus on a travelling group, not on a particular individual. This is one of the features that distinguish

European road movies from their Hollywood counterparts.[129] Okan takes this European road movie convention to its extremes, and does not allow any single character to outshine. In this respect, *The Bus* is fundamentally different from both Hollywood and European road movies. Classical Hollywood and New Hollywood era road movies, as well as European ones, almost always revolve around one or more central individual characters, even if those characters are part of a larger group, so the audience can easily identify with one or more character(s). Germi's *The Path of Hope* is one such film. Like *The Bus*, it follows the journey of a group consisting of rather ordinary people who are forced to travel. Unlike in *The Bus*, however, in Germi's film, Saro and Barbara quickly gain significant importance and become the central characters around whom the film develops. One can observe a comparable development also in Ford's *The Grapes of Wrath*. Okan avoids such a development in *The Bus* by

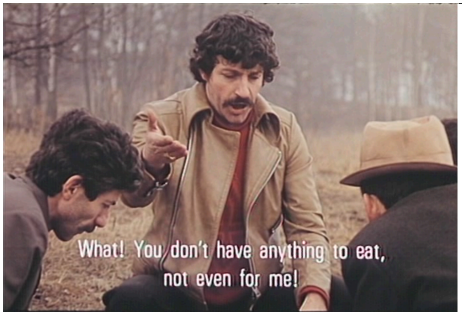
constantly changing the camera's attention from one character to the next. This action makes it virtually impossible for the viewer to develop any kind of identification with, or attachment to, a particular character. If any of the characters gain more visibility, hence importance, Okan restores the balance by applying an unusual method: killing the character. This happens three times in the film. The first two characters who gain the extensive focus of the camera are removed from the film by unexpected deaths. The third, and arguably the most important character of the film, the bus, is smashed to pieces by a giant press at the very end of the film.

In road movies, the vehicle is often conceptualised as "a mechanised extension of the body", with the help of which the body of the traveller goes further and faster towards their destination (if there is any).[130] In *The Bus*, the vehicle of transport is positioned markedly different in comparison to New Hollywood road movies. The bus in Okan's film is anything but an extension of the traveller's body, as it is positioned as an independent body in itself among the bodies of other characters. As the name of the film emphasises, the vehicle is the most important character in the film; it is not an extension, because the term *extension* suggests certain qualities that the bus in the film does not show. An extension, according to the Oxford dictionary, is a part that is added to something.[131] As the definition suggests, an extension is something secondary to what it is added to. In this sense, motorcycles in Hopper's *Easy Rider* can be accurately referred to as extensions. In *The Bus*, however, the order of hierarchy between the bus and the other characters is not that clear. Furthermore, the term extension also implies replaceability, the possibility of changing this secondary part with something else. This kind of relation between vehicle and characters can be observed in Penn's *Bonnie and Clyde*, in which the couple changes vehicles on several occasions during their journey. This is not the case in *The Bus*; the vehicle in the film is the same one from the beginning until the end. Indeed, the film does not end before the bus is de-

stroyed by a giant press. In both *Easy Rider* and *Bonnie and Clyde*, the films end when the main characters die. The same thing is true for *The Bus* given that the film ends when the main character, the bus, dies.

In both New and classical Hollywood road movies, the story often develops around the tension between a couple sitting in the front seats. Obviously, in *The Bus*, there is no couple in the front seats. Yet, the film establishes a similar tension between the driver and the trafficked passengers on a more symbolic level. Okan's rigorous efforts in avoiding identification with any one character help in forming this tension by preventing it from turning into one individual's conflict. The tension between the driver and passengers finds its most visually visible form in the scene when the travellers gather around a campfire—which is itself another common Hollywood road movie convention—to have their last meal just before their arrival to Stockholm. After his complaint about the insufficient amount of food that is left, the driver is silently protested by the passengers, especially by the passenger who wears a hat. The hat-wearing passenger is shown in a shoulder shot made over the driver's shoulder. This particular shot places the passenger and the driver in clear opposition to one another. At its core, the shot signals an opposition of values and world views. With his greed and individualism, the driver is designed as a signifier to stand for the supposed corrupting nature of post-industrial capitalism, while the passengers are designed to stand for the traditional values of pre-industrial times, such as solidarity, sharing, and innocence. Furthermore, beyond this specific scene, the film is, in part, built around the tension between the driver, who is in a position of power, and the passengers, who are powerless in relation to the driver, yet are determined to change this unfavourable power relation by gaining their economic independence through money, which they hope to earn in their new country.

By driving an old bus with illegal migrants and parking it at the most central square of an industrial European country's capital, *The Bus* invites the audience to think about several im-



portant issues, from human trafficking to neo-colonialism, modernism to alienation. Location plays a crucial role in this invitation. Placing the illegal migrants at the most central square of the city, the film provides visibility for these issues and symbolically elevates them into the centre of public debate, with all their political and philosophical implications.

Obviously, *Sergels Torg*, the public square at which the bus is abandoned by the driver, is not the intended final destination at which the illegally travelling passengers wish to arrive after their long and painful journey. Although no explicit information concerning the intended final destination of the passengers is provided in the film, certain details, especially in the monologues of the bus driver, can give a rough idea about the location. While having the final lunch with the passengers by a lakeside just before their arrival to Stockholm, the driver comforts the tired and hungry passengers by saying, "Never mind. You will start working tomorrow anyway. There is plenty of food here".[132] Judging from these words, one can assume that the passengers have been promised jobs in Sweden, most likely somewhere close to Stockholm. The abandonment of the bus at the square creates an interesting sensation both for the passengers and the audience. A sensation that is a mixture of relief of the arrival and the anxiety of being stuck. The abandonment of the bus at the square provides a very strong visual indicator for the doomed prospect of these travellers, who are stuck in between

the faraway place that they come from and the near, yet unreachable, place they dream of.

Not only symbolically, but also as an architectural space in itself, *Sergels Torg* is a very powerful choice. The rusty old bus with its faded pastel colours, curves, and soft lines creates a strong visual contrast with the public square's sharp geometrical pattern consisting of black and white triangles. The image itself immediately implies a clash, as it becomes clear later in the film. This is a clash in many layers: a clash between locals and migrants, between pre-industrial and post-industrial, between old and new; between human and machine, between the Orient and the Occident.[133]

A Road Movie with Social Concerns

The Bus is one of the earliest films concerned with international human trafficking, labour migration, and exploitation. Okan sets his aim in the film as "to underline the grim clash between the people of a technically overdeveloped society and people of an underdeveloped society by positioning them in opposition to one another".[134] He does so against the background of state-sponsored international labour migration, institutionalised through temporary foreign workers recruitment programmes, which emerged as a rather common practice in the late 1950s and 60s in Western Europe. The earliest example of such programmes, the *Gastarbeiterprogramme* (Guest Workers Programme) of then West Germany, came into existence when the country signed bilateral recruitment agreements with several then underdeveloped or developing countries, such as Yugoslavia, Italy, Greece, Turkey, and Morocco. These agreements were designed to fulfil the extreme labour shortage in the country resulting from the so-called *Wirtschaftswunder* (economic miracle) after World War II. Many other industrialised European countries, such as The Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland, Denmark, and Sweden, followed the West German example and introduced similar temporary recruitment programmes. This new reality paved the way for a workforce migration unprecedented in Europe since the

slave trade of the colonial era.

However innocent it may seem, with the not-so-distant colonial past of Europe in mind, it is not implausible to consider the *Gastarbeiterprogramme*, or similar temporary workforce recruitment programmes, as new forms of slave trade with a human face.[135] The temporary nature of these programmes exposes Europe's still fresh colonial reflexes and deeply embedded slave master's logic, which sees the migrant workers as disposable. As Swiss playwright and novelist Max Frisch put it in his famous quote "Wir riefen Arbeitskräfte, und es kamen Menschen", with a presupposition of a fundamental difference between a *worker* and *human*, Europe asked for workers, however, inadvertently got human beings instead.[136] Prominent Marxist art critic and writer John Berger finds this slave master's logic embedded in the very core of the temporary workforce migration programmes.

> What distinguishes this migration from others in the past is that it is temporary. Only a minority of the workers are permitted to settle permanently in the country to which they have come. Their work contracts are usually for one year, or, at the most, two. The immigrant worker comes to sell his labour power where there is a labour shortage. He is admitted to do a certain kind of job. He has no rights, claims, or reality outside his filling of that job. While he fills it, he is paid and accommodated. If he no longer does so, he is sent back to where he came from. It is not men who immigrate but machine-minders, sweepers, diggers, cement mixers, cleaners, drillers, etc. This is the significance of temporary migration. To re-become a man (husband, father, citizen, patriot) a migrant has to return home. [137]

According to this logic, Berger observes, the temporary migrant workers are seen as disposable and immortal:

> immortal because [they are] continuously inter-

> changeable. They are not born: they are not brought up: they do not age: they do not get tired: they do not die. They have a single function—to work. All other functions of their lives are the responsibility of the country they come from.[138]

The Bus places its story against such a grim background and investigates human trafficking in a new light. In this investigation, naturally, political borders and border crossings play a crucial role. Interestingly, Okan takes a curious approach and looks at borders and border crossing through the eyes of the human trafficker, not that of the trafficked. There are two occasions in the film in which international borders and crossing of these borders are directly addressed. The first one takes place at the very beginning of the film and is seemingly concerned with border crossing into Sweden. At this occasion, neither the border nor the crossing is visually presented; instead, the experience is communicated through the monologue of the driver. The second border crossing in the film takes place when the driver travels by plane to Hamburg after abandoning the passengers at the square in Stockholm. This time, the crossing is visualised. Indeed, the scene in which the border crossing takes place is executed brilliantly and provides important ammunition for the film's political criticism.

The scene opens with the landing of a plane at an airport in Hamburg. A group of passengers, among them, the driver, are seen leaving the plane and entering the airport building for passport control. They form a queue in front of a border control officer's desk, who inspects the travellers' documents one by one, and lets them into the country. The procedure is not a tight one, at least, this is the case until the arrival of the driver. The officer does not even open some of the passports to grant entry to their holders. When the driver arrives at the desk, the officer remembers the importance of his job and starts taking it seriously. Differing boldly from the other passengers in his outfit and appearance, the driver hands over his passport. The officer

gives special treatment to the driver's document. He slowly and carefully studies it, as the queue starts to build up behind the driver; after some time, the officer allows the driver to enter the country. However, one gets the impression that the driver is

granted entry only to prevent the European travellers in the queue from waiting any longer. In the airport building, the driver is stopped again, this time by another officer in uniform. The officer escorts the driver into a room and opens his handbag. The bag is packed to the brim with money. The driver looks happy and smiles. The officer asks in German: "What is this?" The driver happily and proudly replies in thickly accented German: "I am bringing money to Germany". Not impressed by the answer, the officer asks the driver to undress. The driver is in shock; his face falls, and he attempts to question the officer's request, but the officer mechanically repeats his demand. Another officer joins them, and upon seeing the second officer, the driver gives in and starts to undress. Interestingly, Okan does not show the driver while he undresses in the scene. Instead, he depicts the process from the point of view of the undressing driver. We only see the driver's arm throwing his clothes, one by one, at the officers who stand by a desk and inspect them. This particular viewing angle suggests that it is not only the driver who is under investigation and is being forced to undress; it is also the viewer. Upon completing the search, the second officer approaches the now fully naked driver and asks him to open his mouth. He searches the driver's mouth, nose, ears, and hair in a very ungentle manner. Without giving any information or warning, the same officer forces the naked driver to bend over in order to prepare him for a body cavity search. The driver resists; he asks what the officers are planning to do. They do not speak or give any information. While one of them forcibly holds the driver in bending position, the other puts a pair of plastic medical gloves on his hands and performs a rectal search without the driver's consent. After the completion of the forced search, the driver manages to free himself and cries: "Are you crazy? I am bringing money to your country, but you are giving me a finger in the ass!" The officers do not show any reaction to the driver's protest, mechanically, they declare that the search is over and the driver may dress and leave.

The scene opens a new front in the film's critique of

modern Western society. It does so by employing a set of signifiers, and referring to practices, which Michel Foucault calls *biopolitics*. Biopolitics, as Foucault observes, is a "set of mechanisms through which the basic biological features of the human species became the object of a political strategy, of a general strategy of power".[139] Foucault observes that biopolitics gives the modern state the possibility to assert control not merely over their subjects' life and death, but their very ways of living.[140] With their sophisticated routine search and control practices, airports are among the places where biopolitics is most visible in concrete terms.

In accordance with the general principles of biopolitics observed by Foucault, the driver is transformed into an object of study, and classified. His appearance and biological features, such as his hair and eye colour, play an important role in this process. In the same way, the driver's passport is a key signifier in the scene. As a sophisticated form of documentation which contains biometric data of its holder, the passport is one of the essential biopolitical instruments of the modern state in its control and regulatory practices. As Foucault points out in *Discipline and Punish*, documents like passports are the outcome of a meticulous process of examination "that places individuals in a field of surveillance", and "situates them in a network of writing" in the authorities' attempt to "capture and fix" individuals.[141] Though in a different context, a similar observation is noted by Orhan Pamuk when he noticed that his eye colour was registered wrongly in his first passport. Pamuk observes that the passport "is not a document that tells us who we are but a document that shows what other people think of us".[142]

The airport scene, particularly the part featuring the full-body strip search performed on the driver, recalls the practices applied during the selection process of guest workers and can be read as a reference to the *Gastarbeiterprogramme*. After signing bilateral temporary recruitment agreements with the guest worker sending countries, Germany established official recruit-

ment centres in these countries in order to regulate the selection and flow of the workers. These centres were tasked to put candidates through medical examinations and tests to confirm that they possessed required health conditions and skills. The scene in which the driver is subjected to the body cavity search recalls medical examinations performed in these centres. This medical examination process was documented best by photographer Jean Mohr. In one of Mohr's well-known photos entitled *Medical Examination, Istanbul*, a handful of guest worker candidates are seen standing only in underwear in front of a German doctor who meticulously examines the genitals of one of the candidates.[143] According to many former guest workers who had to pass through similar examinations, the mentioned photo, albeit shocking, is far from fully representing reality, since the candidates were often examined completely naked.[144]

The portrayal of illegal migrants in the film also calls to mind Georgio Agamben's concept of *homo sacer.* In his book *Homo Sacer*, Agamben examines the ancient Roman law figure *homo sacer* (the sacred man) with the help of the *zoē-bios* dichotomy. It is a useful concept for thinking about the relationship between bare life (*zoē*) and political life (*bios*). The *homo sacer* is a reduced man. A man without *bios*. He is no different than an animal, the carrier of bare life. The *homo sacer,* a figure who is stripped of his political existence, can be killed with impunity according to Roman law.[145] Given that they are not the citizens of the country to which they travelled illegally, and their passports—the documentation of their *bios*—have been confiscated and *trashed* by the human trafficker in an early scene, the passengers of *The Bus* can be conceptualised as modern-day *homo sacer*. Without their passports, the passengers are stripped of their political existence, excluded from political affiliations, and deprived of all functions and rights, which any recognised citizen is entitled to enjoy. In this view, what is left of the passengers after the disappearance of their passport is their *zoē.* They are reduced to carriers of bare life; thus can be killed with impunity.

Medical Examination, Istanbul by Jean Mohr

An Endorsement or A Critique?
Heteronormativity and Homophobia in *The Bus*

Apart from a very few defying examples, such as Ridley Scott's 1991 film *Thelma & Louise*, and Gust Van Sant's 1991 film *My Own Private Idaho*, most road movies develop around heterosexual characters and heteronormative values. In this regard, *The Bus* is no exception. It retains the same heteronormative narration pattern that most road movies have. Furthermore, Okan positions a homosexual character in an attempt to underline the supposed morally corrupt state of the imaginary West. This is most visible in the scene where one of the passengers (performed by Okan himself) meets a local man, seemingly a homosexual, in a public toilet. The local man approaches the passenger and tries to look at his genitals while he is urinating. Despite the fact that he notices the man looking at his genitals, the passenger does not give

any reaction other than a puzzled look. After an unsuccessful attempt to communicate with him, the local man gently drags the passenger to a nightclub. The passenger shows no sign of resistance. In the nightclub, customers (both male and female) watch pornographic films while drinking and dining. Some customers go even further and have sex in front of others. While this rather unusual entertainment takes place, the passenger tries to fulfil his days-long thirst and hunger. Meanwhile, the homosexual character starts to show his sexual desire for the passenger by touching his legs and genitals. Noticing this, the shocked passenger, screaming like a trapped wild animal, jumps from his seat and storms the tables full of food. He quickly tries to stuff himself. The customers of the club condemn the passenger by declaring him "disgusting" and "barbarian".[146] Bodyguards show up and drag the passenger away by force. Taking him to a dark room, they beat and stab the passenger in cold blood until he dies.

In this scene, the homosexual character is presented not only as the signifier of the supposed moral corruption of post-industrial Western society, but also as a source of castration anxiety for the passenger, both metaphorically and literally. When the homosexual character tries to touch his genitals, the passenger gets more and more anxious. He perceives his masculinity under an imminent threat. This literal and metaphorical threat is underlined by a short black-and-white clip inserted into the scene depicting a woman and a man working in a cotton field. Since neither the man's nor the woman's face is visible, it is not easy to know who the people that appear in the clip are. However, the way in which the clip is inserted, and the fact that the clip is black-and-white, evokes the impression that the man in the clip is the passenger himself before travelling abroad. This assumption is supported by the fact that the very same clip appears at the beginning of the film in the scene where the passengers stop by a lake. In the scene, the passenger is seen thoughtfully looking at the frozen lake and smoking. The black-and-white clip

is inserted into the film for the first time at this moment. This particular usage of the clip enables one to assume that the woman in the clip is the passenger's wife, or lover, whom he left behind. If this is the case, it can be said that by reminding the viewer of the passenger's heterosexuality, the nightclub scene establishes the homosexual man as an imminent threat to the passenger's masculinity.

At first glance, the anxiety the passenger experiences in this scene calls to mind Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's concept of *homosexual panic*. Homosexual panic, Sedgwick argues, is an always present "threat of being (called) a homosexual" which, all men, "aside from the historically small group of consciously and self-acceptingly homosexual men", face in all their relations with other men.[147] In her book *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, she writes that homosexual panic is "the most private, psychologised form" of "vulnerability" experienced by "many twentieth-century western men" "to the social pressure

of homophobic blackmail".[148] In the light of Sedgwick's concept, one can argue that Okan's heterosexual character experiences male homosexual panic triggered not only by a hypothetical, but also a tangible, "threat".

As quoted earlier, in an interview he gave in 1977, Okan stated that he aimed to "underline the grim clash between the people of the technically overdeveloped and underdeveloped societies" in *The Bus*.[149] Keeping Okan's expressed motivation in mind, the interactions between the homosexual man and the passenger, and the passenger's anxiety due to his reception of a threat directed at his masculinity, can be read as an embedded extension of the clash that Okan aims to underline, rather than endorsing a homophobic position. The clash is, in part, a result of an inability of developed and underdeveloped societies to understand one another. This inability is openly signalled in the interactions between the homosexual man and the passenger in the toilet scene when the local character unsuccessfully tries to communicate with the passenger. There is a fundamental misunderstanding of the cultural codes of his new country on the part of the passengers, including the codes of sexuality. The passenger becomes a victim of his incomprehension.

In *The Bus*, Okan constructs a heteronormative and homophobic position through his characters' behaviour. Indeed, this heteronormative, homophobic, and sexist stance is not unique to *The Bus*. It is of a recurring nature, and, albeit in different forms, present in all three films. In these works, there are certain characters who express, either verbally or with their actions, positions that can be seen as sexist and homophobic. *The Bus* manoeuvres on a thin line between endorsing sexism and homophobia and using sexism and homophobia for the purpose of cultural critique. Although, at first glance, the film might give the impression that it does the former; if one looks at the film attentively, one can see that the balance in the film tips in favour of the latter. Okan confirms this reading and explains that these sexist and homophobic positions and remarks performed or ex-

pressed by his characters are far from reflecting his own views on the matters, as he does not endorse any sexist or homophobic positions. Instead, he utilises these positions and remarks in his films to illustrate the widespread sexist and homophobic tendencies present in migrant communities in Europe.[150]

As Orgeron observes, one of the core themes of the post-war road movie is the problem in human communication caused by modernity, and the impossibility of communication in modern times.[151] This theme, indeed, is also one of the main themes in Okan's film. This is manifested in several scenes in the film. The above-described scene is one of them. In one of the others, the hat-wearing passenger gets lost in the streets of Stockholm while escaping from a policeman in the dark. While searching his way back to the bus, he comes across a local man who is walking his dog. In an unidentifiable but certainly rural-sounding dialect of Turkish, the passenger tries to ask the local man how he could find his way back to the bus. Unable to understand him, the local man gets scared and runs away. Beyond any particular scene, the film is entirely built around the theme of the impossibility of communication, as it is concerned with the clash between the people of developed and underdeveloped societies and their inability to understand one another.

Given these sociopolitical issues it takes as its background, its politically charged content, and its critical approach, *The Bus* places itself into a special place among European road movies. Though sharing many similarities with films made following European road movie conventions, it is not concerned with identity issues, introspection, or retrospection. Instead, it focuses on particular sociopolitical issues. In this regard, the film distinguishes itself from the European road movie tradition through social commentary. *The Bus* positions itself very closely to what Peter Roffman and Jim Purdy call the "social problem film". According to Roffman and Purdy, "the problem film combines social analysis and dramatic conflict within a coherent narrative structure. Social content is transformed into dramatic

events and movie narrative adapted to accommodate social issues as story material through a particular set of movie conventions".[152] Focusing on sociopolitical issues and offering political commentary are much more common in pre-New Hollywood road movies, which Laderman calls "social conscience films".[153] *The Grapes of Wrath* is one obvious example of this type of film. Interestingly, *The Bus* is similar to Ford's in several respects. First of all, like *The Bus*, it follows the journey of a group of rather ordinary people who are forced to travel in the hope of finding a better life. Second, like *The Grapes of Wrath*, *The Bus* not only takes a real social issue as its point of departure, it also forms its narration by using that issue. In this regard, *The Bus* is an unusual film in comparison to the European road movies of this period, as the film puts emphasis on entirely different issues (im/migration) and takes an angle that is more common to the social problem film, thus becomes 'too political' for European tastes. *The Bus* can be seen as a European variant of a social problem film. Furthermore, just as *The Grapes of Wrath* is a precursor to what Laderman calls the true road movie, *The Bus* can be taken as a precursor to European road movies that address the political issues of refugees and im/migration, such as Markus Imhoof's 1980 film *Das Boot ist voll* (The Boat is Full), Xavier Koller's 1990 film *Reise der Hoffnung* (Journey of Hope), and Dardenne Brothers' 1996 film *La Promesse* (The Promise).

The Bus is an isolated case in the history of the European road movies. It tests the limits of the road movie genre when the journey of the bus comes to a halt in an unintended location almost immediately after the film starts. Even though there exist films that Laderman calls "semi-road movies" with "not much emphasis on driving", such as Alex Cox's *Repo Man* (1984), Okan's film positions itself differently.[154] For, the removal of driving, or journey, scenes do not change the film substantially. Travelling in the film functions rather like a prelude to another type of film. Once the bus arrives at the square, it becomes immobile, and a new kind of film starts. A film one might find

uneasy to call a road movie. However, since the journey has not reached its end-point when the bus halts at the square, one can argue that it is still very much a road movie. Furthermore, there is still an urge on the part of the passengers to move on. Even though the travel from Turkey to Sweden is an essential feature in the film, it is remarkable that *The Bus* hardly shows anything of the travel itself. This unusual integration of the road and journey into the film's corpus grants *The Bus* a special place among road movies, making it an unorthodox road movie, a film at the very edge of the road movie genre.

The Bus is an untimely film that developed a genuine critical sensitivity for the issues of moving, mobility, migration, human trafficking, borders, and border crossing long before these issues evoked the interest of cinema, academia, and the general public. This untimeliness becomes even clearer when it is compared to European road movies made in the late 1980s and later, such as Theo Angelopoulos's 1988 film *Landscape in the Mist*, Gianni Amelio's 1994 film Lamerica, Michael Winterbottom's 2002 film *In This World*, Ismaël Ferroukhi's 2004 film *Le Grand Voyage* (The Great Journey), and Emanuele Crialese's 2011 film *Terraferma*. While many of *The Bus*' European road movie contemporaries were concerned with introspection and existential identity issues, and its New Hollywood road movie contemporaries, such as Richard C. Sarafian's 1971 film *Vanishing Point* and Monte Hellman's 1972 film *Two-Lane Blacktop*, were still continuing to entertain the rebellious escape fantasies, Okan's film placed its focus on politically charged social issues, such as illegal migration and human trafficking, almost two decades before these issues start to appear in European road movies. This untimeliness is probably one of the main reasons behind the film's failure to generate the attention it deserved.

Although one cannot observe any significant change in the production numbers of road movies, or the genre's commercial popularity, or lack thereof, in Turkey's cinema after the release of the film, *The Bus* nonetheless represents a turning point for the road movie in the country. This is manifested by the fact

that road movies made after *The Bus* have more in common with this particular film than with those preceding it. Ökten's *The Herd* and Gören's *The Road* are two such films made after *The Bus*, and as I will demonstrate in one of the following chapters while comparing these films to Okan's third film *The Yellow Mercedes*, *The Bus* has clearly influenced both of these films.

A Fluid Journey

The Bus is a fluid film that does not subscribe fully to any squarely defined genre convention or filmmaking style. One of the sharpest shifts in the film's employment of genre conventions comes directly after the immobilisation of the bus at the beginning of the film. Even though the journey of the bus itself stops at the square, the film continues to 'travel' through the conventions of diverse genres and filmmaking styles.

In one of the early scenes, the bus drives through the city before it stops at the square. Attached to the bus, a fixed angle camera records the city life from the perspective of the vehicle. According to Okan, many of the shots in this particular scene, as well as some others elsewhere in the film, were made with a hidden camera. This was in part due to the fact that the film crew could not obtain necessary permits from the municipality for filming in the city and at the square, and in part, due to the fact that Okan did not have the financial means to hire extras and do rehearsals.[155] For this reason, this part of the film can be seen as a documentary film, using guerrilla filmmaking methods. Guerrilla style filmmaking gets its unique characteristics from its two distinct qualities: shooting film without prior permission and/or shooting without informing the subject(s) being filmed. Okan utilises both of these characteristics in *The Bus* as he shoots the streets of the city and its inhabitants both without permission and without providing any prior warning. Okan has stated that he used guerrilla filmmaking methods not only because of necessity due to lack of permission or financial means, but more importantly, because of a conscious decision as he "strived to make a realistic film observing the principles of

Italian Neorealist cinema, a realistic film like Vittorio De Sica's 1948 film *Ladri di biciclette* (Bicycle Thieves)".[156] Indeed, Okan makes generous use of several characteristic features of Neorealist films in *The Bus* given its "loose and chance-based" story revolving around working-class subjects, its insistence on location filming, its interest in the study of alienation, its "critical perspectives on (…) society informed by leftist politics", and its "lack of moral judgement of characters and situations".[157]

Although it utilises several features that are characteristic of Italian Neorealist cinema, Okan's flirt with documentary-style filmmaking takes him into the aesthetic and ideological realm of other cinema movements as his realistic cinema is not limited only to the use of hidden camera, or to the principles of Italian Neorealist cinema. In one of the later scenes, Okan records some drunken people at the square. This time, the camera is not hidden; on the contrary, it is made explicitly visible. Drunken people who gathered at the square where the bus is abandoned are not acting. They dance and fight in front of the camera, for the camera, even, and more importantly, because of the camera. Okan uses his camera as an inciter by making it explicitly visible and entices people to behave in a way that they would not do otherwise. This kind of use of the camera is almost identical to that of the Cinéma vérité movement. As one of the distinct features of Cinéma vérité films, the presence of the camera is not only acknowledged but furthermore conceptualised as "a catalyst, encouraging subjects to open up" in the process of unearthing the "truths beneath the conventionalities of daily life".[158] In this particular scene, not only through his camera use but also his use of lighting, and his editing preferences, Okan openly refers to Cinéma vérité as he uses flat lighting and imperfect exposures along with long takes recorded using a shaky, handheld camera.

Okan's use of documentary-style filmmaking is so fluid that, at times, it borders on what Colin Young calls *the observational cinema*. According to Young, observational cinema is deeply

related to Italian Neo-
realism and Cinéma vérité, but it distinguishes itself from these movements by the fact that, in this kind of cinema, the "subject directs the filmmaker, rather than the other way around".[159]

Not long after the scenes in which the documentary film approach is dominant, *The Bus* suddenly turns into an absurd slapstick comedy. This is most obvious in the scene when the passengers leave the bus to explore a close-by subway station. At the beginning of the scene, the passengers come across an escalator moving continuously and noisily towards the underground. After a bit of struggle, and some funny interactions with the escalator, they manage to get on the escalator and descend towards the subway platform. Upon their arrival, they are noticed by a group of locals waiting on the platform, who, for an undisclosed reason, have scary masks with them. Noticing the passengers, the

locals put their masks on and decide to have some fun. Seeing this unexpected masked group, the passengers fearfully try to escape. While on the run, some of the passengers notice some fruit and food left on a bench. With the pressure of days-long hunger, they stop by the bench and compete with each other to grab something to eat. They try to bite whatever they can grab. This is not possible, however, because these realistic-looking fruits and food items are, in fact, toys made of plastic. At every bite, the plastic toys whistle. Understanding that they cannot be eaten, the passengers give up on trying. The mask-wearing locals, however, do not give up on chasing them. They encircle the passengers and start dancing noisily around them, as if they are performing a primitive religious ritual. After finally escaping from the locals, the passengers run towards the escalator to reach the bus. However, in a panic, they take the wrong one and struggle to climb the constantly descending escalator until they manage to leave the station.

