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**MASTER OF THE HOUSE**  
**De-Mythologizing the Father in Turkish-German Film**

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## ABSTRACT

The thesis sets out to answer a question: why the Turkish-German films of the last decade have without exception presented the father as impaired or absent? The parameters of the inquiry are set out in an introductory chapter, which also outlines the establishes the theoretical framework for the thesis. An account is given of the Turkish migrations of the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the unique place occupied by Turkey in terms of postcolonial studies is emphasised.

Chapter Two defines the concept of cultural schizophrenia, a theoretical construct which bridges the divide between culturalist and psychoanalytical interpretations. Current debates concerning diaspora and identity are reviewed. The mythological grounding for the dominant position of the father in Islam is examined with particular attention to the traditional Turkish village at the time of the main labour migrations.

Chapter Three indicates how approaches to the patriarch in film have been dominated by Oedipal interpretations. Two Oedipal explanations for the phenomenon of the disappearing father are examined. The first involves the psychoanalysis of the auteur as in Freud's analysis of *The Brothers Karamazov* and Bergman's study of *Wild Strawberries*, each of which centres on the death of a dominating father figure. The second explanation focuses on the theories applied by Elsaesser and Nowell-Smith to the weakened or impaired father figure in Hollywood melodrama of the 1950s, and the possible applicability of this theoretical approach to the case of Turkish-German film. The chapter ends by detailing the shortcomings of Oedipal interpretations with regard to the non-Western family found in the writings of Jung, Deleuze and Foucault.

In Chapter Four, the representation of the strong father figure in Turkish melodrama is compared with the gradual undermining of his position in films of migration of the 1960s and 1970s. This process is illustrated through an examination of Turkish films of this period.

Chapter Five provides a detailed study of the family in Turkish-German films of the decade 1990-2000, focusing on expressions of anxiety, claustrophobia, sexual tension and neurosis, and indicating the gradual replacement of conflict and otherness by that of a positive hybridity. A classification of Turkish-German films is attempted, with particular attention to the concepts of accented cinema, transnational cinema and the 'cinema of duty' resulting from the official funding of minority projects.

The final chapter argues that neither culturalist nor symptomatic approaches can adequately explain the phenomenon of the disappearing father. It proposes that Turkish-German films should be viewed as a distinct filmic cycle, whose collective effect is a de-mythologisation of the father. This proposition entails a consideration of the approaches to myth in film and cultural studies and of an epistemological link between genre and mythopoesis.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

*Even if the frog learned to hiss, still the snake  
would hear through the hiss the information  
he needed, the frog voice underneath.*

*Jelaluddin Rumi, 1207-1273<sup>i</sup>*

*We are facing a migration comparable to the early Indo-European migrations,  
East to West, or the invasion of the Roman Empire by the Barbarians. The new  
migration will radically change the face of Europe. In one hundred years Europe  
could be a coloured continent.*

*Umberto Eco, *Chaosmos: the Return of the Middle Ages*<sup>ii</sup>*

*Coming to terms with 'the Turk' is a crucial aspect of the cultural reordering and  
re-association that must be undertaken in the European space.*

*Kevin Robins, *Interrupting Identities*<sup>iii</sup>*

### **1.1 Parameters of the Thesis**

The principal subject of this study is Turkish-German cinema of recent times, that is mainly films directed by Turkish filmmakers living and working in Germany, although certain earlier, and wholly Turkish, films have been included which bear directly on the subject of migration and diaspora. The Turkish film critic Oguz Makal, in his book *Sinema Yedinci Adam* (Cinema of the Seventh Man), discusses thirty separate films under these headings, and the book deals only with films up to the year 2000. It is therefore not possible, even if it were desirable, closely to examine all of these films, unless this thesis were to become little more than a list and summary, which is essentially the function of Makal's book. The basis for the present thesis is

thus a selection of Turkish films of migration and diaspora, a selection determined by the shape of the thesis itself, which turns on a single question: why has there been a successive weakening of the father figure as represented in Turkish films of migration, to the point where this figure, central to the narratives of Turkish melodrama, has almost entirely disappeared as a significant narrative element? The thesis will argue that this phenomenon reflects the pressure felt among migrant communities, and in the films that depict them, to redefine the traditional role of the father in the Turkish family. This process of redefinition – perhaps like all such gradual but radical processes of social change – has taken place unconsciously; in other words it has not been overtly and deliberately examined in the films but has actually remained unnoticed by the filmmakers themselves and, apparently, by film critics.

The implications of the redefinition of the patriarchal role are profound. It profoundly affects the relationships within the notional Turkish family, in particular the relationships between man and wife and between father and son. It cannot be disentangled from the significant cultural impulses which in contemporary Turkey have led away from the established tenets of the Islamic cosmology and traditional Islamic practice. Nor can it be considered separately from the growing influence on Turkish artists and intellectuals of western patterns of thought, whether expressed in academic epistemology or cultural production.

The immediate task is to establish the legitimacy of the original question, and this may partly be done by emphasising from the start that the question arose from an empirical study of the films themselves. It was not asked in order to present a particular (feminist, psychoanalytical or sectarian) agenda. Indeed, it did not even emerge as a question until towards the end of a quite exhaustive study of most or all of the films of migration listed by Makal, and others that have been released since the publication of that book. The second point to be made is that so far no exceptions to the general rule – of a weakened, impaired or absent father figure – have yet been discovered either within the films here selected for closer study or in other Turkish films of migration. Thirdly, the charge cannot fairly be levelled that the question is framed as a convenient

device for ordering a mass of inchoate material. The fact is that the asking of it tends rather to disturb convenient theoretical models and hypotheses, mainly because the resulting debate cannot be contained either within a single academic discipline nor within one established theoretical framework. I have found that an answer cannot be attempted without some attention to the anthropology of kinship and family, to the sociology of traditional and diasporic communities, to the nature and impact of Islamic cosmology and to the operation and analysis of contemporary myth, as well as to various theoretical approaches within film studies<sup>iv</sup>.

The films studied fall into two parts. With one exception, those considered in Chapter 4 are Turkish films of the 1960s and 1970s dealing with migration and its impact. These may be regarded as transitional, in the sense that although made and financed in Turkey, they adumbrate the themes of physical, social and psychological dislocation taken up in the later films. *Otobus* ('The Bus', Tunc Okan, 1972) deals with the migration of labourers to Sweden, the destinations of the migrants in the other films were the cities of Germany.<sup>v</sup> The last film examined in this chapter, *40 m<sup>2</sup> Deutschland* (Tevfik Başer, 1986), was actually the first of the films to be made in Germany itself but still deals with the experience of the first-generation migrants.

The films closely examined in the following chapter were all made in the twelve years between 1988 and 2000, and all but one were directed by Turkish filmmakers working in Germany. I have elected to refer to these collectively as Turkish-German films<sup>vi</sup>. Typically, the production and financing of the films has been wholly or partly undertaken by German companies and the film crew and cast have been part-Turkish and part-German. To take three examples: the film *Dealer* ('Satici', Thomas Arslan 1998) had a Turkish director and an all-Turkish cast, but the film crew, including the cinematographer and the art director, was German, and the dialogue was in German in all but a few scenes. The film was produced by an independent German production company, Transfilm, in collaboration with the German television channel ZDF. The financing was supplied by the municipality of Berlin through the Berlin-Brandenburg Filmboard. *40 m<sup>2</sup> Deutschland* was directed by Tevfik Başer, a Turkish director educated partly in the West who

became a German citizen in 1989. The cameraman, Izzet Akay, was also Turkish, as were the principal actors, but German filmmakers were responsible for the production, editing and soundtrack of the film. *Kurz und Schmerzlos* (Short, Sharp Shock, Fatih Akin, 1998) was made by a Turkish director but had an international cast and a largely German film crew. The financing was provided by the municipality of Hamburg channelled through ZDF.



## 1.2 The Disappearing Father in Turkish-German Films

Of the Turkish and Turkish-German films dealing broadly with themes of migration and dislocation examined in the following chapters of this thesis, the fathers/patriarchs are dead or absent in nearly half, and under-attack, 'impaired' or ill in the remainder. In terms of family structures – which otherwise include the normal range of sibling and parental relationships – the most consistently remarkable feature is that of the absent or ineffectual father. The phenomenon should be seen against the background of a Turkish family which has traditionally been centred, in economic, cultural and religious terms, around a powerful male figure, and the dominant role played by that figure in the characteristic Turkish cinematic form – the Turkish melodrama.

In *Gurbet Kuslari* ('Birds of Exile', Halit Refig, 1964) and *Gelin* ('Daughter-in-law', Lutfi Akad, 1973), the father figures are under attack and both are defeated or sidelined by the end of the films. In *Otobus* ('The Bus', Tunc Okan, 1974), the migrant workers, naturally, are on their own, and the one man who might have acted as a father-figure (as experienced guide) betrays and cheats them. In *Donus* ('The Return', Turkan Soray, 1972), the protagonists, Gulcan and Ibrahim, are both orphans, and it is the absence of Gulcan's father (although this is never made explicit) that makes her vulnerable to the jealous passion of the local *aga*. Guldane, the heroine of *Almanya Aci Vatan* ('Germany Bitter Homeland', Serif Goren 1979) also appears to be an orphan. There is only one direct reference to the father in *40m2 Deutschland*: 'I was a prisoner in my father's house and now I am a prisoner in your house – what's the difference?' Tuna protests to her husband. A flashback sequence show her watching from behind a half-open door as her husband-to-be negotiates the marriage contract with her father, whose brief portrayal in this scene depicts a weak and selfish man engaged in selling his own daughter. The film ends with the husband, soon to be a father himself, dying of an epileptic fit. In Baser's second feature, *Abschied vom Falschen Paradies* ('Farewell to a False Paradise', Tevfik Baser, 1988), Elif is a Turkish woman sentenced

to a term in a German prison for the murder of her abusive husband and separated by an unbridgeable distance from her family in Turkey.

*Auslands Tournee* ('Tour Abroad', Turkish title: *Yurtdisi Turu*, Ayse Polat, Germany 1999) starts with the funeral of the girl's father and the first part of the film focuses on the reluctance of Zeki, a performer, to take on the role of surrogate father to the young girl. Zeki himself, it transpires, has a mother but his father is either dead or absent. Bayram in *Mercedes Mon Amour* (Turkish title, *Fikrimin Ince Gulu*, Tunc Okan, 1992) is an orphan, raised by his uncle. In *Lola und Bilidikid*, ('Lola and Bilidikid', Kutlug Ataman, Germany 1998) and *Der Schone Tag* ('The Fine Day', Thomas Arslan, 2000) the father has died before the action of the film begins. In *Yara* ('The Wound', Yilmaz Arslan, 1998), Hulya's father appears only briefly and his one narrative function is to 'reject' his daughter by sending her back to Turkey. It is also explicitly suggested at one point that the father holds the key to his daughter's psychosis. In an earlier film by Yilmaz Arslan, *Passages* ('Langer Gang', Yilmaz Arslan, 1992), the action takes place in a German rehabilitation centre for disabled youth, where all the main protagonists are effectively orphaned. An attempt by the Turkish girl Nesrin and her German boyfriend Didi to form a 'family' by 'adopting' a young German boy is short-lived. Nesrin becomes pregnant and commits suicide rather than facing her parents.

In only a few films is the father a functioning member of the family, and in each case, his authority is shown as ineffective or impaired. In *Satici* ('Dealer', Thomas Arslan, Germany 1998), the father beats his wife, who is suffering from a nervous breakdown, presumably as a result of her husband's treatment. His textile business is failing and his relations with his son are minimal and strained. The son himself is married, but lives separately from his wife and child. In *Aprilkinder* ('The April Children', Turkish title *Nisan Cocuklari*, Yuksel Yavuz, Germany 1998), the father is ill and weak, and intervenes only twice in the narrative. The first time is when Kim, his son Cem's German girlfriend, comes to the flat looking for Cem and the father gets up to go to the door and tell her she has come to the wrong house. He is also instrumental in pressurising his

son into accepting the arranged marriage, at which, out of his dressing gown for the first time in the film, he is in attendance. In *Kurz und Schmerzlos*, ('Short Sharp Shock', Fatih Akin, 1998), the father is also portrayed as weak, and almost his only verbal participation in the film, reiterated several times, is a plea to his gangster son to pray with him. Within the diegesis of the film, prayer appears to be his principal activity. In *Berlin in Berlin* (Sinan Cetin, Germany 1993), the father is nominally the head of the household, but fails to dominate his aggressive elder son and, when faced with a crucial decision, yields to the forceful opinion of his own mother. He thus plays no effective part in the development of the plot.

In the tragi-comedy, *Ich Chef Du Turnschuh* ('Me Boss, You Running Shoe', Husni Kutlucan, 1998), the young German boy, Leo, is brought up by his single mother, who is later killed by his blood father. The film focuses on his relations with the Armenian asylum-seeker, Dudi, whom the boy claims as his new father. Like Zeki in *Auslands Tournee*, Dudi makes strong attempts to deny the paternal role, specifically rejecting it more than once. In *Im Juli* ('In July', Turkish title *Temmuz'da*, Fatih Akin, Germany 2000), all the characters belong to a single generation in their twenties. Neither the German couple, Daniel and Juli, nor the Turkish pairing, Isa and Melek, have parents in the film.

### 1.3 Theoretical Approaches

In seeking to expound and explain the phenomenon of the disappearing father – which in the context of the development of Turkish cinema amounts almost to a revolution<sup>vii</sup> – two distinct theoretical frameworks suggest themselves. The first may be broadly termed ‘culturalist’, by which the films in question are seen as the product of a certain minority culture, in this case of the Turkish communities in German cities. In culturalist approaches to cinema, the key concept is that of ‘identity’. So-called ‘identity cinema’ stresses the salient characteristics of minority cultures, and these groupings permit certain generalisations in terms of political attitudes, social values and cultural productions. In particular, the cultural productions of diasporic communities are seen as an expression of the ‘otherness’ of ethnic minorities in unfamiliar, marginalised and potentially hostile environments. A number of overlapping critical constructs have been set up in this way, together with a constant evolution and refinement of terminology, including postcolonial cinema, diasporic cinema, exilic cinema, hyphenated cinema and transnational cinema. The distinctions between these are mainly determined, according to Hamid Naficy, by ‘the different emphasis on the relationship to place’ [Naficy, 2000: 15]. Exilic cinema is concerned principally with the homeland; diasporic cinema more with the contemporary experience of the diasporic communities, and postcolonial cinema with societies and groups which have been subjected to the fall-out of colonialism. The term transnational cinema<sup>viii</sup> emphasises the transcendence of purely national concerns, as well as commercial collaborations which take no account of national borders. Göktürk suggests that the emergence of these films ‘signals the universality of diversity and mobility’ [Göktürk, 2000: 66], a comment indicating that their central focus is still on the question of identity. Shohat and Stam’s term ‘postcolonial hybrid films’ [Shohat and Stam, 1994: 42] also suggests the forging of new identities within particular historical/political contexts.

Some critics (for example, Malik 1996) have identified what they call a ‘cinema of duty’ by which minority filmmakers are obliged, or at least feel obliged, to work with themes and

narratives of a particular kind in order to satisfy the expectations of funding organisations or host-cultures. Similar to this is the concept of 'salvage filmmaking', in which the filmmaker works to save and record elements of his or her ethnic or cultural heritage. The dangers to cultural productions of these pressures are not only an inevitable self-consciousness but the confinement of cultural expression to certain specific parameters and, often, stereotypes. Göktürk refers to the emergence of a 'ghetto culture', one which 'was at great pains to promote politics of integration but rarely achieved much popularity.' [Göktürk, 2000: 67]. The Turkish writer Aras Ören expresses his fear that:

while the conservatives lock us into our cultural ghetto by preserving the culture we brought with us as it is and by denying that there can be symbiosis or development ... the progressives try to drive us back into that same ghetto because, filled with enthusiasm by the originality and exoticism of our culture, they champion it so fervently that they are afraid it might even disappear, be absorbed by German culture.

[quoted in Suhr, 1989: 102]

'Salvage' filmmaking may act as a useful contribution to the maintenance of cultural diversity and the preservation of at least the record and memory of disappearing ways of life.<sup>ix</sup> But the appellation of a 'cinema of duty' implies a serious accusation. It means that neither the viewer, nor especially the critic, can approach the film without suspecting its motives and, in short, questioning its ethical integrity.

All of these categories and sub-genres have been accorded a quite exhaustive treatment in a recent study by Hamid Naficy under the general heading 'accented cinema'. His contention is that 'although there is nothing common about exile and diaspora, deterritorialized peoples and their films share certain features, which in today's climate of lethal ethnic difference need to be considered, even emphasized' (Naficy, 2001:3). According to him, common stylistic features of accented cinema include:

open-form and closed-form visual style; 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.

[ibid: 4]

Accented films commonly contain journeys that are 'deeply psychological and philosophical', 'narratives of panic and pursuit', and the representation of diasporic existence 'tends to stress claustrophobia and temporality ... cathected to sites of confinement and control'. Accented films 'inscribe amphibolic character types who are split, double, crossed, and hybridized'; typically, they exhibit a 'double consciousness' which, Naficy claims, 'constitutes the accented style' [ibid, 5,6]. Under Naficy's geographical categorisation, Turkish diasporic filmmakers are included with the Middle-Eastern and North African group, 'a surprisingly large and diverse group, numbering 321 filmmakers from sixteen sending countries who made at least 920 films in twenty-seven receiving countries, mostly in Europe and North America' [ibid, 18]. Over 500 of these films were made either by Iranians or Armenians, and a further 150 by North African filmmakers. The twenty-five Turkish films form the core of the present study, and it will be seen in the detailed examination of a selection of these films that they exhibit some or all of the chief stylistic and narrative characteristics of 'accented' cinema discussed by Naficy.

