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

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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.

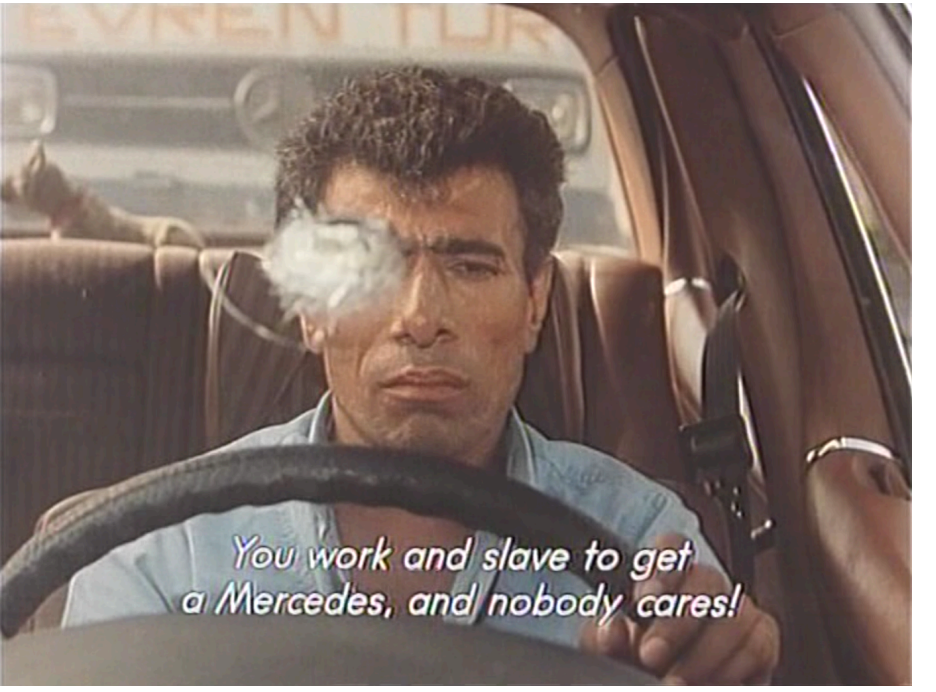
Starting from the very early road movies, the automobile is often depicted as an object with a destructive force. This is also the case in Okan's film, as Bayram's fascination with automobiles is destructive for him both socially and mentally. Socially, Bayram's fascination with automobiles slowly but 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.