"Slapstick is a mode of performance that relies on broad physical comedy. This [type of] comedy is often derived from performed violence and comic pain and is likely to involve trips, falls, beatings and throwing of items".[160] Slapstick is a transmedia phenomenon, different iterations of which exist in different media forms, such as theatre, television, and cinema. In cinema, slapstick is often associated with the early years of cinema history, particularly with the silent movie era.[161] However, this association is far from fully reflecting reality. Although slapstick comedy indeed lived its golden age during the silent movie era, it adjusted itself to changes and managed to survive to this day. Another inclination concerning slapstick in cinema is the assumption that it is a specifically American form.[162] This assumption is also inaccurate given that slapstick comedies appeared in European cinema as early as, and even earlier than, they did in Hollywood, and it continued to develop in a recognisably distinct fashion on both sides of the Atlantic. European filmmakers such as Max Linder and Jacques Tati approached

slapstick comedy in a way that these European films, as Alan Dale notes, "with their close ties to contemporary visual art and literary movements, have graphic, narrative, and moviemaking power unmistakably more sophisticated than [one finds] in the American movies".[163]

Especially in the above-described scene these slapstick qualities can be observed clearly. The passengers' interactions with the escalator, the absurd situations they end up in owing to the masked locals, the plastic fruits, and the way the passengers are bullied are clear. Okan's approach to slapstick is much subtler and more refined than the slapstick in the early years of cinema, and it recalls Jacques Tati's approach to slapstick. This is especially true when the ultramodern cityscape of *The Bus* is considered in relation to the slapstick acting style employed in the film. Okan's use of the ultramodern cityscape is very similar to that of Tati. Like Tati, Okan offers a critique of modern society through his characters' interactions with the ultramodern city and the absurd situations that stem from these interactions. Just as Tati's Monsieur Hulot is lost in modern Paris, Okan's characters are lost in another modern city, Stockholm. Okan's Stockholm, very much like Tati's Paris, is dominated by glass, steel, and concrete. One can imagine Okan's passengers as distant relatives of Tati's Monsieur Hulot from the rural countryside.

Despite the scene's dominant texture and feeling that is reminiscent of Tati's slapstick approach, it does not take Okan much effort to switch to the look and feel of yet another distinct film genre in the same scene, namely that of dark comedy. Dark comedy, sometimes referred to as *black comedy*, is a complex and a "fluid concept".[164] Linda Horvay Barnes observes that dark comedy can be "best perceived in terms of dialectics: as a process in [filmic] development and a product of contemporary social conditions".[165] Although there is not a single comprehensive definition that covers all aspects of the concept, available definitions often agree on some fundamental features. Patrick

O'Neill observes these fundamental components as follows:

> [B]lack humour is based firstly on an essential incongruity—the comic treatment of material which resists comic treatment—and secondly on the evocation of a particular response, namely the reader's [or viewer's] perception that this incongruity is the expression of a sense of disorientation rather than frivolous desire to shock.[166]

Given these fundamental components, one can formulate a working definition of dark comedy as a form or a sub-genre of comedy and satire that treats material, which is generally considered to be taboo, unsuitable, or unfit for comic treatment, in a humorous or satirical manner in order to disorient and confuse the audience in their feelings about and reactions to the situation. Based on this working definition one can observe dark comedy elements in Okan's film. The nightclub scene is arguably the scene in which the dark comedy features of the film are most concentrated.

Okan's persistent employment of disharmony in *The Bus* brings the mind an another mode of narration, the grotesque, as Philip Thomson points out that "[t]he most consistently distinguished characteristic of the grotesque has been the fundamental element of disharmony, whether this is referred to as conflict, clash, mixture of the heterogeneous, or conflation of disparates".[167] Furthermore, Thomson observes that the grotesque is fundamentally different from other modes of narration, which utilise a similar disharmony, in its lack of resolution of this disharmony.

> [T]he special impact of the grotesque will be lacking if the conflict is resolved, if the text [or film] concerned proves to be just funny after all, or if it turns out that the reader [audience] has been quite mistaken in his initial perception of comedy in what is in fact stark horror. The unresolved nature

> of the grotesque conflict is important, and helps to mark off the grotesque from other modes or categories of literary [filmic] discourse. For the conflict of incompatibles, fundamental though it be, is not exclusively a criterion of the grotesque. Irony and paradox depend on this sort of conflict or confrontation, and all theories of the comic are based on some notion of incongruity, conflict, juxtaposition of opposites, etc. (…) [W]e may confidently take it that the lack of resolution of the conflict is a distinguishing feature of the grotesque.[168]

As a film that constantly oscillates between dark comedy and slapstick, *The Bus* can be defined as grotesque, as it does not deliver any clear resolution to the conflict between the horrific and the comic. This unresolved conflict is bold and confusing. This is made manifest once more by the fact that the film was screened in Italy as a horror film under the title *The Tragic Bus*.[169]

In addition to these, one can also observe surreal elements in the film, especially in the subway station scene in which the mask-wearing locals sadistically derive joy from the suffering of the helpless passengers. While complementing the slapstick feeling of this particular scene, the surrealist elements also help the film in establishing its grotesque narration.

Keeping in mind what we have discussed about the film so far, one can conclude that *The Bus* is a rare kind of European road movie, which, on one hand, follows the European road movie conventions, while on the other hand, tests the limits of the film genre itself by reducing its emphasis on actual journeying and the road to an absolute minimum. Unlike its European road movie contemporaries, it is a sociopolitically concerned film. It takes a contemporary social issue, namely human trafficking, as its centre of focus and develops its narration around this particular issue to a degree that it comes very close to being a social problem film.

Notes

[92] Okan, Tunç. *Otobüs*. Pan Film. 1977. Page numbers are absent.
[93] Ibid.
[94] "Sansürde / OTOBÜS". *Gelişim Sinema,* December 1984. 23.
[95] Ibid. 23.
[96] Ibid. 23.
[97] Ibid. 23.
[98] Okan, Tunç. *Otobüs*. Pan Film. 1977.
[99] La Bardonnie, Mathilde. "Un film sur les immigrés n'est pas un film " suisse" in *Le Monde*. 10 February 1976.
[100] Luxembourgeus. 82–83.
[101] "İsviçre'de tam dört film yaptım. Çok uzun süre de orada yaşadım. Hala da İsviçre'de çalışıyorum ama beni hiçbir zaman İsviçreli bir yönetmen olarak kabul etmediler. Bana tek kuruş yardım yapılmadı sinema konusunda. Her yaptığım başvuru reddedildi. Hiçbir zaman İsviçreli bir yönetmen olamadım. (…) Başarılı bir doktor olarak rahatça kabul edildim İsviçre'de. Hiçbir sorunum olmadı bu konuda. Kimse bana doktor olarak "Sen yabancısın". falan demedi, demiyor da. Ama o doktor, İsviçre pasaportu da taşısa, sanat yapmaya kalkıştığında destek pastasını paylaşan kişiler ya da bu konuda karar veren bürokratlar bunu kabul edemiyor. (…) Bunda benim pek bir suçum yok ama yine de olanlarda bir Türk yönetmene karşı bir tür İsviçre ırkçılığı vardı da denebilir".
Translation mine. Luxembourgeus. 83–84.
[102] "Otobüs filminin kopyalarını Türkiye'ye gümrükten deklare etmeden koltuğumun altında ben kendim geçirdim".
Ibid. 77.
[103] Dicleli, Özgür. "Taşkent Film Festivali'nde Türkiye'yi "Selvi Boylum Al Yazmalım" temsil edecek" in *Cumhuriyet.* 28 March 1978. 6.
[104] Iordanova. "The Bus", 120.
[105] "Türk olmaları bir rastlantıdır…" Translation mine.
Oral, Zeynep. "Tunç Okan: Tüketim toplumu insanları ile azgelişmiş toplum insanlarını karşılaştırdım", *Milliyet Sanat*, 17 December 1977. 7.
[106] "Otobüs ya da insan sevgisi" in *Tunç Okan, Otobüs*. Pan Film, 1977.
[107] Interview with Hasan Gül on 6 June 2019 in Stockholm.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VPpvvd4GMOM. Accessed on 23 July 2019.
[108] Ibid.
[109] Kazan, Elia, and Jeff Young. *Kazan: The Master Director Discusses His Films : Interviews With Elia Kazan.* Newmarket Press, 1999. 273.
[110] Özgüç, Agâh. *Türlerle Türk Sineması: Dönemler, Modalar, Tiplemeler.* Istanbul: Dünya Kitaplar, 2005. 225.
[111] Laderman. 26.
[112] Ibid. 24.
[113] Ibid. 26.
[114] Ibid. 1–4

[115] Ibid. 2.
[116] Mazierska, Ewa, and Laura Rascaroli. *Crossing New Europe: Postmodern Travel and the European Road Movie*. London: Wallflower Press, 2006. 2–3. and Laderman. 4.
[117] The period is "variously referred to as the American New Wave, New Hollywood, postclassical Hollywood, and the American Renaissance". Boon, Kevin Alexander. "The Auteur Renaissance, 1968–1980", 81.
[118] Elsaesser, Thomas. "American Auteur Cinema The Last — or First — Picture Show!", 37. and Boon, Kevin Alexander. "The Auteur Renaissance, 1968–1980", 81. respectively.
[119] Ibid. 35.
[120] Laderman. 1.
[121] Ibid. 42.
[122] Cohan, Steven and Ina Rae Hark. "Introduction", 2. and Orgeron. 50.
[123] Mazierska, Ewa, and Laura Rascaroli. 4.
[124] Laderman. 248.
[125] Orgeron. 52.
[126] Ibid. 5.
[127] Ibid. 5.
[128] Of the road movies made in Europe that are contemporaries of *The Bus*, Godard's *Week End* is perhaps the film which is most comparable with *The Bus*, despite the fact that these films have more differences than commonalities. *Week End* is a dark comedy that follows a bourgeois couple, Roland and Corinne, on their journey to Corinne's parents' home in the countryside in order to secure the inheritance of her dying father, ready to murder her parents if necessary. Although they deal with completely different plots and characters, the films also have similarities. First of all, both films revolve around characters who travel for practical reasons and economic motivations. Second, like Okan's film, *Week End* is critical and sociopolitically aware. Despite the fact that the characters belong to different social classes—one being a bourgeois couple and the other being workers from an underdeveloped country—a Marxist class perspective of society is embedded in both films. Both films are critical of capitalist consumerism. This is best observed through the characters' relationship with people and commodities. In Godard's film, the characters are concerned with commodities to such a degree that they would steal luxury bags and shoes from wounded victims of a traffic accident instead of helping them. In Okan's film, the bus driver is a character with similar qualities, as he is concerned more with money, luxury commodities, and technical gadgets than the people that he swindles and abandons. The films are also comparable in their genre defying cinematographic experimentations. Both films oscillate between dark comedy, grotesque, absurd, and surreal elements and aesthetics; like the mask wearing locals of *The Bus*, Godard's film is home to suddenly appearing bizarre surreal characters, such as figures from history and literature, or revolutionary hippies who survive through cannibalism. Despite these similarities, it should be underlined that Godard's *Week End* and Okan's *The Bus* differ in a lot of other aspects, starting with the obvious; unlike *The Bus, Week End* is not concerned with issues of migration or border crossing. Furthermore, …

Week End is not really an exemplar of the European road movie, as it is a radical and highly idiosyncratic criticism of the bourgeoisie, while *The Bus* has a stronger connection with social problem films like *The Grapes of Wrath* and Pietro Germi's *The Path of Hope.* Nonetheless, addressing the similarities that exist between *Week End* and *The Bus* is important, if only to emphasise that even the most comparable European road movie contemporary with Okan's film has indeed very little in common with *The Bus*.

[129] Laderman. 248.

[130] Corrigan, Timothy. *A Cinema Without Walls: Movies and Culture After Vietnam.* New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1991. 146.

[131] "Extension". *Oxford dictionary of English*. 3rd ed. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010. 618.

[132] "Boşverin ya. Nasıl olsa yarın işe başlıyorsunuz. Yemek bol, on günde domuz gibi olursunuz". Translation mine.

[133] Sergels Torg is not only the most central part of Stockholm, it is also the symbol of commerce and the gateway to prostitution given its proximity to the red light street of the city, Malmskillnadsgatan. The square is also a symbol for drugs, since all drug deals were made here until the beginning of 2000s. Furthermore, Sergels Torg is also a symbol of change in Stockholm, a controversial one, since the old city of Klara which were torn down in order to make place for the new and modern. This was a very controversial decision, and was almost followed by a similar demolishing of Gamla Stan. So there are several layers of meaning here, at least from a Swedish context, which makes this very place significant in diverse ways.

[134] "Başlangıçtan beri yapmak istediğim bir çatışmayı, bir büyük uyumsuzluğu, aykırılığı ortaya koymaktı.Tekniğiyle, aşırı gelişmiş tüketim toplumuyla az gelişmiş toplumun insanlarını karşı karşıya getirmekti. Bunların birbirleriyle olan kendi içlerindeki çelişkiyi, aralarındaki korkunç çatışmayı vurgulamak istedim". Translation mine.

Oral. 7.

[135] In his 1985 book *Ganz unten* (Lowest of the Low) German investigative journalist Günter Wallraff, disguising himself as a Turkish Gastarbeiter, has documented unacceptable living and working conditions these temporary workers had been subjected to in Germany. A recent study made by Swedish Nation Radio's Finnish language division, Sisuradio, shows that Wallraff's findings are not unique to Germany, as Finnish guest workers who migrated to Sweden for work between 1968 and 1971 are shown to have a shorter life expectancy than the corresponding age group who were born in Sweden.

https://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=185&artikel=7346494. Accessed on 15 February 2020.

[136] "We called for workforce, and human beings came".

Hollifield, James F, Philip L Martin, and Pia M Orrenius, eds. *Controlling Immigration: A Global Perspective*. United States: Stanford University Press, 2014. 336.

[137] Berger, John, Jean Mohr, and Sven Blomberg. *A Seventh Man: A Book of Images and Words about the Experience of Migrant Workers in Europe.* Middlesex: Penguin, 1975. 58.
[138] Ibid. 64.
[139] Foucault, Michel. *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège De France, 1977–1978.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. 1.
[140] Moreno, Jonathan D. "Chimera in Bioethics and Biopolitics", 380.
[141] Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Vintage, 1995. 189.
[142] Pamuk, Orhan. "My First Passport".
[143] Berger, John, Jean Mohr, and Sven Blomberg. 48–49.
[144] Yurdakul, Gökçe. *From Guest Workers Into Muslims.* Cambridge Scholars, 2009. 26.
[145] Agamben, Giorgio. *Homo Sacer*. Stanford CA: Stanford University, 1998. 47
[146] "Äckligt" and "barbar". Translation mine.
[147] Andeweg, Agnes. "The Ghost in the Closet: Kellendonk and the Gothic". 143, and Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Epistemology of the Closet*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2008. 186.
[148] Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*. New York, NY, United States: Columbia University Press, 2015. 89.
[149] Oral. 7.
[150] Luxembourgeus. 208-209.
[151] Orgeron. 10.
[152] Roffman, Peter and Purdy, Jim. *The Hollywood Social Problem Film: Madness, Despair, and Politics from the Depression to the Fifties*, Indiana University Press, 1981. viii.
[153] Ibid. 24.
[154] Laderman. 265.
[155] Luxembourgeus. 64-65.
[156] "Ben İtalyan Yeni Gerçekçi sinemasında, *Bisiklet Hırsızları* filminde olduğu gibi gerçekçi bir sinema yapmayı amaçlamıştım".
Ibid.
[157] Shiel, Mark. *Italian Neorealism: Rebuilding The Cinematic City.* Wallflower, 2006. 45.
[158] Kuhn, Annette, and Guy Westwell. "Cinema Vérité". *A dictionary of film studies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. 80–81.
[159] Young, Colin. "Observational cinema". 108.
[160] Peacock, Louise. *Slapstick and Comic Performance: Comedy and Pain*. 2014. 27.
[161] Dale, Alan S. *Comedy Is a Man in Trouble: Slapstick in American Movies*. U of Minnesota P. 2000. 1.
[162] Paulus, Tom, and Rob King. *Slapstick Comedy*. Routledge, 2010. 8.
[163] Dale. 22.
[164] Barnes, Linda Horvay. *Dialectics of Black Humor, Process and Product*. Las Vegas: Peter. Lang, 1978. 112.
[165] Ibid. 112.
[166] O'Neill, Partrick. "Comedy of Entropy: Contexts of Black Humour", 91.
[167] Thomson, Philip. *The Grotesque*. Methuen, 1972. 20.

[168] Ibid. 21
[169] Luxembourgeus. 188.

Chapter III

A "Bastard Film"

After a relatively long break, Okan completed his second film *Drôle de samedi* (Funny Saturday) in 1985, some eleven years after his debut film. *Funny Saturday* is the least known and least studied film in Okan's filmography. It follows several short and interconnected stories that take place on an ordinary Saturday in a small Swiss town, Neuchâtel. These stories are woven together around a young heterosexual couple, who either take part in these events or witness them as they unfold. *Funny Saturday* has two different versions, each in a different language and with slightly different editing. Originally made in Swiss French, it was quickly dubbed into Turkish, and curiously enough, was screened in Turkey as a Turkish film under a new name, *Cumartesi Cumartesi* (Saturday Saturday), with a slightly different editing before it was screened in its country of origin, Switzerland. There is nothing unusual about dubbing a film into another language; after all, dubbing is "one of the two dominant forms of film translation, the other being the interlingual subtitling".[170] Although not as usual as the dubbing, the release of a dubbed version of a film in another country even before the screening of the original version, though rare, is not unprecedented. What is unusual, however, is the strategy Okan employed during the dubbing process, which exceeds the conventional limits of linguistic film translation practices. Okan not only translates the dialogue of the film from one

language to another, but completely rewrites some of these dialogues in a way that some of the characters gain qualities which they do not possess in the original version of the film. In this way, Okan does not merely translate the film into Turkish, but *Turkifies* it.

Given this unorthodox experiment, my main aim in this chapter is to find answers to the following questions: How do these two different versions of the same film compare to one another, and, if any, what is the significance of this Turkification experiment for Okan's cinema? In order to find answers to these questions, I will discuss how the film can be read differently from the angles of different national cinemas, as well as from the transnational cinema perspective. To achieve this, after providing general background information about the film, I will first approach *Funny Saturday* as a Swiss film. By considering *Funny Saturday* as a French-language Swiss film, in dialogue with international comedies such as American and French slapstick films made by directors like Agnes Varda and Jacques Tati, Czech New Wave films, and sociopolitical satires by Claude Goretta and Luis Buñuel, my first aim is to read Okan's film as a critique of the Western sociopolitical system, society, and its bourgeoisie. My second objective in this chapter is to discuss if and how the deliberately Turkified version of the film can be read as a commentary upon Turkish society. And finally, as a third step, I will focus on the differences between the two versions, arguing that the Turkified version of the film sheds another light on the original French version.

A Saturday Observation

Funny Saturday is a single-director episode film: a feature-length film, which is composed of more than one autonomous segment that share thematic and stylistic elements.[171] It follows several short and interconnected events that develop around a young heterosexual couple. These short stories are designed and constructed in a way that, if any of them were to be taken out of the film's context, they could function independently as short

films themselves. In other words, *Funny Saturday* is an intertwined collage of short films. In his book *Omnibus Films: Theorizing Transauthorial Cinema*, David Scott Diffrient classifies films like *Funny Saturday* as anthology films. An anthology film is an episode film "made up of many stories yet helmed by a single director", and as such, anthology film is different from an *omnibus* film that is also an episode film but "made up of many directors".[172] Okan's film is one of the rare examples of anthology films in the cinema history of Turkey. In the only available source focusing explicitly on the subject, without mentioning Okan's film, Orhan Ünser traces only six other single-director anthology films in the country's cinema history, which he refers to as "films with more than one story".[173] The anthology film is a rare type of film also in Swiss cinema. Aside from *Funny Saturday* itself, I could only find four other feature anthology fictions in Swiss cinema catalogues: *Traumland* (2013), *A Quintet* (2014), *Les Ponts de Sarajevo* (2014), and *Heimatland* (2015). Given that all of these films were made much later than Okan's film, there is a reasonable possibility that *Funny Saturday* might be Switzerland's first anthology film. Obviously, verifying this possibility requires a more in-depth study, which falls outside of this study's scope and interest.

Funny Saturday has strong ties to literature; in addition to Friedrich Dürrenmatt's short story "Die Wurst" (The Sausage), it makes generous use of prominent Turkish writer and humorist Aziz Nesin's short story "Mu ni?" (What is This?), albeit without permission of the author or recognition of his work. The incorporation of Nesin's work was an unrecognised feature of the film until recently, as Okan consistently denied the fact since the question was raised by Nesin himself immediately after the film's release in Turkey.[174]

Okan explains his motivation behind the decision to use Dürrenmatt's short story in his film as follows:

> The thing that attracted my attention the most in Dürrenmatt's *Die Wurst* was the fact that the

> sausage in the story, which is made from the man's wife's dead body, is eaten by the prosecutor of the court. This is the black comedy in its finest. It gives chills to the reader. This is an attitude that questions everything. This is anarchism. Dürrenmatt questions the entire social and political order. This was the most interesting part of the story for me. Of course, the story needed to be further developed for the film. While thinking about it, this butcher incident happened in Switzerland. A butcher, for real, goes nuts, like in the film, and stabs some people but the charcuterie continues to stay open that day as if nothing has happened. This was shocking to me. It was like a Dürrenmatt story. That is why I decided to develop the original story in this direction.[175]

Like Dürrenmatt, Nesin is known for his critical, dark, and satirical works, and he is considered to be one of the greatest dark humorists of Turkish language literature. In his works, which are overwhelmingly concerned with small glitches in daily life, Nesin uses these seemingly insignificant occurrences to generate sharp social and political critique and commentary. Okan acknowledged that although Nesin is one of the authors he adores the most, he made a mistake by not asking his permission or giving him credit, because he mistakenly deemed the author's work's contribution to the film as not significant enough to be noticed. Noticing his work's unauthorised use in the film, Nesin threatened Okan with legal action. Alarmed by this unexpected threat, Okan chose to deny Nesin's accusation for practical reasons, thinking that such a position would provide a better case of defence in court, in case they end up there.[176]

> I had read the story and I, of course, knew it was Nesin's, but I was not expecting such a reaction [threat of legal action] from him. I needed an acceptable defence argument in case I was sued, since Nesin threatened me with one. If we were to end

> up in court, there is a huge difference between saying "I knew it was Nesin's story, and I used it on purpose", and "I heard this story from someone, but I did not know it was Nesin's". It was such a thought that made me deny Nesin's claim. This is an incident that I am very much ashamed of, and I will always be.[177]

In a recently published book, Okan states that he is going to add an acknowledgement of Nesin and his work to the credits of the film, which he is preparing for a new DVD release.[178]

A Comedy *In-Between*

Like his debut film, Okan's *Funny Saturday* is a fluid film that oscillates between the genre conventions of absurd, dark, slapstick comedy, and thriller. As the title of the film, *Funny Saturday*, and its playful soundtrack give away, the film's dominant mode is comedy. The film's soundtrack is dominated by piano piece and is reminiscent of the kind of music typically used in the vaudevilles and slapstick films of the 1920s and 30s. Given that, just like vaudevilles, *Funny Saturday* has a fragmented structure, the soundtrack gives the impression that it is a deliberately chosen one. The soundtrack, which was composed specifically for the film by prominent composer Vladimir Cosma, who is known for music he made for comedy films, serves at least two different functions in the film. While, on one hand, it defines the mood and sets the tone of the film, on the other hand, the soundtrack establishes continuity in the anthology film, which moves back and forth between the independent episodes.

Dark comedy and slapstick are two distinct sub-genres of comedy which *Funny Saturday* utilises to achieve its humorous effect. One can observe dark comedy elements especially in the episode revolving around the adventures of a butcher. The episode opens with a scene in court during a trial. The scene is the part of the film that is admittedly adapted from Dürrenmatt's short story. Dürrenmatt's extremely short work centres around a brief moment in a courtroom during a trial of a man

who is accused of murdering his wife and making a sausage of her dead body. Okan integrates the story into the film as one of its episodes, both by adding new components to the story, and by placing the story into a new network of events. He reimagines Dürrenmatt's vaguely defined character as a butcher. Neither this nor most other features seen in the episode exist in Dürrenmatt's original work.

In the opening scene of the episode, the butcher is seen sitting on the defendant's seat in a courtroom. In a serious manner, but with exaggerated gestures and movements, the prosecutor explains the crime to the audience that is present in the room. The audience is made up of locals, who will later reappear in the film in different roles. Observing the prosecutor's request, an usher brings a giant sausage to the room, which is supposedly made of the butcher's wife's remains, and places it on the prosecutor's desk. A tension building music accompanies the usher's delivery of the sausage.

The scene has a dark and depressive atmosphere; the mise-en-scène of the room in which the hearing takes place greatly contributes to this feeling. It is a room with a high ceiling and dark walls, and it is decorated with dark, heavy-looking wooden furniture. A short clip inserted into the scene, however, unexpectedly interrupts the development of this depressive atmosphere, and disorients the audience. In the insert, the butcher and his overweight wife are seen walking through parks, riding a pedal boat, and spending time together outdoors. Judging from the wife's changing outfits, the insert suggests that it is a collection of footages taken at different times and places. In addition to the interruption it causes in the dramatic development, the insert also upsets the temporal and spatial continuity of the episode. This fact adds a level of uncertainty and dreamy feeling to the insert. In the clip, the butcher always seems to be thoughtful and serious, while his wife is childish and joyful. She is constantly depicted while eating something, and there is something unpleasant in the way that the eating is portrayed, it evokes a feeling of disgust. She is shown several times insistently offering

whatever she eats to the butcher; the butcher, however, never accepts. The couple never talks; they communicate through exaggerated gestures and facial expressions, and this gives the footage a funny, almost caricature-like atmosphere. This atmosphere is underlined, and, to some degree, created by playful non-diegetic music accompanying the insert in the background. The mood of the insert constitutes a stark opposition to the atmosphere of the courtroom. Okan does not allow the playful mood of the insert to take over the episode; he immediately returns to the dark and depressive courtroom. However, after the insert, the courtroom does not seem to hold the same depressive atmosphere. This is made clear by the reactions of the butcher to the accusations of the prosecutor. After listing his accusations, the prosecutor asks the butcher if there is anything that he wishes to say or add. The butcher hesitantly stands up and utters: "I am sorry, I will not do it again". This answer adds an absurd layer to the scene.

The courtroom scene is one of the scenes of the film in which dark comedy features are clearly visible. First of all, the scene takes place in a setting that is an unusual place for comedy. A courtroom, especially during a trial of a murder case, offers nothing comic in its nature. Like the location, death or murder, especially the one referred to in the scene, which suggests excessive violence and elements of torture, are considered among the least suitable subjects for comedy. Okan succeeds in transforming this seemingly unsuitable subject into a dark comedy. The butcher's absurd reactions, hesitant movements, and the footage inserted into the scene enable him to achieve this. Okan's treatment of the subject, due to its confusing signals, disorients the viewer more than it shocks them. On one hand, the scene revolves around a violent murder case; yet on the other, it presents this matter in a manner that is incompatible with the seriousness of the crime. The scene goes even further and disorients the viewer about the very plausibility of the events unfolding on the screen. This is because in one of the shots following the court scene, the butcher is seen waking up from a dream in his bed

with his wife sleeping beside him. The inclusion of such a shot makes it uncertain whether the court scene was one of the butcher's dreams or real.

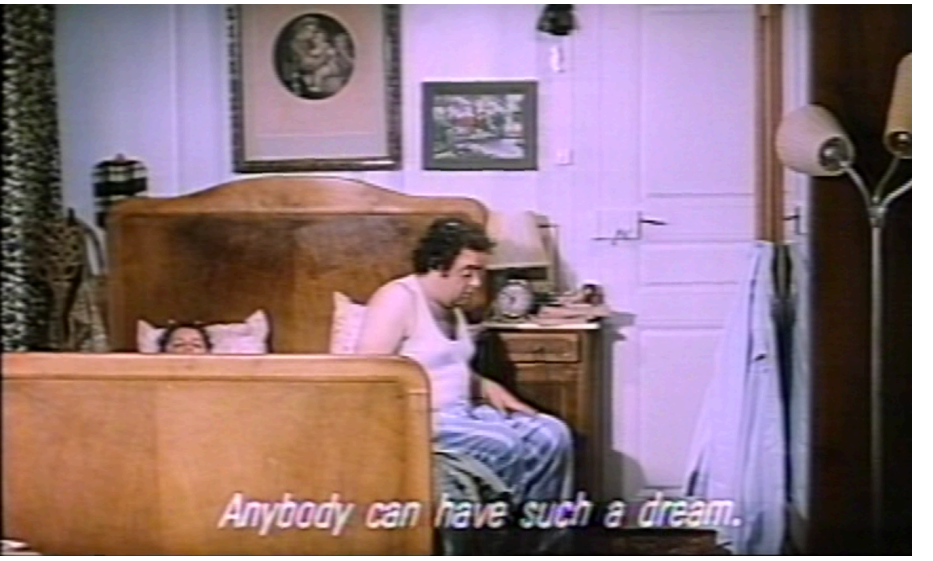
Due to this uncertainty, and the disharmony it contains, the court scene, at first sight, gives the impression of the grotesque, especially if one takes Andrew Stott's definition of the grotesque into account.

> The grotesque is a form of exaggerated and ambivalent social commentary produced by the violent clash of opposites, especially those that are comic and terrifying, existing in a state of unresolved tension. The site of the grotesque clash is the human body, resulting in deeply ambiguous and divided reactions to the horror of corporeality and oneself as an organism. (…) The grotesque (…) is a humorous mode that aims to produce an ambiguous feeling pitched somewhere between pleasure and disgust.[179]

Although the uncertainty and the disharmony provide reasonable ground to look for the grotesque in the film, as both Thomson and Stott point out, these elements are not enough to identify the grotesque in a narration, but the unresolved conflict/tension is.