How does this 'culturalist' approach help in solving the puzzle of the disappearing father? Some initial observations may be made. Firstly, the process of migration necessarily disturbs and, initially at any rate, fragments traditional social structures. In the first phase of the migration of Turkish workers to European cities, the majority of the migrants were young men travelling without their families. The father was left behind, so the experience of surviving in and adapting to harsh conditions and alien environments was undergone without the authority, guidance and reassurance traditionally provided by the patriarch. It should be added that children already born to the migrants before their departure, or conceived during brief visits 'home', would themselves tend to grow up with mothers and grandparents and in the absence of their fathers. Secondly, even if and when the family was re-constituted at a later date, the father-figure may not have been invested with the same authority as before. There are various reasons for this. Children born in the

adopted country – in this case Germany – would grow up with a more thorough knowledge of the language and other practicalities of German society. They would have a deeper understanding of its history and culture and a correspondingly dimmer idea of that of their so-called homeland. In general they would feel a diminished sense of ‘otherness’. All of this would tend to magnify their importance within the family and therefore to belittle the importance of the patriarch. As Tan and Waldhoff put it:

In principle at least, fathers tend to suffer a loss of jurisdiction and authority as head of the family in the course of migration, while mothers may gain economic influence and children often acquire greater social and cultural power. No migrant family escapes a transformation of its established pattern of authority and structure.

[Tan and Waldhoff, 1996: 139]

Here, then, is the ostensible ‘cause’ of the phenomenon under consideration: the fathers have suffered ‘a loss of jurisdiction and authority’, and therefore when represented in films they appear as weakened or impaired. This is why the father in *Aprilkinder* never gets out of his pyjamas (until the very last scene of the film), and equally why in *Ich Chef Du Turnschuh*, the idle and spendthrift son of a hardworking restaurant owner can say of his father: ‘My father can’t even speak German; he’s a *nobody*.’

Yet while culturalist interpretations will do much to explain the emergence of a weakened father in Turkish-German film, what they cannot serve to explain is the cinematic treatment of its narrative consequences. Logically, if the father has suffered a loss of authority, the son (or wife or daughter) will have been proportionally empowered, but there are few if any signs of such an empowerment in the films in question. Sons of existing fathers are generally portrayed as tense and anxious (*Satici*, *Aprilkinder*) or, if in the absence of the father they have themselves become head of the family, they appear to have slipped into the old patriarchal role as if no important social or cultural changes had taken place (Osman in *Lola und Bilidikid*; Murtuz in *Berlin in Berlin*). Wives, without exception, continue to be subordinate or harassed, and daughters are rarely prominent unless the family itself is non-existent or peripheral. The central character of *Der Schöne Tag* is an emancipated and successful young woman (Deniz), whose father has died or

left home before the action of the film starts. The independence of the daughter is partly at least at the expense of the mother, whom she has effectively abandoned, and certainly Deniz' sense of freedom is shown as resulting from the absence of a family structure or of any strong family ties. In this case, then, it is not only a question of a missing father, but of a missing *family*.

More striking still is the way in which the father disappears without any trace of struggle. The family is the principal site and focus of the narrative in the majority of Turkish-German films, yet this potentially crucial source of tension and drama within the family – the rivalry between father and son and the likely resolution of this rivalry in favour of the more 'Germanised' offspring – is simply by-passed. It will be seen from the very interesting parallels to the phenomenon of the impaired father in classic Hollywood drama<sup>x</sup>, that in the films of Sirk, Minelli and Ray, the tension between powerful sons and weakened fathers tends to provide the central narrative dynamic, and indeed this is what one would expect. Yet the father/son confrontations in Turkish-German films are restricted to a few peripheral scenes, *as if it were a matter of no moment*. In the context of a strongly patriarchal society such as the Turkish, this is unlikely, even inexplicable. The conclusion must be, therefore, that something in the text is hidden: there is an unconscious avoidance of this central issue. It is this that leads to the need for a second set of theoretical interpretations.

There is an immediate problem for the film student who attempts to utilise critical theory from the decades of the 1960s and 1970s. This is because the development of film studies, by which the 'grand' theories of earlier decades have been replaced by a more modest and partial and local approach, is widely seen by contemporary critics as a *progression* from the over-ambitious (and mistaken) theories of earlier times to a set of critical approaches that are more sensitive to the whole range of psychological and cultural possibilities inherent in *la condition humaine*. The combined effects of postmodernism and other anti-essentialist positions such as postcolonialism have been to dismantle and, to an extent, discredit the rather top-heavy theories which had



dominated film studies from the early 1960s until the mid-1980s. In the words of Nicholas Tredell:

In the 1990s, film theory shared in the retreat from grand theory to be found across the humanities and human sciences. The most widely publicised idea of the decade was postmodernism, and this claimed that the era of grand narratives – and by implication grand theories – was over; that these were false and potentially oppressive, totalitarian. Christianity, Hegelian philosophy, Marxism and structuralism were all consigned to the dustbin of a history that had effectively come to an end – of course things would still go on happening, but no large-scale systematic change would ever again occur. What were left were local, partial, provisional narratives and theories, aware of their own fragility, and thus able to provide specific insights without ever proving oppressive.

[Tredell, 2002: 205]

Neither postmodernism nor postcolonialism, nor even ‘local, partial, provisional’ theories, can have any guarantee of permanent validity, and the history of film studies (and of all critical studies) to date would strongly suggest that such theories will in their turn be displaced or subsumed by others, but there is an element in postmodernism, in particular, which sets itself up as a ‘not-theory theory’, rather like a painting whose title is ‘untitled’<sup>xi</sup>. Just because of its deliberate elusiveness, this element is especially hard to combat, and it is therefore true that at present the ‘grand theories’ associated with auteurism, structuralism and semiotics, and the great speculative systems traceable to the works of Freud and Marx, are treated by film critics with more circumspection than before.

However, given that the disappearance of the father in the Turkish-German films and its narrative/dramatic consequences (or lack of them) is not explicable only in culturalist or postcolonialist terms, a consideration of the Freudian/Oedipal dimension can hardly be avoided. A Freudian textual analysis might propose that the missing father has ‘disappeared’ as a result of the rivalry of the son, that what has taken place is a literary or textual parricide, the memory of which has been erased or suppressed. This in turn might be seen as resulting from the Oedipal preoccupations of the filmmaker or the working out of a recognisably Oedipal scenario within the

diegesis. However, not only has the psychoanalysis of the *auteur* been largely discredited as an approach to film studies <sup>xii</sup> as a result of reservations raised concerning the relevance of ‘extrinsic’ information, but when, as here, one is considering the work of a large number of different filmmakers, the sheer volume of autobiographical information involved, as well as its inaccessibility, effectively excludes this critical approach.

The other ‘Oedipal’ explanation – involving the working out of Oedipal scenarios within the texts – seems more promising, especially in the case of *Lola und Bilidikid*, in which the brutal older brother who has assumed the mantle of patriarch ejects and later murders a younger brother, and whose violence is finally revealed as resulting from a (violently) repressed homosexuality. In *Berlin in Berlin*, too, the tensions within the family – in particular the older brother’s half-protective, half-lustful relationship with his brother’s widow, as well as the stern rejection of his mother by the youngest boy of the extended family, seems distinctly ‘Oedipal’ in form. Besides, there does exist an important precedent in film studies for this kind of interpretation, namely the analysis of a very similar phenomenon (the disappearing father) in classic Hollywood melodrama, in particular in the writings of Elsaesser and Nowell-Smith. These analyses constitute an interesting fusion of two historical ‘moments’: a moment in film studies associated with the psychoanalytical and feminist film studies belonging roughly to the fifteen years between 1970 and 1985, and a moment in the history of film melodrama belonging largely to the 1950s. The problem that presents itself is the degree to which elements of these analyses might be useful in the context of a very different chronotope. In particular, it is important to establish how far Freud/Oedipus is a western construct, based on western models of the family as well as a specifically western epistemology. Patterns of childrearing, and therefore of ego development, in traditional Turkish society have been very different to those in the West, and the father-son relation, is otherwise conceived. As the American anthropologist Carole Delaney, writing of life in a remote Anatolian village, points out:

There can be no resolution of the Oedipus complex in this society. According to Freud, a man must relinquish his attachment to his mother and identify with his father; but in this

society not only is a man's attachment to his mother prolonged, but a son remains in a submissive relation to his father and thus cannot identify with him. Since the son remains in the parental home, he remains in some sense in an infantile position as long as the father is alive.

[Delaney, 1991: 175]

Similar reservations about the 'universality' of Oedipus are raised by Deleuze and Guattari in their examination in *Anti-Oedipus* of what they refer to as 'primitive societies'. By primitive, they mean societies which are not subject to the complex set of social determinations which are common to developed (i.e. western and post-agrarian) communities. In such cases, they suggest, 'there is no possibility of reducing social reproduction to familial reproduction, nor is it possible to establish one-to-one relations between the two that would confer on any familial complex whatever an expressive value and an apparent autonomous form' [Deleuze and Guattari, 1983: 166]. Their description of a 'primitive' family as 'a praxis, a politics, a strategy of alliances and filiations,' [ibid] closely conforms to the observations made by Foucault in his *History of Sexuality*, which points to significant developments in the family in the West consequent on the economic and social processes peculiar to industrialising societies. He defines this change as a move from the 'deployment of alliance' to the 'deployment of sexuality' [Foucault, 1979: 106]. It was this shift, according to Foucault, that caused the family to become the principal site of sexual tension and thus gave rise to the theories of Freud. What then, of traditional non-western societies which had remained immune – as in the case of Turkish village communities until very recent times – from the economic and social processes referred to?<sup>xiii</sup>

Nevertheless, a phenomenon which is essentially an *absence* is especially susceptible to psychoanalytical or structuralist hermeneutics, and in this, too, Freud was the principal authority. In *The Psychological Mechanism of Forgetting*, Freud was concerned with absences and omissions in speech, exploring 'the unruly influence of wish or impulse in the normal mind'. According to Freud, these 'unruly influences' resulted in what he called '*Fehlleistungen*' – generally translated into English as 'parapraxes' – applicable to the forgetting of names, words and intentions, slips of

the tongue, slips of the pen, misreadings and bunglings, all of which he treated as 'symptomatic'. 'In any parapraxis,' he wrote, 'there is what we might think of as a disturbing act and a disturbed act; a piece of commission and a piece of omission' [quoted in Wollheim, 1971: 80]. Following Freud, structuralist thought stresses the importance of what are variously referred to as 'concealed absences' [Macherey 1978], 'recondite motifs' [Nowell-Smith, 1968: 9], 'distortions and disruptive elements' [*Cahiers du Cinema* 223], all or any of which terms might be applied to the present case. The 'structuring absence' was a key element in structuralist hermeneutics, and films were analysed as much in terms of *what was not there* as of what was. In the preface to '*Young Mr. Lincoln*', Comolli and Narboni explore a taxonomy of possible relations between a film and the dominant ideology, highlighting the idea of 'cracks' caused by internal tensions. [*Screen*, vol. 13/3]. In the *Cahiers* essay on Ford's *Young Mr Lincoln*, described by Bordwell as 'the central exemplar of academic film criticism' [Bordwell, 1989: 85], the figure of Lincoln himself is seen as constituted by absences which in turn are the outcome of 'repressions'.<sup>xiv</sup>

In the '*auteur* structuralism' of the *Cahiers* editors, the clues to the meaning of the film are to be found more or less deeply hidden within the text, and it is in the character and purpose – the 'authorship' – of the filmmaker that some kind of coherent explanation is sought. In the case of Turkish films of migration and the later Turkish-German diasporic films, what is common to the films is not authorship but a specific 'structuring absence' and therefore no primarily *auteurist* approach will serve. Thus one is led to the question as to whether the works concerned constitute a recognisable genre, sub-genre or cycle of films. On the surface, this is problematic. Some of the films in question (*Berlin in Berlin*, *Lola und Bilidikid*) are best described as multicultural melodramas, two are essentially road movies (*Auslands Tournee*, *Im Juli*), one at least (*Ich Chef Du Turnschuh*) is a comedy or tragi-comedy, several (*Otobus*, *Deutschland 40m²*, *Satici*, *Aprilkinder*) aim at a documentary-style social realism akin to the 'social issue' films of 1950s Hollywood or 1960s Britain. *Kurz und Schmerzlos* is an example of a 'transnational' gangster film, with the three central characters respectively Serb, Greek and Turkish. *Der Schöne Tag* seems to belong to the genre of European arthouse movies (the film explicitly pays homage to

Eric Rohmer). Gökturk describes *Lola und Bilidikid* as ‘a flamboyant family melodrama and thriller’, and finally, several may be seen, as Gökturk points out [Gökturk, 2000], as representative of a ‘cinema of duty’, due to the provision of municipal funding for examples of minority cinema.

However, the films also have important stylistic and narrative elements in common. All are essentially urban, and in nearly every case, the urban ambience is represented as rather closed and oppressive – ‘claustrophobic’ is the word used by both Naficy and Gökturk – stressing the paucity of both emotional and economic outlets. Without only one or two exceptions, the family is the site and focus of the diegesis, and often the family home/flat is the centre of the action. The physical confinement of these interior spaces is emphasised, with neutral colours, dim lighting and a rather static camera, and too many internal doors serving as divisions and obstacles between family members. In several cases, attention is drawn to the function of the front door of the flat as a portal between two worlds (especially in *Berlin in Berlin* and *Deutschland 40m<sup>2</sup>*). In *Berlin and Berlin*, the grandmother says of the unwanted (German) houseguest: ‘If he goes out of the door, you can shoot him’, because at that precise point the ineluctable laws of hospitality cease to operate. Important scenes take place on staircases (*Aprilkinder*, *Almanya Aci Vatan*, *Lola und Bilidikid*, *Deutschland 40m<sup>2</sup>*), physical spaces leading from outside to inside, or from upstairs to downstairs, and symbolic spaces connecting inner and outer, upper and lower. External cityscapes highlight what is tawdry, closed-in and neglected. Gökturk writes that *Dealer* depicts ‘unglamorous, minimalist visions’ of the city of Berlin, in which ‘encounters in private and public spaces are acted in a subdued, chilled manner’ [ibid: 73], and the same might be said for *Aprilkinder*.

In terms of narrative structure, the stories tend to be conveyed in a series of one-to-one dialogues or conversations within small familiar groups. Although this is partly a function of budgetary restrictions (which mean that crowd scenes, for example, are effectively prohibited), the recurrence of rather evenly paced dialogues between the protagonists seems characteristic. An

extreme example of this is to be found in *Satici*, in which the action moves awkwardly from one dialogue to the next: Can (the central character) and his girlfriend; Can and the dealer; Can and his co-worker at the restaurant; Can and policeman/friend; Can and the dope-addict Zeki. What is striking in this series is a lack of variety and surprise. The narrative structure resembles a modern stage play with its limited cast and confined arena, but without even the exits and entrances and the swift changes of mood which provide the dramatic elements of the dynamic and unpredictable. Perhaps the most striking element to be found in all or nearly all of the films is an overriding sense of *anxiety*. Usually, this is centred in one particular character (Murat in *Lola und Bilidikid*, Hulya in *Yara*, Guldane in *Almanya Aci Vatan*, Can in *Satici*, Cem in *Aprilkinder*, Zeki in *Auslands Tournee*, Bayram in *Mercedes Mon Amour*). This anxiety is generally caused by, or at least reflected in, the tense and unsatisfactory relationships of the family circle, and in the case of Hulya and Guldane develops into an actual mental instability or neurosis.

In the final section of Chapter 5, I shall argue that it is legitimate to regard the films, despite their disparities, as constituting a *cycle* of films according to the usage of Steven Neale [Neale, 2000]. I shall also propose that the ‘structuring absence’ of a strong father figure is in fact a significant ‘inner’ characteristic of the genre<sup>xv</sup>. This constitutes a crucial step in my argument in that it proposes a solution to the critical problem posed by Jameson in his 1995 essay *The Geopolitical Aesthetic*: ‘Under what circumstances can a necessarily individual story with individual characters function to represent collective processes?’ [Jameson, 1995: 4]. Without it, it would not be possible to consider the films collectively and to make the connection – which is the subject of my conclusion – between the concept of genre and what I have termed cinematic mythopoesis. This connection was put forward by Wollen, who suggested that it was genre that was the ‘proper subject for the study of myth’. In support of this he quotes Jakobson’s insistence that ‘only a work that gains the consensus of the collective body ... becomes an actuality of folklore’ [Wollen, 1976: 490].<sup>xvi</sup> For Wollen, genre is the means by which the collective consensus is established in cinema. As with other theorists of genre, he is no doubt thinking of ‘major’ genres, established over decades, while Turkish-German films constitute only a partial

and specific generic category – properly considered perhaps as a sub-genre of Turkish melodrama – with audiences generally (but not entirely)<sup>xvii</sup> limited to arthouse cinemas and film festivals.

Employing a rather different terminology, and quoting Northrop Frye rather than Jakobson as his authority, Jameson makes a similar point regarding the relation between art (in his context literature) and the community. ‘It does not seem a very difficult next step if, with Frye, we see literature as a weaker form of myth or a later stage of ritual, to conclude that in that sense all literature, no matter how weakly, must be informed by what we have called a political unconscious, that all literature must be read as a symbolic meditation on the destiny of community.’ [Jameson, 1981: 69/70]. If literature can be viewed as ‘a weaker form of myth’, then cinema has, with its visual immediacy and promotional paraphernalia, at least an equal claim to be so viewed. One thinks inevitably, in contemporary cinema, of popular and influential film cycles such as *Star Wars* (Lucas, 1977-2002) or the James Bond films, but as Jameson suggests with his appositional ‘no matter how weakly’, it is degree rather than principle that is at stake. In his study of *Blue Velvet* (Lynch, 1986), a film with a quite limited market and restricted impact, Jameson sees the entry of history ‘in the form of ideology, if not of myth’ and ‘a mythic and sociobiological perspective of the violence of nature’ (Jameson, 1991: 295).

To take a very different and more directly relevant example, in the films of Mike Leigh, with their very local and specific emphasis in terms of geography, social class and theme, Nick Haeffner found ‘elements which inhere in the structure of the films themselves which Leigh may not have deliberately intended’, and argued that what he referred to as ‘these “melodramatic” elements ... form a mythical structure which enhances the dramatic effect of the films and establishes a moral framework which is brought to bear on a range of contemporary social questions’ [Haeffner, 1997]. This observation concurs closely with what I wish to highlight in the Turkish-German cycle, an unintended thematic or psychological element which indicates a significant transformation of the moral and social framework. Like Haeffner, I read the films in question as ‘material culture, not only as surviving documents or fossilised traces of another era,

but also as dynamic myths, symbols and narratives, which stage collective memories, fantasies and desires.’ [ibid: 1] As Haeffner points out, this method of analysis may be compared with what Bordwell refers to as ‘myth criticism’ [Bordwell, 1989: 78-82], but it has also contains echoes of what Tyler somewhat playfully called – in a pre-structuralist era of film criticism – a ‘psychoanalytic-mythological’ approach [Tyler, 1992 (1947): 729]. In Chapter 6, I will discuss the various strands of myth criticism with regard to film studies, in particular the relation of ideology and myth in the early Barthes, the limitations (for cinema) of the purely structuralist approach associated with Levi-Strauss, and the grander concept of myth proposed by Ricoeur.

My thesis proposes that the disappearance of the father in Turkish-German films represents a collective forgetting which is the outcome of radical sociological changes in the Turkish family caused by the twin effects of migration and modernism. It is suggested that because of the absolute authority of the Islamic cosmology and of the traditional deference to the patriarch which is the central axis of the traditional family structure, it has been impossible for the Turkish-German filmmakers directly to confront the demise of this authority. What is observable in the films, therefore, is not the familiar Oedipal scenario of Hollywood melodrama in which the conflict with the father provides the main dramatic elements, but only an absence, a gap, a void where the father used to be. A combination of the secularisation of Islam within Turkey itself and the effects of the Turkish diaspora has resulted in a radical transformation in the Turkish family, particularly regarding the authority of the father, but this transformation has not yet been directly confronted in Turkish or Turkish-German film. The representation of the phenomenon in Turkish-German film has therefore been an unconscious, unintended effect, a symptom of profound changes which are not yet fully apparent. The gradual emergence of what is effectively a new mythology is necessarily antecedent to the conscious articulation of the approaching demise of patriarchy. I do not believe that the two very different theoretical approaches that I have felt obliged to consult – ‘culturalist’ and ‘symptomatic’ – are mutually exclusive, simply that they address different aspects of the same problem, the one empirical, political and sociological and the



other recondite and elusive. I shall argue that the process of mythopoesis always and inevitably consists of these two axes, that myth emerges within, and is shaped by, a particular historical and cultural context, but that the relation between the substantive sociological context and the structure and imagery of the emerging myth cannot by its nature be susceptible entirely to rationalist explanation.

## 1.4 Turkey in Postcolonial Studies

Before proceeding to the main body of my thesis, it is necessary to make some prefatory comments about the rather unique status enjoyed by Turkey in terms of the ongoing postcolonial (and, particularly, 'orientalist') debates. As Shohat and Stam point out: 'Countries such as Iran and Turkey fit uneasily into the tripartite scheme [first world, second world, third world] in that they were never directly colonized, even though they form part of the economically "peripheral" countries subject to indirect European domination' [Shohat and Stam, 1994: 26]. Turkey is neither of the East or of the West, with its Thracian provinces, and half of its largest city, in Europe. It is the only Islamic nation to be a member of NATO, which it joined in 1952, and to have applied to join the European Union, (with which it signed a customs union in 1996). Its population is recorded as over 90 percent Muslim, but its constitution, its courts and its governmental forms are determinedly secular, and the army sees itself as a defender and guarantor of the secularist principle<sup>xviii</sup>. Like Russia, its politics have been *étatist*, but unlike Russia, not even remotely socialist; like the West, it has increasingly put its trust in capitalist solutions, but still with a preponderant public sector in the economy. Despite its religious and historical links with the countries of the Middle East, it has kept largely aloof from Arab politics, and despite its strong cultural and linguistic affinities with Iran, it has firmly opposed the implications of the Ayatollahs' revolution. Although once classified as 'Third World' under the now obsolete tripartite division referred to above, it was itself the heart of a powerful colonial empire that reached into three continents, and its history in the twentieth century has been very different from the majority of so-called emergent nations. Turkish women had the vote as early as the second decade of the century, and the traditional power of Islam and Sufism was broken by the mid-1920s. The destruction of the Sultanate by Ataturk put an abrupt end to the power of dynastic aristocracy, in contrast with contemporary developments in most of Turkey's non-Communist neighbours.<sup>xix</sup>

Only once, during the two or three years following the First World War, did Turkey risk political and economic domination by foreign powers. It might be said that Turkey experienced its 'colonial moment' at the Treaty of Sèvres signed by the last of the Sultan's governments in 1920 – which took from Turkey all of Thrace (*Trakya*), all the Arab lands, Smyrna (*Izmir*) and the hinterland, the Turkish Aegean islands, Armenia, the Kurdish territories and much of Anatolia itself, leaving really only 'the rump of an inland state' [Kinross, 1995: 231]. What followed immediately afterwards was the nationalist revolution, the swift defeat of both the invading Greeks and the forces of the Sultan, and the complete revision of Sèvres three years later at the Treaty of Lausanne. During the crucial years of the 1930s, the country lived under a strong, nationalistic, secular regime, at a time when the Indian nationalist movement was still young. By the 1950s, Turkey was governed by a relatively settled multi-party democratic system, while Iran was ruled by the Shah and by British Petroleum. There was thus none of the colonial mentality of the colonised, and little of the sense of inferiority, whether technological or cultural, of peoples whose buildings are built, educational systems devised and armies trained, by foreigners. This is important in terms of the 'struggle for decolonization at both the cultural and political levels' [Turner, 1994: 3] which stands at the centre of the postcolonial discourse.

Among Turkish cities, the case of Istanbul is special. Geographically, it straddles Europe and Asia and therefore, in a sense, East and West. To cross one of the two Bosphorus bridges has still, to many visitors, a symbolic dimension. It is to move between two continents, with their separate histories and cultural legacies. It was not the border between Rome and the Orient, which mostly lay on the frontier with the Persians, a thousand miles further east, nor between the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Ottomans, which lay between Buda and Pest or, occasionally, at the gates of Vienna, yet in medieval history it was not the fall of Pest that was significant, nor of Edirne (Adrianopolis) nor of Beograd (Belgrade) but of Constantinople, and this date – 1453 – was for many years regarded by western historians as the end of the Middle Ages, just as the taking of that city was regarded by the Ottomans of the time as the climax of their territorial ambitions.

If Istanbul has been one of the pivotal points around which the East-West axis has turned, it also had a very considerable cultural and economic status of its own, as former capital of the Eastern Roman Empire and the largest market of the late Middle Ages, with one of the greatest churches of Christendom and some of the greatest of Islamic mosques, with a population part Greek, part Armenian, part Jewish, as the entrance and entrepot to Black Sea (and therefore Russian) commerce, as well as the military, political and religious headquarters – for three centuries or more – of the most extensive and powerful empire of al-Islam. As early as 1561, the Imperial ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, Busbecq, declared: ‘No nation in the world has shown greater readiness than the Turks to avail themselves of the useful inventions of foreigners, as is proved by their employment of cannons and mortars, and many other things invented by the Christians’ [quoted by Lewis 2002:41]. Istanbul always had a thriving merchant class (mostly Greeks and Armenians), and, perhaps more importantly, Ottoman engineers, architects, doctors and technicians were well-known for their skills throughout the region and beyond. The city’s multi-ethnic and polyglot history both concealed and transcended the binary oppositions of East/West, Islamic/Christian, Asia/Europe, and if there were signs and expressions of a cultural schizophrenia, this had the character of multiplicity and not of duality.<sup>xx</sup>

In the Istanbul of the late nineteenth century, there was a theatre based largely on western models, an Islamic administration partly staffed by Greeks, the presence of Catholic, Protestant, Eastern Orthodox and Armenian churches, and Jewish synagogues, as well as a multiplicity of languages: Ottoman Turkish primarily, but also Greek (which was still the lingua franca of the Eastern Mediterranean), French (the language of international diplomacy), German (the Germans were building the Istanbul to Baghdad railway and constructing the new roads and bridges), English (for example in the Christian schools and colleges), Armenian and Bulgarian and Russian and more. Travellers to Istanbul during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, rather than commenting on its schizoid character tended to celebrate its extraordinary hybridity. In a letter (in French) to the Abbé Conti in 1718, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu wrote from Istanbul:

The suburbs of Pera, Jtophana and Galata are collections of strangers from all countries of the universe. They have so often intermarried that this forms several races of people the oddest imaginable. There's not one single family of natives that can value itself on being unmixed. You frequently see a person whose father was born a Grecian, the mother an Italian, the grandfather a Frenchman, the grandmother an Armenian and their ancestors English, Muscovites, Asiatics etc. This mixture produces creatures more extraordinary than you can imagine. Nor could I ever doubt but there were several different species of men, since the whites, the woolly and long-haired blacks, the small-eyed Tartars and Chinese, the beardless Brazilians, and to name no more, the oily-skinned yellow Nova-Zemblians [north Russian islanders] have as specific differences under the same general kind as greyhounds, mastiffs, spaniels, bulldogs or the race of my little Diana, if nobody is offended at the comparison. Now as the various intermixing of these latter animals causes mongrels, so mankind have their mongrels too, divided and subdivided into endless sorts. We have daily proofs of it here, as I told you before. In the same animal is not seldom remarked the Greek perfidiousness, the Italian diffidence, the Spanish arrogance, the French loquacity and all of a sudden he's seized with a fit of English thoughtfulness bordering a little upon dullness, which many of us have inherited from the stupidity of our Saxon progenitors.

[Montagu, 1998: 111/12]

Even when the 'intermixing' involves only two ethnicities, Montagu sees this as a cause for celebration, as in 'the fantastical conjunction of a Dutch male with a Greek female'. 'Tis a pleasure to observe,' she writes, 'how the different atoms are perpetually jarring together in the children ... they have the large black eyes of the country with the fat, white, fishy flesh of Holland and a lively air streaked with dullness' [ibid: 112].<sup>xxi</sup>

The ethnic, linguistic and religious heterogeneity of Ottoman and post-Ottoman Istanbul may be regarded as a conspicuous example of what Clifford has referred to as 'histories of alternate cosmopolitanisms and diasporic networks', of 'transnational networks not produced by and/or resisting the hegemony of western technological society' [Clifford, 1994: 327]. Montagu's description of 18<sup>th</sup> century Istanbul differs in tone but not in substance from descriptions of late 20<sup>th</sup> century cities of the cosmopolitan West, in which there is a realization that 'cultures are always made up of mixed, heterogeneous, and even contradictory discourses, never more

themselves ... than when they are not just being themselves, in other words not being in that state of unattractive and aggressive affirmativeness into which they are twisted by authoritarian figures who, like so many pharisees or mullahs, presume to speak for the whole culture' [Said, 2001: xv].

The myths of Orientalism as identified by Edward Said [Said, 1978, 1981, 1997] never accurately applied to the Turkish paradigm. Put briefly, what Said had observed and closely examined was the tendency among western historians and other western commentators (the 'Orientalists') to view Eastern peoples, societies, religions and forms of governments through the prism of their own value-systems: as backward, irrational and exotic, stagnating despotic societies lacking initiative, enterprise or the capacity for change. Said includes the following examples: Titus Burkhardt spoke of Islam as 'wretched, bare, and trivial'; Michelet wrote: 'the Orient advances, fatal to the gods of light by the charm of its dreams, by the magic of its chiaroscuro'; 'Kinglake's undeservedly famous and popular work [*Eothen*]' was 'a pathetic catalogue of pompous ethnocentrism and tiringly nondescript accounts of the Englishman's East'; Burton's observations of 'the Orient' were tainted by his 'arrogance and self-belief', and Scott's by his 'feeble historicism'; Nerval describes his journey to the East as going 'further and further into a haunting internal world of paradox and dream'. [Said, 1991: 208, 72, 193, 196, 101, 183]. 'Orientalist' remarks might also come from the pens of strident critics of the West. Engels was disdainful of the cyclical stagnation of Islam – 'the repetition and rotation of personnel in an unchanging social order'. 'Progress, tension and the dialectic were,' Engels wrote, 'a Western prerogative, and the East could be consigned to a stagnation from which only the West could liberate it' [quoted by Gellner, 1992: 10/11]. Regarding the Ottomans, Said points out that because of the imminence over centuries of Ottoman military threat to Europe, 'its great events, figures, virtues, and vices, were as something woven into the fabric of [European] life' [Said, 1991: ref.]. The problem was that these details of Ottoman life were also seen through the perspective of the 'Ottoman Peril' so that they formed part of folklore rather than of any real knowledge or understanding.

The uniqueness of Turkey's history has not been fully acknowledged in the anti-Orientalist discourse. This shortcoming surfaced in an acerbic dispute between Edward Said and Bernard Lewis, conducted in various books and articles [see especially E. Said: *Orientalism Reconsidered*, 1997, pp 130-135 and B. Lewis, *Islam and the West*, 1993, pp. 104-106]. The levels of personal animosity reached in this debate are surprising even in an argument between someone who has made his name in the debunking of Orientalist studies by Europeans and another man whose reputation relies on a series of just such studies. 'For sheer heedless anti-intellectualism unrestrained by the slightest trace of critical self-consciousness, no one, in my experience, has achieved the sublime confidence of Bernard Lewis,' Said wrote [Said, 1997: 133], while Lewis has accused Said of rearranging (i.e. falsifying) the history of Orientalism and claims that 'Mr. Said's attitude to the Orient – Arab and other – as revealed in his book [*Orientalism*], is far more negative than that of the most arrogant of authors and scholars' [Lewis 1993: 112]. The argument has a particular relevance for Turkish studies, which Lewis declared Said to have 'eliminated' [ibid: 107], pointing out that almost the whole focus of *Orientalism* is on the Arab areas of the Middle East, to the exclusion not only of the Indian subcontinent and the Far East but also of Turkey itself. According to Lewis:

Orientalists in Europe and America have dealt with all the cultures of Asia – China and Japan, India and Indonesia; and in the Middle East their studies are by no means limited to the Arabs but have included the Turks and Persians as well as the ancient cultures of the region. There is a radical, one might even say a complete, difference in the attitudes of virtually all these peoples toward the scholars who study them from outside.

[ibid: 115]

In other words, Lewis is saying, there can be no legitimate generalisations about 'the East'. Yet for Said, it is Lewis himself who is guilty of generalising:

Few people today with any sense would want to volunteer such sweeping characterizations as the ones advanced by Lewis about more than a billion Muslims, scattered throughout at least five continents, speaking dozens of different languages, and possessing various traditions and histories. All he says about them is that they are all enraged at Western modernity, as if a billion people were but one ...

[Said, 2001: 572]

Clifford, it seems, agrees with Lewis, taking issue with Said over the restricted standpoint of the Orientalist thesis, and claiming that his (Said's) critiques 'engage pervasive postcolonial processes... from a blatantly partial perspective' [Clifford, 1988:11]. A significant footnote to this accusation of partiality may be found in the Palestinian film *Wedding in Galilee* (1987), in which an ageing Palestinian rambles on, in the present tense, about the *Turkish* occupation. As Shohat and Stam point out, 'In Palestinian eyes, Israel represents just one more invasive foreign power arriving in the wake of the Turks and the British' [Shohat and Stam, 1994: 278]. Turkey is bracketed with Israel *in the present tense*, not with Palestine as in Said's 'partial perspective'.<sup>xxii</sup>

Said has been primarily concerned with the Arab Middle East, and in Turkey attitudes to the West have been more complex than appears in his thesis. Ataturk himself was very sympathetic to western culture, which he regarded as progressive and liberating, and he was followed in this by his successor, Ismet Inonu. Of more recent leaders, Turgut Ozal adopted unashamedly pro-western policies<sup>xxiii</sup>, while Suleyman Demirel and Tansu Ciller tended to equate anti-westernism with Islamic fundamentalism. It may be argued that the political attitudes of the multi-party era had more to do with vote-getting than with scholarship, but what is significant is that the pro-west / anti-west debate in Turkey, since the time of Ataturk, has, with one important exception<sup>xxiv</sup>, focused on the issue of religion. The influence of Islam was seen by Ataturk and nearly all his successors<sup>xxv</sup> as stifling and obscurantist, which is a very different situation to Palestine, where both Al-Fatah and Hamas have grounded their political aspirations in the Islamic creed, and different again, for obvious reasons, to Iran. The secularity of the Turkish State does have something in common with that of India, but its rationale is based on Kemalist principle rather than on the need to transcend a clear sectarian divide.