Obviously, neither the episode nor the film, in general, contains any unresolved conflicts. On the contrary, they clearly and quickly evolve into comedy. In this respect, *Funny Saturday* distinguishes itself from Okan's previous film, as the debut film does not provide any clear resolution of conflicts, and, though it features comic elements, does not evolve into a comedy.

André Breton observes that dark comedy is "hemmed in by too many things, including stupidity, sceptical sarcasm, lighthearted jokes", but it is above all "the mortal enemy of sentimentality".[180] In this understanding, a terrible situation can be turned into a dark comedy with an inappropriate response—or total lack thereof (deadpan)—from the character. The discrep-



ancy between the expected response to the given situation and the actual response, or lack thereof, is what is considered funny in dark comedy. In the case of the grotesque, the central concern is the deliberately inconclusive exploration of the relationship between horror and humour. The principal aim of this exploration, as is the case in the above-described scene, is to disorient the viewer regarding the viewing attitude s/he should adopt. It can be said that, while dark humour is concerned with the response of the characters to a tragic situation, the grotesque is rather concerned with the viewing attitude of the audience.

Wes D. Gehring observes that the dark comedy, like the grotesque, was influenced by the post-World War II philosophy of existentialism. Influential figures of the movement like Jean-Paul Sartre and Martin Heidegger "posit that man is alone in a godless irrational world".[181] Similar to existentialist influences, another school of thought, absurdism, which shares a common theoretical template and concepts with existentialism, has also influenced dark comedy. According to Albert Camus, who brought absurdism into prominence, the absurd is a result of the

realisation that the world is not a rational place. "Man stands face to face with the irrational. He feels within him his longing for happiness and for reason. The absurd is born of this confrontation between the human need and the unreasonable silence of the world", Camus writes.[182] According to Gehring, this irrational and "absurd world, where the individual counts for very little" is one of the main themes of the dark comedy along with the themes of the "awful finality of death", and "man as beast".[183] Gehring observes that the absurd in dark humour "is usually presented in two ways—through the chaos of an unordered universe and through the flaws of mortal man. The first and most fundamental simply has man being victimised for merely trying to exist".[184]

In the later scenes of the episode revolving around the butcher, Okan increases the dosage of visible violence while managing to keep his dark comedy attitude intact. In one of these, the butcher arrives at his workplace, which he shares with several other unhappy, robot-like colleagues. He joins his workmates in their alienating, repetitive tasks, as they cut big chunks of meat into smaller pieces. Even though they all stand and work around the same desk, none of them talks. The butcher looks unhappy and thoughtful. After a while, the workers, except one worker and the butcher, leave the desk to fulfil some other tasks in the workplace. The colleague with whom the butcher is left is big and fat, just like the butcher's wife. The butcher and his colleague continue to cut big chunks of meat. They still do not talk. At one point, the butcher accidentally touches his colleague's arm with his sharp knife. His overweight colleague startles and starts to yell at him. The butcher does not say anything; he just looks at his colleague with an expressionless face. The fat man keeps yelling at him but nothing changes in the butcher's face. This goes on for some time, until the butcher suddenly and unexpectedly stabs his colleague with the big knife. The stabbed worker, screaming in pain, slowly falls on his knees and disappears from the unmoving frame. The butcher, showing no emo-

tions, stabs his colleague several more times. Another worker, a woman, runs to the help of the stabbed worker after hearing the screams, and he quickly stabs her, too. She too utters a scream before falling on the ground. The woman's scream reaches other parts of the workplace, where customers wait in a queue to purchase products. Hearing the scream, everybody in the shop freezes for a short moment until one of the workers behind the counter leaves his position and walks into the part of the workshop where the scream came from. He slowly walks down the stairs, only to find the bodies of his colleagues lying on the floor, covered in blood. The murderous butcher is nowhere to be seen. At that moment, a door slowly opens behind the man. The worker turns towards the door but cannot see anybody. He slowly walks towards the door. His steps echo in the narrow walkway surrounded with tile-covered walls. The echoing sound of the worker's footsteps and his slow, hesitant movements build up the tension. This part of the scene gives the impression of a horror movie. The worker hears a sudden noise coming from behind

and quickly turns around. As soon as he does so, the butcher stabs him, too. The worker slowly falls on his knees, then to the floor. The murderous butcher is seen standing motionless. He looks at the camera and utters the same words, those he uttered in the court scene: "I am sorry".

Unlike the court scene, in this later scene, the murder and the violence is not left to the imagination of the viewer; on the contrary, they are visualised in detail. This visualisation makes it even harder to generate comedy from the situation. Nonetheless, Okan manages to achieve comedy in this situation by making the butcher repeat the same absurd reaction that he gave in the court scene. The clear discrepancy between the gruesome violence displayed in the scene, and the deliberate display of a lack of emotion in the butcher's excuse, creates the absurd humour in the scene. Interestingly, by making the butcher repeat his excuse, and thus establishing a connection to the court scene, Okan disorients the audience even further regarding the plausibility of the events unfolding on the screen. The court scene was signalled to be a dream of the butcher by the shots that followed. In this scene too, the viewer is left uncertain in determining whether this murder scene is yet another dream of the butcher.

Exaggerated acting by an all-amateur cast is another feature of the film that helps the scene, and the film in general, to establish its dark comedy feeling. Exaggerated acting is the polar opposite of a deadpan reaction, which the butcher shows in his excuse, but it creates a similar humorous effect due to the discrepancy it creates to the expected reaction. There are two reasons that enable one to conclude that these exaggerated acting performances are the result of a deliberate choice rather than incompetent directing. The first reason is the near-flawless acting performances in the director's debut film, which also features nearly all amateur actors. This clearly shows that Okan is perfectly capable of working with amateur actors. The second reason is that these exaggerated acting performances open the way for the film to employ conventional slapstick elements, which will appear in later parts of the film. A similar observation

concerning the exaggerated acting performances can be made for the filmmaker's previous film, *The Bus*, especially regarding the episode that follows the driver in Hamburg.

In *Funny Saturday*, Okan uses some of the oldest and, arguably, by far the most recognisable and distinct elements of early slapstick cinema, namely running and chasing, which, for instance, were utilised persistently by filmmakers like George Nichols, Mack Sennett, and Henry Lehrman in the 1910s in films revolving around fictional characters called The Keystone Cops. Running and chasing are two of the earliest slapstick elements featured in film, which are not adopted from theatre or other performance forms that predate cinema. This is because, as physical performances, running and chasing are not suitable for the limited physical space of the theatre stage. Given this fact, it can be argued that slapstick achieved through running and chasing is uniquely cinematic because it could come into existence only after the invention of the film camera that is able to follow the characters in larger spaces than a theatre stage. Okan not only uses these characteristically cinematic elements, but does so in a way that the film's approach to slapstick recalls the slapstick films of the early periods of cinema history. This is most obvious in the scene in which the murderous butcher chases his boss in the street of Neuchâtel with a knife in his hand.

The scene opens with the butcher's entry into the part of the charcuterie where the customers wait, after killing three of his co-workers, with a big bloody knife in his hand. The customers panic and flee the place upon seeing the knife-wielding butcher in his blood-covered work gear. The butcher approaches the counter behind which only his boss is standing. He walks toward his boss, directing the knife at him. Trying to keep distance, the boss first slowly backs away, then unexpectedly turns around and starts running. After fleeing the shop, he continues to run in the streets. The butcher runs after him. After chasing his boss through several public squares and crowded streets, the butcher gets tired and stops. Seeing him stop, his boss stops as

well, and starts watching him from a safe distance. After a little rest, the butcher starts running again, so does the boss. The chasing scene is projected at a higher speed than the rest of the film, so that the actions appear much faster than they would be in normal life. This manipulation in the projection speed creates a chasing scene that is clearly reminiscent of the slapstick comedies of early film history. The slapstick feeling in the scene is also supported by the non-diegetic music played in piano accompanying the scene.


Higher projection speed and background music played in piano, along with black-and-white images, were some of the standard features of the early slapstick comedies. Almost all of these components came into existence out of necessity rather than a deliberate aesthetic or artistic choice. In the early days of cinema, neither recording nor projection devices had a standardised frame rate. Different device manufacturers had been using different frame rates. In addition to this, these recording and projection devices were operated not with electric motors, or any other technology that would provide a constant frame rate in their operations, but with hand cranks. This reality made it an almost impossible task to achieve the frame rates that were designated as the standard by manufacturers. This lack of frame rate standard gave birth to a particular film aesthetic, which is associated with the comedy films of the early film history. These comedy films were often projected in higher frame rates than

their intended rates used during the recording, causing the characters and objects appear to be moving faster than they would do in normal life.

In the early days of cinema, or more precisely, until Alan Crosland's 1927 film *The Jazz Singer*, films were recorded without sound. This was due to the lack of technology that would provide synchronised sound in film recordings. However, these 'silent' films were very rarely silent in their projections. Since the very early days of cinema, films were screened almost always with accompanying music either played live during the projection, or played from sound recording devices such as a gramophone. Violin, piano, and organ were among the most common instruments played during the screenings. Due to this very fact, the background music played on a piano has been strongly associated with these early comedy films.

In his article "Pie and Chase: Gag, Spectacle and Narrative in Slapstick Comedy", Donald Crafton observes that the slapstick gag—whether it is in the form of pie-throwing, stepping on a banana peel, or chasing—refuses to integrate into the narrative of the film.[185]

> One way to look at narrative is to see it as a system for providing the spectator with sufficient knowledge to make causal links between represented events. According to this view, the gag's status as an irreconcilable difference becomes clear. Rather than providing knowledge, slapstick misdirects the viewer's attention, and obfuscates the linearity of cause-effect relations. Gags provide the opposite of epistemological comprehension by the spectator.[186]

Crafton also observes that the slapstick gag, due to its refusal to integrate into the narrative context of the film, turns what is shown on the screen into a "pure spectacle".[187] The slapstick chasing in Okan's film offers a perfect example for Crafton's argument, as the scene being projected at a higher speed misdirects the viewer's attention and obfuscates the linearity of cause-

effect relations of the episode, thus transforming the slapstick chasing into a pure spectacle without the requirement of narrative causality.

In their book *Slapstick Comedy*, Tom Paulus and Rob King observe two orientations, two "ideological stances", in slapstick's cultural image: iconoclasm—"slapstick as 'alternative', opposed to established values and hierarchies of taste"—and nostalgia.[188] Although Paulus and King make their observations based on American slapstick films, these two orientations can be observed in Okan's employment of slapstick, as well. Okan's use of slapstick is both iconoclastic and nostalgic at the same time. It is iconoclastic for two reasons: firstly, the slapstick in the film plays with the assumed incompatibility between slapstick and the elements of thriller and crime films, and creates disorientation in the viewer. This becomes quite obvious in the chasing scene when, at one point, the main female character of the film, who happens to be part of the crowd through which the butcher chases his boss, suddenly ends up in front of the butcher and comes face to face with the murderer. At this particular point, the high tempo music in the background immediately stops and the high projection frame rate drops to the industry standard. The disappearance of the background music and the sudden drop in frame rate create a drastic change in the mood of the scene, and establish a tension. Following the disappearance of the background music, natural background sounds surrounding the public space fill the scene. These natural sounds underline the tension even more. The butcher looks at the female character directly in the eyes, while directing his knife at her; frozen by fear, she breathes heavily. They look at each other for some time without moving. Okan shows the characters with close-up shots, which raises the tension even higher. The stand-off scene clearly recalls the classical tension building duel scenes of western films. However, the tension does not last long, as the butcher leaves the woman untouched and continues to pursue his boss. With the chase, the piano in the background starts, and the projection

speed is again increased. In this particular scene alone, the film switches between the conventions of multiple genres: slapstick, crime, horror, and even western. With this, Okan proves that although the slapstick seems to be incompatible with elements of crime and thriller, this is not the case. A similar kind of utilisation of slapstick can be found in some of the early slapstick films; this particular approach is sometimes called "thrill comedies".[189] Harold Lloyd's 1923 slapstick *Safety Last!* is one of the iconic examples of such comedies.

The second reason that Okan's employment of slapstick is iconoclastic is found in the sudden and unexpected appearance of slapstick elements in the film, which until then swings only between the conventions of dark comedy and thriller. The slapstick elements create an opposition to the expected conventions of dark comedy and thriller, and trigger continued disorientation in the viewer. The sudden and unexpected appearance of slapstick also creates an opposition to the modern comedy elements of the film, and evokes feelings of nostalgia due to the

allusion these elements make to an old comedy form.

Okan's use of slapstick elements, in addition to establishing a strong connection to the early slapstick films, thus evoking nostalgia, recalls also some of the relatively new films' approach to slapstick, such as Agnes Varda's 1962 film *Cleo de 5 à 7*. In her film, Varda inserts one of her own short films *Les Fiancés du Pont Mac Donald (ou Méfiez-vous des Lunettes noires)*, which was originally released as a separate film in 1961, into the feature film. The inserted short film, featuring Jean-Luc Godard and Anna Karina, has a different, much higher projection rate than the rest of the film. In his article "Accelerated Gestures: Play Time in Agnès Varda's *Cléo de 5 à 7*", Peter Verstraten points out that the inserted short slapstick film, through its higher projection rate, "belies the conception of temporal continuity" of the *Cleo de 5 à 7*.

> If I were to consider the original release of this short film, I would be inclined to regard this replay of a slapstick short as a nostalgic reference to the silent era of comic actors, when such accelerated movements were not uncommon. As part of the feature film, however, the projection of a short film at a speed of sixteen frames per second alerts us to the fact that cinema is founded upon "false movements", to cite Alain Badiou's phrase.[190]

A similar observation can be made concerning the effect of the slapstick chasing scene on the rest of Okan's film. One can assert that the higher projection speed disturbs the temporal flow of the scene and alerts the viewer to the mechanism behind the seemingly "natural" process and development. At this particular point, giving extra attention to Okan's particular use of the film's soundtrack reveals that when the film makes a sharp transition on the temporal plane, the soundtrack steps in and dominates the film, attempting to retain temporal continuity. A perfect example of this can be found in the court scene, where Okan inserts the short clip depicting the butcher and his wife wandering

in a park. After the insert, the episode makes a sharp transition, not only on the temporal plane, but simultaneously also on the spatial plane. The insert itself is, in fact, home to several temporal and spatial discontinuities. Through his particular use of the soundtrack, Okan establishes continuity between the court scene, in which the soundtrack starts, and the insert through which the same soundtrack is constantly present. Interestingly, in the slapstick chasing scene, Okan does not follow the same strategy; instead, the soundtrack starts only after the projection speed is increased, and more importantly, it solely accompanies the chasing part of the scene that is projected at a higher speed. This particular use of the soundtrack establishes continuity only between the segments of the scene that are projected at higher speed, and disturbs the temporal continuity of the scene even more.

Even though similarities between Varda's *Cléo de 5 à 7* and Okan's *Funny Saturday* may seem like a coincidence, when observed carefully, it becomes clear that these similarities are the reflections of a fundamental quality that both filmmakers share, namely the persistent search for new ways of storytelling. Anges Varda is often referred to as "the mother of French New Wave". The French New Wave was an influential cinema movement, which, according to Chris Wiegand, is characterised by the importance it gave to "the manner in which the movie's story was told" more than "the story itself".[191] In support of Wiegand's observation, it can be added that the French New Wave films were low (or limited) budget films that were almost always shot in location using natural sound, with highly experimental narrative and editing features, revolving around marginalised, often immoral antihero characters, and operating through often improvised plots and dialogues. Even though almost all of these features, in one form or another, can be found in Okan's film, given its concern with how it tells, as much as what it tells, it is more suitable to study the film in context of another new wave movement, the Czechoslovak New Wave, which was clearly in-

fluenced by the French New Wave. In addition to features they share with the French New Wave films such as experimental editing, low budget off-studio filmmaking, and improvised dialogues, the Czechoslovak New Wave films distinguish themselves from the French New Wave films with strong narratives, non-professional actors, and absurd humour. *Funny Saturday* shows a stronger affinity with Czechoslovak New Wave films than with the French ones. For this reason, I will now discuss the film in relation to some of the Czechoslovak New Wave films.

Inspirations From Czechoslovak New Wave

Being an immigrant filmmaker, living and making films in Europe, Okan had the opportunity to access a wider selection of films that were very difficult, if not impossible, to access in Turkey. This privilege enriched his cinema. Traces of this can be found in *Funny Saturday*, especially in the film's employment of dark comedy. Okan's approach to black comedy is markedly different from that of his contemporaries in Turkey. In an interview he gave relatively recently, Okan acknowledges this fact by stating the following: "I am a person of Bosniak origin. I have a Slavic approach to humour. The humour in Turkey has thick lines, it is rougher. Slavic humour is much more refined. I look at issues dialectically, I see the good in the bad, and the bad in the good".[192] Especially in his second film, he shows many affinities with the dark comedy films from Slavic countries, especially films from the Czechoslovak New Wave.

The Czechoslovak New Wave was a cinema movement that emerged in the early 1960s in now-defunct Czechoslovakia, and included films made by a diverse group of filmmakers over a relatively long period. Dina Iordanova observes several distinct identifying features of the Czechoslovak New Wave films:

> These include interest in contemporary topics (often tackled with documentary authenticity), the subtle humour (often bordering on the absurd), the use of avant-garde narrative and editing techniques

> (often deployed with astonishing persistence), and the attention to psychological detail (often better revealed in explorations of interactions within a group rather than in studies of individual protagonists).[193]

Some of Miloš Forman's films offer the best combinations of the trademark features of the Czechoslovak New Wave. His 1967 satirical film *Hoří, má panenko* (The Firemen's Ball) is one of these. In the film Forman follows the birthday party of an elderly head of a provincial fire department taking place in a small town hall. Members of the fire department, along with a big crowd of guests, are present at the venue. In addition to the usual traditional dances and fundraising raffle, the firemen want to organise a beauty competition. However, things do not go as planned. The participants of the beauty competition, handpicked by the firemen, are hesitant to appear before the crowd; prizes that are prepared for the raffle keep disappearing; and finally, a disastrous fire breaks out in a nearby building. After overcoming the initial shock, the guests prefer to watch the building being consumed by fire and sip from their drinks while the firemen hopelessly try to extinguish it. Featuring funny, dark, and, at times, outright absurd incidents surrounding the ball, the film generates a satirical critique directed at society, and at the so-called socialist state of Czechoslovakia. In this context, the disappearing prizes can be read as the signifier of widespread corruption inherent in the system, while the incompetence the firemen show in organising the ball—not even speaking of their professions yet—can be read as political commentary on the incompetence of the ruling elite.

Another important filmmaker of the Czechoslovak New Wave, Jiří Menzel, takes the social and political critique—subtly and somewhat indirectly offered by Forman—into a darker and more direct form in his 1969 film *Skřivánci na niti* (Larks on a String). The film follows the inmates of a forced labour camp, who are locked up in a junkyard as part of the "socialist rehabili-

tation" they have to undergo due to their supposed bourgeois and dissident lifestyles, and their attempts to defect the country. Featuring a diverse group of characters, including a barber, a dairyman, a prosecutor, and a philosopher, the film depicts the socialist country as an industrial junkyard, and its citizens as inmates who are under the constant watch of the state. In addition to its distinct dark and Kafkaesque tone, *Larks on a String* also utilises satire to deliver its critique.

Jan Němec's 1966 film *O slavnosti a hostech* (A Report on the Party and Guests) is another Kafkaesque film from the Czechoslovak New Wave film. In distinction to the previously named films, Němec's film not only uses dark, absurd, and satirical elements, but also surreal ones. The film follows a small group of friends, who appear to be upper-class intellectuals, during their picnic in a forest on a sunny day. After the picnic, the group, which consists of both men and women, goes for a walk in the forest. On the way, a suspicious-looking man with a mysterious entourage encircles the group. The man, Rudolf, asks the group puzzling questions, intimidating them with an unspecified guilt, and making the group insecure about the way in which they should react to the situation. Shortly after, the group learns that Rudolf was sent to invite them to a party taking place by a nearby lake, organised by an unknown host. Much like Rudolf, the host of the party continues to manipulate the group, forcing them to become even more insecure. Němec's film immediately brings to mind Franz Kafka's novel *The Trial*, in which the main character Josef K. is unexpectedly arrested in a strange manner by two unidentified agents sent by an unspecified authority over an unspecified crime, who do not take him away. This reference, along with its persistent pessimism, makes the film truly Kafkaesque. In addition to these qualities, Peter Hames draws parallels between Němec's film and Luis Buñuel's *The Exterminating Angel* (1962) and *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie* (1972) because of Němec's use of surreal elements.[194]

The Czechoslovak New Wave films are polemical in

essence. The polemical method operates on three different levels in these films, as they are oppositional, anti-traditional, and critical.[195] The oppositional and critical components of the New Wave are found in the films' ideological criticisms directed at society and the totalitarian socialist regime, while the anti-traditional component is found in the films' form, as they very often employ avant-garde narrative and editing techniques.

Funny Saturday is a product of a different country, period, context and socioeconomic condition. Nevertheless, it is not difficult to observe pronounced similarities between the New Wave films and *Funny Saturday*. Indeed, the film demonstrates all the distinct characteristic features of the Czechoslovak New Wave pointed out by Iordanova. Like many New Wave films, it deals with contemporary topics, and it tackles these with a detached style that is reminiscent of a documentary approach to filmmaking. This approach finds its most concrete form in the film's employment of guerrilla filmmaking practices, the most obvious of which is to be found in the chasing scene, where the knife-wielding butcher runs after his boss through crowds of people on the streets. Many of the people on the street appear to be unaware of the fact that the chase unfolding before their eyes is part of a film, and that they are being filmed. Okan confirms this observation:

> The mise-en-scène in this particular scene is not something we planned and controlled in every small detail. We simply made the actors run in the streets. Many of the people on the street were not aware of what was going on. (…) I do not remember the shots in this particular scene in detail, but I can say for sure that this scene was not fully staged. In fact, in that scene, I wanted to show people's apathy for each other.[196]

Another feature that makes Okan's film very similar to those from the Czechoslovak New Wave is its use of avant-garde narrative and editing techniques. As pointed out earlier, Okan's film

is a collection of interconnected short stories. The film does not follow common continuity editing principles; instead, it utilises a complex mixture of parallel editing, jump cuts, flashbacks, and flash-forwards to create a unity between the independent short episodes that take place on different temporal and/or spatial planes.

Okan pays great attention to the psychological details of his characters. However, he does this not through the studies of individual characters, but rather through their group interactions. This is another significant feature which makes *Funny Saturday* similar to New Wave films.

Beyond these important, yet rather obvious, similarities between Okan's film and the films of the Czechoslovak New Wave, the most important aspect in Okan's film is perhaps the particular way in which the film adopts a dry-comic humour, achieved through the combination of both deadpan and slapstick humour.

Like the New Wave films, Okan's film is a polemical one. However, its polemical method operates on a different level, and with different objectives in mind. *Funny Saturday* is a critical film, as well; however, it has a completely different context. The Czechoslovak New Wave films were critical toward the totalitarian regime in Czechoslovakia, even though they could be made thanks to a brief period of relatively "liberal" climate, which ceased after the Warsaw Pact invasion in 1968. Being a filmmaker who made his films in Western Europe, and later in Turkey, Okan never had to deal with a totalitarian regime. Despite this fact, Okan follows a strategy that is very comparable to that of the New Wave films, and questions the sociopolitical system of the countries in which he lives and makes his films. Like the New Wave filmmakers, Okan focuses on contemporary issues and daily realities. He finds small and seemingly insignificant moments and events in daily life and uses them like loose threads to deconstruct the sociopolitical fabric. Okan is very critical toward the sociopolitical systems of the countries in which he lives, and in many ways, he likens capitalist market economy to all-encom-

passing totalitarian system. While the characters in the New Wave films are pressured by a totalitarian regime, Okan's characters are pressured by the speed, efficiency, and consumption dogmas of market capitalism.

Beyond providing the film with a surreal and absurd tone, the episode revolving around the butcher is especially geared towards generating a powerful critique of capitalism and consumer society. The butcher's workplace, the charcuterie, is exemplary in this criticism. As a workplace that transforms animals into objects of consumption, it underlines the particular production and consumption logic of capitalism. The charcuterie is a *factory* which objectifies animals, denying their dignity. It is also a workplace, where the division of labour in the capitalist mode of production is clearly visible. Every individual worker in the charcuterie performs clearly defined, simple, and repetitive tasks. The repetitive nature of the tasks illustrates the reduction of the workers to mechanical parts in a big machine, a machine that is designed to deliver certain products to achieve only one goal: the generation of maximum possible profit. As is made clear through the behaviour and expressions of the butcher-turned-murderer and his co-workers, the repetitive labour does not provide the workers with any kind of satisfaction, besides their wages. In the Marxist sense of the term, the workers are alienated from their labour, and from the commodity to whose production they contribute. The work in the charcuterie is degrading, both for the workers and the animals. The animals are objectified and turned into a mere commodity to be bought and sold. Although this particular issue is not directly addressed in the film, it is still within the critical scope of the film. One of the most stereotypical images traditionally associated with Switzerland, along with cheese, chocolate, and watches, is the free-strolling cows with their big bells in the Alps. None of these idealised images are shown in the film; instead, Okan is concerned with the brute daily reality. As he states, he "look[s] at the issues in an opposite way" and sees "good in the bad, and the bad in

the good".[197] Okan is an iconoclast who is interested in both the insignificant routines of daily life, and idealised images, as he unearths the less charming sides these routines and images hide.

The work in the charcuterie is degrading for the workers, because it normalises killing, and alienates them from their labour. In this context, the butcher's unexpected decision to kill another kind of animal, human, can be interpreted as a revolt against the system. On the other hand, this unexpected behaviour can also be seen as a temporary glitch in the machinery. Indeed, proceeding developments in the scene make this later reading more plausible. The fact that the owner wants to keep the charcuterie open despite the murder of three of his workers, and his own narrow escape from the same destiny, underlines this reading. Returning to the analogy, the owner's attempt to keep the charcuterie open can be read as an attempt to keep the machinery running despite the fact that it is missing several parts. The machine analogy is also useful to stress the replaceable nature of the worker in a capitalist industrial mode of production. They might die, but the machine must keep running. The missing parts can and will be replaced with new parts, namely new, obedient, robot-like workers.

Although it takes up considerable space in the film, Okan is not only concerned with production in advanced capitalist societies; he also addresses consumption and the consumers' relationship with the goods and services that they themselves contribute to produce, directly or indirectly, in the first place. There are several scenes in the film that directly address this issue. The film's title, both the French-language original and the Turkified version, can be seen as a reference, which establishes a contextual framework for the film's approach to consumption. *Drôle de samedi*, which translates to "Funny Saturday", and *Cumartesi Cumartesi*, which translates to "Saturday Saturday", signal a contextual framework for the film by limiting its temporal plane to a particular day of the week, the Saturday. In many parts of the world, Saturday is one of the days of the weekend,

and as such, it is associated more with consumption and recreation than production. Interestingly, *samedi* (Saturday for French) is derived from Latin *Sabbati diēs*, meaning literally the "day of the Sabbath". Sabbath is the day that is set aside for worship and rest in the Judaeo-Christian tradition. In the film, no worship is taking place, at least not in the biblical sense of the term. However, if one adopts Walter Benjamin's view, one can still conceptualise the Saturday in the film as a day of Sabbath, though not that of the Judaeo-Christian tradition, but of the *religion of capitalism*. In his short text "Capitalism as Religion", Benjamin observes several fundamental similarities between capitalism and religion: "One can behold in capitalism a religion, that is to say, capitalism essentially serves to satisfy the same worries, anguish, and disquiet formerly answered by so-called religion".[198] For Benjamin "capitalism is a pure religious cult, perhaps the most extreme there ever was. Within it everything only has meaning in direct relation to the cult".[199] What Benjamin refers to as the *cult* of capitalism is, obviously the capital. "Capitalism is the celebration of the cult [the capital] (…) Here there is no "weekday", no day that would not be a holiday in the awful sense of exhibiting all sacred pomp—the extreme exertion of worship".[200] In the same vein as Benjamin, Andrew Targowski writes that "capitalism is religion, of which the first commandment is profit (…) by any means".[201] Okan seems to share a similar position regarding the religious undertones of capitalism, as becomes clear in the scene where the boss wants to keep the charcuterie open, despite the murder of three of his workers.

While the issue of consumption is addressed on several occasions in the film, it finds its most concentrated form in the scene in which the couple visits a supermarket just before it closes. The supermarket is full of consumers who run around and compete against time, and each other, to finish their shopping before the goods run out and the supermarket closes. More than a routine weekly shopping scene, it resembles a plunder scene. Consumers appear to be ignorant of one another as they drive

their shopping carts very aggressively and crash them into other carts and consumers carelessly. The main character, Pierre, gets irritated by this unreasonably aggressive tempo, but still carries on with the weekly *ritual*. He finds a long queue when he arrives at the cashiers, and reluctantly joins it. Shortly after, a woman, driving carelessly, crashes her shopping cart to his, causing several bottles to fall and break. Pierre does not seem to be bothered much. His partner, Véronique, however, gets very irritated and quickly tries to clean up the mess. Looking emotionless, Pierre watches Véronique trying to clean the floor. She is very angry. Pierre moves his attention from his partner to a cashier woman and starts observing her. After watching the cashier for a while with empty eyes, he suddenly abandons his cart in the queue, grabs Véronique by the arm, and drags her out of the supermarket. Portraying post-industrial Western citizens as mere consumers, who are extremely individualised, and caring about nothing else but consuming, the scene provides an open and direct commentary on the craze of consumption.