The atypical nature of Turkey's history in the 20<sup>th</sup> century perhaps provides the explanation why Turkey is so rarely referred to in general studies of East/West relations. Darius Shayegan's *Cultural Schizophrenia* (1997) contains a single reference to Turkey (concerning the reforms of the Young Turks); Akbar Ahmed's *Postmodernism and Islam* (1992) contains thirty



references to Iran, fifteen to Iraq, twenty to Palestine, more than fifty to Pakistan and only two to Turkey; Moore-Gilbert, Stanton and Maley's *Postcolonial Criticism* (1997) has ten for India, nine for both China and Algeria, five for Jamaica, three for Palestine and none at all for Turkey; Gellner's *Postmodernism, Reason and Religion* (1992) also lacks a single reference. These disproportions must reflect the individual preoccupations of authors and editors, but they also stem from the problem of categorising, and therefore generalizing, the Turkish experience.

## 1.5 The Turkish Migrations

The impact on the Turkish family of 'the West' and of 'modernity' – which terms are practically synonymous in this instance – has been most dramatic among migrant communities whose members have made the radical transition from the homogenous peasant societies to the late twentieth century metropolises of western Turkey and Western Europe.

The demographic history of Republican (post-1923) Turkey has been marked by two parallel series of migrations. The first, both historically and numerically, was the (mainly) east-west migration within the country itself, taking place over decades and perhaps involving as many as ten million people, emigrants from the Southeast and from the great central Anatolian plateau and from the Black Sea region who made their way to the big cities – Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, Adana. The second series consists of the migrations which took around three million Turks away from their homeland to the cities of Northern and Western Europe (Stuttgart, Berlin, Hamburg, Amsterdam, Paris) during the thirty years between 1960 and 1990. The two migrations are linked, not only because they were both essentially motivated by the same demographic and economic forces – a rising population and a dearth of rural employment – but because the migrants often originated from the very same areas: rural regions with impoverished or eroded soils or where the population pressure was at its highest. The exact extent of the two series of migrations is difficult accurately to gauge, because so much of the internal movement was unrecorded and unrecordable, but the approximate figures above (suggested by increases in urban populations within Turkey together with the more reliable figures for external migration) indicate that these two migrations may have directly affected one-quarter of the entire Turkish population [FAO 1995: 1-10], and of course much more if one were to include under this heading the offspring of earlier migrants. In addition, there have been immeasurably large, but more local, migrations undertaken by families of Laz, Circassians, the semi-nomadic Yoruk and Oghuz, as well as an influx of Bulgarian Turks in 1989.<sup>xxvi</sup> In 1927, 75 percent of the Turkish population was rural, and the figure had hardly

changed by 1950. By 1972, the proportion was down to 62 percent and by 1990 to 41 percent [State Institute of Statistics: Statistical Indicators, 1995]. More recent SIS estimates suggest that the rural population now represents no more than 25-30 percent of the population.

In 1991, nearly two-thirds of all farms in Turkey were smaller than five hectares [FAO, 1995: 6] and agricultural incomes have dwindled relative to those of the general population. Communications in many rural areas were still difficult, markets distant and agricultural techniques increasingly uneconomic. In addition, the extent of lands affected by drought, particularly in the East, was steadily increasing, and massive dislocation was caused between the mid-1980s and the late 1990s by the Kurdish conflict in the Southeast.<sup>xxvii</sup> The overall result has been a stream of migrants and economic/political refugees from the impoverished countryside to cities with neither the housing nor the basic services to handle an influx on this scale. The speed of this change has been staggering. The number of settlements with a population in excess of 500,000 increased from only four in 1975 to 66 in 1990 [FAO, 1996: 5]. Istanbul alone is reckoned to have doubled in size from a city of between 7 and 8 million in 1980 to a conurbation of perhaps 15 million people today. According to Keyder:

Between 1950 and 1960, the population of all the four largest cities increased by 75 percent, and the urban population (settlements of 10,000 or more inhabitants) from 19 to 26% of the total ... In other words, one out of every ten villages migrated to an urban area during the 1950s. Such geographical mobility truly was the beginning of the national integration, eradicating physical distances, and bringing into brutal confrontation the peripheral and central cultures.

[Keyder, 1987: 137]

The rapidity of urban growth has led to the appearance of the *gecekondu*, a term that literally means 'built overnight', referring to the avoidance of urban planning restrictions. Keyder's expression 'brutal confrontation' suggests that the growth of the *gecekondus* was a violent one, and certainly the degree of social and cultural upheaval, not only for the migrants but also in the lives of the host cities, should not be underestimated. Yet to an extent, the

westward migration to the big cities of the Aegean and Marmara coastline has followed the traditional routes established by the original migrations of Turkic-speaking peoples during the European middle ages. The American journalist Robert Kaplan, visiting the *gecekondu* settlements of Ankara, commented on the cleanliness and order of the households, the insistence of parents that their children should attend schools and the ease with which migrant families had made the transition from a rural village existence. Kaplan attributed this to the nomadic and semi-nomadic traditions of Turkish peoples during the course of their history.<sup>xxviii</sup> Pointing out that over half the urban area of Ankara consists of *gecekondus* and that over half of the city's inhabitants live in them, Zurcher also claims that the translation of *gecekondu* as 'slum' is misleading:

Unlike the inhabitants of the slums in major Western cities, who have reached the end of the line and often do not feel part of society any more, the people in the Turkish squatter towns were, and are, upwardly mobile and integration-oriented. Another difference is that the social fabric of the squatter communities on the whole remained quite strong, helped by the fact that the population of a neighbourhood usually consisted of people from one area of the country (even if that area lay 500 miles away). Ties between the squatter town and the original villages remained close, with people going back to marry, for instance, or to invest in land.

[Zurcher, 1998: 283]<sup>xxix</sup>

As far as migration abroad is concerned, a brief chronological and statistical profile will best reveal the main developments, as follows. The first phase of the labour diaspora to European cities may be dated to the period following 1961, when the Labour Agreement with Germany was signed (similar agreements were signed with Austria, Belgium and the Netherlands in 1964 and with France in 1965). In 1960, the Federal Republic of Germany had no significant numbers of non-European immigrants. In 1961, there were 6,500 registered Turkish migrants working there, and this figure had risen to around 469,000 by 1970 and 600,000 by 1973 (Caglar, 1994: 3). The effect on both economies, Turkish and West German, was profound. In 1963, Turkish workers in Germany were sending home an average of US \$700,000 per month; in 1965, the figure was \$28 million per month (Altug, 1965: 2). In 1970, of the nearly 3 million foreign residents in the FRG,

16 percent were Turks (Soysal Nuhoglu, 1994/6: 22). In November 1973, the immigration of new non-EEC workers to Germany was banned, but the following year regulations were put in place allowing migrants' families to join them. This resulted in a steady growth of migrant numbers during the remainder of the 1970s, even though the actual number of foreign workers employed was decreasing. By 1979, there were 1,268,300 Turkish migrants in Germany (ibid: 4), and this figure continued to increase, to 1.8 million in 1993, and 2.3 million in 1995. At this time, there were around 300,000 each in France and Holland and smaller numbers elsewhere, giving a total population of Turks in Europe of nearly 3.5 million<sup>xxx</sup>. In 1993, there were 150,000 Turks living in Berlin alone; 80 percent of them had been there for at least ten years. By this time, the picture is one of an internally stratified and permanent population, whose economic activities were integrated within German economy as a whole. A total of 35,000 Turkish businesses had been established in German cities, with an investment value of 7.2 billion DM and turnover of 25 billion DM (*Zentrum für Turkeistudien*, 1992).

For the first phase Turkish migrants, the object of their move to Germany was in most cases to amass enough money in order to return to Turkey to continue their lives and build their families. They saw their migration as temporary, and thus it was a form of exile. The most telling evidence in this respect is the uniformly low rate of applications for naturalisation, even after the relaxation of the regulations in 1993. That the actual rate of naturalisation remained very low, between 0.3 and 0.6 percent of all Turkish immigrants to Germany during this period [Muenz and Ulrich, 1997: 100] is to be expected, given the strenuous requirements, and the continuing legal bias in favour of *jus sanguinis*. It appears, however, that the great majority of Turks in Germany did not even attempt to make the application. Before 1993, this can be explained by the fact that to obtain German citizenship, the applicant would have to forfeit Turkish citizenship, something that nearly all immigrants were extremely reluctant to do. A survey conducted in 1993 (among all foreign workers, not just Turks) indicated that 95 percent of those questioned wanted dual citizenship [Soysal, 1999: 114], an option that did not exist for Turks before it was made possible by Turkish legislation in 1995. In the same survey, when asked for the reasons for their lack of interest in

acquiring German citizenship, the replies were as follows: 24.6 percent said that citizenship brought no significant benefits; 27.6 percent said that they did not wish to become German; 55.1 percent said that wished to remain citizens of their own countries; 12.1 percent raised the issue of difficult procedures and high fees; only 5.5 percent indicated that they had not fulfilled the requirements.

These figures strongly suggest that it was the attitudes of the immigrants, mainly their desire not to lose their own citizenship, that kept the rate of naturalisation low, and not primarily the restrictive immigration legislation and complex procedures. This does not exculpate successive German governments from the charge that the bias in favour of the lineage-based *jus sanguinis* at the expense of the territory-based *jus soli* represented a real discrimination, and the fact that Polish or Czech workers with distant and unverifiable claims to Germanic descent received preferential treatment cannot be justified on any rational terms. However, the survey does indicate an important attitude on the part of the non-Germanic immigrants: the great majority of them were committed to retaining their original citizenship. Although this does not necessarily involve intending to return to the homeland, what it certainly does mean is that the option was to be kept open. This Turkish diaspora was not one in which the migrants were prepared, in that telling and appropriate expression, to ‘burn their boats’.

In common with the majority of Turkish commentators on the Turkish labour migration to Germany<sup>xxxii</sup>, I have chosen to describe the migration as a ‘diaspora’, even though not all definitions of this much-discussed term would allow this categorisation. Robin Cohen’s classification of historical diasporas is fourfold: forced diasporas such as the Jewish and Armenian; colonising diasporas such as the Greek and British; trading diasporas such as the Lebanese; and labour diasporas such as the Irish, the Indian and the Chinese. [Cohen, 1997: ix]. This simple classification provides a useful historical framework, but still begs some questions, particularly the degree of compulsion involved in what he calls labour diasporas – among which the Turkish diaspora of the 1960s and 1970s must be counted. According to Paul Gilroy, in

diaspora 'life itself is at stake', and the word connotes 'flight following the threat of violence, rather than freely chosen experiences of displacement' [Gilroy, 1997: 318]. By this definition, neither the migration of Turkish workers to Europe, nor the post-colonial migrations from the Caribbean to Britain or from Algeria to France in the 1950s and 1960s would constitute diasporas, although in these three cases there were powerful economic pressures which make the description 'freely chosen' of doubtful applicability. Cohen also thinks that the term diaspora should properly be reserved for forced resettlements, for population dispersions that are 'unfortunate, brutal or traumatic' [Cohen, 1997, p. \*\*], and although all large-scale population movements must involve a degree of trauma, and will be unfortunate for some, 'brutality' is quite another matter. William Safran [Safran, 1991: 83/84], concerned with modern and not historical diasporas, suggested six conditions: dispersal from an original centre to at least two peripheral places; the maintenance of a memory, vision or myth about the homeland; the belief on the part of the migrants that they are not fully accepted in the host country; the continuing image of the homeland as an eventual place of return; a commitment to the maintenance or restoration of the homeland; the definition of the migrant group through their continuing relation with the homeland. The emphasis of these conditions, especially the last two, would exclude the Turkish diaspora, which, as Clifford points out, 'is not so much oriented to roots in a specific place and a desire for return as around an ability to recreate a culture in diverse locations'[Clifford, 1994: 306]. A commitment to the maintenance or restoration of the homeland is a very specific condition, perhaps referring primarily to such groups as the Palestinians and the Armenians. It might also apply to an element among diasporic Kurds. The debate over the proper applicability of the word diaspora essentially constitutes an insistence that each extensive population movement of the twentieth century has taken place under quite specific conditions, with varying degrees of compulsion and hardship, and the progressive semantic refinements indicate nothing more than the uniqueness of each diasporic experience.

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<sup>i</sup> From the *The Essential Rumi*, translated by Coleman Barks [Barks, 1997].

<sup>ii</sup> In Kearney 1992: 96/7

<sup>iii</sup> In du Gay and Hall (eds.) 1996: 64

<sup>iv</sup> See 1.3 below.

<sup>v</sup> Details of all the films discussed may be found in the Filmography in Appendix 1. After the first mention of any particular film in the body of the thesis, I subsequently refer to it by its original production title (whether German, Turkish or English) without details of director or date.

<sup>vi</sup> The exception is *Mercedes Mon Amour* (Tunc Okan, 1992), which was produced in Turkey. For thematic reasons, as well as for its later date, I have included this among the second group of films.

<sup>vii</sup> The Turkish melodrama constituted the dominant form of Turkish cinema for a period of at least thirty years up to the early 1970s. A strong father figure was a typically a central character, often *the* central character, in these melodramas. The significance of this will be discussed in Chapter 3 (3.1).

<sup>viii</sup> See Naficy 1996, pp. 119-144.

<sup>ix</sup> Often this purpose is served by films whose primary artistic intention is quite different. A good example of this may be found in the Turkish film *Suru* ('The Herd', Zeki Okten / Yilmaz Guney, 1978) which is a strongly political film setting out the profound consequences for semi-nomadic pastoralists as they come up against the pressures of modernisation. Yet as a second, and presumably unintended, function, the film also records for posterity unguessable details of the ancient and threatened existence of the pastoralists. One critic described the film as having 'a kind of unconscious innocence no longer available to most European and American narratives' [*Time Out* review of *Suru*, July 7, 1997]. Actually, the film's 'unconscious innocence' is a function of the real innocence (of modernity) of the herders themselves and a testament to the documentary-style realism of the cinematic treatment.

<sup>x</sup> See below, 3.2: 'Theorising Melodrama'.

<sup>xi</sup> This is perhaps why it has been found relatively easy to say what postmodernism is not, and much less easy to say what it is. One of the features of postmodernist thought is its insistence that there are no absolutes, that everything is relative. The problem with this is, as Rene Guenon long ago expressed it, 'in seeking to reduce everything to change, one would arrive logically at a denial of the existence of change itself' [Guenon, 1999 (1927): 51]. Guenon points out that this was the meaning of the arguments of Zeno of Elea.

<sup>xii</sup> See for example Bordwell, 1989, Chapter 3.

<sup>xiii</sup> It might also be added that Islam, with its strongly collective identity, lacks the emphasis on the individual which is characteristic of western thought and upon which the notion of Freudian psychoanalysis to an extent rests.

<sup>xiv</sup> Structuralist theories have been largely 'deconstructed', and therefore devalued, since their prominence in the 1970s. Bordwell's book cited above provides a comprehensive summary of the objections to structuralist methodology. It is not intended here to restate the case for structuralist hermeneutics but simply to suggest that in this particular case – that of a striking and unintended *absence* – structuralist theory needs to be considered, particularly because of the unmistakable impact that it had on the interpretation of myth (see Chapter 6).

<sup>xv</sup> The distinction between 'inner' and 'outer' forms was elaborated by Buscombe in his 1970 essay in *Screen* entitled 'The Idea of Genre in American Cinema'. The concept is taken from Warren and Welleck (1956) in their examination of literary genres.



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<sup>xvi</sup> Jakobson is here referring to folktales but the question may be asked as to what, if any, are the differences between established folkloric cycles – such as those collected by the Grimm brothers – and the Greek or Nordic tales and sagas to which we agree to give the appellation ‘mythology’. In this context, it is interesting that Jameson continues his discussion of *Blue Velvet* by referring to the film as a ‘fairy story’.

<sup>xvii</sup> *Lola und Bilidikid*, for example, had some success in commercial Berlin cinemas at the time of its release in 1998.

<sup>xviii</sup> As evidenced in the ethical justifications proposed by army officers in the military coups of 1960, 1971 and 1980, see Zurcher 1998, Chapter 14 and Lewis 2002, Chapter 11.

<sup>xix</sup> The historical summaries presented in this chapter contain information drawn from standard histories of 20<sup>th</sup> century Turkey, among which one may mention: Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*; Emile Zurcher, *Turkey, A Modern History*, Roderic Davison, *Turkey: A Short History*, Clement Dodd, *The Crisis of Turkish Democracy*, Stanford Shaw and Ezel Kural, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey, Vol. II*. In this introductory section, I have given academic references only in the case of contentious propositions.

<sup>xx</sup> It should be noted that the psychological term schizophrenia does not necessarily denote a splitting into two, but may also refer to a splitting into many, a fragmentation rather than a simple division.

<sup>xxi</sup> Lady Montagu’s blunt judgements of the various ethnic groups would be impermissible today, not only because of their racist stereotypes but also because she is tarred – as is de Nerval and Kinglake and Burckhardt and many others – with the ‘Orientalist’ brush.

<sup>xxii</sup> In recent years, Turkey has drawn closer to Israel in diplomatic, strategic and commercial terms. Israeli F16 jets are serviced in Turkey and a number of tourism agreements have been signed between the two countries.

<sup>xxiii</sup> See for example Pope, op. cit. 158 – 218.

<sup>xxiv</sup> The exception belongs to the period of the 1970s and early 1980s when there was a strong anti-western and anti-imperialist strain in student and left-wing radicalism in Turkey.

<sup>xxv</sup> Adnan Menderes was one exception. He was executed in 1960.

<sup>xxvi</sup> An estimated 330,000 Bulgarian Turks arrived at the Turkish border within a few weeks in mid 1989. ‘A kind of hysteria seized the ethnic Turks ... whole villages and quarters of towns applied for passports ... the Turkey-Bulgaria border presented a latter-day vision of all the Balkan refugee movements of the past.’ [Pope, 1997: 203] In fact, the Turkish authorities were unable to handle the scale of the exodus and perhaps half of the migrants soon returned to Bulgaria (although many of these would later come back to Turkey over succeeding years).

<sup>xxvii</sup> Many villages in the Kurdish Southeast were completely evacuated. According to Zurcher: ‘By the end of 1993 some 500 villages had been emptied and in 1994 900 more followed. By 1996, the total stood at 3,000 ... Diyarbakir had to accommodate more than half-a-million fugitives and was completely overwhelmed.’ [Zurcher, 1998: 327].

<sup>xxviii</sup> Robert Kaplan, *Atlantic Monthly*, May 1992.

<sup>xxix</sup> Which version – the ‘brutal confrontation’ suggested by Keyder, or the rather positive observations of integration and upward mobility given by Zurcher and Kaplan – is the more accurate? In the preface to her novel *Berci Kristin Çöp Masalları* (‘Tales from the Garbage Hills’), Latife Tekin speaks of her own introduction to life in Istanbul: ‘In 1966, I came to live in Istanbul. It felt like a sharp pain that split up my childhood. Unfulfilled dreams tore apart the people that I grew up with. My father quickly became working class, then gradually fell into unemployment. Three brothers worked on construction sites. I finished high school, slipping away like a trembling shadow from seven brothers and sisters. I paid the price of moving away from fear and loneliness to go to school: subjected to a thousand denials and pressures, I was incredibly shaken. I fought hard to keep up with the city and was badly bruised. During my struggles I fell

apart from those that I grew up with. But I resisted in order not to lose my own values, my language, and the constant and passionate love that those people bore me'. [Tekin 1984, introduction] The passage is full of the imagery of violence (fear, bruises, trembling, shaken, struggles). Attention may be drawn in particular to the 'sharp pain that split my childhood', the potential beginnings of a schizophrenia essentially cultural, since it was grounded in the fear of losing her values, language and loves. Yet her three brothers found employment and she herself was able to finish high school and to resist and survive the pressures of the city. In her introduction to the English language edition of the novel, Saliha Parker points out that the media tended to highlight the worst sides of *gecekondu* life: 'Life [in Istanbul], unlike in the village, had different dynamics and was subject to sharply dramatic as well as gradual changes. Makeshift dwellings could be set up overnight ... but razed to the ground the next day. Even in the 1990s it is not uncommon to have raids on squatter huts built on land unlawfully possessed. Such news, accompanied by photographs conveying the drama especially of women and children torn away from their homes, still make the headlines. While struggles continue, especially in pockets or frontiers, the primitive dwellings of thirty years ago have been transformed into two or three storey buildings, roads have been built, public transport has been provided by local authorities.' [Saliha Parker, introduction to *Tales from the Garbage Hills*, 1996, p. 12/13]. The picture is complicated by historical chronology. Tekin's narrative was based on the testimony of an older generation, who remembered the burning of the illegal dwellings and the initial lack of any amenities. As the settlements became established, the attitude of local authorities altered, forced to acknowledge the fact that what was makeshift and temporary had become a permanent reality that had to be accommodated. In 1997, legislation was passed which granted a moratorium on illegal housing which removed the worst insecurities of the inhabitants.

<sup>xxx</sup> **Turkish Populations in Europe, 1995**

[Source: Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1999]

<i>Country</i>	<i>Turkish Population</i>
Germany	2,300,000
France	305,000
Holland	280,000
Austria	140,000
Belgium	130,000
Britain	80,000
Switzerland	80,000
Sweden	50,000
Denmark	45,000
Italy	15,000
Norway	10,000
Finland	3,500
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,438,500</b>

<sup>xxx</sup><sup>i</sup> The extensive work done to date on the Turkish diaspora has concentrated on the social and economic conditions of the workers [e.g. Castles and Kosack, 1973; Castles and Miller, 1993; Abadan-Unat (ed.) 1976; Bagoz, Ilhan and Furniss (eds.) 1985], the problems of identity and citizenship [Cesarani and Fulbrook, 1996; Y. Soysal 1994], the social and psychological otherness of the immigrant [Mandel, 1989, 1990, 1994; Caglar 1994], and the celebration of emergent hybrid forms of cultural expression [Kaya, Göktürk, Soysal]. All of these writers have felt free to use the word diaspora to describe the Turkish labour migration.

## CHAPTER 2: EAST AND WEST IN TURKEY

*In Islam we see a pre-industrial faith, a founded, doctrinal, world religion in the proper sense, which ... totally and effectively defies the secularization thesis ... the reasons which have made this achievement possible seem to be the following: all under-developed' countries tend to face a certain dilemma ... should we emulate those whom we wish to equal in power (thereby spurning our own tradition), or should we, on the contrary, affirm the values of our own tradition, even at the price of material weakness?'*

*Ernest Gellner, Postmodernism, Reason and Religion<sup>i</sup>*

*In all Eastern countries the patriarchal family, as it was handed down from earlier times, remained the basis of society, sanctified by religious ritual and moral philosophy in China and strengthened in India by the caste system, which was also to a large extent rooted in the instinctual plane. As to political forms, Eastern civilization inherited that most ancient institution, the tribal or magic chief, and elaborated it into the powerful institution of autocratic kingship. And this became almost the only form of government known to the East.*

*William Haas, The Destiny of the Mind, East and West<sup>ii</sup>*

*The family is a microcosm containing within itself all of the patterns of dominance and submission that are characteristic of the larger society.*

*Sylvia Harvey, Woman's Place: The Absent Family of Film Noir<sup>iii</sup>*

'One can easily deduce an identity crisis,' wrote Turkish film critic Nezih Erdogan of the Turkish cinema, 'but what are we to make of an identity which is in permanent crisis?' Kevin Robins declares that Turkish culture has been 'imitative and derivative'. [Robins 1996: 65]. He refers to the 'uncertainty of identity within Turkey' and to 'the cultural void at the heart of modern Turkish culture' [ibid: 68]. There may actually be no void, because in painting and poetry and prose fiction, the artistic scene in Turkey is active<sup>iv</sup>, but there is certainly a sense of a lack or loss of identity and direction, which I shall argue, are the symptoms of a 'cultural schizophrenia' which has affected the Turkish cinema in general and Turkish-German films in particular.

The first section of the chapter analyses the meaning of Darius Shayegan's term 'cultural schizophrenia' and its expression at different levels of society (political, communal and individual) and on different planes (intellectual and psychological). The second section shows how the evolution among migrants from an alienating otherness into a fulfilling sense of hybridity is presently restricted to artistic and intellectual milieux rather limited in social and educational terms.

The third and fourth sections examine the religious/mythological basis for the roles and relations within the traditional Turkish family and the survival of patriarchal norms in the rural areas of Turkey during (and beyond) the period of the Turkish migrations. The divine immutability of Islamic lore is stressed, and the way in which it has acted as a powerful obstacle to any epistemological change which might have allowed amendments or revisions to Islamic thought. The deeply-rooted religious and social conservatism which resulted has had the effect of maintaining institutions such as the rural family in a more or less pristine form. Even in secularist Turkey, the law of the father in Turkish villages remained absolute in the latter decades of the twentieth century, defined and buttressed by an Islamic cosmology which served as an active

mythology, complete with attendant rituals and conventions. For this reason, the transformation or replacement of the Turkish patriarchy has proved both problematic and significant. The Islamic mythology regulated, even dictated, the social and ritual behaviour of Islamic communities, including Turkish village communities at the time of the diaspora. In general, migrant workers moved directly from the countryside to the cities of Anatolia or Europe. Thus their cultural values and family structures were mostly founded in a very powerful religious conservatism. The key sources for this phenomenon are the series of anthropological studies of Turkish village life carried out during the era of greatest migrant activity.

## 2.1 Cultural Schizophrenia: Islam and the West

The term 'cultural schizophrenia' was coined by the Iranian philosopher Daryush Shayegan and used as the title for one of his books: '*Cultural Schizophrenia, Islamic Societies Confronting the West*' (1997). I use the term in this same limited sense, to refer to a particular form of division and tension created within Islamic cultures, at the level of community, institution or individual<sup>v</sup>, when faced by the challenges and pressures of western modernity. At the level of the community or family, the split is expressed as a tension between the sacred and the profane, the open and the closed – in other words immunity or vulnerability to outside influence – and between the pure and the impure (*temiz/bulasik*), which means in effect the observance of the proper customs and their pollution or distortion. At the level of the individual, the tension is between faith and lack of faith (certainty and doubt), the rights of the individual against the demands of the State, and the desires of the self versus the pressures of the family. At the level of institution, the tension may be variously expressed: for example, between tradition and modernity in academic thought, and between the centre and the periphery in nation-building.<sup>vi</sup> At each level, the tensions may result in a crisis of identity revolving around the following issues: what is the nation (or what does it mean to be a Turk), what is the individual (or who am I?), and what is the correct order and function of community and family. It is the last of these that chiefly concerns my argument, since the first symptom of 'disorder' within the family will inevitably be an attack on, or threat to, the patriarchal authority. The usefulness of the concept of 'cultural schizophrenia' is in its theoretical synthesis of the terms of Freudian psychoanalysis and the concerns of contemporary culturalist approaches, describing the psychological and intellectual impact on members of one culture forced to adapt to the assumptions and conditions of another.

Shayegan draws attention to cultural differences between the East and West in general, and Islam and Christianity in particular, which go much beyond the formal and theoretical issues of religious belief, and are brought more visibly to the surface as 'the East' is forced to confront the challenge of modernity.

The tension between the unveiling of new zones of reality and the atavistic compulsion to exclude or eject them from the field of knowledge was bound to create fissures in the consciousness: although things were changing externally, mental projections still functioned according to the old mode of representation. How were people to live with these internal chasms? Whether we like it or not, this is still the insoluble problem underlying all the mental distortions – and they are very numerous – that ravage our world. The problem can only be raised by people born into these civilisations. Just as no person can stand in for another in the act of dying, so nobody from a different civilization can experience existentially this split in the interior of his or her souls. It is, in other words, our specific and inalienable destiny.

[Shayegan, 1997: 5]

There are two connected propositions here. The first is that the tension in the field of knowledge operates also at the level of the individual/subject – as 'fissures in the consciousness' or 'internal chasms'. The second proposition is that 'the problem can only be raised by people born into these [eastern] civilisations'. How can this be so? Is it because western commentators will always to an extent adopt an 'Orientalist' viewpoint? Or is it true that you have to experience these tensions in order to understand them? Does the word of Shayegan, as an Iranian professor at an American University, carry more weight in these regard than that of, say, a European-origin professor at a university in Ankara? Will Edward Said always know something about the Palestinians that Bernard Lewis cannot? The intellectual world, like the political world, is still in

the throes of post-colonialism. This means a rather deliberate re-weighting of the scales, temporary but necessary alterations to the mechanisms. The 'East' has suffered at the hands of the 'West' – the warships, the colonists, the missionaries, the 'concessions', the oil companies, the pillaging of cheap raw materials, the great gulf of misunderstanding and the expressions of a naïve superiority. This is not to say that the 'westerner' can say nothing of value about the East, it is only to say that whatever he or she might say will bear a trace of a thousand years of Christianity, the Medieval Gothic, the 'expansion of Europe', the Reformation, the Enlightenment, the Cartesian 'cogito' or the Freudian Oedipus. Some of these influences may also act on a university-educated 'easterner' – for Darwin and Freud are as basic to the philosophy syllabus at a university in Singapore as they are in New York – but they will always be to an extent alien, even in an intellectual world where the divisions between what is exogenous and what is indigenous are being pulled down, and any notion of the 'authentic' is being dismissed.

In *Cultural Schizophrenia*, Shayegan presents himself as a mediator between East and West, someone fully aware of, and sensitive to, eastern (especially Islamic) traditions, but also someone who recognises the need to react positively to the insistent challenge of western modernity. He points out that some eastern societies, notably Japan, have found a way of successfully reconciling eastern traditions and western modernity. 'In Japan,' he writes, 'where the working environment and the modern life-style are Western while family life and private customs remain traditional, people's normal activities are not paralysed by this compartmented structure, which also protects them from violent upsets' [ibid: 23]. He also points out that there have been various Islamic thinkers – for examples those of the *Nahda* ('Renaissance') movement in nineteenth century Iran – who were strongly attracted by the western notion of individual rights and liberties. The problem was, Shayegan declares, that even when eastern thinkers wished to learn from and accommodate western thought, they lacked the necessary conceptual and philosophical legacy.



The western ideas ‘were not the result of some recent miracle, but the end-product of an exceptional historical process – almost, I would say, the product of a paradigm shift – and could not be transplanted into our world without displacing and marginalising the traditional values to which we were so attached, and which occupied every corner of our public space’ [ibid: 4]. Thus:

Innovation was possible only if accompanied by a break with the premises of Islamic theology: something a religious outlook can tolerate only by denying itself. The result was a sort of log-jam of thought, the renewal of a prophetic philosophy repeated over and over again, under all circumstances, by one thinker after another, leading to severe hardening of the scholastic arteries. This became more apparent as the Western influence, first felt in the late eighteenth century and growing stronger over the next hundred years, circulated ideas – mainly political and social – which these civilisations were not equipped to deal with in any way. Beleaguered by these increasingly aggressive modes of thought, the societies responded by turning inwards and marginalizing themselves; meanwhile, individuals lived out and mimetically reproduced their ancestral social comportment, thinking in outmoded patterns which grew daily more out of step with the changing realities of the outside world.

[ibid: 39]

The ‘hardening of the scholastic arteries’ is reflected most clearly in the tenets and attitudes of Islam in its fundamentalist form, which ‘makes imperious demands: it wants to rule everything, to manage society, to regiment minds and make them impermeable to the swamping tides of technological mutation. More than this, it tries to make them resistant to research and innovation’ [ibid: 23].

Shayegan’s concern is primarily with the history of ideas, with the ‘paradigm shifts’ that occurred in western intellectual and cultural life and are connected chiefly with

Copernicus/Galileo/Newton, Darwin and Huxley, and Charcot and Freud. These had no counterpart in the more static intellectual climate of Islam, where belief in the perfectability of society, according to Koranic law, served to exclude the quest for new models of government and society characteristic of the European Enlightenment. As Ernst Gellner reminds us: 'The central doctrines of Islam contain an emphatic and severe monotheism, the view that the Message received by the Prophet is so to speak terminal, and that it contains both faith and morals – or, in other words, it is both doctrine and law, and that no genuine further augmentation is to be countenanced' [Gellner, 1992: 6]. It is precisely this 'terminality' that gives to traditional Islam its sense of absolute immunity to change or emendation. In Shayegan's words:

The *mullah* has all the answers; this makes him superior to those around him. He is learned in the innate science deriving directly from the sources of revelation. The *mullah* has direct access to the science of the last prophet, who was the last link in an unbroken chain of revelations stretching back to Adam, the prototype of humanity. He is thus the repository of a religion superior to all the others, Judaism and Christianity included ... This generally pre-Galilean world contains everything to do with man from his pre-natal state to the resurrection. It has its own cosmology and its own co-ordinates, and remains unaffected by the three great shocks – cosmological, biological and psychological – which, in Freud's words, have forged the consciousness of modern man.

[ibid:160/61]

Shayegan takes the concept of the 'paradigm shift' from Thomas Kuhn's book, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, which defines the paradigm as 'the aggregate of beliefs, recognized values and techniques which are common to a given group.' [ibid, footnote on p. 177]. Shayegan somewhat extends this definition to mean 'a particular vision of the world shared by members of a

community of scientists and thinkers.’ [ibid: 47]. He notes that this concept is similar to Foucault’s use of the word *episteme*, (and indeed it is with Foucault that Shayegan has most in common, epistemologically). Imagining himself as a ‘typical’ Islamic thinker, Shayegan looks at how the great paradigm shifts have ‘moulded consciousness to the imperatives of each new way of thinking’, but declares: ‘This has not occurred in my case. My consciousness is still rooted in a world of enchantment. It is true that, as a result of continual bombardment, ... [the Islamic thinker is] susceptible to the irresistible attraction of new things; but their genealogy and archaeology remain unknown’ [ibid: 6]. He suggests that the effects of cultural schizophrenia may be found not only in the universities and the academic treatises and in cultural productions, but also in communities, in family life, and in the attitudes, communications and even the body language of the individual.

The predominance of so-called primary mental processes means that empathetic relationships acquire greater importance than the secondary conceptual process expressed through language. Hence our tendency to communicate through caesuras, through pauses and silences; hence too our natural propensity for magical and animist thought. The consequence is that modern ideas from outside have to coexist with an inappropriate content rooted psychically in an earlier age, an age which still speaks the ‘animist’ language of myths and symbols.