In the supermarket scene, Okan questions not only consumerism, but also the relationship between commodities and individuals. An obvious marker of this is found in the internal monologue of Pierre—who is called Sümer in the Turkish version—that the viewer hears while he is in the queue watching the cashier's fingers quickly typing in the prices of the products. In the French version of the film, the character asks himself, "In the midst of this whole organisation, were we up to all this perfection?"[202] In the Turkified version, the monologue is translated as "Was humankind as perfect as the technique it created?"[203] In both versions of the film, the monologue underlines the alienation of the individual from the commodities, which s/he created.

The question of alienation is one of the reappearing themes in the film. Apart from the episode that follows the adventures of the butcher, another episode, the one which revolves around a driving school student, can be read as further com-

mentary on the question. According to the dialogues in the episode, the student has been taking driving lessons for quite some time, yet he is still not able to drive as well as required. He has failed his previous three driving exams and has only one last chance left to try. After narrowly avoiding a collision multiple times on the country road, he hits several cars in the city while trying to park. The episode can be read as an answer to Pierre's question: No, we humans are not as perfect or as flawless as the technique we have created. The automobile has "not only [been] the symbol of modernity, of modern industrial capitalism and urbanisation, of power and freedom; it [has been] also the symbol (…) of a cultural aesthetic in the service of modernity" for much of the twentieth century.[204] Furthermore, the automobile, due to its production process, the assembly line, has acquired the status of "the classic symbol of the subjection of man to the machine [and of his alienation] in our industrial age".[205] The automobile, automobile ownership, driving, and the alienating effects of driving on the driver and passengers have also been a "constant theme of much exploration, both sociological and cinematic, over the last century".[206] Okan's driving school scene is one of these cinematic explorations.

A Carnivalesque Film

Funny Saturday also recalls Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the *carnivalesque*. The carnivalesque is a literary mode which Bakhtin traces back and defines in reference to medieval carnivals. The medieval carnivals were special and time-limited periods during which the law, prohibitions, and any sort of restrictions that determine the socio-hierarchical structure and the order of ordinary life are suspended.[207] Bakhtin distinguishes four interconnected categories of the carnival and the carnivalistic sense of the world: free and familiar contact among people, eccentricity, carnivalistic mésalliances, and profanation. According to Bakhtin, "a new mode of interrelationship between individuals", which leads to "free and familiar contact among people" is established during the carnival.[208] This new interrelationship

counterposes "all-powerful socio-hierarchical relationship of noncarnival life", and allows "eccentric and inappropriate" behaviours and expressions to surface. During the carnival, a:

> free and familiar attitude spreads over everything: over all values, thoughts, phenomena, and things. All things that were once self-enclosed, disunified, distanced from one another by a noncarnivalistic worldview are drawn into carnivalistic contacts and combinations. Carnival brings together, unifies, weds, and combines the sacred with the profane, the lofty with the low, the great with the insignificant, the wise with the stupid.[209]

The carnival debases sacred texts and narrations and brings them "down to earth".[210] In connection with this act of bringing things down to earth, Bakhtin writes that "the primary carnivalistic act is the mock crowning and subsequent decrowning of the carnival king", and notes that this ritual, in one form or another, is encountered in all carnivals.[211] Even though the carnival was an event that was "limited in time only and not in space", the town square and streets adjoining it were "the main area for carnival" where this primary act almost always took place.[212]

Bakhtin defines the carnivalesque mode as a part of "the realm of serio-comical", and observes three characteristic features that are common to all genres of the serio-comical: they are concerned with "the living present, often even the very day", they consciously rely on "experience and free invention" instead of relying on legend and/or satisfying themselves through it, and these genres are deliberately "multi-styled and hetero-voiced" as they "reject the stylistic unity of epic, the tragedy, high rhetoric, the lyric".[213]

Keeping these qualities in mind, it is not difficult to detect the carnivalesque in *Funny Saturday.* First of all, like other carnivalesque works, *Funny Saturday* is a serio-comical film because it oscillates between grotesque dark comedy and slapstick that is bordering on the absurd; it is concerned with the living

present and the very day it is made, and it is multi-styled and hetero-voiced. Like a carnival, *Funny Saturday* takes place in the town square and adjoining streets, depicting the world as a place that is upside down and in chaos during a time-limited period, the Saturday. Furthermore, the film's mockery and criticism of modern capitalist consumer society can be seen as the most central act of the carnival, namely a symbolic decrowning.

Although carnival was sanctioned by the ruling authorities, and this very fact testifies to their control over it, as well as their presumption of restoration of the initial order by underlining the temporary nature of the carnival, as Bakhtin sees it, "carnival had a subversive effect, since it showed that social hierarchies were not unquestionable".[214] After all, whether it was a god, or the highest earthly authority, the carnivalistic "laughter was always directed toward something higher (…) to force them to renew themselves" by shaming and ridiculing them.[215] Perhaps, not many things offer an example to Bakhtin's point as concretely as the Czechoslovak New Wave films. The Czechoslovak New Wave films were critical films that made a mockery of the existing totalitarian system, even though they were perfectly aware that the films' mockery was not enough to take the system down. However, they also knew that their efforts were nonetheless important because, if nothing else, it proved that the system can be questioned/mocked/ridiculed using the instruments, infrastructure, and limited freedom of speech provided by the very system. In this regard, given its references to the Czechoslovak New Wave films, and its emulation of these films' approach to dark comedy, an echoing observation can be made concerning *Funny Saturday*, as well. For although it does not offer any concrete alternative to the system it criticises, and for this reason it can even be accused of being escapist, by making a mockery of capitalist market society, *Funny Saturday* nonetheless demonstrates that the existing order is neither unquestionable nor irreplaceable.

Funny Saturday and the National Cinemas of Switzerland and France

Dark comedy is a relatively common genre in Swiss cinema. One of the most well-known and most popular Swiss films ever made, Rolf Lyssy's 1978 film *Die Schweizermacher* (The Swissmakers), and Claude Goretta's 1973 film *L'Invitation* (The Invitation), are two such films, both of which predate Okan's 1985 film. *The Swissmakers* follows funny, and at times, outright absurd interactions between foreign nationals who have applied for Swiss citizenship and two cantonal policemen who are tasked to investigate these foreign applicants. Swinging between absurd and dark comedy, Lyssy's film offers a critique of Swiss society, and questions Swiss identity.

The Invitation revolves around the events taking place during a garden party organised by middle-aged insurance employee Remy (Michel Robin). After buying a new country home with the money he unexpectedly inherits from his recently deceased mother, Remy invites all his office colleagues to a garden party. Aided by alcohol, served liberally by the experienced butler hired for the party, the guests gradually start losing all their inhibitions and reveal their real personality traits, which they successfully mask during the office hours. Goretta's film, which offers a critique of the Swiss bourgeoisie, shares several traits with *Funny Saturday,* including some of its actors, such as Jean-Luc Bideau and Michel Robin. Like *Funny Saturday*, *The Invitation* creates a carnivalesque atmosphere to deliver its social criticism. Much like Okan's film, it swings between absurd and black comedy, but, unlike *Funny Saturday*, it does not feature slapstick elements. This should not come as a surprise, because slapstick is not a type of comedy that Swiss cinema is fond of. Scanning the Swiss film catalogues covering the period between the end of World War II and the production year of *Funny Saturday*, 1985, as well as English language sources on Swiss cinema, I could only find two films that feature slapstick elements. These are Franz Schnyder's 1958 film *Die Käserei in der Vehfreude* (The Cheese Fac-

tory in the Hamlet), and Karl Suter's 1959 film *Der Mustergatte* (The Model Husband). However, none of these films is really comparable to *Funny Saturday* in their employment of slapstick for at least two reasons. First of all, the slapstick elements are neither dominant nor central to the narrations of these films; and second, slapstick is not employed to generate a social critique in these films.

The dark comedy has a much stronger vein in French cinema than it does in Switzerland. Claude Faraldo's 1972 film *Themroc*, Marco Ferreri's 1973 film *La Grande Bouffe* (Blow-Out), Luis Buñuel's 1974 film *Le Fantôme de la liberté* (The Phantom of Liberty), Bertrand Blier's 1979 film *Buffet froid*, and Jean-Marie Poiré's 1982 film *Le père Noël est une ordure* (Santa Claus Is a Stinker) are some of the most distinguished examples of the genre, which are contemporaries of *Funny Saturday.* Of these films, Faraldo's *Themroc*, Buñuel's *The Phantom of Liberty*, and Poiré's *Santa Claus Is a Stinker* show certain similarities to Okan's film.

Themroc follows the reversion of a blue-collar worker, who rebels against modern society, into an urban caveman. Faraldo's low budget film features no intelligible language as the characters communicate with each other in gibberish, roaring and growling. *Funny Saturday* is comparable to *Themroc* in several aspects, both in content and in form. Like *Themroc*, Okan's film revolves around male characters (the butcher and Pierre) who revolt against the modern capitalist system of production and consumption, though the extent to which these characters go in their rebellion is substantially different. Like *Themroc*, *Funny Saturday* is a satirical film that utilises dark comedy elements. Furthermore, both films rely mostly on situational physical comedy rather than cultural or national specific humour, making both of these films transcultural narratives. Given the lack of any intelligible language in *Themroc*, this transcultural quality is much bolder.

Buñuel's *The Phantom of Liberty* is a single-director episode film consisting of several unrelated episodes that are

linked by certain characters that move from one episode to the next. *The Phantom of Liberty* is an iconoclastic film that ridicules and challenges the preconceived social norms, as well as the very notion of reality, in modern bourgeois society with the help of satirical humour featuring absurd, surreal, and dark comedy elements. Given these qualities, *Funny Saturday* is comparable to Buñuel's film in several aspects. First of all, like *The Phantom of Liberty*, *Funny Saturday* is a single-director episode film, which is composed of more than one autonomous segment that share thematic and stylistic elements. Second, like Buñuel's film, *Funny Saturday* is a fluid film which features absurd, surreal, and dark comedy elements. And, third, like Buñuel's, Okan's film is concerned with the critique of modern society and its norms, which both films achieve through the deconstruction of daily routines.

Jean-Marie Poiré's *Santa Claus Is a Stinker* is a substantially different film than these two French films. Though also a dark comedy, unlike the previous films, Poiré's work features verbal and non-verbal slapstick elements, as well. The film follows a series of bizarre events, such as an accidental murder of a man and the feeding of his dismembered body to zoo animals, revolving around volunteers who work at the Paris office of a telephone helpline for depressed people during Christmas Eve. Due to its violent and gruesome elements, along with its use of verbal and non-verbal slapstick, *Santa Claus Is a Stinker* shows other similarities with *Funny Saturday.* Poiré's film is the only one among these three French dark comedies that explicitly combines dark comedy elements with slapstick. However, unlike Okan's film, its employment of slapstick is not geared to generate, or support, sociopolitical commentary. In this regard, another French film made around the same period, Jacques Tati's 1971 film *Trafic* (Traffic), shines as a more suitable example of comparison to Okan's film in terms of its use of slapstick. *Traffic* follows Tati's famous fictional character Monsieur Hulot, this time a car designer, on a road trip from Paris to an auto show in Amsterdam. On their way, Monsieur Hulot and his entourage encounter various bizarre situations and obstacles. The episode in *Funny Satur-*

day, which revolves around the driving school student and his uneasy, and to some degree, absurd relationship with his car and the traffic, recalls Monsieur Hulot's relation to cars and traffic. This is not surprising, given that Jacques Tati is one of Okan's favourite filmmakers, whom he knew and had followed since he was an actor in Yeşilçam, long before his own directing career began.[216]

Given the similarities *Funny Saturday* shares with the films of diverse European filmmakers and cinemas, it can be observed that through this film, the immigrant filmmaker with a background in Turkey and its commercial cinema, Okan developed a cinema that is influenced and nourished by diverse filmic aesthetics and ideological attitudes. This places Okan within the context of European arthouse cinema along with a diverse group of filmmakers, ranging from Varda to Forman, Goretta to Tati. These diverse influences enable Okan to articulate a particular critique of Western European society, a critique that is informed by the realism of Italian Neorealism, the philosophical sensitivity of existentialism, the sharp political tongue of the Czechoslovak New Wave, the experimental attitude of the French New Wave, and the critical humorous playfulness of Forman, Tati, and Buñuel. This eclectic yet well-balanced articulation is also a clear proof of Okan's transboundary cinema.

Beyond Film Translation

Each in a different language, and with slightly different editing, *Funny Saturday* has two different versions: the original French-language version and the Turkified version. *Funny Saturday* was Turkified as *Cumartesi Cumartesi* (Saturday Saturday) by Okan in the post-production by a complete rewriting of some of the dialogues of the couple around whom the film revolves, and by representing the couple, along with another character, with Turkish names and im/migrant backgrounds. These seemingly small changes have significant consequences for the film, since these newly acquired im/migrant identities, especially that of the cou-

ple, alter the context of the film entirely.

Turkification of foreign films is not a new phenomenon in Turkey's cinema history; it was one of the trademarks of the Yeşilçam era. In this era, which stretched roughly from the early 1950s to the late 1980s, many commercially successful Hollywood films, such as *Superman*, *Batman, Star Wars*, and many others, were Turkified through their local remakes. This was possible thanks to the lack of comprehensive copyright laws in Turkey at the time. Thanks to this fact, there exists an arsenal of absurd film characters, such as a Turkish Superman whose headscarf-wearing mother prepares lunch bags for him before he heads to work at a newspaper office.[217]

Although what Okan does in his film is technically also a Turkification of a foreign film, Okan's method is fundamentally different from the Yeşilçam era practices. Okan's modifications of *Funny Saturday* into *Saturday Saturday* more closely resembles the Turkification practices of the pre-Yeşilçam era, which were applied especially to films that were imported from Egypt during the Second World War. During this period, because of the devastating war, film production in Europe almost completely stopped. Turkey stayed neutral and did not participate in the war, but the collapse of the European film industry affected the country's cinema directly, since the majority of the films shown in the country were either European productions, or North American ones that arrived through European distribution channels.

The North American cinema industry was not affected by the war as much as the European industry was, yet the war made the distribution of Hollywood films almost impossible. Under these circumstances, film distribution companies in Turkey were forced to find alternative ways to survive. While some of these companies started their own film productions to supply the ever-increasing demand, some others started to import films from countries with which Turkey previously had very little or no cinematographic relations, such as India and Egypt. Of those

newly imported films, the Egyptian ones gained immediate popularity in Turkey thanks to cultural similarities between the two countries. However, the Arabic language spoken in these films posed a serious obstacle for the films' access to the Turkish speaking public. Aware of the problem, film companies immediately got involved in, and successfully mastered, dubbing and overcame the obstacle in a short time. Dubbing was a much more suitable option than subtitling given the strong oral culture in Turkey, and the low rate of literacy, especially common in rural areas at the time. Moreover, in the dubbing process, Egyptian films were not only translated into Turkish but, more interestingly, often Turkified through alterations in plots, characters, and replacement of soundtracks with the local ones. Bearing these practices in mind, Okan's Turkification strategy can be said to share significant similarities with the Turkification practices of the pre-Yeşilçam era. However, it should be stressed that Okan's Turkification strategy constitutes a unique example because, unlike the filmmakers of the pre-Yeşilçam era, Okan Turkified his own film.

Given this unusual treatment and its results, I think it would be more productive to approach Okan's second film as two different films: *Funny Saturday* and *Saturday Saturday.* Conceptualising these two versions of the same film as different films is to a certain degree necessary, because the changes that Okan made in the characters alter the very context and essence of the film. As pointed out earlier, in the Turkified version, the couple around which the film revolves is re-imagined as an immigrant couple with Turkish names and backgrounds. These new identities give new meanings to the characters' relationship with the world. I will return to this shortly.

Saturday Saturday and the National Cinema of Turkey

Although comedy, along with melodrama, has been one of the most popular genres in Turkey's popular commercial cinema, dark comedy has occupied a marginal place in the industry's

output. These films are extremely limited in number, and they are mostly the product of the mid-1970s and later periods. Interestingly, Okan's own film, *The Bus* (1974), provides one of the earliest examples of the genre in the country's cinema. Apart from Okan, several other filmmakers stand out with films containing dark comedy elements. Zeki Ökten, Atıf Yılmaz, and Kartal Tibet are among the most noticeable of these filmmakers. Despite the fact that they contain some elements of dark comedy, films of these directors are typical Yeşilçam films. Dark comedy elements do not occupy a central position in these films; they are only found in the sidelines. Kartal Tibet's 1981 film *Davaro* is one such example. It is a comedy that revolves around the heterosexual love story of a villager, Memo, and his childhood sweetheart, Cano. Memo and Cano want to marry, but the lovers are not permitted to do so by Cano's parents, who demand an astronomical sum from Memo for giving their permission. Upon his return from Germany, where he temporarily worked to gather the necessary sum, Memo learns that he has to face a bigger problem than gathering the money before he can marry Cano: a long-lasting blood feud. Memo has to kill a fellow villager, Sülo, according to the rules of the blood feud. Memo rejects the idea, and instead, he masterminds a plot with Sülo according to which Memo shoots Sülo in the village square with tampered ammunition, and Sülo pretends to be shot and dead. After the duel, Memo, along with other villagers, bury Sülo in a grave in which Memo and Sülo previously installed a piping system, to allow Sülo to breathe while in the coffin buried underground. As expected in a comedy film, things quickly get out of control when Memo and Sülo come to notice that they failed to take the religious practices governing the burial ceremony into account. After a series of funny and absurd events Memo realises his dream and marries Cano without murdering Sülo at the end of the film. The film addresses the very serious issues of blood feud, death, and religious rituals with a comic treatment, using dark comedy elements.

Although Tibet's and several other filmmakers' films

make it possible to assert the existence of a dark comedy vein in Turkey's popular commercial cinema, these films differ from *Saturday Saturday* significantly in their approach to cinema in general, and dark comedy in particular. These films carry all the standard features of the typical Yeşilçam film of that period. Like many other Yeşilçam productions of the time, they centre around heterosexual love stories and have happy endings after following classical, often linear, narrations. Like other Yeşilçam films, these films are products of the unique financing and distribution system of *Regional Enterprise System.* As explained in the previous chapters, this unique system gave the audience almost total control over the content of films. This financial reality, in combination with the strict censorship regime, which was in force until 1986, limited these films in their approach to taboo subjects, and forced them to be shy in their use of black comedy. In this context, one can mark 1986 as the year that brought a visible change to popular commercial cinema's approach to dark comedy in Turkey. In that year, the strict censorship regime, which was in force since 1939 without significant change, was abolished. This important development immediately found its reflection in cinema. Zeki Ökten's 1986 film *Davacı* (The Plaintiff) is an early manifestation of this. Ökten's film focuses on the story of a villager and his neighbour in their endless struggle with the justice system and bureaucracy after one of them sues the other over a rather small dispute. *The Plaintiff* offers a very direct and sharp critique of until-then taboo subjects, like the state and its slow, corrupt, and overblown bureaucratic justice apparatus. It combines comedy with Kafkaesque elements. Such a film, featuring sharp critique directed at the political and bureaucratic establishment, was inconceivable before the abolishment of the censorship.

As much as dark comedy, slapstick occupies a considerable space in *Saturday Saturday*. Okan's approach to slapstick is markedly different than those of other Turkish filmmakers who employed slapstick in their films. Like in many other national cinemas, slapstick was one of the earliest comedy forms to

emerge in the cinema of Turkey. Semih Evin's 1950 film *Sihirli Define* (The Magical Treasure) is one of the earliest feature films made in the country featuring slapstick elements. It is a comedy that follows the story of two friends in their search for a hidden treasure. İsmail Hakkı Dümbüllü, the legendary actor of the traditional Tulûat theatre—a kind of improvisational theatre with national roots—is one of the main actors in the film. On several occasions, Dümbüllü and his friend perform theatrical acts that heavily rely on exaggerated physical movements and gestures. Like in many other slapstick comedy films, running, chasing, falling, and fights are the central instruments generating comedy in the film. One must note, however, that the slapstick in the film is more the result of the application of Tulûat theatre's classical features to cinema than the imitation of European or American slapstick films. Given the fact that the traditional Tulûat theatre in its core relies heavily on exaggerated gestures and facial expressions, performing these kinds of acts in front of a film camera creates a unique kind of slapstick with national connections.

Apart from Dümbüllü films—there are more than twenty-five of them—which, in essence, are an extension of the Tulûat theatre into cinema, there are other films in Turkey's cinema history that employ slapstick elements in a comparable fashion to European and American slapstick films. Nuri Ergün's *Cilalı İbo Casuslar Arasında* (Ibo the Polished Amongst the Spies, 1959) is one such film. It follows the funny story of fictional character Cilalı İbo, who tries to stop the operations of foreign secret agents in Turkey. Cilalı İbo (Ibo the Polished) is an awkward, childish, and clumsy shoe polisher with a lisp, who always wears a funny baseball cap with his name written on the front. His clumsiness and curiosity often land him in troublesome situations, but he always manages to save himself with some luck and craftiness. Cilalı İbo ends up in several fights and chases. The film relies heavily on the character's exaggerated gestures and facial expressions, along with his lisping speech and mispronunciations, to generate its comedy. *Ibo the Polished Amongst the*

Spies was a commercial success. Noticing this, the film's producer Osman Fahir Seden went on to produce a total of sixteen different Cilalı İbo films between 1959 and 1986, directed by various directors.

Following the commercial success of the Cilalı İbo series, another film series that relies on slapstick comedy features started in 1963 with the film *Helal Olsun Ali Abi* (Good To You Big Brother Ali) directed by Hulki Saner. The series follows the adventures of a fictional character, Turist Ömer (Ömer the Tourist). Turist Ömer is a very similar character to Cilalı İbo in his childishness, curiosity, clumsiness, and craftiness. Like Cilalı İbo, Turist Ömer often ends up in troublesome situations because of these qualities. The acting style is very similar, as well, as the actor who plays Turist Ömer uses vivid and exaggerated gestures and facial expressions to create comedy. The verbal slapstick in the film is achieved through the use of colourful slang and outrageous metaphors. Unlike Cilalı İbo, Turist Ömer does not have a speech disorder, and he makes no pronunciation mistakes. Like Cilalı İbo, Turist Ömer wears headgear; however, unlike Cilalı İbo's, it is a hat, not a baseball cap. This is interesting because, with his Western-style hat, Turist Ömer is reminiscent of Jacques Tati's fictional character Monsieur Hulot. Like the Cilalı İbo series, the Turist Ömer films were very successful commercially, and a total of ten Turist Ömer films were made between 1963 and 1973, all directed by the same director. In these later films, Turist Ömer, as expected from a character carrying the title "tourist", visits countries as diverse as Spain, Germany, and Saudi Arabia. In the last film of the series, *Turist Ömer Uzay Yolunda* (Ömer the Tourist in Star Trek, 1973), he even travels to outer space, as the film is in part an unapologetic knock-off of the then-popular television series *Star Trek*.

Both Cilalı İbo and Turist Ömer films are quite different from films such as *The Magical Treasure* in their approach to slapstick. These films are not cinema extensions of theatre performances; on the contrary, they use slapstick elements more suitable for cinema, which are often adapted from American and

European slapstick films. One of the most interesting examples of such an approach can be found in another comedy film made in 1963, *Tosun'la Yosun'un Maceraları* (The Adventures of Tosun and Yosun) by Nuri Ergün. The film is an unapologetic *Laurel and Hardy* knock-off. In the film, a Turkified Laurel and Hardy, Yosun and Tosun, operate within a Turkified collection of gags taken from various films of some of the most popular Hollywood slapsticks of the 30s and 40s. *The Adventures of Tosun and Yosun* and *The Magical Treasure* represent two extreme poles of Turkey's popular commercial cinema's approach to slapstick. While *The Magical Treasure* uses elements rooted in the traditional national culture to produce slapstick comedy, the other prefers to copy Hollywood directly to achieve the same.

Given these examples, it is obvious that Okan's approach to slapstick is significantly different from that of his fellow filmmakers in Turkey, as he uses neither theatrical nor culturally specific national elements nor gags taken from Hollywood slapsticks. Okan's film also distinguishes itself from other slapstick films made in Turkey with its absence of any kind of verbal slapstick. This makes the film's reference to silent slapstick films of early film history even more pronounced. The utilisation of slapstick as a tool to generate social critique is another feature that distinguishes Okan's film from the films mentioned earlier, as they lack such a feature.

Differences Between *Funny Saturday* and *Saturday Saturday*, and Their Significance

Funny Saturday, the original French-language version of the film, and its Turkified version, *Saturday Saturday*, feature identical visual material. In the Turkified version, these identical images and episodes are presented with slightly different arrangements and in a different order. Though noticeable, this is not the only difference between these two versions of the same film. Both films feature voice-over narration. The most noticeable difference between these two versions is that the voice-over in *Saturday Saturday*

is more dominant in comparison to the voice-over in *Funny Saturday*. Furthermore, unlike in *Funny Saturday*, the voice-over in *Saturday Saturday* is used to explain situations appearing on the screen to the viewer. Okan states that even though it was Turkified, the film has nothing to do with Turkey or Turks: "I Turkified the film forcibly. (…) These things appearing in the film are foreign to Turkey. They are foreign to the reality of the country".[218] Okan's excessive use of voice-over and heavy reliance on the soundtrack in *Saturday Saturday* should be seen in this light, as it suggests that Okan was unsure about the film's accessibility for Turkish viewers, and he used the voice-over to clarify certain aspects of his film. Besides these features, it should be mentioned that the overly dominant soundtrack, which strengthens the continuity in the film, at times gives the film the appearance of a music video in its Turkified version.

As touched upon at the beginning of the chapter, apart from these important but rather technical differences, the most significant differences between these two versions lie in the alterations made to the characters. In the Turkified version, the couple around whom the film revolves is re-imagined as an immigrant couple with Turkish names and backgrounds. Pierre, one of the main characters of *Funny Saturday*, becomes a Turkish immigrant, Sümer, and his partner, Véronique, becomes Turkish immigrant, Ayşegül. Given these alterations, it should be noted that Okan has not only Turkified the film, but also *immigrantised* it. These new Turkified and immigrantised identities introduce new meanings to the characters' relationship with the world. Sümer and Ayşegül have a very different relationship with the world than do Pierre and Véronique. This difference can be observed in several scenes, but most obviously in the scene in which they visit a shopping centre.

In the scene, the couple, while window-shopping, is stopped by the security guard of the shopping centre with the suspicion of shoplifting. They are escorted into a room, after being forced to pass in front of the curious eyes of other con-

sumers. In the room, the security guard demands to search the couple's pockets and bags. Sümer, or Pierre, angrily rejects the guard's demand and insists that the guard must call the police if he wants to perform a search. After leaving the room for a while to discuss the matter with one of his colleagues, the guard returns and allows the couple to leave without being searched. In the original French-language version of the film, the scene generates a completely different meaning than it does in the Turkified version. In *Saturday Saturday*, the scene suggests a racist or xenophobic motive behind the security guard's ungrounded suspicion, while the same thing cannot be said for the scene in the French version of the film. In *Funny Saturday*, the scene suggests nothing more than a glitch in the chaotic marketplace on a busy Saturday.

Besides the couple, there is another character, Alex, in *Funny Saturday*, who is given an immigrant identity in the Turkification process. Alex is Turkified as immigrant Erol in *Saturday Saturday.* Alex/Erol is a philanderer who engages in relations with numerous women both sexually and non-sexually during the film. The character is performed by Okan himself. Just like the couple, Alex's Turkification gives a new and special significance to his behaviours. For instance, Erol's relationships with women, unlike Alex's, can be seen as a commentary on the deeply embedded perception of foreign, non-Muslim women common among the first generation of Turkish migrant workers. Zülfü Livaneli refers to this perception as "the myth of the infidel woman waiting for Turkish men".[219] According to Livaneli, who lived in Western Europe for a long time as a political refugee and had the chance to observe Turkish migrant workers, many of these male guest workers were led to believe that they would be welcomed and picked up upon their arrival to Germany by an imaginary "blonde German woman who would jump into the strong arms of the Turkish man".[220] Although many of these guest workers were supposedly expecting to be welcomed by these imaginary blonde, non-Muslim, European women, para-

doxically, these women were also considered to be immoral by the same migrant workers due to their liberal attitudes towards their own bodies, sexuality, and men. Ian Buruma observes that this kind of perception is not unique to the Turkish guest worker community in Europe. Occidentalists, especially fundamentalist Islamists and ultra-orthodox Jews, share a very similar perception of Western women. According to Buruma, the perception of Western women plays a very central role in the formation of the Occidentalist narration, "the dehumanizing picture of the West painted by its enemies".[221] Noting that Western women "are regarded by devout Muslims, or indeed ultra-orthodox Jews, as whores and their men as pimps", Buruma writes that "the issue of women is not [a] marginal" one, and "it lies at the heart of (…) Occidentalism".[222]

The episode that follows the adventures of Erol in *Saturday Saturday* presents a peculiar image of women and daily life in the West that is reminiscent of the view of the Occidentalists. In one scene, Erol secretly follows one of Ayşegül's friends during her visit to the town centre and the market. The woman becomes aware of the fact that she is being followed by an unknown man, but does not react. Sometime later, Erol approaches the woman and invites her for a drink. She accepts the invitation and they sit at a cafe in the town square. After a while, Erol invites the woman to his nearby apartment. She accepts again, and the couple has sex in the apartment. Later, they leave the apartment and return to the square. While they are chatting, the woman sees her husband kissing another woman on the square. She is shocked and angry to see her husband cheating, and turning to Erol, she slaps him in the face and leaves.

Occidentalism can be defined as the asymmetric sibling of Orientalism. Like the Orientalist one, the Occidentalist imagination of *the other* is coloured by sexual fantasies. In his influential book *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient*, Edward Said observes that, in the minds of the Orientalists, the Orient is associated with "the freedom of licentious sex" and is imagined as

"a place where one could look for sexual experience unobtainable in Europe".[223] In the film, Okan seems to mirror this very image and uses it to represent the Occident, the imaginary West, in an identical way. In Okan's filmic imagination, Europe, not the Orient, is the place where one can look for sexual experience unobtainable in Turkey, a country which is traditionally considered as part of the Orient. The episode portrays Western women and their husbands as unfaithful. This representation is reminiscent of Buruma's observations regarding the perception of Western individuals by Occidentalists.

The woman who cheats on her husband with Erol, meets her friend, Ayşegül, before meeting Erol. This meeting with Ayşegül is a well-calculated move by the director. It serves at least two different purposes: firstly, meeting Ayşegül gives an insight into her social context. This enables the director to integrate the story of her and Erol into the film's fragmented corpus. Second, the woman's meeting with Ayşegül inevitably provides a comparison between the two women: Ayşegül is an immigrant, and the other woman is not. The local woman is cheating on her husband with a foreign man, while Ayşegül loves her husband and is faithful to him. The meeting establishes an opposition between the Orient and the Occident. As a representative of the Orient, Ayşegül embodies more "traditional" values, while the other woman, as a representative of the Occident, is made to stand for the imaginary West, embodying the perception of Occidentalists. Obviously, such readings can only be done for *Saturday Saturday*. They are not applicable to the original French version of the film.

Okan stated that:

> *Funny Saturday* has no connection to Turkey. The film is a bastard film. It has nothing to do with Turkey or Turks. It has nothing to do with im/migration or im/migrants either. I did not have any such intentions. I began the film with the intention of

> making a French film. (…) I Turkified the film later, forcibly. I Turkified the main characters in order for the film to become more accessible and commercially successful in Turkey. Turkifiying the characters was my idea. I asked myself: 'What would change if the characters were Turkish, French or something else? After all, it is just a couple who lives there.[224]

When asked about the significant changes that the Turkification of the film caused, such as the racist, xenophobic, and Occidentalist undertones previously discussed, Okan expressed surprise, and admitted that he did not foresee these problematic aspects when he decided to Turkify the film.[225]

Even though he prefers to downplay the significance of the Turkification process and the marketing of *Funny Saturday* as a Turkish film under the name *Cumartesi Cumartesi*, Okan's manipulation of the characters and dialogues, as well as the timing of these manipulations, are significant. In fact, given its timing and subject matter, *Saturday Saturday* as a whole can be read as a critical commentary on the rapid political and social changes that Turkey has undergone following the military coup d'état on 12 September 1980.

On Friday, 12 September 1980, Turkey woke up to the third military coup d'état in its relatively short modern history. Citing the political chaos, economic instability, and politically motivated violence ongoing between extremist right- and left-wing factions for years as the pretext, the military overthrew the democratically elected civilian government and took over the rule of the country in a hierarchical coup. After the military takeover, the constitution and the parliament were abolished. Political parties, labour unions, and all political organisations were shut down. Thousands of citizens were arrested, tortured, and some —many of them extra-judicially— were murdered. The entire country was turned into an open-air prison. After ruling the country with an iron fist and violently suppressing all

labour movements and left-leaning oppositions, the military handed the rule of the country over to the "democratically" elected right-wing neo-liberal *Anavatan Partisi* (Motherland Party) government, under the leadership of Turgut Özal, in 1983 following an election held under the watchful eyes—and the shadow of weapons—of the military. Similar to the CIA-backed military coups that took place in Latin American countries around the same period, the military takeover brought with it a rapid and unregulated neo-liberalisation of the economy. The military rulers, and the right-wing government that succeeded it, deregulated almost all branches of the economy while privatising most public institutions. The coup d'état also had a significant impact on the social, cultural, ideological, and individual domain. As Pelin Başcı observes:

> [i]t is possible to view the cultural impact of the 1980 takeover as a backlash against mid-twentieth-century pluralism and reform-minded utopianism. Coming on the heels of the January 24 (1980) austerity measures, the coup initiated a breakdown in existing socio-economic practices through the swift introduction of neo-liberal policies. As a violent social engineering project, the takeover cleared away organized labor and social opposition in favor of capitalist relationships. It augmented one kind of competition based on rugged individualism, while suppressing another based on communal solidarity. The shift from protectionist "statism" (devletçilik) to market economy took place under the watchful eyes of the generals. This process advocated a new ethos, which combined political authoritarianism with "competitive individualism".[226]

Aiming to create a new type of human, the military junta reformulated the relation between the state and its citizens, and set the groundwork to transform the individual citizen, who had rights and responsibilities, into an apolitical competitive consumer. Sociologist Enver Aysever observes that, after this refor-

mulation, a new code of morality and immorality, which promoted being rich by any means, was created.[227] Interestingly, all these reformulations and changes have not been made in secrecy; on the contrary, they were proudly announced and defended by Prime Minister Özal on many occasions, with now-sloganised statements. At one of these occasions, when asked about corruption allegations concerning the state officials, Özal, in defence of these officials, famously declared "Benim memurum işini bilir!" (My public servant knows what is best for him/her, or My public workers know how to survive well).[228] Özal's expression can be seen as the manifestation of "state-sponsored bribes and embezzlement", and indeed, it has been perceived as a green light for wild and lawless competition in the pursuit of individual financial enrichment, at the expense of society.[229] In another of his speeches, Özal declared that "Anayasayı bir kere delmekle bir şey olmaz" (Nothing happens if the constitutional law is broken once), legitimising and promoting this lawlessness even further. The quote can also be read as a manifestation of the political and moral degeneration of the period. It should be noted that this neo-liberal transition was not unique to Turkey. This was very much the zeitgeist of the period during which the Conservative Prime Minister of Britain, Margaret Thatcher, famously declared "[t]here is no such thing as society; there are individual men and women".[230] It was also the height of the Cold War, and for that reason, neo-liberal policies were often presented with a nationalist and religious flavour. A clear manifestation of this can be found in another famous speech by Özal, in which, after announcing that he himself loves the wealthy, Özal declared that the "religion of Islam emphasises wealth, not poverty, and Allah loves those who are wealthy".[231]

Given the timing of its release, which was about five years after the military takeover, and two years into Özal's wild neo-liberal policies, Okan's film can be read as a commentary on the post-coup reality and rapidly changing society in Turkey. Interestingly, 12 September 1980 was a Friday. It can be argued

that Okan's film is concerned with what came after that particular Friday, Saturday, and the new life and relations it brought. In this context, the couple can be seen as a symbolic representation of Turkish society, lost in the neo-liberal reality, new relations of the post-coup market economy, and its chaotic and competitive daily life.

Interestingly, though the couple has a rough time in this new reality, Okan does not seem to be hopeless about the future. This is a significant change from the dystopian tone and hopeless ending of *The Bus*. This hopeful projection finds its embodiment particularly in the episode revolving around a dentist and a teenager. The episode exists both in the original and in the Turkified version of the film. The teenager is afraid of dental treatment and injection. In order to distract the dentist and avoid the injection, he asks the dentist difficult questions, for example, the chemical components of the medicine that the dentist is preparing to inject. The dentist, not expecting such a challenging question, is unable to answer. Exploiting the dentist's inability, the teenager manages to escape from the clinic without receiving the injection and treatment. The teenager first appears in the episode while awaiting his turn in the clinic's waiting room. He is seen reading a book about computers. After leaving the clinic, the same teenager is seen sitting on a public bench. An old man (played by Michel Robin) tries to understand and solve a Rubik's cube he found on the bench. After seeing the cube, the teenager asks for permission to look at it. After expressing his doubts about the teenager's ability to solve the puzzle, and stating that he himself has been trying to solve it for some time without success, the old man hands the cube over to the teenager. The teenager, under the surprised watch of the old man, solves the puzzle very quickly and gives it back. The old man cannot believe what he just saw. All these events take place before the witnessing eyes of Pierre/Sümer, who sits beside the old man the entire time. The interactions between the teenager, the dentist, and the old man, as well as details such as computer magazine and the Rubik's cube, can be read as Okan's perception of the

relation between generations and the question of progress. Based on this reading, it can be argued that Okan believes in progress and new generations, and that he is hopeful for the future.

Given the features discussed so far, one can state that *Funny Saturday* is an unusual experiment in cinema history. It is a rare film, perhaps the only one, in cinema history that was produced in one particular national context (Switzerland) using a particular language (French) before it was adapted into another national context (Turkey) and language (Turkish) by the film's director himself. This adaptation was not just a linguistic translation of dialogues, but also a significant change in characters, dialogues, and editing. This interesting adaptation experiment multiplies the film, and, in practice, creates two different films from a single one. One of these films (*Funny Saturday*) speaks to (at least, intends to) an international audience by addressing, and commenting upon, a condition that is experienced by many individuals in post-industrial consumer societies, while the other film (*Cumartesi Cumartesi*), by re-contextualising the same condition and slightly rephrasing its commentary, speaks more directly to an audience in Turkey (not yet a post-industrial consumer society at the time) about a new issue (immigration) that is not even hinted in the original version of the film. *Funny Saturday* is a non-Czechoslovak New Wave film, which contains many of the distinguishing features of the movement, even though it was made in a different country and period. It is also a carnivalesque film that adopts a serio-comical tone to deliver a social commentary.

Notes

[170] Baker, Mona, and Gabriela Saldanha, "Lip-Synchronised Dubbing", 17.
[171] Diffrient, David Scott. *Omnibus Films: Theorizing Transauthorial Cinema.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014. 7.
[172] Ibid. 14.
[173] "Birden fazla öykülü filmler". Translation mine.
Ünser, Orhan. "Birden fazla öykülü filmler"
[174] In my book based on a series of interviews with him, Okan for the first time ever recognised the fact that he had used Nesin's work in his film without the author's permission by stating the following: "Yes, this part of the film was taken from Aziz Nesin's work. First, I denied this fact because I did not pay enough attention to it. Surely, this is not the most important work of Aziz Nesin. Frankly, I did not have enough time to deal with it either". Translation mine.
Luxembourgeus. 127.
[175] "Dürrenmatt'ın hikayesinde beni en çok çeken şey o sosisin mahkeme reisi tarafından ve yahut da savcı tarafından yenmiş olması. Bu korkunç bir kara mizah. İnsanın tüyleri diken diken oluyor. Her şeyi sorgulayan bir yaklaşım bu. Anarşizm diyoruz ya, bu işte. Dürrenmatt bütün siyasal, toplumsal düzeni sorguluyor. Hikayenin beni çarpan kısmı bu oldu. Tabi ki hikayeyi geliştirmek gerekliydi. Derken Neuchâtel'de bu kasap olayı oldu. Bir kasap deliriyor ve gerçekten birilerini bıçaklıyor. Ben Neuchâtel'de yaşarken oldu bu olay. Aynen filmdeki gibi kasap birilerini bıçakladıktan sonra kasap dükkanı o gün hiç kapanmadan çalışmaya devem etti. Ben bunu hem kendim gidip gördüm, hem de daha sonra gazetede okudum. Bu beni çok çarptı. Aynen bir Dürrenmatt hikayesi gibiydi. O yüzden filmde Dürrenmatt'ın hikayesini bu şekilde geliştirdim". Translation mine.
Ibid. 108.
[176] Ibid. 127-128.
[177] "Hikayeyi okumuştum ve tabii ki de onun Aziz Nesin'in hikayesi olduğunu biliyordum ama açıkçası Aziz Nesin'den öyle bir tepki gelmesini de pek beklemiyordum. Bir de Aziz Nesin'in beni mahkemeye vermesi durumunda, ki bu yönde bir açıklaması oldu, bir savunmamın olması gerekiyordu. O cümle bu amaçla söylenmiş bir yalandır. Mahkemeye gitsek mahkemede "Aziz Nesin'in hikayesini bilerek, isteyerek aldım". demek başka "Ben bu hikayeyi bir yerden duydum ama hikayenin Aziz Nesin'in hikayesi olduğunu bilmiyordum". demek başka. O an öyle bir yalan söylememin arkasında böyle bir düşünce, refleks yatıyor olmalı. Ama dediğim gibi, bu çok utandığım ve hep de utanacağım bir olaydır". Translation mine.
Ibid. 127-128.
[178] Ibid. 128.
[179] Stott, Andrew. *Comedy*. Routledge, 2005. 83
[180] Breton, André. *Anthology Of Black Humor*. City Lights Books, 1997. xix.
[181] Gehring, Wes D. *American Dark Comedy: Beyond Satire*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1996. 12.

[182] Camus, Albert. *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays.* Vintage International, 1991. 10.
[183] Gehring. 36.
[184] Ibid. 36.
[185] Crafton, Donald. "Pie and Chase: Gag, Spectacle and Narrative in Slapstick Comedy", 107.
[186] Ibid. 119.
[187] Ibid. 110.
[188] Paulus, Tom, and Rob King. *Slapstick Comedy*. Routledge, 2010. 3.
[189] Ibid. 13.
[190] Verstraten, Peter, "Accelerated Gestures: Play Time in Agnès Varda's Cléo de 5 à 7", 42.
[191] Wiegand, Chris. *French New Wave*. Pocket Essentials, 2005. 21.
[192] "Ben Boşnak kökenliyim, benimki Slav bakış açısı. Türkiye'nin mizahının çizgisi kalın, daha kaba. Slavlar'da daha ince. Ben ise olaylara tersten bakarım, iyiye kötü, kötüye iyi…" Translation mine.
Cumhuriyet Pazar. 28 April 2013. 1.
[193] Iordanova, Dina. *Cinema of the Other Europe: The Industry and Artistry of East Central European Film.* Wallflower, 2003. 97.
[194] Hames, Peter. *Czech and Slovak Cinema: Theme and Tradition*. Edinburgh UP, 2009. 170.
[195] De Cuir, Greg. "The Yugoslav Black Wave: The History and Poetics of Polemical Cinema in the 1960s and 1970s in Yugoslavia". 407.
[196] "O sahnedeki her şey tamamen kurgulanmış, en ince ayrıntısına kadar planlanmış bir mizansen değil. O sahnede oyuncuları koşturduk, sokaktaki insanların çoğunun olup bitenden haberi yoktu. Ama İsviçreliler böyle. Bize kıyasla daha soğuk insanlar. Birisi birisini bıçakla kovalıyorsa bir İsviçreli olaya sadece ilginç bir şekilde bakmakla yetinebilir. Bu sahnedeki planları şu an tam olarak hatırlamıyorum ama o sahne benim hazırladığım bir mizansen değil, bunu söyleyebilirim. Bu sahnede insanlar arasında birbirine karşı bir ilgisizlik olduğunu göstermek istedim". Translation mine.
Luxembourgeus. 119.
[197] "Ben ise olaylara tersten bakarım, iyiye kötü, kötüye iyi…" Translation mine.
Cumhuriyet Pazar. 28 April 2013. 1.
[198] Benjamin, Walter. "Capitalism as Religion", 259.
[199] Ibid. 259.
[200] Ibid. 259.
[201] Targowski, Andrew. *Cognitive Informatics and Wisdom Development: Interdisciplinary Approaches.* United States: IGI Global, 2010. 162.
[202] "Au milieu de toute cette organisation, est-ce que, nous, nous étions à la hauteur de toute cette perfection?" Translation mine.
[203] "Acaba insanoğlu kendi yarattığı teknik kadar kusursuz muydu?" Translation mine.
[204] Giblett, R. *Sublime Communication Technologies*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2008. 99.

[205] Walker, Charles R. and Robert Guest. *Man on the Assembly Line*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Uni. Press, 1952. 9.
[206] Borden, Iain. *Drive: Automobile Journeys Through Film, Cities and Landscapes*. London: Reaktion. 2012. 32.
[207] Bakhtin, Michail M. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2009. 122–123.
[208] Ibid. 123.
[209] Ibid. 123.
[210] Ibid. 123.
[211] Ibid. 124.
[212] Ibid. 128.
[213] Ibid. 108–109.
[214] Nikolajeva, Maria. *Power, Voice And Subjectivity In Literature For Young Readers.* Routledge, 2010. 10.
[215] Bakhtin. 126–127.
[216] Luxembourgeus. 103.
[217] *Süpermen Dönüyor* (The Return of Superman, 1979) by Kunt Tulgar
[218] "Film zorla Türkleştirdim. (…) Film yabancı bir film. Ülkenin gerçeklerine son derece yabancı." Translation mine.
Luxembourgeus. 113,130.
[219] Livaneli, Zülfü. *Sevdalım Hayat*. Istanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 2007. 157.
[220] Ibid. 158.
[221] Buruma, Ian, and Avishai Margalit. *Occidentalism: The West in the Eyes of Its Enemies*. New York: Penguin Books, 2005. epub.
[222] Ibid.
[223] Said, Edward W. *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient*. London: Penguin Classics, 2003. 190.
[224] "Filmin Türkiye ile hiçbir bağlantısı yok. *Cumartesi Cumartesi* piç bir filmdir. O filmin Türkiye ile Türklerle hiçbir alakası yok. Zaten böyle bir film yapmak için de yola çıkılmadı. Tamamen bir Fransız filmi yapmak üzere yola çıkıldı. (…) Ben ikinci filmimi zorla Türkleştirdim. Filmin Türkiye'de iş yapması için ana karakterleri Türkleştirdim. Karakterleri Türk yapmak fikri benim fikrimdi. Kendi kendime dedim ki, 'karakterler ha Türk olmuş, ha Fransız olmuş, ha başka bir şey olmuş, ne değişir ki? Nihayetinde orada yaşayan bir çift bunlar.'" Translation mine.
Luxembourgeus. 112.
[225] "Bu karakterleri Tükleştirirken o kadar da detaylı düşünmedim. O kadar da kasıt aramamak lazım". Translation mine.
Ibid. 112.
[226] Başcı, Pelin. *Social Trauma and Telecinematic Memory: Imagining the Turkish Nation since the 1980 Coup*. Springer International Publishing, 2017. 74–75.
[227] "Yeni bir ahlak/ahlaksızlık yaratıldı. Zengin ol da, nasıl olursan ol! Kartvizitlerde ne meslek yazar oldu, ne de unvan. Sadece zengin ya da yoksul yazması yetiyordu". Translation mine.
Aysever, Enver. "Vicdandan vazgeçince yaşamak kolay!". *Birgün*, 19.11.2014.

[228] Translation Davide Torsello in *Corruption in Public Administration: an Ethnographic Approach*. Edward Elgar Pub., 2016.
[229] Baran, Z. "Corruption: The Turkish challenge" 135.
[230] Outhwaite, William. *The Future of Society*. Blackwell, 2006. 17.
[231] "İslam dini fakirliği değil, zenginliği öne çıkartır, Allah zengini sever". Translation mine.

Chapter IV

A Journey Back Home

Okan completed his third film *Mercedes Mon Amour* (The Yellow Mercedes) in 1992, seven years after his second film, *Funny Saturday*. The film is the last film of the trilogy, which I call the *Trilogy of Im/migration* in this study. *The Yellow Mercedes* is also Okan's first film that he made in his country of birth, Turkey. Unlike his previous two films, Okan's third film was shot almost entirely in Turkey, except for a very short episode that takes place in Germany. Apart from a few actors appearing in supporting roles, and a few technical crew members, the film features predominantly Turkish actors and crew who were formerly associated with the popular commercial cinema industry of the country. *The Yellow Mercedes* is a literary adaptation. It is based on the celebrated 1976 novel *The Delicate Rose of My Desire* by one of the most prominent authors of Turkish language literature, novelist and playwright Adalet Ağaoğlu. Just like the novel, the film follows the dystopian journey of *Gastarbeiter* Bayram from Munich, where he works as a so-called "guest worker", to his rural hometown in central Anatolia, driving his newly bought, hard-earned, long-dreamed-of automobile. Okan named the film *Sarı Mercedes* in Turkish (literally "The Yellow Mercedes"), *The Yellow Mercedes* in English, and *Mercedes Mon Amour* in French (literally "Mercedes My Love").[232] Despite Okan's expressed disapproval, the film is also known as *Fikrimin İnce Gülü* in Turkey in part because it was

adapted from an already famous novel, and in part, because it was wrongly advertised by the production company as such before its premiere in Turkey.

The Yellow Mercedes is a road movie. In her novel, Ağaoğlu does not offer a simple road story, but a complex, multilayered reading experience in which Bayram's journey occupies a relatively small portion. Ağaoğlu carefully and masterfully interweaves a series of events and memories—mostly through flashbacks—into Bayram's journey. Although Bayram's physical journey functions as the mainframe of the novel, the book is more concerned with the swift and dramatic changes occurring in Turkey's social and political landscape after 1950. Perhaps, this should not come as a surprise, given that in an interview she gave to BBC Radio a short time after *The Yellow Mercedes*'s release in 1993, Ağaoğlu stated that she often writes her novels with a certain problematic political, social, or personal issue in mind. In the same interview, Ağaoğlu also stated that she often uses archival research and documentary novel techniques and principles in her works.[233] Given these facts, it might be stated that *The Delicate Rose of My Desire* offers a clear example of Ağaoğlu's writing in which the main character of the novel functions as a visible signifier to address a much deeper and more complicated sociopolitical issue. In his adaptation, Okan purposefully removes, ignores, or decontextualises many of the local cultural, social, and political references of the novel, in order to create a transnational and transcultural film, which, according to Okan, is concerned with "the relationship between human and commodities" rather than any specific local issue.[234] Okan does not believe in making politically motivated, culturally specific, and didactic works, as he makes his films for the wider world, not just for a Turkish audience.[235]

The Yellow Mercedes is a well-known film in Turkey, and it is consistently listed among the best films ever made in the country.[236] However, despite Okan's motivation for making a film for an international audience, the film is not as well-known abroad.

As already explained in chapter two, the road movie is not a common genre in Turkey's cinema. One needs less than the fingers of both hands to count all road movies made in Turkey preceding *The Yellow Mercedes*. If one remembers the fact that Turkey's cinema had been one of the most productive national cinemas in the world, producing more than 200 feature films annually during most of the 1960s and 70s, the scarcity of road movies can be better grasped. Apart from *The Bus*, only two of these rare road movies, Ökten's 1979 film *Sürü* (The Herd), and Gören's 1982 film *Yol* (The Road), are known internationally.

Yeşilçam cinema was living its final days when Okan started *The Yellow Mercedes*' production in 1987. In this year, foreign film companies were allowed to do business for the first time in Turkey. As explained earlier, this move was the beginning of the end for the popular cinema of Turkey, and it brought Yeşilçam to a total collapse in 1989. Okan's first film in his native country came into existence under these troubling conditions. One might assume that Okan, as an independent filmmaker, was not directly affected by the negative developments in the country's film industry, or, rather, what was left of it. This was not the case. Okan's film was supposed to be financed and produced by an established film company, owned by Okan's brother-in-law Cengiz Ergun. However, due to financial difficulties, caused mostly by the general conditions of the industry, the production company withdrew from his project long before it could be completed, forcing Okan to pause the production and search for alternative financial resources to complete the project. As Okan explains, although the film is officially registered as a German-French co-production, it was financed mostly by Okan himself.

> In the end, the film is totally mine. I established a film company in Germany and another film company in France, and made a co-production between these two companies. I made the film by myself by signing cooperation agreements between my own companies located in different countries.[237]

Unlike *The Bus* and *The Yellow Mercedes*, neither *The Herd* nor *The Road* is an independently financed film. *The Herd* was produced by Yılmaz Güney's own film production company, *Güney Film*, using the means of the Regional Enterprise System with a local audience in mind. When it received unexpected attention abroad and awards at prestigious international film festivals, *Güney Film* established new contacts and found new financial resources for their upcoming projects, one of which was *The Road*.[238] When *The Herd* was made, the film industry of Turkey was alive and kicking, so the film faced no difficulties either in finance or in distribution. In contrast to *The Herd*, *The Road* was financed by a film production company in Switzerland. Furthermore, the Swiss production company, beyond providing financial resources, also undertook the marketing and international distribution of the film. Following the involvement of a foreign production company and its capital, the film's target audience had shifted from local to international. This fact is acknowledged openly by Güney himself, who is the scriptwriter of both *The Herd* and *The Road*.[239]

In this chapter, I will look for an answer to the question why, despite Okan's aim, *The Yellow Mercedes* has failed to generate much international attention. In this search, I will compare Okan's film to Ökten's and Gören's previously mentioned films, which received considerable international attention. Comparing *The Yellow Mercedes* to these films also provides an interesting perspective for understanding the development of the road movie in Turkey, as both *The Road* and *The Herd* are road movies that are preceded by Okan's road movie debut, *The Bus*, and succeeded by his second road movie, *The Yellow Mercedes*.

I will start the chapter by looking at the film's relation to its literary source of origin, the novel *The Delicate Rose of My Desire*. This will be followed by a section that provides a general look at the road movie genre in Turkey in the period following Okan's debut film, *The Bus*. In the following and the final section, I will compare *The Yellow Mercedes* to Ökten's and Gören's

films, as well as Okan's debut film. In this chapter, I aim to find answers to the following questions: As a road movie, how does *The Yellow Mercedes* relate to *The Herd* and *The Road*, as well as to Okan's own road movie debut, *The Bus*? How do these films compare to one another in terms of telling a local story to a global audience? And finally, what might be the reason(s) behind *The Yellow Mercedes*'s failure to attract international attention while both *The Herd* and *The Road* could?

A Journey Away from a Journey: From Paper to Screen

In his 2007 book *Adaptation and Its Discontents*, after surveying various taxonomies of adaptation offered by various theorists, Thomas Leitch proposes a ten-level scale to categorise the relationship between a film that is adapted from a literary source, and the literary text that serves as the source of origin for the film: celebration, adjustment, (neoclassical) imitation, revision, colonization, (meta)commentary or deconstruction, analogue, parody and pastiche, imitation (secondary, tertiary, or quaternary), and allusion.[240] Of these categories, Leitch defines *colonization* in reference to Kamilla Elliott's "the ventriloquist concept" as a process in which the adaptation "blatantly empties out the novel's signs and fills them with new filmic spirits."[241] The colonizing adaptations "see progenitor texts as vessels to be filled with new meanings" whether the new content "develops meanings implicit in the earlier text, amounts to an ideological critique of that text, or goes off in another direction entirely."[242] Given that in *The Yellow Mercedes*, Okan transforms Ağaoğlu's time, location, and context-specific novel that is engraved with direct social and political references into an internationally-minded film that is disengaged from the novel's time, location, and context constraints, as well as from its social and political references, Okan's approach in adapting the novel into the film can be defined as a *colonizing* adaptation.

Although *The Yellow Mercedes* builds its narration on Ağaoğlu's main character and his journey, Okan's work distin-

guishes itself from the book considerably. This is mostly because, unlike it is visualised in the film, the novel offers much more than just a road story revolving around one single character. It follows several other characters in addition to Bayram, and the many events that revolve around them. Bayram's journey, though central, occupies only a small portion of the novel. Although the road journey provides the main narrative framework, Ağaoğlu's text is more concerned with the social and political landscape of Turkey at the time than with Bayram's personal story.

Okan uses two different methods in his adaptation to approach the novel that is full of local cultural and political references. The first of these methods can be defined as, what I will call, *pruning*, as Okan, like a gardener, removes certain branches of the novel, while encouraging the growth of others in an effort to re-shape Ağaoğlu's story in a way that serves his vision. A clear execution of this pruning method can be observed in one of the film's flashback scenes which depicts Bayram, then still a child, and his first interaction with an automobile. Both in the novel and in the film, Bayram's fascination with automobiles starts in his childhood with the arrival of a big and shiny American automobile in his poor and remote village in central Anatolia. It is the first time in his life that Bayram sees an automobile. He observes both the vehicle and its driver curiously and carefully. The driver receives an unprecedented welcome and respect from the villagers, so much so that everybody in the village's *kahvehane* (a traditional teahouse/meeting place exclusively for men) tries to kiss the hand of the driver. Everybody, even men much older than the driver, competes to give their seat to him. Bayram, an orphan and a member of one of the poorest families of the village, quickly discovers the connection between the automobile and the respect its driver enjoys, and starts dreaming of himself in a similar vehicle, and the respect and recognition he would receive because of it. From that point on, owning an automobile becomes an obsession for Bayram; it becomes his biggest goal in life.[243]


In the novel, Ağaoğlu provides some other information that is not provided in the film, with which she establishes one of the central veins of the novel's political charge. For instance, the driver of the American car is not a random driver who happens to drive by the village in his automobile. He is a representative of the right-wing populist conservative *Demokrat Parti* (Democrat Party), whose leader, Adnan Menderes, campaigned against the one-party rule of the *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* (Republican People's Party) government, with the promise to transform Turkey into a "little America" with "a millionaire in every neighbourhood" in the run-up to the country's first free election in 1950.[244] This information, which is omitted in Okan's film, transforms the shiny American automobile in the novel into a signifier of populist right-wing policies and American imperialism—political, economic, and cultural—gaining ground in Turkey, with the help of local henchmen. Okan faithfully preserves all the visual details of the scene as they are described in the novel, including the big American automobile, its driver, his interactions with the villagers, and Bayram the child, curiously watching all of these take place. However, he removes all the details and direct political references that Ağaoğlu utilises to establish the political subtext of the novel. The film neither provides information about the period of the events, nor the identity and connections of the driver. As a result, Okan transforms Ağaoğlu's story, which is

marked by time-specific local political references, into a personal drama, also politically charged, but in a different context. I will return to this point later in the chapter.

Okan repeats this very same strategy of adaptation several times to adapt other parts of the novel in his film. In fact, unlike what he did while integrating both Dürrenmatt's and Nesin's works into his previous film, he adds only a few minor things to Ağaoğlu's novel in the adaptation. He essentially removes the parts and signifiers that give the book its direct and sharp local political tone.