[ibid: 64]

## 2.2 Identity and Hybridity

The phenomenon of cultural schizophrenia has been identified in the contemporary world especially in diasporic communities composed of migrants and exiles, among the Afro-Caribbean peoples of London or the North Africans of Paris or the Turks of Berlin, Hamburg and Stuttgart. In the writings of Salman Rushdie (1991), Edward Said (1978, 1993, 2000), Stuart Hall (1988, 1992, 1996), James Clifford (1988, 1994), Paul Gilroy (1997) and Homi Bhabha (1990, 1997)<sup>vii</sup>, the 20<sup>th</sup> century migrant becomes the archetype of the marginalised, the persecuted, the alienated, in other words the potential schizophrenic who has to confront within his/her own psyche the tensions of belonging to two cultures or to neither, or having to bend and reshape his/her personality and assumptions in order to survive in an alien world.

Predictably, many or most of the writers concerned with this phenomenon are among Rushdie's 'translated men'. 'Having been borne across the world,' as Rushdie puts it, 'we are all translated men' [Rushdie, 1991: 17]. His own background was one of an extraordinary ethnic/religious complexity. He was born in Bombay to middle-class members of a tiny Protestant group within a larger Greek orthodox community, itself part of a predominantly Sunni Muslim population living in a Hindu country [ibid: 168]. Stuart Hall was born in a middle class family in Jamaica. Edward Said was born in Palestine and was educated in Cairo before travelling to work in the United States. According to him:

The greatest single fact of the past three decades has been, I believe, the vast human migration attendant upon war, colonialism and decolonization, economic and political revolution, and such devastating occurrences as famine, ethnic cleansing, and great power machinations. In a place like New York, but surely also in other Western

metropolises like London, Paris, Stockholm, and Berlin, all these things are reflected immediately in the changes that transform neighborhoods, professions, cultural production, and topography on an almost hour-by-hour basis. Exiles, emigres, refugees, and expatriates uprooted from their lands must make do in new surroundings, and the creativity as well as the sadness that can be seen in what they do is one of the experiences that has still to find its chroniclers ...

[Said, 2000: xiv]

Theodor Adorno, a German Jew, was an exile in New York in the 1940s and reacted to the experience by clinging on to his native (German) language, anchoring himself, as it were, in what remained to him of his indigenous culture.

Every intellectual in emigration is, without exception, mutilated, and does well to acknowledge it to himself ... He lives in an environment that must remain incomprehensible to him, however flawless his knowledge of trade union organizations and the traffic may be; he is always at a loss ... His language has been expropriated, and the historical dimension that nourished his knowledge, sapped ... [His is] an illusory, unreal existence in the life-process of society.

[Adorno, 1974: 33]

Tzvetan Todorov was born in Bulgaria and lived in Paris from 1963 to 1981 without once returning to his home country during that time. Like Adorno, he puts a particular emphasis on the issue of language. 'I could have been French with the French and Bulgarian with the Bulgarians,' he writes. 'Each of my two personalities could have realised itself in one of my two languages' [Todorov, 1992: 21]. But what he actually finds is: 'My double belonging produces one result: in my own eyes, it taints each of my two discourses with inauthenticity, since each can correspond

but to half of who I am; yet I am indeed double. I thus once again confine myself to an oppressive silence' [ibid: 23]. This sense of oppression, Todorov suggests, can lead to schizophrenia. He quotes Malraux, who wrote of T.E. Lawrence: 'Colonel Lawrence used to say, from experience, that any man who truly belonged to two cultures ... lost his soul' [ibid: 17]. The Turkish émigré writer Zafer Senocak wrote:

I carry two worlds within me  
but neither one whole  
they're constantly bleeding  
the border runs  
right through my tongue.<sup>viii</sup>

It will be noted that Senocak, like Todorov and Adorno, is referring primarily to language ('right through my *tongue*'), which is what one would expect in the case of people whose metier depends on words. However, these 'translated' men were able to utilise their experience of 'translation' in their own writings, drawing strength from what might otherwise have been weakness. 'Sometimes we feel that we straddle two cultures; at other times, that we fall between two stools', Rushdie wrote, but 'the ambiguous and shifting ground' between two cultures, 'is not an unfertile territory for a writer to occupy.' [Rushdie, 1991: 15]. Adorno claimed that 'for a man who no longer has a homeland, writing becomes a place to live' [Adorno, 1974: 87]. Senocak's conclusion was that: 'One's feet learn to walk on both banks of the river at the same time.'<sup>ix</sup> The Turkish-German poet Nevfel Cumart, who was born in Germany to Turkish parents, speaks in his poetry to: 'those who sit between two stools / at home neither here nor there / who daily walk the narrow ridge / on the edge of two worlds.' Yet Cumart writes in German, which he describes as his mother tongue.<sup>x</sup> Yuksel Pazarkaya, who has written of the *Gastarbeiter* experience since the 1960s, insists that the German language be viewed not as a barrier to social participation, but as a path to the universalist humanist tradition of Lessing, Heine, Schiller and Brecht.<sup>xi</sup>

It should be stressed that the intellectuals and academics who act as the ‘champions’ of hybridity are not themselves representative of the huge numbers of ‘ordinary’ migrants who have been dislocated by economic and other forces and whose struggle to adapt consists in the first instance of the need to survive in material terms. This distinction – one of educational and economic opportunities, if not actually of social class – may with some justification be drawn between the Turkish-German filmmakers and the protagonists of their films. Tevfik Baser for example, director of *40 m<sup>2</sup> Deutschland*, was trained in photography, graphic design and cinematography in England and Turkey in the 1970s and 1980s [Pfaum and Prinzler, 1993: 236]. He went to Germany through an Eskisehir-Hamburg link that existed in the film and television department at the Anadolu University and now lives and works in Hamburg [Göktürk, 1998: 9]. Kutlug Ataman, who directed *Lola und Bilidikid*, attended film school in Los Angeles, and graduated from UCLA with a Master of Film Arts (MFA).<sup>xii</sup>

The culturalist and post-colonialist emphasis on the contemporary migrant has spawned its own semantics for the process of ethnic mixing, including ‘globalisation, diaspora, multiculturalism, transnationalism, transculturation, bricolage, syncretism, différence, racism, exclusion, hegemony’ [Kaya 1997: 33]. The resulting cultural forms are severally referred to as ‘syncretic, creolised, translated, crossover, cut’n’mix, hybrid or alternate’ [Vertocev, 1996b: see Kaya 42]. ‘Hybridity’ has emerged as the key word in the emergence of new, heterogenous identities. According to Stuart Hall, ‘cultures of hybridity ... are ‘one of the distinctly novel types of identity produced in the era of late modernity’ [Hall 1994: 310], and they are largely the result of ‘the diaspora experience’:

The diaspora experience as I intend it here is defined, not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of ‘identity’ which

lives with and through, not despite, difference; by hybridity. Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference.

[Hall 1994: 235]

What is 'novel' about these 'late modern' types of identity – given the fantastic intermingling of races and languages which were present in 19<sup>th</sup> century Istanbul or early 20<sup>th</sup> century New York and which had existed for centuries in cities of the Eastern Mediterranean such as Beirut and Cairo – is not so much the fact of an ethnic melange as 'the unanticipated flourishing of ethnic loyalties inside national minorities' [Bauman 1990]. Such loyalties were no doubt present among the Armenians of Istanbul or the Copts of Cairo, but presented no ostensible threat to a polyglot and cosmopolitan society, which was anyway subsumed in the sense of belonging to the global community of *al-Islam*. Thus the focus of Hall and Rushdie and Clifford has been not on the historically mixed conurbations but on the relatively newer diasporic communities resulting from the economic dislocations of the mid-twentieth century. In today's Europe, 'The East' confronts 'the West' in the London borough of Southall or the Berlin suburb of Kreuzberg or the outer banlieus of Paris in a much more acute fashion than in the old 'frontier' cities of Bombay, Istanbul or Tangier.

In their writings on the 'new' hybrid identity, the explicit intention of culturalist writers is to encourage the dismantling of ethnic and national homogeneity – or what Marx and Engels had referred to in the Communist Manifesto as 'fixed, fast-frozen relationships with their train of venerable ideas and opinions' [Marx and Engels, 1973: 73] – and its replacement by a more heterogeneous concept of society. 'My general aim,' wrote Clifford, 'is to displace any transcendent regime of authenticity; identity must always be mixed,



relational, and inventive' [Clifford 1988: 11]. He insists elsewhere that 'contemporary diasporic practices cannot be reduced to epiphenomena of the nation state or of global capitalism', but that they may be seen as 'quests for nonexclusive practices of community, politics, and cultural difference' [Clifford, 1994: 302]. According to Gilroy: 'Diaspora challenges [the traditional] picture of identity by valorizing other relationships ... By embracing diaspora, our grasp of identity turns instead towards an emphasis on contingency, indeterminacy and conflict' [Gilroy 1997: 334].

The cultural productions resulting from the new set of relationships made possible in a world of hybrid identity are characterised by diversity and originality. In the words of Eric Wolf:

The demonstration that each struggling nation possessed a distinctive society, animated by its special spirit or culture, served to legitimate its aspirations to form a separate state of its own. The notion of separate and integral cultures responded to this political project. Once we locate the reality of society in historically changing, imperfectly bounded, multiple and branching social alignments, however, the idea of a boxed, unitary and bounded culture must give way to a sense of the fluidity and permeability of cultural sets. In the rough and tumble of social interaction, groups are known to exploit the ambiguities of inherited forms, to impart new evaluations of valences to them, to borrow forms more expressive of their interests, or to create wholly new forms in answer to changed circumstances.

[Wolf, 1982:387]

In this emphasis on a more inclusive, pluralist, contingent view of society and the proposal of 'anti-essentialist' approaches to identity, lies the core of the culturalist project – the dominant and perhaps characteristic academic project during the 1990s not only in fields

such as anthropology and sociology but also in literary criticism and film studies. What emerges from this project is a celebration of hybridity. Rushdie calls *Satanic Verses* 'a love-song to our mongrel selves' [Rushdie 1991: ref].

There is little evidence in these passages from Rushdie, Senocak, Wolf, Clifford and Gilroy for evidence of 'cultural schizophrenia'. On the contrary, the celebration of hybridity tends to overcome and replace any such thing. The eventual aim, one supposes, of the culturalist and postmodernist projects is the percolation from the academic and literary world of the anti-racist, anti-essentialist attitudes which will make 'cultural schizophrenia' impossible. Yet even if the process is well advanced in academic writings and minority cultural productions and even television panel shows, and in the anti-discriminatory legislation and civil service priorities of western democracies, the reality is very different at points on the world's surface where one community is still pitted against another, where a minority struggles to assert its identity and its rights against an established hegemony, whether against helicopter gunships and tanks as in the Palestinian West Bank and in Grozny, or against sticks and stones and knives as in the city of Ahmedabad in Gujarat and Srinagar in Kashmir, or against more subtle weapons of discrimination as in London's Tower Hamlets or the northern suburbs of Paris. In such places, ethnic and sectarian differences are not a cause for celebration but for tension and conflict. In reality, the social and economic conditions pertaining among the minorities of the cities of Europe and Anatolia do not allow of any sweeping generalisations but may be located at any point on the spectrum of possibilities, from a vital and peaceful heterogeneity on the one hand to oppression and despair on the other.

Shayegan's concern within this spectrum of possibilities is with instances where the East-West duality expresses itself, either in the form of a historic philosophical/cultural opposition or in specific instances of a primarily religious tension between Islam and Christianity. In such cases, the 'hybridity' is much harder to attain than when merely ethnic and linguistic issues are at stake, because whereas a gradual hybridisation may be achieved over time through such means as education, ethnic mixing through marriage, the acquisition by immigrants of linguistic fluency, and anti-racist legislation, ancient religious and cultural distinctions are deeply embedded in family structure, social ritual, votive observances and even in body language. Of no institution is this truer than the family.

### 2.3 The Family in East and West

The family need not be defined by a particular religious tradition in order to have a 'sacred' character, as Althusser understood. 'Everything takes place in the Family,' wrote Althusser, 'the Family is in essence Holy' (Althusser, 1971: 180). In his analysis, the family had indeed originally been coupled with the church, but 'the Church has been replaced today in its rule ... by the School.' (ibid:157). The dominance of the school, like that of the church, according to Althusser, operated through ideology, and for him, there was no intrinsic difference between an ideology sanctioned by a revealed religion and an ideology sanctioned and supported by the official propaganda, even of a secular state.

According to Islamic theology, the position of the father is divinely ordained and immutable. Therefore, if the authority of the father is represented as being impaired or ignored aside in cultural productions, the reason would have to be sought in – or would at least have to include – the distancing of society from its Islamic faith and Koranic practice. It needs to be emphasised that what is at stake here is not so much (or not only) an explicitly declared faith as what through custom and ritual gives coherence and stability to a society and its common institutions. Religion will here be treated, broadly, as an 'active mythology' (or mythological paradigm)<sup>xiii</sup>, that is as a complex system of customary law and observance rooted in sacred texts and amended by historical precedent. The issue of 'belief' will be viewed only as the necessary 'glue' for the operation of this active mythology, leaving aside whatever inspirational and intellectual justifications may have been proposed.

The traditional Islamic family is centred on the figure of the father. The Islamic belief system sees the father as standing in a direct line both with the ruler (Sultan, monarch, Shah) and with Allah. The Ottoman Sultan/Caliph was Allah's representative on earth; the father was Allah's representative in the household. 'The father is the second God after Allah ... The Muslim family is the miniature of the whole of Muslim society ... The father's authority symbolizes that of God in the whole world' [Nasr, 1985: 110]. Thus the father's wishes, whether stern instructions or polite requests, have the force of commands sanctioned by divine authority. The place of each family member within the hierarchy of kinship, as well as the allocation of roles and domestic life, labour and ritual, have their basis in the law of Allah as transmitted via the Koran.

Christian doctrine contains a similiar idea. Malinowski pointed out: 'The whole Christian morality ... is strongly associated with the institution of a patrilineal and patriarchal family, with the father as progenitor and master of the household' [Malinowski, 1982: 159], and indeed God is 'The Father', as in the 'Our Father which art in heaven', 'our heavenly Father', 'Almighty Father', a personification which naturally magnifies the father rather than belittling God.<sup>xiv</sup> Yet there were important differences of principle in the Christian and the Islamic theologies, notably as regards the institution of marriage, for Islamic doctrine is quite specific that the marriage between a man and a woman is a union intrinsically subordinate to the relations between man and Allah. According to Mernissi, the institutional arrangements of Muslim marriage actually serve as a prophylactic against 'the growth of the involvement between a man and a woman into an all-encompassing love, satisfying the sexual, emotional and intellectual needs of both partners [and thus] a direct threat to the man's allegiance to Allah.' [Mernissi, 1975: viii] The Islamic toleration of poylgamy reinforces the idea of a love in marriage that is not thought of as 'all-encompassing'.

The essential point ... is that Islamic marriage presupposes a completely different spiritual protoype from that of Christian marriage. Christian monogamy reflects the

marriage of the Church – or the soul – to Christ, and this union is founded on a personal and non-transferable love. Islamic polygamy on the other hand finds its justification in the relationship of the one truth (*al-Haqq*) to its several animic vessels: man, as spiritual officiant (*imam*), represents the Truth; his role corresponds to the active vessel, namely the Spirit, whereas the wife corresponds to the passive vessel, namely the Soul. This is also why a Muslim man may marry a Christian or Jewish woman, whereas a Muslim woman may only take a husband of the same faith as herself. These spiritual prototypes – in both cases – are not something imposed on marriage from the outside, but inhere in the nature of things. The symbolism in question is not necessarily in everyone's consciousness, far from from it, but it is inherent in the respective tradition, and therefore part of the collective mentality.

[Burckhardt, 1992: 103]

Added to this crucial difference is the effect on Christianity of the biblical significance of Mary the mother of Christ. Mary may not have shared in Christ's divinity, but she appears in the bible, particularly in the story of the nativity, as an equal (in some way superior) partner of Joseph, who, representing mortal man, actually plays a secondary and rather marginal role. There is no parallel to this in the Koran or in the life of the Prophet Muhammad, who 'took' more than one wife, including, it appears, one who was scarcely more than a girl. The best-known quotation from the Koran in this respect is also the most striking: 'Women are given to you as fields to be sown, so go to them and sow as you wish.' [Sura 2:223] The same *sura* goes on to say: 'Your women are assets for you, and you may enjoy your assets however you like, so long as you maintain righteousness'. Elsewhere, the Koran declares: 'The men are placed in charge of the women, since God has endowed them with the necessary qualities, and made them the bread earners. Thus, the righteous women

will accept this arrangement obediently, and will honour their husbands in their absence, in accordance with God's commandments. As for the women who show rebellion, you shall first enlighten them, then desert them in bed, and you may beat them as a last resort'. (*Sura* 4:34) The Koran reiterates the necessity for maintaining a particular order in family and social relations, just because this order mirrors the divine order. 'Male and female complement each other, each to fulfill the role for which they were preordained, each to uphold the other in their areas of weakness. It then becomes incumbent on Muslim society, not only to refrain from tampering with God's order by introducing innovations, but also to maintain the differences' [Haddad, 1980: 65].<sup>xv</sup>

In Christian mythology, the family is imbued with a kind of earthly magic of its own, the prototype of which is the Joseph-Mary-Jesus triangle so dramatically represented in the scene of the nativity. A wedge is driven between the image of the divine family and that of its earthly counterpart, specifically in the biblical episode in which Christ summarily rejects his own family: "Who is my mother and who are my brothers?" And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in Heaven is my brother, and sister, and mother" [Matthew 13, v.48-50]. Even if read figuratively, this passage is a shock to any comfortable notions of immutability and permanence in family relationships, which here explicitly lack the sanction of the divine.