Ağaoğlu's anti-militarist stance is one of the features of the novel that gets a fair share of Okan's pruning. This anti-militarist position is articulated through the internal monologues of the protagonist, and through flashbacks to the character's memories. Reading the novel, one learns that Bayram completed his compulsory military service at the military prison of Diyarbakır, a prison notorious for its humiliating treatment and torture of inmates in the 1970s and 80s. During his compulsory service, Bayram witnesses, and becomes the subject, of similar treatment. His psyche is deeply scarred by these experiences.[245] Published in 1976, the novel features direct references to, and critique of, the dedemocratisation and militarisation of daily life in Turkey, which starts with the Military Memorandum of 12 March 1971. Through Bayram's experiences and memories, Ağaoğlu portrays the entire country as a prison camp. Ağaoğlu's text is very effective in communicating its anti-militarist position, so much so that it was banned from further publishing in 1981 by the military junta, with the pretext that it was defaming the military. Following the ban, all the previous issues of the book were recalled and confiscated. The book was banned until 1983.[246] None of the novel's daring anti-militarist references made it into the film.

The other strategy Okan utilises in his adaptation is to place the film in a different period. The novel places its story in the immediate period in which it was written. The film, though

it does not specify the period, takes place sometime between the late 1980s and beginning of the 1990s. This is also the period in which the film was produced, as the film's production started in 1987 and ended more than four years later, due to financial difficulties. By changing the period, Okan renders some of the time-specific references of the novel practically functionless in the film. This second strategy can be called *decontextualisation*. One of the most obvious examples of this approach is found in the placement of one of the characters, a foreign driver of a Volkswagen van. Both in the novel and the film, Bayram comes across a Volkswagen van which is travelling in the same direction. Both in Ağaoğlu's and Okan's work, the colourfully painted van evokes the impression of a hippie van. With his sloppy outfit, calm appearance, and behaviour, the van's German-speaking driver only confirms this impression. European and American hippies in colourful vans, travelling to the East, mostly to Kathmandu, Nepal, or India, were a rather common sight in Turkey in the late 1960s and much of the 1970s because the country is a crossroad located geographically between Europe and Asia.[247] Ağaoğlu utilises this hippie figure travelling to the East as a post-industrial individual, who, after satisfying his material needs in the industrialised West, is now in search of immaterial values in the not-yet-industrialised East. In this way, she places the hippie figure in opposition to Bayram, a citizen of a pre-industrial country in search of material goods, embodied by the Mercedes.

Okan uses Ağaoğlu's hippie figure without any significant change. However, due to the fact that the film is placed in a different period, the character does not evoke the same sense of opposition in the film as it does in the novel. Instead, the hippie character appears as an out of context feature in the film and is reduced to a comic figure with the help of whom Bayram ends up in absurd situations. This comic quality of the character is boldly underlined by a musical leitmotif assigned specifically to the character. The leitmotif gives the character a cheerful aura, which fits well to the character's mocking attitude towards

Bayram's self-celebratory victorious posture, while, at the same time, making it impossible to take the hippie character and what he represents seriously.

Returning to the gardener and the tree analogy, it should be noted that, although Okan cuts away many branches of the novel and tries to re-shape it according to his own vision, he cannot fully hide the nature of Ağaoğlu's proverbial tree and the taste of its fruit that is dominated by local political references and sociopolitical critique. One of the most iconic scenes of the film provides a perfect example of this. The scene is a very close visualisation of the corresponding part in the novel. Bayram drives his beloved automobile, which he calls *Balkız* (literally "honey-maiden"), on a picturesque road cutting through agricultural fields covered with golden crops of wheat. He is very close to his intended destination, the village. His calm drive is interrupted by the sudden appearance of a combine harvester on the road, operated by a child. Bayram tries his utmost to avoid a collision with the giant machine, and he succeeds. However, he cannot prevent his automobile from driving off a deep roadside ditch.

This particular scene in the novel offers a subtle critique of populist modernisation in Turkey, promoted wildly by pro-market right-wing populist governments that ruled the country almost uninterruptedly since the country's first free election in 1950. By populist modernisation, I mean a form of consumerism, and the process of acquiring modern technology while ignoring the necessary social and cultural requirements, as well as its possible implications. The populist modernisation can be defined as a process of modernisation only on the façade. Ağaoğlu addresses this problematic issue brilliantly by positioning the combine harvester as a signifier for the rapid and chaotic mechanisation in agriculture, one of the most visible and arguably most painful consequences of these populist policies. Bayram, a former agricultural labourer who has been displaced and forced to move to a big city, and later abroad due to the mechanisation in agriculture, falls victim to the same forces that displaced him in the first place once again, and loses his beloved

Mercedes, and with that, his dreams. The child operator of the combine harvester is the jewel in the crown of this well thought out signifier. It underlines the immaturity of Turkish society in the use of modern technology and the comprehension of its implications. The scene is directly adapted into the film, without any significant change. Interestingly, however, this particular scene is not essential for the film in the generation of its story in the way that Okan wants it to focus on "the relation between the human and the commodity".[248] Okan could have easily removed the scene in the adaptation process, or at the very least, modify it in a way that the scene would lose its references to the specific social and political issues of the time. However, he does not do that. As a result, the inclusion of the scene inadvertently provides the film with references to local sociopolitical realities, which are meaningful only to those who are sufficiently familiar

with the country, despite the declared intentions of Okan.

Ağaoğlu's novel is one of several literary works in Turkish language literature that focus on the problematic aspects of Turkey's modernisation and westernisation experience through the utilisation of modern machinery as a central signifier. In her article "Car Narratives: A Subgenre in Turkish Novel Writing", literary scholar Jale Parla observes that literary works with such modern machinery as their central signifiers occupy a significant space in Turkish language literature to such a degree that it should be considered as a subgenre.[249] For instance, Aziz Nesin's 1955 short story *Medeniyetin Yedek Parçası* (The Spare Part of the Civilisation), and Talip Apaydın's 1958 novel *Sarı Traktör* (The Yellow Tractor), can be pointed out as prominent examples in Turkish language literature that focus on similar issues using similar signifiers. In their works, both Nesin and Apaydın focus on the socially and economically destructive consequences of rapid mechanisation in agriculture by using the very same modern machine, the tractor, as their signifier. Even though they wrote their works quite early on, neither Nesin's nor Apaydın's works are the earliest examples. These works are a part of a long literary tradition that can be traced all the way back to the first realist novel in Turkish language, Recaizade Mahmut Ekrem's 1896 work *Araba Sevdası* (The Carriage Affair).

Ekrem's novel revolves around a dandy, Bihruz Bey of the Tanzimat Era in the Ottoman Empire. Bihruz Bey is a seemingly westernised, lavish character whose only joy in life is his carriage. One day, the protagonist sees Periveş Hanım, a prostitute, in a luxury carriage and falls in love with her after mistakenly taking her for an educated, westernised woman. As quickly becomes obvious, Bihruz Bey is not in love with the lady but with the landau, a symbol of modern Western technology and lifestyle in the eyes of the protagonist. By placing the carriage in the centre of its narration, the novel uses the vehicle as a signifier to discuss the late Ottoman society's problematic relation to modernisation and westernisation. Ağaoğlu's novel fits neatly

into the same literary tradition, as she uses Bayram's relationship with his Mercedes as a tool to discuss Turkish society's problematic relation to modernisation and westernisation. Okan's adaptation of Ağaoğlu's work can be said to extend this literary tradition into cinema with a transnational bend. This is noteworthy, because it shows that, despite Okan's intentions and efforts, the film preserves several important and distinct connections to its source of origin and the sociological reality on which this source feeds. This makes *The Yellow Mercedes* a film that speaks to both national and international audiences at the same time, though on different channels.

Okan's effort to transform the novel into an internationally-minded film was not welcomed by Ağaoğlu. Seeing the film for the first time when it was released to the general public, Ağaoğlu expressed her strong disapproval of the adaptation, pointing out that the film is stripped of the social and political references her novel generates. She went even further and sued Okan, arguing that the adaptation was unfaithful and inappropriate. After a lengthy legal battle during which Ağaoğlu unsuccessfully tried to stop the film's screening by withdrawing from the legal agreement that gave the filming rights of the book, the court ruled in favour of Okan and cleared the way for screening.

The Road Movie in Turkey after *The Bus* and Reception of The *Yellow Mercedes*

Filmmakers in Turkey have been familiar with two distinct approaches to the road movie genre: the New Hollywood road movie, which, as I discussed extensively in the second chapter, came into existence in the 1960s starting with the progressive road movies like Arthur Penn's *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967) and Dennis Hopper's *Easy Rider* (1969), and the European road movie. This is by no means a surprising result if one remembers that the overwhelming majority of foreign films shown in the country—whether road movie or not—have been coming either from Europe or the United States, mostly from the latter. Furthermore, many of the classic examples of both approaches, such as

Bonnie and Clyde, *Easy Rider*, Bergman's *Wild Strawberries*, and Antonioni's *The Passenger*, were screened in the country without hindrance during the Yeşilçam era.[250] Given that Yeşilçam era filmmakers often looked at foreign films for inspiration, it is unrealistic to assume that these films would not be noticed by these filmmakers. Interestingly, despite its dominant position in terms of their ease of access to Turkey's film market, Hollywood road movies do not seem to have influenced Yeşilçam era filmmakers' approach to the genre as much as the European road movies have done. This can be explained by two main factors: the censorship and the financial dynamics of Yeşilçam. Road movies made in Hollywood, especially those made in the 60s and later, were socially critical films to such a degree that they can be said to advocate rebellion against society and its values. Due to the strict censorship regulations, which had been in effect in the country until 1986, it would be inconceivable to produce such critical and rebellious films in Turkey.

The second factor, which led the filmmakers in Turkey to prefer the European approach to road movie over the New Hollywood one, was the financial dynamics of Yeşilçam. As discussed in previous chapters, Yeşilçam cinema was financed directly by the moviegoers through the *Regional Enterprise System.* Filmmakers in Turkey, who often lacked their own financial capital necessary for the production, did not have the luxury to ignore the tastes and values of the audience, let alone criticise or rebel against them. Given that, European road movies seem to have been perceived as a more suitable model for Turkish filmmakers, as they were deemed more introverted and less rebellious. Even though a few road movies were made in Turkey, one can talk about a general reluctance against the genre in Turkey's commercial cinema, leaving it primarily to those—mostly independent filmmakers—who sought to go beyond Yeşilçam's profit-driven approach to filmmaking.[251] One can point out several reasons why the genre has never been a popular choice for commercial filmmakers. The first of these reasons is obviously

the cost; due to transport and logistics requirements, road movies are economically more demanding than typical Yeşilçam films, which usually took place in or around Istanbul, and often in domestic settings. After all, Yeşilçam was a strictly profit-driven, penny-pinching film industry that tried to reduce cost in every imaginable way, going as far as asking the actors, especially less established ones, to do their own makeup and bring their own clothes.[252] The second reason, connected to the first, has been the difficulty of convincing Yeşilçam stars to take part in a road movie, possibly having to leave Istanbul for the project. Given that a typical Yeşilçam star often worked for more than one film project at a time, leaving Istanbul was not something the film stars were happy about, as this would mean loss of income.[253]

The Yellow Mercedes received positive reactions in Turkey from critics and the public, alike. It was nominated for and awarded several prestigious prizes at various national film festivals, for categories including best director and best male actor. According to Okan, despite its success at national film festivals, the film failed to attract viewers to the theatres due to weak marketing and lack of proper distribution when it was released in 1993, five years after the film's production began.[254] The 90s was an extremely turbulent period for Turkey's cinema, given that the commercial cinema industry had collapsed, and the film market fell under the total control of foreign production companies and foreign films for much of the period. Despite these difficulties and initial inability to attract viewers, thanks to frequent television screenings in the 1990s, *The Yellow Mercedes* has attained the status of a classic film, and has left its mark on Turkey's cinema and popular culture.

Today, *The Yellow Mercedes* is still a well-known and celebrated film. It has deeply shaped Turkish society's collective imagination concerning the image of Turkish *Gastarbeiter* abroad. Ever since the film's release, it is impossible to imagine Turkish guest workers abroad without thinking of Bayram, his journey, and his experiences. Interestingly, the film even altered the image

associated with the luxury automobile brand Mercedes-Benz. Although still prestigious, since the film's release, the brand is also associated with the uncouth nouveau riche.

Road to Abroad

Apart from Okan's road movie debut, *The Bus*, Ökten's *The Herd* and Gören's *The Road* are the only other road movies made in Turkey that are widely known internationally. *The Herd* follows several members of a nomadic clan on their train journey from their rural hometown in south-eastern Turkey to the country's capital, Ankara, accompanying a big flock of sheep. They travel to Ankara both to deliver the flock to a middleman who paid for the livestock in advance, and to avoid a looming blood-feud that has been ongoing between the clan and another local tribe for years.

The Herd has a very little known background story that involves Okan. He was the person that spotted the story among many others offered to him by celebrated actor and filmmaker Yılmaz Güney, and he bought the filming rights to make a film under his own direction. Given that Güney was serving a prison sentence for murder at the time, Okan did all necessary research for the script during its development, ranging from making long train journeys to gather visuals for Güney, to finding the shooting locations. Okan also contributed to the development of the script itself and provided the financing for the film with the money he earned from the screenings of *The Bus*. However, due to a financial dispute, Okan withdrew from the project at the very last stage of the pre-production, opening the way for Zeki Ökten to be the director of the film on Güney's request.[255] Despite his withdrawal from the project, one can still detect Okan's influence on the film in several ways. First of all, contrary to what Güney's original story prescribes, the film ends in Ankara, not in Istanbul.[256] Okan stated that he was the one who insisted on concluding the film in Ankara, rather than in Istanbul, because he found the former location symbolically more telling than the latter. Furthermore, he states that the scene, which de-

picts the film's main character, Şivan, and his wife, Berivan, looking at the shiny shop windows in Ankara, is copied from *The Bus* without permission or recognition.[257] In an interview he gave to Atilla Dorsay in 1980, Güney confirmed Okan's statements and acknowledged that Okan's influence on the script was more substantial than suggesting one location over another, as he also contributed to the development of the characters.[258]

The Herd received unexpected attention abroad and won several awards at prestigious international film festivals, such as the *Golden Leopard* at Locarno International Film Festival, and the *OCIC Award* at the 29th Berlin International Film Festival in 1979. The *Golden Leopard* won in Switzerland helped *Güney Film*, which produced *The Herd*, to establish new connections and secure new financial resources for *The Road*.[259] According to documents that were recently made public by *The Road*'s Swiss producer, Edi Hubschmid, all the rights of *The Road* were sold to the Swiss production company *Cactus Film* in 1980 at an early stage, when the film was nothing more than a sketch titled *Bayram* (Holiday).[260] On Güney's request, the script of *Holiday* was first given to Erden Kıral to direct. However, almost a month into the film's shooting, Güney stopped the production and removed Kıral from the project for an undisclosed reason.[261] Shortly thereafter, the project started again from scratch, featuring many new actors, this time under the direction of one of Güney's long-term assistants, Şerif Gören. Gören's *Holiday*, which was renamed *The Road* by Güney in the post-production phase, follows the journeys of six prisoners who are granted a week-long furlough from a semi-open prison due to the religious high season *Kurban Bayramı* (Eid al-adha).

Bordering on third cinema, with its social realist aesthetic and powerful social commentary, *The Herd* distinguishes itself from the preceding road movies made in the country, as well as from the popular Yeşilçam melodramas of its period. Unlike the popular commercial films of the time, *The Herd* is not a star film. Although it features Yeşilçam stars like Tarık Akan and Tuncel

Kurtiz, these actors are placed in an unfavourable light, transforming them into antiheroes. This kind of casting of star figures is an extremely rare occurrence in Turkey's cinema during the Yeşilçam era. Yeşilçam films very often revolve around one or two characters—almost always star figures—without sufficiently developing any of the side characters. Film critic Sadi Çilingir observes that the problem of underdeveloped characters is characteristic of Yeşilçam, and it is not limited only to side characters, as according to Çilingir, Yeşilçam has no characters but "types".[262] Unlike many typical Yeşilçam films, *The Herd* revolves around more than two characters, albeit two of them, Şivan and Berivan, receive the most attention. *The Herd* provides considerable depth to other characters, however, it does not allow the viewer to identify with any of them. *The Herd*, like many Yeşilçam melodramas of the period, mainly revolves around a heterosexual love story, but due to the antihero natures of its main characters, and the lack of a happy ending, it also distances itself from these films. This distance to Yeşilçam cinema is perhaps part of the explanation behind the film's appeal to the international viewer. By Yeşilçam standards, *The Herd* is an unusual film, with a strong auteurial presence. It is an unusual film, first of all, because, unlike the overwhelming majority of Yeşilçam films, it adopts a realistic attitude in approaching its subject, without resorting to any kind of miraculous quick fix, or *deus ex machina*, to deliver a neat resolution. Yeşilçam films almost always make use of these methods, as the conflicts in these films are always resolved at the end. In Yeşilçam films, lovers always reunite, if not in this world, surely in the next, for instance. *The Herd*, taking place in a particular local setting, tells a universal story, with a clash of generations at its heart. The local setting can be argued to be another contributing factor to the film's success in attracting international viewer's attention, as it develops a familiar story in a unique and exotic sociopolitical setting, applying a documentary-like realism without further exoticising or orientalising it.

Like *The Herd*, *The Road* lacks the typical Yeşilçam star figure; all of its protagonists are positioned as antiheroes. Unlike *The Herd*, however, it does not follow a linear narration; instead, it relies heavily on a parallel editing technique, since the film follows six different journeys taking place on different temporal and spatial planes at once. According to Güney's original script, the film was supposed to consist of twelve different characters and their journeys. Due to financial and time restrictions, the film's newly appointed director, Gören, refused to film all twelve stories and reduced the characters to six. However, only four of them can be seen as fully developed in the film. While one of the stories was left undeveloped due to limited time during the shooting, the other was removed entirely in the editing phase by Güney.[263]

The Road is an important film both politically and cinematographically. Politically, it is important because of its critical content, and the timing of this criticism. If one remembers that the film was made in Turkey while the country was under the rule of a military junta, the importance of the film and the bravery of its creators are better grasped. Cinematographically, *The Road* is an important film because it is a manifestation of a strong will to explore new ways of cinematographic expression, as the film pushes the parallel editing technique to its limits. In this regard, *The Road* was a more influential film internationally than *The Herd*. Celebrated filmmaker Alejandro González Iñárritu's films *Amores perros* (2000), *21 Grams* (2003), and *Babel* (2006) offer perhaps the clearest confirmation of this influence, which could have been recognised even if Iñárritu himself had not acknowledged that he was influenced by *The Road*.[264] *The Road*, like *The Herd*, received considerable positive reactions abroad, and was even awarded with *Palme d'Or* at the 35th Cannes Film Festival in 1982, together with Konstantinos Gavras's *Missing*, becoming the first-ever film from Turkey to win the prestigious prize.

The Herd and *The Road* feature a number of convention-

al elements of the European road movie tradition. First of all, as explained earlier, unlike the characters in post-*Easy Rider* Hollywood road movies, characters in these two films hit the road not because they want to, but because they are forced to. Unlike the characters in *The Herd*, *The Road*, and *The Bus*, the main character in *The Yellow Mercedes* makes his journey not out of necessity, nor because of an outside force out of his control, but out of free choice. Bayram makes the journey because he wants to visit his village where he was once an underdog, to show off his Mercedes. Even though certain side characters, such as Robert Lander in Wenders' 1976 film *Kings of the Road*, offer exceptions, hitting the road out of free choice is not a characteristic or reoccurring feature of the European road movie tradition. Bayram is another and a bolder exception in this regard, since, unlike Wenders' Lander, he is the main character of the film, and one can argue that he is comparable to the characters in New Hollywood road movies, although he is not a rebellious one. Given that Bayram's decision to travel to his hometown is motivated by a strong desire to free himself from the low social status in the social hierarchy of the village with the help of his newly bought automobile, such a comparison is not totally groundless.

Like in many European road movies, characters in *The Herd*, *The Road*, and *The Bus* make their journeys by vehicles of public transport, such as trains and buses. In *The Yellow Mercedes*, however, the main character travels in his privately owned automobile, and he travels alone. This signals a significantly different relationship between the character and the vehicle of choice. In the preceding films, except *The Bus*, the characters have no attachment to the vehicle by which they make their journeys, whereas Bayram has a rather complex relationship with the vehicle. As explained earlier in the chapter, Bayram's obsession with cars starts with the arrival of a shiny automobile to the poor and remote village in which he grew up, and owning a car quickly becomes Bayram's goal in life. In the hope of achieving this goal, Bayram migrates to a big city, Ankara, then to Germany, leaving behind not only his childhood sweetheart,

Kezban, but everybody who ever cared for him. After buying his long dreamed of and hard-earned car, Bayram starts the journey from Munich heading back to the village, in the hope of reuniting with Kezban, and gaining social recognition in the village at last. During the journey, the Mercedes gains a personality in the mind of Bayram. He imagines the car as a female and calls her *Balkız*. At some point, Bayram even starts speaking to the car.

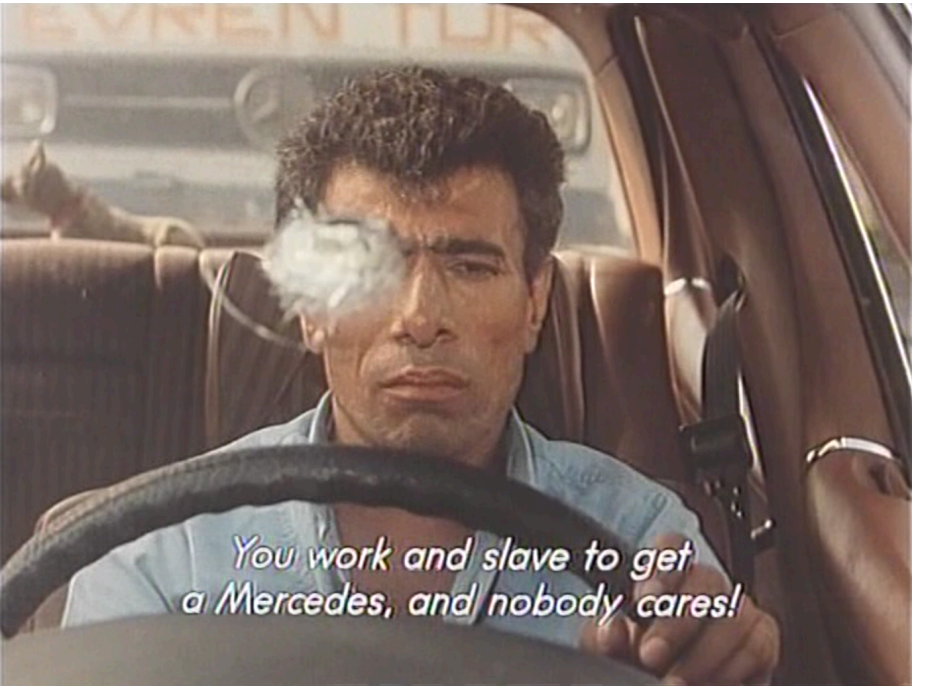
Starting from the very early road movies, the automobile is often depicted as an object with a destructive force. This is also the case in Okan's film, as Bayram's fascination with automobiles is destructive for him both socially and mentally. Socially, Bayram's fascination with automobiles slowly but steadily destroys his relations with the people around him. In order to achieve his childhood dream, Bayram sells his property in the village despite the disapproval of his uncle who raised him, leaves his lover, Kezban, steals his best friend's documents, and dumps the people who helped him in Germany. Mentally, Bayram's object of fetish distorts his perception of reality and creates false expectations. Through his car ownership, Bayram expects to gain an immediate social recognition and respect, but this expectation does not match reality. No one is interested in Bayram, or in his car. He is squeezed between his unrealistic expectations and the cold face of reality.

In road movies, the vehicle is often conceptualised as "a mechanised extension of the body", through which the traveller travels further and faster towards his destination.[265] In *The Yellow Mercedes*, this is exactly the case. The automobile in the film is transformed into an extension of Bayram's body to such a degree that he is shown to experience physical pain every time the automobile gets a bump or scratch. Bayram evokes the impression that he is a modern centaur, half man and half automobile—maybe more automobile than man. There are several scenes that speak to the connection between Bayram and his Mercedes. Perhaps the most poetic is the scene in which the windshield of the Mercedes is cracked by a stone, thrown from a

lorry driving in front of the car. After forcibly stopping the lorry's driver and demanding compensation for the damage, Bayram is seen with a bruised eye, suggesting a violent reply from the driver. In the scene, the camera is positioned in a way that the bruise is hidden perfectly behind the circular crack left on the windshield by the stone. When the camera changes its angle, the bruised eye becomes visible. This particular camera arrangement establishes an obvious connection between the damage on the car's windshield and the damage on Bayram's body.

In many road movies, the story typically develops around the tension between a couple sitting in the front seats. There is no such tension in *The Yellow Mercedes*, since Bayram travels alone. One can, however, talk about another form of tension, namely, the tension forming in Bayram's mind as he starts to reflect on the past and his decisions. Looked at from this perspective, Bayram's journey is more than just a physical journey. He physically travels towards the village where he came from, but he also travels psychologically back in time. As Devin Orgeron puts it, the automobile functions as a "sort of mobile psychoanalytic couch" in the film.[266] This type of journey is a familiar one in the European road movie tradition, with one of the most iconic examples being found in Ingmar Bergman's 1957 film *Smultronstället* (Wild Strawberries). The film follows the long car drive of an elderly professor, Isak Borg, and it is more concerned with the character's journey into the past than with the physical car drive, as the professor revisits his memories and reflects on his past experiences. In this regard, Bayram's journey is comparable to that of Isak Borg.

Orgeron observes that one of the core themes of the road movie is the impossibility of communication in modern times. This theme is also one of the main themes in Okan's film, as it becomes clear in several scenes. In one of these scenes, after parking his Mercedes in a crowded parking space in a chaotic city centre, Bayram starts chatting with the valet boy who helped



him park, after the boy praises his automobile. Straightening his posture and visibly deriving pleasure from it, Bayram starts to chat with him about his car and his journey. The boy seems to be genuinely interested in what he has to tell. After a short while, the boy disappears to help the next driver. Totally absorbed in his own story, Bayram does not even notice the boy's disappearance and continues to talk to the void the valet boy left behind. Although Bayram is portrayed as an asocial character throughout the film, this scene makes clear that he does burn with a desire to tell his story to somebody. He wants to talk about the experience of living abroad, his automobile, and his achievement of buying it. He longs to be acknowledged, taken seriously, and socially respected. This is even expressed verbally by Bayram himself at one point in the film in a voice-over. The voice-over underlines Bayram's desperate need for communication. How-

ever, no one is interested in Bayram or in his story, nor does anyone have the time to listen.

Bayram is a very self-absorbed character, and as such, he is interested in telling his story more than listening to others'. He wants to be heard, but he does not want to listen. In fact, during the entire film, he never listens to what others have to tell. He neither listens to his uncle's suggestion not to sell the land in the village nor that of Kezban to stay in Turkey and marry her. The only time Bayram listens to someone is at the very end of the film, when he has a conversation with a shepherd near the village. For the first time in this conversation, Bayram starts to understand his mistakes.

Beyond any particular scene, in general, the film is built around the theme of the impossibility of communication, as Bayram's entire journey is about sending messages to several receivers. By purchasing an automobile and driving it all the way from Munich to the remote village in central Anatolia, Bayram wants to deliver a message to his fellow villagers, that he is no longer an underdog, and he should be respected. He also wants to communicate something to his lover, Kezban, whom he left in Turkey when he travelled to Germany to save money for the automobile. Through his automobile, Bayram wants to tell Kezban that he loves her and that they now can be united. However, none of these messages can be delivered, first of all, because Bayram cannot reach the village, and second, Kezban is now married to another man. Bayram's journey is without an end, and his messages are without receivers. The film is built around an incomplete journey and failed communication.

Despite its apparent celebration of forward motion and its apparent iconoclastic radicalism, the road movie paradoxically and nostalgically clings to a mythical innocent moment in the past and desires to roll back history in an effort to find stability.[267] Okan's film offers a perfect embodiment of this. Bayram's commitment to buy a car and travel with it is motivated by a significant moment in Bayram's childhood: the moment

in which he saw the American-built car in the village. This is the mythical moment of Bayram's life, a moment which, in his mind, formed the pathway that would lift him from his low social status. By becoming a car owner, he wants to travel to that mythical moment and replicate what the driver of that shiny American-made automobile did. By doing so, Bayram hopes to repair his damaged self-esteem, gain social recognition, and ultimately reach a stable mental state.

The European road movie, unlike its post-*Easy Rider* New Hollywood counterpart, does not revolve around characters who can be described as rebellious, criminal, or outcast; instead, it often focuses on the journey of a rather ordinary person who travels for practical reasons.[268] This is also the case in *The Herd*, as the film's characters travel to Ankara to deliver their herd to a middleman. In *The Road,* the situation is a little more complicated, as the film's journeying characters are indeed, con-

victed criminals who are given a furlough from prison. However, the film tries to disguise this feature by focusing on the personal dramas of the characters instead, positioning the criminals not as perpetrators or outlaws, but as victims. This approach moves the individual responsibilities away from the characters and blames the state and society for their unlawful actions. This can be observed in the episode that follows Ömer's journey, a convicted international smuggler. Although cross-border smuggling is a clearly defined and undisputed crime all over the world, the film portrays the harsh military crackdown on the cross-border smuggling as arbitrary punishment targeting 'innocent' civilians instead of depicting them as criminals. Furthermore, the film celebrates Ömer's rejection to return to prison and his escape to Syria. Although *The Road* does not provide the reason behind every character's incarceration, the three characters of whom the film does provide information are convicted of international smuggling, robbery, and murder, respectively.

The characters in *The Bus* are ordinary people travelling to Europe illegally in the hope of finding jobs. In certain respects, these characters can also be considered criminals, given that they travel to a foreign country illegally. However, unlike *The Road, The Bus* sympathises neither with the characters nor with their actions. In *The Road*, the viewer can identify with the characters, and can even reach a cathartic moment when Ömer escapes to Syria. If one analyses the scene in which Ömer is shown on horseback like a warrior advancing on the enemy; one could hardly fail to understand the film's celebration and glorification of Ömer's decision not to return to prison and his choice for freedom. French film critic Marcel Martin romanticises this particular scene and writes that "the Kurdish convict sets off towards the mountains, perhaps to join an insurgent group".[269] Ömer is the only character in the film who rebels against the state of things and frees himself from these undesirable conditions. This leaves no doubt that he is placed differently among the rest of the antihero characters of the film, as the only hero

of the film.

Though not as pronounced as Güney's characters in *The Road*, Okan's Bayram too is an ambivalent character. On one hand, he is a rather ordinary person who travels for a practical reason—to visit the village and show off his automobile—and on the other hand, he can be described as an outcast, albeit being neither a criminal nor rebellious. Bayram is an outcast because he does not have a respected status in his village. Much like the protagonists in *The Herd* and *The Road*, he is an antihero. Bayram is not a character with whom an audience can, or would want to identify. Interestingly, the actor who performs Bayram, İlyas Salman, has never been a typical Yeşilçam star. Salman mostly appeared in supporting roles rather than in leading ones. *The Yellow Mercedes* is one of the rare films in which he appears in the leading role. As discussed in the second chapter, although they are not placed as antiheroes, the viewer cannot identify with the characters of *The Bus* either, as Okan purposefully prevents this by constantly changing the camera's attention from one character to the next.

Like *The Bus*, *The Herd*, and *The Road*, Okan's third film, *The Yellow Mercedes*, is home to another recurring motif found in many road movies: "witnessing of road side atrocities as a sign of the times".[270] Okan achieves this through a fine blend of fiction and documentary. For instance, Bayram drives by several traffic accident scenes. According to Okan, some of these accident scenes were staged while others were genuine. He also states that many of the scenes in the film taking place on the road were recorded documentary-style using guerrilla filmmaking techniques, without any prior arrangement or manipulation of the scenery.

> I followed the character's journey during a day. I have caught unbelievable shots. Many people could not believe it and asked me how I did it. I answered 'I shot in documentary-style.' We were just blocking the road. Actually, this road was the most impor-

> tant transit route, which connected the Middle East and Europe at the time. There were no alternative roads, which do exist today. This was the only one. We were just blocking it. When enough vehicles were gathered we were unblocking the road. Salman was sitting in the front seat of the car and driving it. Camera, reflector, lights, and I were on the car's bonnet, outside. We were driving like this. Whatever happened in traffic was up to chance. It was quite chaotic. Sometimes shooting was successful and sometimes not. It was a very difficult process.[271]

Like *The Bus* and *The Yellow Mercedes*, *The Herd* and *The Road* feature several scenes that are captured using guerrilla filmmaking techniques, mostly hidden camera. Despite being a fictional drama, *The Herd* is home to many scenes that are captured using a hidden camera. Some of the most obvious examples of this guerrilla-style filmmaking are the scenes that show the passage of the herd on the main streets of Ankara, or the film's final scene, which shows one of the characters, Hamo, getting lost in the city. *The Herd*'s target audience is a local audience in Turkey. This is clear in scenes containing direct references to social and political realities of the country, such as the scene showing an overcrowded hospital, or, more obvious yet, the scene that depicts the gunning down of a left-wing activist at a bus stop who distribute propaganda leaflets. These images are meaningful only for those who are familiar with Turkey's turbulent recent economic and political history. When the teenage son of the people who host Şivan and his sick wife, Berivan, gives the couple a lecture on class struggle while sitting in front of a wall with a picture of Karl Marx, these political references evolve into direct propaganda. With this in mind, *The Herd* can be said to share some qualities with third cinema films.[272] One can observe several similar features in *The Road*, as well, as several scenes in this film too were captured using guerrilla filmmaking methods, ranging from hidden camera to location shooting without per-

mission.[273] Furthermore, according to Tarık Akan, one of the leading actors of the film, all the scenes featuring soldiers were shot with real soldiers after giving their commanders a false script and convincing them that they were partaking in a different kind of film.[274] Although it features unpremeditated location shootings, *The Yellow Mercedes* is nowhere near third cinema. Having observed this, one can proceed to conclude that, apart from certain elements such as a political agenda and direct political propaganda, which are not common features to be found in European road movie, *The Herd* and *The Road*, in general, can be said to follow the European road movie tradition in terms of their approach and demonstrate many of its conventional qualities. *The Yellow Mercedes*, on the other hand, offers a kind of road movie that uses conventional elements, both from European and post-*Easy Rider* New Hollywood road movies, and oscillates be-

tween these distinct approaches. Furthermore, in comparison to his debut film, *The Yellow Mercedes* represents a clear shift away from the conventions of European road movie in Okan's approach to the genre. Perhaps this pronounced shift towards the New Hollywood road movie was the reason why prominent film critic Atilla Dorsay asserted that *The Yellow Mercedes* was "in many respects the first true road movie of Turkish cinema", inadvertently also giving away his own Hollywood-centric cinema view.[275]

The Class Question in Turkey's Popular Cinema

Class is an extremely rare feature to appear in Turkey's popular cinema. Although many Yeşilçam melodramas form around a plot of the uneasy love between a poor girl and a rich man, or vice versa, it has successfully avoided the class issue at all cost. This was mostly the result of self-censorship practices developed by the film industry as a survival mechanism to cope with the strict unwritten production codes, since not many people would want to be accused of making communist propaganda in a NATO country bordering on the Soviet Union, where McCarthy style communist witch-hunts were common during much of the Cold War.

Yeşilçam pictures a classless fairy-tale world where everything is possible. In this world classes do not exist; there are only rich and poor, good and bad characters. A poor garbage collector, despite having a terrible voice, can suddenly become a rich and famous singer by ending up on stage in a concert hall by mistake while running away from a chase, as happens in Zeki Ökten's 1977 film *Çöpçüler Kralı* (The King of the Street Cleaners). A person with perfect sight can become blind after an amateurishly performed traffic accident as happens in Muzaffer Arslan's 1970 film *Hayatım Sana Feda* (I Sacrifice My Life for You). Or, a physically disabled person can miraculously start walking without any trace of disability after a kick in the butt, as happens in Natuk Baytan's 1981 film *Üç Kağıtçı* (The Swindler). Yeşilçam films operate in a different reality. In this reality, which is not

necessarily bound by logic or the laws of physics, classes do not exist. These films never critically question the sources of the rich's wealth, or the reasons behind the poverty of the poor; wealth and poverty are presented as natural, God-given, and unquestionable things, like the colour of one's hair and eyes. In Yeşilçam films, one can find good rich characters as well as bad ones; however, poor characters are seldom bad. If a poor character is bad, there is always a convincing explanation, that is, of course, in the context of Yeşilçam's own reality. There is an obvious inclination in Yeşilçam films to present poor characters in a positive light, and these characters almost always appear to be happier than the rich ones. One could go as far as to state that Yeşilçam melodramas glorify the poor and, to a certain degree, their poverty by consistently presenting wealth as an agent of moral corruption, and the wealthy as corrupt.

Perhaps no other film brings all these characteristics together better than Ergin Orbey's 1975 film *Bizim Aile* (Our Family), one of the most beloved Yeşilçam family melodramas of all time. In *Our Family*, the daughter of the rich factory owner, Alev, and the son of a poor man working in Alev's father's factory, Ferit, fall in love. Alev's rich and well-connected father does not approve of the relationship. He challenges, and even threatens, the worker's son to stop seeing Alev. Ferit does not submit to the factory owner's threats and continues to see her, and eventually, they get married without informing Alev's father. Upon hearing about this, Alev's father fires Ferit's father from his long-time job in the factory, and later, through connections and by exploiting legal loopholes, confiscates his house. This makes the crowded family, among whom Alev has been living since her marriage, homeless in the middle of the winter. Despite the hardship, the family keeps their spirits high. They manage to be happy with each other, while Alev's father is left unhappy, suffering from loneliness despite his wealth and power. After a deus ex machina achieved by Ferit's father's emotional tirade in Alev's father's office, the businessman realises his mistakes, returns the house to its rightful owners, and apologises to his daughter. Like

the overwhelming majority of Yeşilçam melodramas, the film concludes with a neat resolution and a happy ending.

Despite commercial cinema's intentional and persistent avoidance, the class issue nonetheless appears in some of the films made during the Yeşilçam period, starting from the early 1960s, thanks to the relative atmosphere of freedom granted by the new constitution. Halit Refiğ's 1962 film *Şehirdeki Yabancı* (Stranger in the City), Ertem Göreç's 1964 film *Karanlıkta Uyananlar* (Those Awakening in the Dark), Nevzat Pesen's 1964 film *Hızlı Yaşayanlar* (Those Who Live Fast), and Duygu Sağıroğlu's 1965 film *Bitmeyen Yol* (Road Without End) are some of these films. With their social realist attitudes and aesthetics, these films revolve around working-class characters and focus on social issues like internal migration, poverty, exploitation, and unionisation struggles. These films are followed by films like Yılmaz Güney's 1975 film *Arkadaş* (Friend), Yavuz Özkan's 1978 film *Maden* (The Mine), and Özkan's 1979 film *Demiryol* (The Railroad). The social realist films of the 1960s are sympathetic towards the working-class and its struggles, while these later films use the class question more as a propaganda and agitation tool. These later films more closely resemble propagandistic socialist realism and third cinema movements.

Having observed the general situation concerning the class question in Turkey's cinema, one can see that Okan's approach to the matter is significantly different than that of the Yeşilçam filmmakers, and such an observation brings me to the next argument I would like to pursue concerning *The Yellow Mercedes*.

A Non-British Kitchen-sink Film on the Road

In comparison to both *The Road* and *The Herd*, *The Yellow Mercedes* shows quite a different attitude in approaching its subject, as Okan attempts to transculturise and transnationalise Ağaoğlu's time, region, and culture-specific narration by stripping it to the bare essentials and placing it in a class perspective rather than underlining a local social/political/cultural condition. Even

though Okan has stated that he no longer considers his views as left-wing, his take on the film still is.[276] He approaches Bayram, not as a specific Turkish Gastarbeiter with a particularly interesting story, but as a worker who, albeit unconsciously, wants to change his social status in the class hierarchy.

Like the convicts in Gören's film, and the nomads in Ökten's, Bayram is part of the lumpenproletariat, in the sense that he does not have the class consciousness; but unlike these other characters, he is clearly not satisfied with his social status and tries to change it through a quick fix, namely the ownership of a luxury automobile. The brand of Bayram's newly bought automobile, Mercedes-Benz, is significant because it is a luxury car brand that is historically associated with the upper-class and powerful elites. Bayram's journey is also a class journey; given that the character's main aim is to achieve upward mobility in the class strata.

Bayram is a former agricultural worker displaced by modern technology, signified by the combine harvester, and as such, he belongs to "the lowest layers of the old society" in Marx and Engel's class understanding.[277] Unlike Ökten's and Gören's characters, Bayram is not unemployed nor a criminal; he is a hard-working labourer. It can be argued that Bayram adapted himself fairly well to the new social reality, albeit without internalising the values of his new social class. Nonetheless, Bayram is much closer to gaining class consciousness and being a proletarian in the Marxist sense of the term than the characters in the other films. Neither the characters in *The Road* nor the main characters in *The Herd* have such a prospect. Despite approaching Bayram's journey from the perspective of class, Okan by no means utilises Bayram as a means to glorify the working classes. On the contrary, he adopts a realist but detached attitude, which recalls the British New Wave filmmakers' approach, often referred to as "kitchen-sink realism".

British New Wave was a cinema movement that emerged in Great Britain during the late 1950s and early 1960s.

Influenced by Italian Neorealism, French New Wave, and British Free Cinema movements, the movement finds its most representative examples in films like Jack Clayton's 1959 film *Room at the Top*, Karel Reisz's 1960 film *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, Tony Richardson's 1961 film *A Taste of Honey*, his 1962 film *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner*, and Lindsay Anderson's 1963 film *This Sporting Life*.[278] British New Wave films are united in their political and artistic independence from the mainstream commercial cinema of the period, their pseudo-documentary social realism, their interest in ordinary working-class people, their fascination with the details and minute rituals of everyday life, and their use of location shooting.[279] Concerning the British New Wave, Doru Pop observes that:

> [a]s with other "New Wave" moviemakers who came before, the British directors were looking for alternatives to capitalist cinema storytelling. They rejected socialist realism and came up with another answer: "social realism". Opposed to the idealistic perspective of the Soviet realism, the new social realism offered a rather grim view of the life of the working-class.[280]

One can observe all these distinct qualities of the British kitchen-sink dramas in Okan's third film. First of all, *The Yellow Mercedes* is an independent film, both financially and artistically. It features quite a substantial amount of authentic footage captured through guerrilla filmmaking methods, and it persistently utilises location shooting. Furthermore, the film is concerned with a rather minute event in the life of an ordinary working-class anti-hero. Like many of the British kitchen-sink dramas of the late 1950s and 60s, it has strong ties to literature; like the majority of these British New Wave films, it is a literary adaptation. And finally, *The Yellow Mercedes* is a dystopian film that offers a grim view of the life of its working-class character.

Although the story takes place in a non-British context with a completely different sociopolitical reality, Okan applies

the British New Wave films' class centred sensitivity to his films. *The Yellow Mercedes* is particularly comparable to one of these British New Wave films in its approach to the main character, and to some degree, to the subject matter of the film itself, namely Jack Clayton's 1959 film *Room at the Top*. Clayton's film follows the young and ambitious Joe Lampton, who, like Bayram, just moved to a big city from a small town with the ultimate aim of climbing the class ladder. Shortly after moving to the city, despite the discouragements of friends, colleagues, and relatives, Joe starts pursuing Susan, the daughter of a local industrial magnate and a woman he is not really in love with. After Joe's persistent chase, Susan falls in love with him. In the meantime, Joe falls in love with Alice, a married woman. While trying to convince Alice and her husband to divorce so that he can marry her, Joe learns that Susan is pregnant with his child. Forced to make a decision between the woman he is in love with and the woman he pursued for her wealth and upper-class background, Joe chooses the latter and realises his long-awaited dreams of moving upwards on the class ladder. However, his achievement does not make Joe any happier. Alice dies in what appears to be a suicidal traffic accident while all of his relatives and friends distance themselves from him. Joe is left alone and unhappy with a woman whom he does not love.

Like Clayton's film, *The Yellow Mercedes* revolves around a character who is not happy with his place in the social strata and wishes to climb the class ladder through a quick fix. Like Clayton's Joe, Okan's Bayram comes from a rural background and moves to a big city in his search of an opportunity to realise his dreams. Furthermore, like Joe, Bayram is forced to make a choice between the woman whom he really loves and another object of desire—in Bayram's case this object of desire is a car; in Joe's case, it is another woman—which he believes will help him achieve his goal; both choose the latter. As in Joe's case, Bayram's friends and relatives do not approve of Bayram's decision, and, much like Joe, he is left alone and unhappy at the end of the film. The similarities between the two films are not limited

to the plot and characters.

One of the recurring features in British kitchen-sink dramas is the lack of sympathy, and even discouragement, they show for their characters' ambitions of upward social mobility. They seem to tacitly celebrate their failures, thus their class *immobility*. As Barry Forshaw puts it, the characters in kitchen-sink dramas are all "doomed to failure, but that failure comes in different forms".[281] In a way, these dramas suggest the impossibility of social climbing. A good example of this attitude can be found in the relationship between Jimmy, who has a working-class background, and his upper-class wife, Alison, in Tony Richardson's 1959 film *Look Back in Anger.* Jimmy often takes out his anger and frustration, stemming from the injustices he sees in society, on his wife and her upper-class background by mocking and dominating her. Richardson's approach to the main character, Archie Rice, in his 1959 film *The Entertainer* offers another example of the same attitude, as Archie fails to secure the funds necessary to put up a new show. In his 1961 film *A Taste of Honey*, Richardson reiterates his position with his depiction of the failure of the marriage of working-class Helen and self-made businessman Peter. John Schlesinger's 1963 film *Billy Liar* offers yet another articulation of a comparable attitude when Billy decides to disembark the train just as he was about to leave Yorkshire for good to start a new and promising life in London with his free-spirited lover, Liz. Richardson shows that his attitude is unchanged in his 1962 film *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner*, when main character, Colin Smith, suddenly stops running meters away from the finish line, where winning the race would have meant a chance to be released from the detention centre he is in and a promising future as a runner. In his 1968 film *Up the Junction*, Peter Collinson adopts a comparable approach when working-class Pete ends up in jail while attempting to woo his upper-class ex-girlfriend, Polly, with a stolen car. A similar mechanism, with a little twist, is at play in Clayton's *Room at the Top.* Joe realises his long-awaited dreams when he chooses Susan's wealth

and upper-class background over Alice, but it does not bring him happiness. Okan also allows his character to reach his goal, but he underlines that Bayram's achievement cannot deliver the results he was hoping for. Okan follows a slightly different strategy in his approach to his main character, as unlike Clayton, he does not show sympathy toward his protagonist, and he does not allow the viewer to identify with him during the entire film. Clayton portrays Joe as a likeable character and allows identification with him until he chooses Susan over Alice. After Joe's decision, Clayton's sympathy for him disappears abruptly. Joe becomes unsympathetic because he employs sly methods to achieve upward mobility, thinking it is the only way to achieve it. At this point, Clayton's decision to turn his back on Joe signals also a moral standing, which one can define as a *moralised class loyalty*.

The Yellow Mercedes adopts the British kitchen-sink dramas' approach to the road movie genre. Interestingly enough, there is no road movie among the classic British New Wave films of the late 1950s and 1960s. Okan's film offers a unique example that combines the British kitchen-sink dramas' social realism and class-centred political awareness with the generic flexibility of the road movie. *The Yellow Mercedes* is a rare example of kitchen-sink reality on wheels. Furthermore, Okan also brings something of his own to the kitchen-sink from his previous films, and adopts a slightly ridiculing dark-comic attitude towards Bayram. As a result, unlike British kitchen-sink dramas, *The Yellow Mercedes* does not take its working-class anti-hero so seriously, and does not endorse any kind of class loyalty. In this regard, Bayram does not really offer a proper working-class character image comparable to British kitchen-sinks' working-class characters.

A Stranded *Mercedes*

In his 2017 book *Yol - Bir Sürgün Hikâyesi* (Yol - An Exile Story), *The Road*'s Swiss producer Edi Hubschmid writes that the film was accepted to the Cannes Film Festival through personal connections and lobbying efforts coordinated by the Swiss film company.[282] In a 2017 interview, the film's other (uncredited) pro-

ducer, Donat Keusch, gives a similar account of the events that confirm Hubschmid's statement.[283] Okan goes even further and confidently asserts that François Mitterrand, the socialist President of France at the time, watched the film and personally requested its inclusion in Cannes Film Festival's programme.[284] Having been awarded one of the most prestigious awards of the cinema world at Cannes, the film generated a lot of attention internationally and could easily reach millions of viewers all around the world, except in the country where it was made.

Okan not only financed his own films, but he also arranged the marketing and distribution by himself. *The Yellow Mercedes*'s production took more than four years to complete (1987–1992), as he had been struggling to secure financial resources for the film, and he had to solve technical issues, like editing, himself. Okan repeatedly pointed out that, as an independent emigrant filmmaker who also worked full-time as a dentist to earn his living and finance his films, he never had an opportunity to establish a stable relationship with the film industries of the countries in which he lived. Furthermore, he underlined that none of his films received financial support, nor were they ever accepted to major international film festivals. As a result, *The Yellow Mercedes* could only be screened in a few countries in Europe, and did so for a short period, with an extremely limited number of copies.[285]

The Road was completed in 1982, some two years after the military coup d'état on 12 September 1980 that overthrew the democratically elected government in Turkey. As a film that was made under extremely challenging conditions, *The Road* is an important and politically critical film. It can be argued that being a critical film made in a country under military rule generated more international attention for the film than would have been the case if it was the product of a different country or period. In addition to its country of origin, political criticism, and timing, another reason that can be argued to have contributed to the international attention enjoyed by *The Road* is the film's por-

trayal of Turkey, which echoes the image established by Alan Parker's *Midnight Express* (1978) just a couple of years before. *Midnight Express* follows the horrifying experiences of a young student from the United States who is sentenced to jail in Turkey after trying to smuggle kilos of drugs. Parker's orientalist and astonishingly inaccurate semi-fictional story, which is still banned in Turkey, is probably the single most damaging blow to the international image of the country prior to the rise of Islamist governments in the early 2000s in the country. Parker's film was so influential that it gave rise to slang expressions such as "better/worse than a Turkish prison" in English. When released in 1982, only four years after Parker's film, *The Road* inevitably recalled similar images in the minds of many Western viewers, since the film revolves around a similar issue, with a comparable portrayal. In fact, connections to, or comparisons with, Parker's film were the subject of some of the most frequently asked questions to the film's scriptwriter Güney.[286] The connection between the two films has also contributed to the film's international appeal.

The Road is "the first major Turkish film released in more than fifty countries."[287] It is a well-known but not as well studied film in Turkey. Despite being the first, and until Nuri Bilge Ceylan's 2014 film *Kış Uykusu* (Winter Sleep) the only film from the country to win one of the most prestigious film awards in the world, *Palme d'Or*, there is not even a single book in Turkish (or in English for that matter) focusing exclusively on the film as of the time of writing.[288] Apart from a very few articles, what is written about the film is limited to short newspaper and popular cinema magazine pieces, and books written about various other subjects (mostly about Yılmaz Güney) that also mention the film in different contexts. In these texts *The Road* is mentioned mainly in three different contexts: Film's unusual production history and its international success, the Kurdish identity question, and representation of women in the film. *The Road* is a celebrated film, but it also received critique in aspects ranging

from representation of women to its orientalist depiction. For instance, while some film critics and scholars such Dorsay and Şehmus Güzel praise the film for its plot that revolves around central women characters and argue that such a position is an important one in the discussion about the question of women's liberation struggle, film scholar Asuman Suner observes that *The Road* positions the women characters as passive and mute objects through the display of their victimised bodies, and presents Anatolian women as exoticised ethnographic objects.[289] In a lengthy text on the film, after celebrating it for its plot, cinematography, direction, and international success, one of Güney's friends and respected film critic Atilla Dorsay criticises Güney's inclusion of the title Kurdistan into the film in the post-production and writes that it is a "bilious" decision given the facts that the film does not even contain anything specific concerning the matter, and until that moment Güney had abstained from making any comments about the issue while he was free and famous in Turkey.[290] In connection with these points raised by Dorsay and Suner, film scholar Nezih Coskun, writes that *The Road* "foments the orientalist tendencies of Europe."[291]

Financial difficulties and an inability to adequately market the film internationally were the issues that limited *The Yellow Mercedes*' access to an international audience the most. Okan is not only an independent filmmaker artistically and economically, but also ideologically. Due to deliberate choice, he has never been a part of any political or ideological grouping in Turkey or Europe. Okan is convinced that his political and ideological independence was not appreciated by the cultural and intellectual elite that are influential in Turkey's cinema circles. Many of these people were—and still are—left-wing or left-leaning. Okan never had a good relationship with film critics and other influential gatekeepers of Turkey's film industry.[292] Keeping this in mind, one can speculate that Okan's ideological take on *The Yellow Mercedes*, which neither glorifies nor propagandises its working-class character, is another reason why the film had difficulty

in reaching a wider audience in Turkey, as well as abroad, as unlike *The Road*, it was never embraced or backed by any cultural or intellectual elite, either in Turkey or elsewhere.[293]

Notes

[232] Luxembourgeus. 167–168.
[233] Arşiv Odası: Adalet Ağaoğlu, 1993 - BBC Türkçe
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gsPEpbOEPCA&frags=pl%2Cwn. Accessed on 17 September 2018.
[234] "Ben başka tarafa, insanla madde arasındaki ilişkiye gittim". Translation mine.
Luxembourgeus. 147.
[235] "Ben burada yaşıyorum, ben Türkiye için film yapmıyorum ki. Ben yapabilirsem dünya için film yapmak istiyorum. Kimi ilgilendirir Türkiye'de birinin askere gidişi falan. Bunlar kimseyi ilgilendirmiyor. Beni ilgilendiren o kişinin madde ile olan yalnızlığı ve bunun sonucunda da her şeyi, herkesi ve bütün insan ilişkilerini kaybedişi. Bundan daha büyük bir konu olamaz. Çok güzel bir konu. Bunu kalkıp da politik yerlere çekmenin bir anlamı yok". Translation mine.
Ibid. 148.
[236] https://www.ntv.com.tr/galeri/sanat/tum-zamanlarin-en-iyi-100-turk-filmi,lFt6NSW0AkOoshJioaUKnw. Accessed on 17 September 2018.
[237]"Aslında sonunda tamamen bana ait. Ben Almanya'da bir firma kurdum, Fransa'da bir firma kurdum ve kendi kendime bir ortak yapım yaptım. Kendi kendime anlaşma imzaladım". Translation mine.
Luxembourgeus. 158.
[238] In fact, *Yol* is technically a Swiss film. All the rights of the film were sold to the Swiss film production company *Cactus Film* while the film was at the scriptwriting stage.
[239] Hubschmid, Edi. *Yol - Bir Sürgün Hikâyesi Kitap*. PPP Publishing Partners, 2017. 210.
[240] Leitch, Thomas M. *Film Adaptation And Its Discontents*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009. 93–126.
[241] Ibid. 109.
[242] Ibid. 109.
[243] Ağaoğlu, Adalet. *Fikrimin İnce Gülü*. Istanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2013. 173–177.
[244] Gökay, Bülent. *Soviet Eastern Policy and Turkey, 1920-1991: Soviet Foreign Policy, Turkey and Communism*. London: Routledge, 2006. p.71. and Örnek, Cangül, and Çağdaş Üngör. *Turkey in the Cold War Ideology and Culture*. New York: Macmillan, 2013. 6.
[245] Ağaoğlu. 8–9.
[246] "Adalet Ağaoğlu'nun 'Fikrimin ince gülü' romanı toplatıldı", *Cumhuriyet*. 02.06.1981. 1.
[247] Yıl 1967: Hippiler İstanbul'da
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MsreMbABK0w&frags=pl%2Cwn. Accessed 20 September 2018.
[248] "Ben başka tarafa, insanla madde arasındaki ilişkiye gittim". Translation mine.
Luxembourgeus. 147.
[249] Parla, J. "Car Narratives: A Subgenre in Turkish Novel Writing", 536.

[250] *Milliyet*, 18 November 1968.6, 20 April 1983, 31 October 1982, and 26 March 1976 respectively.
[251] Apart from Okan's own film, *The Bus* (1974), Ökten's 1979 film *The Herd*, and Gören's 1982 film *The Road*, which I will study in detail and compare to *The Yellow Mercedes* later in the chapter, there are only two other road movies in the country's cinema history preceding *The Yellow Mercedes*. These are Nevzat Pesen's 1964 film *Hızlı Yaşayanlar* (Those Who Live Fast) and Ömer Kavur's 1985 film *Amansız Yol* (The Road with no Mercy). As explained in the second chapter while looking at *The Bus*, these films are typical Yeşilçam melodramas that demonstrate some of the conventional elements of European road movie, as well.
[252] "Hiçbir pişmanlığım yok". *Milliyet*. 18 February 2018.
http://www.milliyet.com.tr/pazar/hicbir-pismanligim-yok-2611992. and "Ahmet Mekin: Özgür bir ülkede uyanmak isterim" *Birgün* 27 April 2018. https://www.birgun.net/haber/ahmet-mekin-ozgur-bir-ulkede-uyanmak-isterim-217492. Both accessed on 17 October 2019.
[253] Pösteki, Nigar. *Yeşilçam'dan Bir Portre: Ayhan Işık*. Istanbul: Es Yay., 2007. 173.
[254] Luxembourgeus. 139-140.
[255] Ibid. 87-88.
[256] *Sürü*'s unpublished original script given to me by Okan.
[257] Luxembourgeus. 88.
[258] Dorsay, Atilla. *Yılmaz Güney Kitabı*. Istanbul: Varlık, 1988. 157.
[259] Hubschmid. 44–45.
[260] https://docs.google.com/viewerng/viewer?url=https://yol-the-book.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/n_kommentierte_dokumente.pdf&hl=en. Accessed on 1 October 2018.
[261] Akan, Tarık. *Anne Kafamda Bit Var: 12 Eylül Anıları*. Can Yayınları, 2016. 100.
[262] Çilingir, Sadi. "Sinemada Tipler – Karakterler".
[263] Akan. 101.
[264] Lowenstein, Stephen. *My First Movie: Take Two*. Pantheon, 2008. 75.
[265] Corrigan, Timothy. *A Cinema Without Walls: Movies and Culture After Vietnam*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1991. 146.
[266] Orgeron. 52.
[267] Ibid. 2, 31.
[268] Mazierska, Ewa, and Laura Rascaroli. 5.
[269] "Kürt mahkum, dağlara doğru, belki de bir direniş grubuna katılmak üzere uzaklaşır". Translation mine.
Quoted in Dorsay, Atilla. *Yılmaz Güney Kitabı*. Istanbul: Varlık, 1988. 216
[270] Orgeron. 30.
[271] "Ben trafikte bir gün boyunca adamı takip ediyorum ve orada biraz da şansın yardımıyla müthiş planlar yakaladım. İnsanlar inanamayıp 'bu filmi sen nasıl çekebildin?' diye sordular. 'Dokümanter çektim' diye yanıtladım. Kesiyorduk yolu, yolu da nasıl kesiyoruz. Orta Doğu ile Avrupa'nın arasında bu iki yeri birleştiren zamanın önemli geçiş noktasıydı burası. O zaman başka alternatif yollar yoktu şimdiki gibi. Bir tek o yol vardı. Biz gittik yolu kestik, kimse de gelip neden kestiğimizi açıkçası sormadı. Duruyordu arabalar, telsizlerle –o zamanlar telsizler...

de pek iyi çalışmıyordu– yeterince araba birikince bizim Mercedes'i ayarlıyorduk ama nasıl… Arabanın içinde önde İlyas Salman oturuyor, kaputun üzerinde lamba, reflektör, kamera, bir de ben varım. Böyle yola çıkıyoruz. Ondan sonra da trafikte ne çıkarsa bahtımıza. Her şey zaten birbirine giriyor. Bazen başarılı oluyordu çekim, bazen olmuyordu. Çok zor bir çekim süreciydi". Translation mine.
Luxembourgeus. 150.