## 2.4 Survival of the Patriarchy in Rural Turkey

The evidence of the anthropologists (see for example Pierce 1964; Stirling, 1965; Szyliowicz; 1966; Meeker, 1970; Van Nieuwenhuijze, 1977; Delaney, 1984)<sup>xvi</sup> suggests that the traditional family structure had survived largely intact in Turkish villages at the time when migration to the big cities or to Europe became common in the 1960s, and even beyond that. This is no doubt partly a function of geographical remoteness, although Ilber Ortayli also points out that the near Eastern family structure was a heritage of an exceptionally long pre-industrial history of social development in contrast with the brief pre-industrial histories of Europe and North America [Ortayli 1994: 137].

As a result of research undertaken in a Turkish village in the 1980s (which she refers to under the fictional name of 'Gökler'), the American anthropologist Carole Delaney concluded that Islamic beliefs concerning reproduction were based on the metaphor of the seed and the soil. She also suggested that it was this symbolical understanding of procreation that in Geertz' words 'tunes human action to an envisaged cosmic order and projects images of cosmic order onto the plane of human experience' [Geertz 1973: 90]. The man provides the seed; the woman is the soil. But this is not perceived as an equal relationship. The giver of the seed is the origin of life. 'The creative, life-giving ability of men is felt to be godlike; villagers say the father is the second god after Allah.' [Delaney 1984: 33]. According to Bouhdiba, 'Procreation is primarily the transmission of existence in the form of an immanent thrust in which God himself participates'. It follows that: 'Woman proceeds from man. Woman is chronologically secondary' [Bouhdiba, 1985: 11/12]. It also follows that, as Khan expresses it, 'The flesh, the bones, the muscles, the blood, the brain, and indeed all the faculties and the whole complicated yet wonderfully coordinated machinery of the human



body constituting a complete microcosm is all potentially contained in less than a millionth part of a drop of fluid' [Khan, 1962: 186/7]. This understanding, which even if they do not spell it out, underlies, according to Delaney, the villagers' attitudes to procreation and to the procreated family. For example, the man is referred to as the '*cocuk sahibi*', the child-owner. [Delaney 1984: 36]. This is no mere form of words. In the (rare) cases of divorce, whatever the circumstances and causes of the breakdown of the marriage, the children belong to the father.

The seed-soil theory, Delaney argues,

... expresses a fundamental aspect of the universe. In the projection of creative power onto God, it becomes omnipresent and invisible – a power animating the universe.

Because of the structural and symbolic alliance established between men and God, men partake of this power; as a result, their dominance seems natural and given in the order of things.

[ibid: 35]

This matches what has already been said about the reflection of the divine order on earth; the difference is that Delaney starts with observations of what the villagers themselves think and feel about such matters. This is the manifestation and application of the theology in the mundane realities of peasant life, and governs all the principal codes of behaviour and entitlement within the extended family and in the village as a whole, including matters of social relationship, dress and demeanour.

Like land, women must be covered; a woman must always be under the mantle of a man (whether father, husband, brother, or son), and this is symbolized by wearing the headscarf. A woman who wears the headscarf is referred to as *kapali* (covered, closed)

as opposed to *acik* (open). A woman who walks around *acik* is open to sexual advances from men.

[ibid: 38]

Paul Stirling, who lived and studied in two central Anatolian villages, Sakaltutan and Elbaşı, in the early 1960s, observes:

The contrast between men and women is sharply emphasised in every way. They are separate in work and leisure. The division of labour is clear, and in full households is strictly observed. Men do the heavy work in the fields, control all transport, and conduct all relations with the outside world, including almost all buying and selling. They make all major decisions, at least ostensibly, and defend the household and its honour.

[Stirling, 1965: 117]

In the village of 'Gökler', still remote from, and largely immune to, outside influences, this view of gender roles was accepted without protest, but the metaphor of the seed and the soil, as Delaney points out, does not correspond to the scientific facts as perceived by western science, according to which reproduction takes place through the *union* of the sperm and the ovum, with the ovum containing half the genetic contribution of the child. As these facts became more widely known in westernised cities and universities, 'some women were coming to see themselves not merely as vessels for the male seed, not merely as nurturers and supporters of life, but as co-creators. This growing sentiment, I believe, was related to women's growing demands for rights' [ibid: 12/13]. In this may be seen a precise and pertinent example of what Shayegan means when he talks of the unresolved conflicts between a sacred cosmology and the rapid socio-economic changes introduced by the West. As Delaney puts it: 'The relation between the sexes symbolically represents the nature and order of their world. To change the relation between the sexes threatens the nature and order of the entire universe'[ibid: 278].

In the context of the traditional Turkish village, just as in fundamentalist States such as Afghanistan under the Taliban or Iran under the Ayatollahs, 'Islam is a brotherhood; the essential bond is between men' [ibid: 306]. Delaney witnesses one man, arriving at a gathering of women, take up a male infant and humorously ask the question: 'What can men do that women can't?' The answer is 'Go to the mosque.' The different treatment accorded to boys and girls in the village was very evident.

A boy is constantly told he is *erkek* (male), and his penis is the focus of much attention. Often when boys' diapers were changed their penises were kissed and stroked... the connection between maleness, concentrated in the penis, and Islam was made quite explicit, as if the penis is the ticket of admission to the Islamic brotherhood. The implication is that girls' lack of a penis is reason for their exclusion, that they can never be full members.

[ibid: 78]

In general, Delaney observed, all children were treated with the greatest indulgence and patience, 'picked up, fondled, and transferred from person to person throughout the day.' But:

Girls are spoiled even more than boys, not because they are seen as more valuable than boys but precisely because they are seen as less valuable. Girls are merely guests for a brief time in their parents' home; they are *el* (foreign, outsiders), as they will be in their husband's house... The differences between small girls and boys were quite pronounced ... Boys were more composed and sedate and are much more constrained by the notions of respect and deference to elders.

[ibid: 77/78]

The relationship between the men and the boys, and the dutiful behaviour expected of the boys is underlined in Stirling's description of the scene in the village 'guest' rooms of a winter's evening, where the men gather and talk:

The young are expected to keep quiet in the presence of their elders, and children are sent out if they giggle or make a noise. Youths do not speak, and the younger married men speak little, especially in the presence of their own fathers. A younger man is expected to sit in a respectful posture, that is, not to cross his legs if sitting Europeanwise with his feet on the floor, and to keep his feet tucked underneath him if squatting on the divan. Smoking in the presence of father is forbidden. Every guest room has a drinking cup and a filled wooden water bottle always ready. If a seated man wants a drink he will demand it simply and unceremoniously, and one of his juniors, usually a boy, will bring the cup, wait respectfully with his hands crossed while his elder drinks and then take it back.

[Stirling, 1965: 224]

In a sense, it seems, more is expected of a boy. As he grows up, he is expected to exhibit qualities of *erkeklik* (manliness) and not be *civik* (weak) or *kilibik* (soft) [ibid: 178]. Girls, as in Delaney's description above, are treated with particular indulgence precisely because they do not *matter* so much. They are temporary members of the household. 'A woman is part of a family; a man has one' [Delaney, 1984: 113].

The words of one of the songs sung at the weddings in 'Gökler' refer to a girl who has married outside the village, but Delaney points out that such is the isolation of a newly-married bride from her old ways, habits, friends and familiarities, that the sentiments might be the same for a girl who had married into a family that lives just a few lanes away:

It's been six years since I left my village

The bitter words of my father have become honey to me  
The thorns of my village have become roses to me  
I miss my village, both my mother and father, I miss my village.  
If my father had a horse, he would mount it and come to me  
If my mother had a boat, she would sail to me  
If my siblings knew the way, they would come to me.

[ibid: 117]

Love marriages were possible in Gökler, as well as in the two villages studied by Stirling, but love was certainly not the key issue. The marriage was essentially an arrangement between two families, initiated, debated and agreed between the two patriarchs.

In theory, the young people themselves have no say at all, and the women can only suggest and advise. It is the household head who decides, and it is he who makes the formal approach ... Once a man has fixed his choice, he goes with, or sends, one or two close kin, and a respected senior man less close to him as negotiator, to pay a formal visit to the girl's home. They are received by a similarly constituted committee, and negotiations are conducted with great delicacy through intermediaries ... a bride price is agreed at this meeting, and a first instalment (*hecelik*) is expected either on the spot or within a few days.

[Stirling, 1965:179/80]

The mercenary aspect to the arrangement was always important, although in the case of two prosperous families, its importance might be more formal than financial. The exchange of money sealed the contract and gave each family an investment in the success of the marriage. Delaney points out that the villagers of Gökler did not view this as a 'commercial' transaction: 'The words for taking and giving girls in marriage are those normally used for

buying (*almak*) and selling (*satmak*)... Although villagers insist that the marriage arrangement is not buying and selling as in the market, girls are valuables transacted by others in a process they do not control' [ibid: 78].

The common Turkish word for bride is *gelin*, which is thought to derive from the verb *gelmek*, to come. The form *gelin* would be the personal imperative: "Come!", which indicates the often peremptory fashion in which a bride would (initially at least) be treated by her mother-in-law and other senior members of her husband's household. The injunction that a woman cover herself whenever she ventured beyond the family compound, and not on any account to enter into conversation with other men, meant that young married women had a severely limited social life. As Delaney points out: 'Social intercourse between unrelated men and women is almost equivalent to sexual intercourse, which is why town and city (as well as Europe and America) are considered *bulasik* [impure, unclean] unlike the village which is *temiz* [clean]' [ibid: 42]. All commercial and official interaction with the outside world was conducted by the men. Women required specific leave (*izin*) to be allowed to move or interact outside the narrow limits of the realms where their duty lay. Because the outside world was considered impure and dangerous, the village tended to be regarded as the only 'proper' place to live and work, an attitude which contributed to the sense of insecurity and risk associated with migration to cities, either in Turkey or abroad, and goes far to explain the exaggerated anxieties of the men in relation to their wives and sisters in these circumstances.

As far as the groom was concerned, his relations with his parents after marriage remained as strong as before. He owed his father absolute obedience, and was expected to continue to defer to him in all important matters. Generally, he and his wife continued to live in the family compound, where his father was the patriarchal authority. Stirling points out:

As a son approaches middle age and his father falls into dotage, control of household affairs may pass to the son. But formal respect for the father is never relaxed and he remains head of the household. For example, the village headman was about thirty-five years of age, and his official position and his self-importance gave the impression that he was in charge of his household. In fact, his old but still vigorous father was the real head, and had a great influence on his son's public conduct as well.

[Stirling, 1965: 103]

It is not until his father's death that a son assumes the mantle of patriarchal authority. 'Even a man of mature years will normally keep silence publicly in his father's presence,' Stirling writes. 'To disagree publicly with his father is a declaration of rebellion' [ibid: 224]. Such cases were therefore rare, and Stirling records only a single instance, which ended in the public humiliation of the son and the reaffirmation of the primacy of the father, Husnu.

The son complained that the father did none of the household farm work, but kept all the proceeds. One day he helped himself to money from his father's money box. His father upbraided him, and the son drew a knife ... Husnu was separated from his son by the timely intervention of his own brother ... [*next day, in front of neighbours and kinsmen*] Husnu burst into an unrestrained tirade against the vile inhuman ingratitude of such a son. The son was crouching against the wall with his back to the others.

[ibid:102]

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<sup>i</sup> Gellner, 1992: 18/19.

<sup>ii</sup> Haas, 1956: 64.

<sup>iii</sup> Harvey, 1979:24.

<sup>iv</sup> Such a statement is hard to substantiate statistically, but evidence can be found in the number and activity of art galleries, bookshops and literary magazines in Istanbul and Ankara as well as the international reputation of Turkish writers such as Orhan Pamuk and Latife Tekin.

<sup>v</sup> I have chosen to use the word 'individual' here instead of 'subject' even though the former term has been abandoned in postmodernist and post-Freudian psychoanalytical discourse. By so doing, I intend no comment on the issue of the centred/decentred self, but assume that even a 'decentred self' is *individuated* to an extent and therefore that the use of the older term maintains some generally acceptable meaning.

<sup>vi</sup> In Turkey, according to Robins and Aksoy, 'The Republican ideal nation was a very patent fiction of the elites ... The story of modern Turkey is officially told in terms of the progressive expansion of the Kemalist principles of modern nationhood. But it could also and better be told in terms of the continued erosion of the imagined community of "new Turks" ... This more complex account would be a history of the migrations that have brought the disorderly periphery into the urban strongholds of the Republicans. It would be about the development of the huge *gecekondu* areas (squatter settlements) which transformed the cities ... And we would have to take account too, of the development of the new population of "European Turks", whose culture is now bringing back home another kind of Turkish reality' [Robins and Aksoy, 2000: 209].

<sup>vii</sup> Gokturk refers to Homi Bhabha as 'the great propagator of hybridity' [Gokturk, 1998:4].

<sup>viii</sup> Quoted in Morley and Robins, pp 102/3.

<sup>ix</sup> *Ibid*: 103.

<sup>x</sup> Fischer and McGowan, *From Pappkoffer to Pluralism*, in Horrocks and Holinsky 1996: 11. In another poem, Cumart views Turkey with 'paralysing indecision / between magnetic longing / and repelling horror'.

<sup>xi</sup> Fischer and McGowan, *ibid*, p. 6.

<sup>xii</sup> Ataman now lives in London where he works with experimental film techniques, an exhibition of which was shown at London's Serpentine Gallery in early 2003 [The Observer Magazine, December 29, 2002].

<sup>xiii</sup> Shayegan also refers to Islamic thought as a 'mythology', as in the following excerpt: 'The whole "mythology" of Islam which had been simmering discreetly in the imaginations of the thinkers of the *Nahda*, acquired a demented quality leading directly – with the help of fundamentalism – to the present explosion of the collective unconscious, in all its terror and misery.' The notion that a mythology can 'simmer in the imagination', 'acquire a demented quality' and directly contribute 'to the present explosion of the collective unconscious', suggests the same kind of collective role for contemporary mythology that I have expounded in Chapter 6 of this thesis.

<sup>xiv</sup> Certain feminist Christian groups in Britain of the 1990s recommended that the first words of the Lord's Prayer should be altered to 'Our *Mother* which art in Heaven', a suggestion that the Church of England seems unlikely to implement, but even the fact that it was made from within the Christian church and accorded some serious discussion indicates how far Christianity – as compared to Islam – is prepared to



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accommodate criticism of its patriarchal bias. The ordination of female priests in the Church of England constituted the most significant move in this direction.

<sup>xv</sup> Quoted in Delaney, 1991: 289.

<sup>xvi</sup> These are mainly anthropological studies undertaken by foreigners who have resided for a period of time in a Turkish village. Because of the essentially 'closed' nature of Turkish villages, in other words, the way in which the 'purity' (*temizlik*) of the village is deliberately maintained by excluding outside influences, there are problems involved in all such studies, but oddly the problems tend to be less for foreigners than for other Turks. All strangers are '*yabancı*' (foreign), but the *yabancı* from abroad is at least not expected to behave as a villager. He or she is granted a certain latitude or tolerance, whereas a Turkish researcher would be subject to the same rather strict codes of behaviour pertaining to the villagers themselves. For this reason, Turkish studies of village life tend to be socio-economic and gender-based studies carried out from a certain academic distance, for example Ozturk 1963/4/5, Taskiran 1976, Ozbay 1982, Keyder, 1987, Sirman 1990 and others. Of the anthropological studies, the most useful in the present context is Carole Delaney's '*The Seed and the Soil*' [University of California Press, 1984]. Delaney spent two years in a central Anatolian village during the early 1980s, and the timing of her visit coincided with the period just before the improvements in technology and communications – and the social developments that went with them – penetrated the Anatolian countryside. This was the time of the first of the Turgut Özal premierships, when Turkey was rapidly opened to the effects of foreign investment and the liberalisation of international trade, but these effects did not extend much beyond the large towns. The resulting disparity between conditions in the villages (lack of electricity, roads, employment opportunities and, even, reliable and safe water supplies) was therefore most noticeable during the 1980s, less so by the end of that decade. Therefore the incentive for migration to the cities was then at its most potent. As a woman, Delaney was able to gain access to areas of the domestic life of the village which would have been strictly off-limits for a man. As with other foreigners, she was also relatively immune from the powerful conventions governing the behaviour of individuals, although occasionally she attracted some rebukes. '*Cok geziyorsun,*' they would say to her – 'You're wandering about too much'.