272 Third cinema is a socially engaged realist cinema movement that is rooted in and shaped by Marxist political, economic, and aesthetic theories, approaches, and motivations. Positioning it as an alternative to both commercially motivated Hollywood Cinema (First Cinema) and artistically motivated European (Art) Cinema (Second Cinema), third cinema is first theorised by Argentinian filmmakers Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino in 1969 in the manifesto "Hacia un tercer cine" (Toward a Third Cinema), which is itself based on the experiences the filmmakers gathered during the production and screening of their 1968 documentary *La Hora de Los Hornos* (The Hour of the Furnaces).

273 Even though he does not use the particular term "guerrilla filmmaking", one of the main actors of the film, Tarık Akan, clearly states in his memoirs that Gören used a variety of filmmaking techniques while filming *The Road*, ranging from a hidden camera to location shooting without permission.
Akan. 102.

274 Akan. 103–104.

275 "Türk sinemasının birçok açıdan ilk gerçek "yol filmi". Translation mine.
Dorsay, Atilla. "Bir 'Alamancı'nın karayolları macerası", *Cumhuriyet*, 5 March 1993, 11.

276 Luxembourgeus. 31.

277 Marx, Karl, and Friedrich Engels. *The Communist Manifesto: a Modern Edition.* Verso, 2012. 48.

278 Taylor, B. F. *The British New Wave: a Certain Tendency?* Oxford Uni. Press, 2012. 1.

279 Lay, Samantha. *British Social Realism: from Documentary to Brit-Grit*. Wallflower, 2009. 60.

280 Pop, Doru. *Romanian New Wave Cinema: an Introduction*. McFarland, 2014. 56.

281 Forshaw, Barry. *British Crime Film: Subverting The Social Order.* Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. 26.

282 Hubschmid, Edi. *Yol - Bir Sürgün Hikâyesi Kitap*. PPP Publishing Partners, 2017. 108.

283 Donat F. Keusch on YOL - The Full Version. https://vimeo.com/235182816. Accessed on 13 May 2019.

284 Luxembourgeus. 91.

285 Ibid. 211.

286 Yılmaz Güney'in Kadın ve Kadın Hakları üzerine konuşması
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KEPqX0TEn9M. Accessed on 18 December 2018.

287 Yılmaz Güney's YOL - The Full Version [official trailer] https://vimeo.com/284931761

[288] Film's producer Edi Hubschmid's book *Yol- Bir Sürgün Hikayesi* focuses mostly on the film's production process and Güney's escape from prison, while Güney's own book *Yol* is the script of the film. None of the books offer a study of, or commentary on the film.

[289] Dorsay, 122-123., Güzel, M. Şehmus. *Özgür Yılmaz Güney*. Güney Yayınları. 1996. 121-122., Suner, Asuman. "Yılmaz Güney, Yol ve kadın bedeni üzerine yazılmış tutsaklık öyküleri", 131.

[290] "Dışarıda iken bugünkü yönetimin karşısında gözükmemeye, bugünkü yönetime eleştiri getirmemeğe dikkat etmişken ve "Yol"da da bu konuda açık ve dolaysız hiçbir eleştiri yokken, bir "Kürdistan" lafıyla mide bulandırmaya, filmi izleyen herkesi rahatsız eden bir tavra girmeye Yılmaz Güney'i iten nedir?" Translation mine. Dorsay. 224-225.

[291] "Yol'un Altın Palmiye almasının nedeni batılıların Türkiye'yi geri görmesi, Yol'un da bu bakış açısını Avrupa'nın oryantalist eğilimlerini de kaşıyarak ortaya koymasıydı." Translation mine.
Coşkun. Nezih. "Yılmaz Güney'in Yol'unun mirası" Yeni İnsan Yeni Sinema. 25 December 2000. http://yenifilm.net/2000/12/yilmaz-guneyin-yolunun-mirasi/. Accessed on 13 October 2019.

[292] Luxembourgeus. 201

[293] *The Road* is *considered* to be the first film in Turkey's cinema history to feature Kurdish language dialogues and reference to *Kurdistan*. This is despite the fact that according to the film's assistant directors Turgay Aksoy and Muzaffer Hiçdurmaz, and the film's director of photography Erdoğan Engin the Kurdish language dialogue and the title *Kurdistan* did in no way, shape, or form existed in the script and in the material that was filmed by Şerif Gören. This feature, along with some others, were added to the film without the knowledge or consent of the film's director Gören in the post-production by Güney, who with the help of the film's Swiss producers, escaped from the semi-open prison he was serving his sentence and fled to Switzerland in 1981, where he completed the film's post-production. Güney's insertion of the title *Kurdistan* is problematic not only because it is done without the knowledge and consent of the film's director Şerif Gören, but because it caused Gören and the film crew to be taken to court and tried with capital punishment by the military junta that was ruling the country at the time. The unauthorised inclusion of Kurdish elements into the film is a less known, and even less discussed issue.
Yolun Öyküsü. 2009. Directors: Esin Yılmaz, Nurdan Nerez.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7_Ude2Rnr2k. Accessed on 07 October 2018.

Conclusion

Since his acting career started in 1965, Okan lived, worked, and made films in five different countries: Turkey, Germany, Switzerland, Sweden, and France. Just like the filmmaker himself, Okan's cinema is semi-nomadic, as it has continuously 'travelled' between different film styles, genres, aesthetics, and approaches since his debut film, *The Bus*. Okan is an eclectic filmmaker. He adapts, borrows, imitates, and, at times, even copies ideas and approaches from a diverse group of creators within film and literature, ranging from Aziz Nesin to Friedrich Dürrenmatt, from Jacques Tati to Jack Clayton. Like any nomad, Okan travels lightly, bringing only a few essentials with him from one film to the next. His *serio-comical* vision, which sees the good in the bad, and the bad in the good, and his split reception-invoking multi-layered structure are some of the most persistent of these features. Whichever subject he chooses, and whichever genre or film style he utilises, Okan's cinema persistently exhibits them.

Okan's serio-comical vision manifests itself in his persistent use of dark comedy elements, often bordering on the grotesque. As discussed in the previous chapters, dark comedy is not a common film feature either in Turkey or in Europe. Okan is a member of a very small group of European filmmakers who persistently employ dark comedy elements in all their films. If one takes into account financial and aesthetic independence, the number of filmmakers in this group shrinks even further. British

filmmaker Ken Loach, the Czechoslovak filmmakers Miloš Forman and Jan Němec, Swedish filmmaker Roy Andersson, Swiss filmmaker Rolf Lyssy, and Yugoslav filmmaker Emir Kusturica are perhaps among the most well-known filmmakers who can be placed in the same group. In comparison to these filmmakers, Okan is still an unknown name.

Although they use particular local events, issues, and stories as inspiration or starting points, Okan's films always approach their subjects with an international ambition and international viewer in mind. In *The Bus*, Okan's illegal migrants are from rural Turkey, but the ethnic or national identities of the characters are reduced to a hard-to-detect, insignificant, and irrelevant detail in the film. "The Turkishness of the passengers is a coincidence, (…) they could have very well been Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, or Arab, and this would not have changed anything in the film".[294] In *Funny Saturday*, Okan moves his focus to a set of interconnected short stories he observed in Switzerland, his country of residence at that time. Although the majority of these stories represent real events, Okan depicts these events in such a way that they do not feature any specific local references. This is demonstrated clearly by the successful Turkification of the film. In *The Yellow Mercedes*, Okan manages to depict a local story in such a way that the focus on the relationship between the film's protagonist and his automobile becomes more important than any particular local, political, or cultural aspect of the story.

Sociopolitical awareness and commentary are other persistent features in Okan's films. Although they revolve around different plots and characters, all four films are critical films, offering commentary on a wide variety of issues ranging from consumerism to human trafficking, im/migration to bureaucracy, orientalism to biopolitics, and alienation to commodity fetishism.

Okan's persistent effort to reach an international audience while dealing with local issues invokes a *split reception* on the audience. Without exception, all Okan's films can be read, at

least, in two different contexts: within a history of Turkey's national cinema; and in relation to European (art) cinema. This is because, despite his consistently expressed desire to make films for the wider world keeping an international audience in mind, Okan's films consistently employ features that specifically speak to a local audience in Turkey, addressing issues that are of significant importance to it. Okan cannot ignore this audience, as he is strongly connected to Turkey, its people, and his memories of his country of birth despite living abroad uninterruptedly since 1967. He also cannot ignore the international audience, for he is a committed humanist, interested in the human condition much more than in any national or cultural-specific issue. This is the grand tension reigning in Okan's cinema.

This tension is a double-edged sword: both a boon and a bane. While trying to reach different kinds of audiences, Okan, at times, fails to reach either of them. His latest film, *Umut Üzümleri* (Grapes of Hope), is a case in point, as the film was welcomed neither by Turkish nor by international audiences. Before proceeding to discuss what might be possible reasons behind the film's failure in attracting the attention of Turkish and international audiences, I shall provide a short introduction to the film.

Okan completed his fourth, and at the time of writing, the latest film, *Grapes of Hope*, in 2012, some twenty years after *The Yellow Mercedes*. Just like *The Yellow Mercedes* and his second film *Funny Saturday*, Okan's latest film has strong ties to literature, as it is an intermediate adaptation of the prominent Turkish social realist Fakir Baykurt's 1967 novel *Kaplumbağalar* (The Tortoises). Although it was only completed in 2012, *Grapes of Hope* had been a film in the making ever since Okan's debut film. Okan bought the filming rights from Baykurt in late 1979, just two years after *The Bus*' release in Turkey, and applied for a filming permit to the country's film control commission in early 1983 with a complete script, only to be rejected with the claim that the script humiliates the state and its officials.[295] Despite

convincing, and signing agreements with, Anthony Quinn and Nastassja Kinski to perform the main roles in the early 1980s, Okan could not realise the project due to financial restraints and bureaucratic hurdles until 2012.[296]

Grapes of Hope is an escapist comedy. It revolves around the adventures of a small central Anatolian village's inhabitants in their struggle to create a vineyard on a barren hillside, and take the property back after it is unjustly confiscated and given to a local bourgeois by the corrupt local bureaucracy. Like his previous films, apart from a very few professional actors appearing in leading roles, the film features predominantly amateur actors. Almost all villagers in the film are actual villagers living near the shooting location. Unlike his previous films, this film follows a classical linear narration, utilises identification mechanisms, and delivers a neat resolution of conflicts after resorting to a number of schematic narrative devices. *Grapes of Hope* was shot in a mock-up village built entirely from scratch for the film, reminiscent of villages in Hollywood westerns. Building a mock-up village is an unusual move, not only for Okan, but also for the film industry in Turkey.

Despite being an escapist comedy, Okan employs dark comedy elements comparable to the ones in *Funny Saturday*, as the film oscillates between dark comedy and slapstick. This oscillation is visible particularly in his depiction of the bureaucrats. For example, in one of the scenes, two land surveyors, one fat and one quite skinny, arrive in the village to survey the vineyard after learning that the villagers managed it on a barren piece of land, which until then, no one ever cared for. The surveyors are clearly reminiscent of iconic slapstick duo Laurel and Hardy. Welcomed by the village's mukhtar, they are invited for dinner. Accepting the invitation, the surveyors sit at a floor table, laid on the ground for them, and wait for the food. While waiting, the skinny surveyor leaves the table for the toilet. In the toilet, which is a stand-alone open-pit latrine, the surveyor notices chickens feeding on the human waste coming from the toilet. Disgusted

by what he saw, he returns to the table. Shortly after returning, the mukhtar's wife appears with a fried chicken, which, according to the mukhtar, is freshly slaughtered and homegrown. Seeing the chicken, the skinny surveyor says that he cannot eat it. Not having seen what the skinny surveyor saw while in the toilet, the fat surveyor starts to eat the chicken with a good appetite. Seeing the skinny official not eating anything, the mukhtar asks his wife to prepare something else for the man. She brings fried eggs this time instead.

Baykurt's work places its narration somewhere in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Okan transforms this time-specific story into a timeless one, which sends confusing signals regarding the historical and logical consistency of these events. For instance, while some of the events, particularly those in the city, seem to take place at the beginning of the 2000s, a big part of the film seems to be stuck somewhere in the 1950s. Strangely, this is not a result of a time-cut between these different times and places; instead, the film depicts the events as happening simultaneously and in close proximity to one another. Such a depiction creates a strange filmic land and timescape presenting a

21st-century modern city with its mobile phones and sports cars, and a 1950s village without electricity and running water next to one another. Stranger still is that the inhabitants of the village in this filmic universe seem to be unaware of the most basic benefits and requirements of modern urban life, such as traffic lights and pedestrian crossings.

Baykurt narrates his story in part from the perspective of a revolutionary teacher, appointed to the village by the newly established Republic's progressive government. Okan preserves the teacher figure in the film and narrates the story from his perspective, but he depicts him as a second-generation Turkish immigrant living in France instead, who decides to work in the village as part of a European Union project. This modification is one of two insignificant details that relate the film to Okan's im/migration trilogy, because the narration is seen through the eyes of an immigrant. The other detail which loosely ties the film to the trilogy is the depiction of the villagers as Crimean Tatars displaced by Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin's deportation policies. However, the supposed Crimean Tatar identity of the villagers is not a detectable feature and is communicated only through a short text inserted at the end of the film. Like the immigrant teacher, the Crimean Tatars do not exist in Baykurt's original work, as his villagers are Alevis, a religious minority in Turkey. Despite these newly added features, *Grapes of Hope* is neither concerned with im/migration nor with im/migrants. For this reason, I have left the film out of the trilogy and this study's main scope of interest. Still, it has some other elements in common with the previous films, such as Okan's persistent seriocomical vision, his sociopolitical awareness and commentary, and international ambition.

Okan explained that he made certain alterations in the original story, such as the identity of the teacher, because he wanted to make the film more accessible to a non-Turkish audience.[297] Obviously, such a strategy is a simple and effective one in the transformation of a local plot into a more internationally

accessible film. However, at times, such a strategy can also have unforeseen consequences, as it does in *Grapes of Hope*. As mentioned earlier, Okan reimagines Baykurt's teacher, the narrator in both the book and the film, as a second-generation Turkish immigrant living in Europe. Okan's re-imagination of the character transforms *Grapes of Hope* into an orientalist, and even a self-orientalist, narration, which is by no means the case in Baykurt's novel. In his book *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient*, Edward Said observes that many European Orientalists perceive and depict the Oriental individual as "irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike" while positioning Europeans as "rational, virtuous, [and] mature" in relation to the Oriental.[298] Such a perception codes the Oriental as someone who is incapable and in need of guidance. If one remembers the euphemistic name given to French colonial missions, *Mission Civilisatrice* (Civilising Mission), one would see that such a perception is neither unique nor limited to orientalists, but widely shared during the colonial era, and, albeit not as powerful, a persisting one today. Bearing Said's observation in mind, one can detect an obvious orientalist representation of the villagers in *Grapes of Hope*.

The film opens with the arrival of the teacher to the village, consisting of only a couple of houses located on a barren hilltop in the middle of nowhere. There is neither an obvious nor a convincing sign in the film to justify the existence of the village in that location, as the villagers do not seem to do anything but farm a small patch of land until the arrival of the teacher. Shortly after his arrival, the teacher convinces and *guides* the villagers to undertake the project of trying to create a vineyard on a barren hillside. In Baykurt's novel, this storyline serves the ideological function of promoting the revolutionary teacher as well as the policies of the progressive government which appointed him to the village. In Okan's storyline, even though he is of Turkish origin, the European teacher invokes a completely different reading. With the re-imagining of the teacher as European, Okan reduces the villagers to oriental subjects in need

of guidance, while positioning the teacher as "the European civiliser". Watching the scene in which the teacher teaches a villager how to use traffic lights to cross the road in a chaotic city centre, this civilising mission becomes undeniably obvious. Interestingly, in *Grapes of Hope*, Okan not only depicts the oriental villagers as "childlike", but literary as children, as many of the inhabitants of the village happen to be children who are literally *schooled* by the teacher. Furthermore, if one considers the fact that the teacher is not a European foreigner but a "Europeanised" Turk, the relationship between the teacher and the villagers signals something that goes beyond the individual relationship between these characters. The "Europeanised" Turkish teacher positions Europe as a civilised domain where anyone, even an oriental individual like himself, can be civilised by living there and/or internalising its values, while positioning the orient as a domain that is to be guided and civilised. In this conceptualisation, Europe (the Occident) is depicted as the source of "light" of "enlightenment", a place where anyone can come and receive this light, thus get enlightened, while the Orient is depicted as a place in the "dark" that needs to be enlightened by the selfless torchbearers of the Occident.

One may wonder if these changes which transform Baykurt's social realist story into a Yeşilçam style cliché-ridden film that revolves around the experiences of a selfless, devoted missionary-like European teacher versus donkey-riding thick-skulled villagers who are unaware of the world outside of their village, are introduced to embolden the comedy aspect of the film. Unfortunately, the answer is no. This is because, the replacement of the Turkish teacher with a Europeanised one does not add the film anything other than a more contemporary temporal context—which itself makes the temporal continuity of the film problematic as discussed before—and a self-orientalist perspective. The Europeanised Turkish teacher does not make the film any funnier or ironic than it could have been if he was kept as imagined by Baykurt. Unlike what he does in his second film, *Funny Saturday*, Okan does not introduce clichés and stereo-

types in *Grapes of Hope* in order to make fun of them, instead, he takes them seriously and tries to build his narration on them, which, in my opinion, does not work.

Despite this and a few other problematic aspects discussed in the previous chapters, such as the Occidentalist tone in the Turkified version of *Funny Saturday*, Okan's films provide a considerable level of depth concerning the issues of im/migration and modern human's problematic relationship with commodities. These issues are core thematic elements in his films. Regardless of their plot lines, in varying degrees and significance, his films always revolve around these two core themes. These themes are overlapping and intertwined in the films. Okan always investigates them simultaneously, and furthermore, in dialogue with each other. In the trilogy, Okan's im/migrant characters are defined and developed through their interactions with commodities. In *The Bus*, the would-be foreign workers travel to Sweden illegally with the hope of finding a better life and having better access to commodities. While these would-be workers are defined through their destitution, and by their desire to end it by travelling to Sweden, the film's villain, the bus driver,

is defined through his greed, fetishistic attachment to, and praise of, modern technology, and the commodities he acquired in Europe. Furthermore, Okan establishes the film's main axis of conflict as the clash between those who have and those who have not. In his second film, *Funny Saturday*, Okan continues his investigation by placing an immigrant couple in a literal marketplace and observing their interactions with the market, commodities, and the culture of consumption. In *The Yellow Mercedes*, Okan continues his investigation by focusing on a Turkish guest worker's fetishistic attachment to his newly bought automobile. Even though the teacher is portrayed as an immigrant, and the villagers as Crimean Tatars, migration and migration-related discourses are reduced to peripheral and insignificant references in *Grapes of Hope*. Human's problematic relationship with commodities, on the other hand, continues to serve as the central thematic concern, articulated through the struggle between the inhabitants of the village and the local bourgeois over the ownership of the vineyard. Here, Okan again places capitalistic commodity fetishism and bureaucracy in his line of fire. This time, commodity fetishism is addressed through the examination of the local bourgeoisie's unceasing appetite for money, farmland, and the vineyard.

Beyond giving it a self-orientalist tone, Okan's alterations of the original story also make the film a less realistic and less convincing for a Turkish audience. Despite its downsides, and its failure to attract attention in Turkey and abroad, *Grapes of Hope* is still a manifestation of Okan's unceasing desire to look for new ways of storytelling. For the first time, he utilises the classical narration strategy that is often used by commercial cinemas, such as those of Hollywood and Yeşilçam. He uses clear-cut good and bad characters, linear narration, identification mechanism, and a neat resolution of conflicts. During the several meetings I had with him, Okan was generous enough to allow me to read the script of his fifth film project, which he has been working on for some time, and informed me of his plans to make a commercial film by fully following commercial cinemas'

tried and tested recipes, narration methods, and marketing and distribution mechanisms. Keeping this in mind, one can see *Grapes of Hope* as a practising ground for a shift in Okan's cinema.

There are only a few filmmakers from Turkey who are internationally known. Many of my friends, even those who are interested in cinema, cannot name any filmmaker other than Yılmaz Güney, and less so, Nuri Bilge Ceylan. Though certainly important filmmakers, their films by themselves are not enough to understand and appreciate Turkey's rich cinema landscape, which is still one of the most productive national cinemas in the world today. If one wishes to acquire a deeper understanding of Turkey's (art) cinema, one can watch and study a long and diverse list of films by filmmakers including, but not limited to, Lütfi Ömer Akad, Metin Erksan, Halit Refiğ, Duygu Sağıroğlu, Şerif Gören, Zeki Ökten, Ömer Kavur, Erden Kıral, Nesli Çölgeçen, Tevfik Başer, Yeşim Ustaoğlu, Kutluğ Ataman, Zeki Demirkubuz, Derviş Zaim, Reha Erdem, Semih Kaplanoğlu, Ümit Ünal, Pelin Esmer, Özcan Alper, Tolga Karaçelik, and Emin Alper. Tunç Okan is one of the most essential names on this list, not only because he is one of the first independent Turkish filmmakers, but also because he is one of the earliest filmmakers from Turkey who made films with the ambition to reach an international audience. I hope this study will contribute to adding Okan's name to the list of internationally known filmmakers from Turkey and encourage people to discover and study his cinema more closely.

Notes

[294] "Otobüs ya da insan sevgisi" in *Tunç Okan, Otobüs*. Pan Film, 1977.
[295] Luxembourgeus. 195, 246-247.
[296] Ibid. 249-253.
[297] Ibid. 197.
[298] Said. 40.

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Filmography

A Taste of Honey	Tony Richardson	1961
Alice in den Städten (Alice in the Cities)	Wim Wenders	1974
Amansız Yol (The Road with no Mercy)	Ömer Kavur	1985
America America	Elia Kazan	1963
Angst essen Seele auf (Ali: Fear Eats the Soul)	R. Werner Fassbinder	1974
Arkadaş (Friend)	Yılmaz Güney	1975
Aşkı Ben mi Yarattım (Is It Me Who Created the Love)	Şerif Gören	1979
Baba (Father)	Yılmaz Güney	1971
Bana Kurşun İşlemez (Bullets Cannot Pierce Me)	Yılmaz Güney	1967
Billy Liar	John Schlesinger	1963
Bitmeyen Yol (Road without End)	Duygu Sağıroğlu	1965
Bizim Aile (Our Family)	Ergin Orbey	1975
Bonnie and Clyde	Arthur Penn	1967
Border Incident	Anthony Mann	1949
Breathless	Jean-Luc Godard	1960
Buffet froid	Bertrand Blier	1979
Bu Vatanın Çocukları (This Land's Children)	Atıf Yılmaz	1958

Cilalı İbo Casuslar Arasında	Nuri Ergün	1959
(Ibo the Polished Amongst the Spies)		
Cleo de 5 à 7	Agnes Varda	1962
Çöpçüler Kralı	Zeki Ökten	1977
(The King of the Street Cleaners)		
Davacı	Zeki Ökten	1986
(The Plaintiff)		
Davaro	Kartal Tibet	1981
Demiryol	Yavuz Özkan	1979
(The Railroad)		
Der Mustergatte	Karl Suter	1959
(The Model Husband)		
Die Käserei in der Vehfreude	Franz Schnyder	1958
(The Cheese Factory in the Hamlet)		
Die Schweizermacher	Rolf Lyssy	1978
(The Swissmakers)		
Düşman Yolları Kesti	Osman F. Seden	1959
(The Enemy Has Blocked the Roads)		
Düş Gezginleri	Atıf Yılmaz	1992
(Walking After Midnight)		
Easy Rider	Dennis Hopper	1969
Falsche Bewegung	Wim Wenders	1975
(The Wrong Move)		
Hayatım Sana Feda	Muzaffer Arslan	1970
(I Sacrificed My Life)		
Heaven's Gate	Michael Cimino	1980
Helal Olsun Ali Abi	Hulki Saner	1963
(Good To You Big Brother Ali)		
Hızlı Yaşayanlar	Nevzat Pesen	1964
(Those Who Live Fast)		
Hoří, má panenko	Miloš Forman	1967
(The Firemen's Ball)		
I Am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang	Mervyn LeRoy	1932
Il Cammino della speranza	Pietro Germi	1950
(The Path of Hope)		
Im Lauf der Zeit	Wim Wenders	1976
(Kings of the Road)		
Karanlıkta Uyananlar	Ertem Göreç	1964
(Those Awakening in the Dark)		

Kasımpaşalı Recep	Yılmaz Güney	1965
(Recep of Kasımpaşa)		
L'arrivée d'un train en gare		
de La Ciotat	Lumière Brothers	1895
(The Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat Station)		
La Grande Bouffe	Marco Ferreri	1973
(Blow-Out)		
Le Fantôme de la liberté	Luis Buñuel	1974
(The Phantom of Liberty)		
L'Invitation	Claude Goretta	1973
(The Invitation)		
Le père Noël est une ordure	Jean-Marie Poiré	1982
(Santa Claus Is a Stinker)		
Le Voyage dans la Lune	Georges Méliès	1092
(A Trip to the Moon)		
Look Back in Anger	Tony Richardson	1959
Maden	Yavuz Özkan	1978
(The Mine)		
Midnight Express	Alan Parker	1978
Missing	Konstantinos Gavras	1982
My Own Private Idaho	Gust Van Sant	1991
O slavnosti a hostech	Jan Němec	1966
(A Report on the Party and Guests)		
Planes, Trains and		
Automobiles	John Hughes	1987
Professione: Reporter	Michelangelo Antonioni	1975
(The Passenger)		
Repo Man	Alex Cox	1984
Room at the Top	Jack Clayton	1959
Safety Last!	Harold Lloyd	1923
Sihirli Define	Semih Evin	1950
(The Magical Treasure)		
Skřivánci na niti	Jiří Menzel	1969
(Larks on a String)		
Smultronstället	Ingmar Bergman	1957
(Wild Strawberries)		
Sürü	Zeki Ökten	1979
(The Herd)		
Şehirdeki Yabancı	Halit Refiğ	1962
(Stranger in the City)		
The Entertainer	Tony Richardson	1959
The Loneliness of the Long		

Distance Runner	Tony Richardson	1962
Themroc	Claude Faraldo	1972
Thelma & Louise	Ridley Scott	1991
The Grapes of Wrath	John Ford	1940
Turist Ömer Uzay Yolunda (Ömer the Tourist in Star Trek)	Hulki Saner	1973
Trafic (Traffic)	Jacques Tati	1971
Tosun'la Yosun'un Maceraları (The Adventures of Tosun and Yosun)	Nuri Ergün	1963
To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything! Julie Newmar	Beeban T. Kidron	1995
Up the Junction	Peter Collinson	1968
Üç Kağıtçı (The Swindler)	Natuk Baytan	1981
Week End	Jean-Luc Godard	1967
Wild Boys of the Road	William Wellman	1933
Yol (The Road)	Şerif Gören	1982
You Only Live Once	Fritz Lang's	1937
40 Quadratmeter Deutschland (40 Square Meters of Germany)	Tevfik Başer	1986

Curriculum Vitae

Tayfun Luxembourgeus was born on 3 February 1985 in Bolu, Turkey. He completed his BA in 2007 in the Department of Public Relations and Publicity at Marmara University, Istanbul, Turkey. Following his graduation, he did not want to work in this field, due to ethical concerns and political believes. He decided to focus on cinema for which he developed a deep interest during his bachelor education. With this motivation, he attended the Department of Cinema at the same university and earned an MA degree in Cinema in 2010 with a thesis focusing on the representation of homosexuals and homosexuality in Turkey's Cinema. In 2014 he earned another MA degree in the Department of Visual Culture from Lund University in Sweden with a thesis focusing on Tunç Okan's debut film *Otobüs* (The Bus, 1974). Interested in displacement, im/migration, minorities, and their reflections in cinema, he decided to study Okan's cinema further, and write a PhD dissertation about the cinema of the filmmaker.

Propositions

1. Hamid Nafiy's *accented cinema* is an Americentric and self-orientalising concept.
2. Calling certain people who live in a country other than their country of birth "expatriate" while calling some others who do the same "immigrant" is ethnocentric and classist. For this reason, either all immigrants should be called expatriates, or all expatriates immigrants.
3. *Türk Sineması* (Turkish Cinema) is a problematic concept and should be replaced with *Türkiye Sineması* (Cinema of Turkey or Turkey's Cinema).
4. The Republic of Turkey is one of the nation-states that succeeded the Ottoman Empire, but is not the continuator of it, despite the groundless claims of the Islamists currently in power in Turkey.
5. The history of "Turkish Cinema" is often started with Fuat Uzkınay's short documentary footage *Ayastefanos'taki Rus Abidesinin Yıkılışı* (Demolition of the Monument at San Stefano) which is claimed to be made in 1914. However, it is not really possible to talk about "Turkishness" of a cinema in that early age during the Ottoman Empire without flirting with ethnic nationalism and even racism.
6. The cinema history of Turkey needs a new periodisation that would define the period preceding the establishment of the national state of Turkey as a different period.
7. The canonisation of certain films from Turkey that are known abroad is a political decision.
8. Hollywood studios should stop making alien movies in which the world is attacked by extraterrestrials and saved by an American hero (very often male) at the end.
9. Hollywood is the national cinema of the United States of America and it should be treated as such. It might be the most technically and economically advanced film industry in the world but it is not the best.
10. Religious education is child abuse.