### CHAPTER 3: THE SHADOW OF OEDIPUS

*Death of the Father would deprive literature of many of its pleasures. If there is no longer a Father, why tell stories? Doesn't every narrative lead back to Oedipus? Isn't storytelling always a way of searching for one's origins, speaking one's relationship to the Law, entering into the dialectic of tenderness and hatred?*

*Roland Barthes: The Pleasures of the Text*

*In order to properly treat a hysterical girl, one must not leave her with her father and mother; she needs to be placed in a mental hospital ... In the case of hysteria of young boys, what one must do is to separate them from their mothers. So long as they are with their mothers, nothing is of any use ... The father is sometimes just as unbearable as the mother; it is best, then, to get rid of them both.*

*Jean-Martin Charcot: Lecons de Mardi, Jan/Feb 1888*

*The photo of the father, expanded beyond all bounds, will be projected onto the geographic, historical and political map of the world in order to reach vast regions of it ... An Oedipalization of the universe. The Name of the Father encodes the names of history – Jews, Czechs, Germans, Prague, city-country ... As Kafka himself says, the problem isn't that of liberty but of escape. The question of the father isn't how to become free in relation to him (an Oedipal question) but how to find a path there where he didn't find any ...*

*Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari: Kafka*

The culturalist and sociological context of the Turkish family in migration may explain the phenomenon of the disappearing father, in the sense that the social and cultural context account for radical changes in the structure and relationships of the family and for the father's loss of authority. However, the cinematic treatment of this phenomenon in Turkish German film – in particular the way in which the father-son rivalry is deliberately avoided – requires a different approach. In other words, the question revolves around the issue of why the father's loss of authority has not been accompanied in the films by any dramatic confrontation or even narrative tension. How is it that a 'revolution' of such moment can take place as if it were not worthy of being addressed and also shorn of its potential for dramatic tension?

In this chapter, I shall consider three separate theoretical approaches, all of which are directly or indirectly traceable to the proposals of Freudian psychoanalysis. The first is that the disappearance of the father may be the result of a concealed Oedipal rivalry, much in the way that Freud himself accounted for the parricide in *The Brothers Karamazov* through a psychoanalysis of the author. A rather different scenario is considered through the examination of a scene in Bergman's *Wild Strawberries* and through Bergman's own analysis of the film's creation. However, the shortcomings of such interpretations must be recognised, not only because of the problem over the validity of extrinsic evidence but also, in this case, because of its inaccessibility.

The second approach is associated with the interpretation of the classic Hollywood melodramas of the 1950s, especially in the writings of Thomas Elsaesser and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, both of whom identified a similar phenomenon (of a weakened or impaired father) in the work of such directors as Minelli, Sirk and Ray. The problem here is how far these interpretations may be valid for the rather different social/historical/cultural circumstances prevailing in Turkey of the 1970s and 1980s or Turkish Germany in the 1990s. This leads in turn

to a consideration of what Deleuze and Guattari termed 'the imperialism of Oedipus'. Various connected objections to Freud are considered, including those of Jung, Deleuze and Foucault. Deleuze and Foucault, it is suggested, provide the link between the the psychoanalytical approaches dominant in film studies of the 1970s and early 1980s and the post-structuralist turn they took thereafter, a link with some particular significance for this thesis.

The final section deals with a particular structuralist methodology concerned with the perceived importance of 'absences' in film. Given how thoroughly structuralist thought has been 'deconstructed' in the last twenty years of film studies, I was at first reluctant to give serious consideration to this theoretical approach. However, the fact that the phenomenon I was analysing was precisely 'an absence', it seemed important to consider whether the idea of 'structuring absences' proposed by such writers as Macherey, Nowell-Smith (in his work on Visconti) and the editors of the *Cahiers du Cinema* might be pertinent in the present context, especially in view of the fact that even with the rapid waning of structuralist influence, the notion of significant 'fissures' or 'crevices' in film narrative has continued to have a wide currency in critical hermeneutics.

### 3.1 Psychoanalysis of the Auteur/Son

Freudian psychoanalysis might be applied to the problem in two distinct ways. The first is the analysis of the auteur. It might be possible, for example, to interpret the death or disappearance or impairment of the father in Turkish-German films as a collective wish-fulfilment, rooted in a concealed hatred or jealousy of the father, either on a personal or ideological level. In the father's absence, the central protagonist in a narrative would be the son, who here has (metaphorically) murdered his father and (actually) replaced him. His motivation according to Freud would be Oedipal, in other words: anxious (subconsciously) at the threat of castration represented by the father and, desirous of union or identification with his feminine side, represented by the mother, he kills the father and takes his place, but the guilt of combined parricide and incest – the primary taboos – force him to erase the memory of the act from his art. Thus the father has disappeared, apparently without a struggle. In Freud's own words:

Parricide, according to a well-known view, is the principal and primal crime of humanity as well as of the individual ... It is in any case the main source of the sense of guilt ... The relation of a boy to his father is, as we say, an ambivalent one. In addition to the hate that seeks to get rid of the father as a rival, a measure of tenderness for him is also habitually present. The two attitudes of mind combine to produce identification with the father ... At a certain moment the child comes to understand that an attempt to remove his father would be punished by him with castration. So from fear of castration – that is in the interests of preserving his masculinity – he gives up his wish to possess his mother and get rid of his father. In so far as this wish remains in the unconscious it forms the basis of the sense of guilt... Both impulses, hatred of the father and being in love with the father, undergo repression.

[Freud, 1928: 448]

It was in *Totem and Taboo* (1913), that Freud most thoroughly articulated his theory of father/son relations. Exploring what he saw as ‘the ambivalent emotional attitude, which to this day characterizes the father-complex in our children and which often persists into adult life,’ [Freud 1950: 141], he traced this ambivalence to ‘primal’ tensions within a notional family in primitive times. ‘They hated their father, who presented such a formidable obstacle to their craving for power and their sexual desires; but they loved and admired him too.’ [ibid: 143]. The father was thus a ‘feared and envied model’ and as such had to be both replaced and emulated. ‘In the act of devouring him, they accomplished their identification with him, and each one of them acquired a portion of his strength.’ [ibid: 142].

In Dostoevsky, according to Freud’s analysis, the combination of guilt and repression resulted in neurosis and epilepsy: ‘Now it is highly likely that this so-called epilepsy was only a symptom of his neurosis and must accordingly be classified as hysterio-epilepsy – that is as severe hysteria.’ [ibid. p. 444]. Freud also treats homosexuality as an outcome of neurosis.

A strong innate bisexual disposition becomes one of the preconditions or reinforcements of neurosis. Such a disposition must certainly be assumed in Dostoevsky, and it shows itself in a viable form (as latent homosexuality) in the important part played by male friendships in his life, in his strangely tender attitude towards rivals in love and in his remarkable understanding of situations which are explicable only by repressed homosexuality, as many examples from his novels show.

[ibid, p. 449]

This equation (of homosexuality with neurosis) is a reminder of how far psychoanalytical theory has altered since Freud, for although Freud himself was later to amend his position on

homosexuality, underlying all his work was a deep suspicion of 'deviant' sexual practice, a suspicion rooted in what to the contemporary mind seems a very mistaken view, that 'the sexual processes ... are fundamentally of toxic origin' [ibid, p. 445]. In the case of Dostoevsky, Freud describes the sexual act as 'a mitigation and adaptation of the epileptic method of discharging stimuli' [ibid].

Assuming for the present that Freud/Oedipus is correct, he/it thus provides an outstandingly simple psychoanalytical answer to the question which this thesis has proposed (namely: what is the explanation for the missing father?). In Freudian terms, the castrating father represents a threat to the son which he can only overcome by repressing other sides of his nature (for example feminine sides) and becoming like the father. It is this necessary identification with, and ultimately replacement of, the father that provides the dynamic and dialectic of the patriarchal system. As Frosh expresses it: 'The Oedipus complex, which embodies patriarchy and operates to perpetuate it in the contemporary world, derives a substantial hold over the individual through also performing a defensive role, protecting him/her against fundamental anxieties.' [Frosh, 1987: 171]

In literature, as in life, the mechanisms of the Oedipus complex remain concealed. Freud was not concerned with the cinema – and indeed the only reference to it in his writings was contemptuous<sup>i</sup> – but he made various examinations of literature, observing: 'It can scarcely be owing to chance that three of the masterpieces of all time – the *Oedipus Rex* of Sophocles, Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* – should deal with the same subject, parricide.' [1928:453] In the case of Dostoevsky, Freud sees 'the unmistakable connection between the murder of the father in *The Brothers Karamazov* and the fate of

Dostoevsky's own father.' [ibid 446]. The literary act, then, is a kind of displacement of the real act, and the psychoanalyst/critic may reveal the link by examining the 'symptoms'.

His [Dostoevsky's] choice of material ... singles out from all others violent, murderous and egoistic characters, thus pointing to the existence of similar tendencies within himself ... Dostoevsky's very strong destructive instinct, which might easily have made him a criminal, was in his actual life directed mainly against his own person (inward instead of outward) and thus found expression as masochism and a sense of guilt.

Nevertheless, his personality retained sadistic traits in plenty, which show themselves in his irritability, his love of tormenting and his intolerance even towards people he loved, and which appear also in the way in which, as an author, he treats his readers. Thus in little things he was a sadist towards others, and in bigger things a sadist towards himself, in fact a masochist – that is to say the mildest, kindest, most helpful person possible.

[Freud 1928: 442/443]

The makings of such links between the workings of an author's unconscious and his literary creations depend on extra-textual, in this case biographical, information, as well as the application of more or less conjectural models, which under Freud's authority became widely accepted as established 'scientific' fact. The practice of psychoanalyzing *auteurs* in critical film theory, common enough during the period of pre-structuralist auteurism, has been discredited, initially because of the structuralist insistence that only in the structures of the text can the meaning of a film be read, and afterwards because of the problems associated with the position of the subject, in this case the psychoanalyst/critic. (Although it remains true that fragments of biographical information pertaining to filmmakers are still widely employed in the pluralist atmosphere of contemporary criticism.)



Some of the objections to auteur psychoanalysis, at least those connected with subject-position, may be blunted when the 'critic' is the auteur himself. A pertinent example of this may be found in Ingmar's Bergman's self-analysis in relation to his film *Wild Strawberries*, in whose 'dusky room' he found 'a negative chaos of human relations'.

I was feuding bitterly with my parents. I couldn't talk to my father and didn't even want to ... there were too many skeletons in our closets, too many poisonous misunderstandings ... I imagine that one of the most impelling forces behind *Wild Strawberries* could be found in that situation ... I was quite sure I had been an unwanted child, growing out of a cold womb, one whose birth had resulted in a crisis, both physical and psychological ... Later I discovered what the name of the leading character – Isak Borg – really meant. Isak Borg equals me ... I had created a figure who, on the outside, looked like my father but was me, through and through ... I was looking for my father and my mother, but I could not find them. In the final scene of *Wild Strawberries* there is a strong element of nostalgia and desire: Sara takes Isak Borg by the hand and leads him to a sunlit clearing in the forest. On the other side he can see his parents. They wave to him.

[Bergman, 1995: 23/4]

Bergman does not here explicitly acknowledge the influence of Freudian concepts, although the conclusion to the passage indicates the link: 'The driving force in *Wild Strawberries* is, therefore, a desperate attempt to justify myself to *mythologically oversized parents* who have turned away, an attempt that was doomed to failure.' [ibid; my italics].

Such self-analysis is rare, perhaps even unique, in the writings of 'auteurs' regarding their own work and provides a suggestive comment on the complex and unseen influences on the process of creative activity. Bergman's account would appear to offer a reinforcement of the validity of Freudian analysis, the more impressive because undertaken by the filmmaker himself and because it deals in feelings that are no longer suppressed but have actually become conscious. What Bergman describes as 'the skeletons in the cupboard' may readily be equated with Freud's notion of repressed or sub-conscious memories and experiences; the 'driving force' may be none other than the need to express and reveal the mixture of desire and guilt consequent on such repressions. Support for this interpretation may be found in a scene described in *The Magic Lantern*:

I had a violent altercation with my father. I warned him not to hit me. He hit me and I hit him back. He staggered and ended up sitting on the floor while Mother alternately wept and appealed to the remnants of our commonsense. I pushed her away and she screamed loudly. That same evening I wrote a letter to say we would never see each other again.

[Bergman, 1988:139]

Yet even in this exceptional case – exceptional in that the critic/analyst here does not rely on symptoms and clues within the text itself but has access to the unconscious feelings made conscious by the auteur in an honest and lucid account – the final product (the film itself) is still the result of multi-dimensional influences. Isak Borg (I.B.) may be a version of Ingmar Bergman (I.B.), but the character is played in a certain way, filmed in a certain way, is lit by certain lights, acts and reacts within the framework of a certain fictional narrative. One at least of these dimensions is elaborated by Bergman:

One day we were to shoot the final scene. Isak Borg's great love of his youth takes him to a sunny hillside. Far away, he can see his parents beckoning to him. ... Viktor

[Sjostrom] was angry and spiteful... He stumped off ... A quarter of an hour later he was back ... Aren't we going to take those damned scenes? He was by no means in a better mood ... he was grumbling and rejecting all friendly approaches ... When everything was ready, he came staggering over, supported by a production assistant, exhausted by his bad temper. The camera ran and the clapper clacked. Suddenly his face opened, the features softening, and he became quiet and gentle, a moment of grace. And the camera was there. And it was running. And the laboratory didn't muck it up.

(ibid, 181)

Bergman was forced to admit:

Victor Sjostrom took my text, made it his own, invested it with his own experiences: his pain, his misanthropy, his brutality, sorrow, fear, loneliness, coldness, warmth, harshness and ennui. Borrowing my father's form, he occupied my soul and made it all his own – *there wasn't even a crumb left for me!* He did this with the sovereign power and passion of a gargantuan personality. I had nothing to add, not even a sensible or irrational comment. *Wild Strawberries* was no longer my film: it was Viktor Sjostrom's!

[Bergman, 1995: 23/4]

Although this is illuminating as a case-study in the process of artistic creation, it cannot be used to clarify or explicate the text in question. Bergman confesses that interviews with the media, such as the one in which he happened to make the identification between Isak Borg and himself, contain untruths and 'clever evasions'. Although he comes to the conclusion that 'the driving force in *Wild Strawberries*' was 'a desperate attempt to justify myself to mythologically oversized parents', the final text of the film apparently revolved around the performance of Sjostrom who 'took my text' and 'made it his own'. Then the shooting of the crucial final scene was only rescued by a strange 'moment of grace'. Finally

Bergman reminds his readers of the make-or-break role of the film's exposure in the laboratory. There is rich material here for the psychoanalyst, not only in terms of Bergman's relationship with his parents, but also the suggestion that Sjoström acted as a surrogate father figure ('Borrowing my father's form, he occupied my soul'). The fundamental point, however, is that an understanding of the meaning of the film (as opposed to the creative process that gave birth to it) neither needs, nor is helped by, these personal and contradictory considerations.

In *The Brothers Karamazov*, a brother of the hero murders their father. Freud suggests that the act represents the displaced repression of the author's hatred of his own father. In *Wild Strawberries*, the 'author' (Bergman both wrote and directed the script) sees in his own work the playing out of his ambivalent feelings for his parents. Both are examples of the fictional (literary or cinematic) representation of the Oedipal scenario. According to Bergman, his feelings about his 'mythologised' parents constitute the 'driving force' behind the film, but they surface in only a single scene: the waving scene referred to above. To the symptomatic critic, therefore, if not armed with the auteur's own account, this scene would furnish the most important, and maybe the only, clue to the Oedipal reference. It is a fragile and tenuous link. In the case of Freud's analysis of *The Brothers Karamazov*, it would have been impossible without the extensive biographical documentation of Dostoevsky's life.<sup>ii</sup>

### 3.2 Theorising Melodrama

Writing of Hollywood melodrama, Geoffrey Nowell-Smith observed: 'Where the central figure is a man there is regularly an impairment of his masculinity' [Nowell-Smith, in Gledhill, 1987: 72]. In the same collection of writings, Thomas Elsaesser talks of male impotence as 'a characteristic sexual code in melodrama' [ibid.: 67]. In dealing with 'the Oedipal themes of emotional and moral identity', he wrote, family melodrama

... often records the failure of the protagonist to act in a way that could shape the events and influence the emotional environment, let alone the stifling social milieu. The world is closed, and the characters are acted upon, and each other's sole referent, there is no world outside to be acted on, no reality that could be defined or assumed unambiguously.'

[Elsaesser, in Gledhill 1987: 55]

Thus, a primary ingredient of melodrama according to both Nowell-Smith and Elsaesser consisted of an inherent inadequacy of the protagonists which they contrasted with the freedom to act of the typical hero in the cinema of action (westerns, gangster movies and the like). In Nowell-Smith's words, the contrast is with 'the mythic potency of the hero of the Western' [op. cit.: 72].

For Elsaesser, the 'classic Oedipal scenario' is typified by Douglas Sirk's *Written on the Wind* (1956). The father figure, Hadley Sr., is shown initially as a rich oil magnate who dispenses wealth and power. His son, played by Robert Stack, is portrayed as being driven by a desire to emulate or surpass his father and as being unable to do so. 'I can't fill my father's shoes,' he tells his lover (Lauren Bacall). When these two marry, they are unable to have a child, and the cause is identified as Stack's 'low sperm count', a discovery that drives him back into the alcoholism from which his relationship with Bacall had rescued him. As Elsaesser observes:

Robert Stack compensates for his sexual impotence and childhood guilt feeling by hugging a bottle of raw corn every time he feels suicidal, which he proceeds to smash in disgust against the paternal mansion. In one scene, Stack is making unmistakable gestures with an empty Martini bottle in the direction of his wife.

[ibid: 65]

The phallic bottle thus connotes an (empty) substitute for his lack of virility. When his father dies – of natural causes – Stack cries out, in an explicitly Oedipal moment, ‘*It was I who killed him!*’

In *Written on the Wind*, there is also an inadequacy in the figure of the father himself. His physique is small and weak, and in spite of the trappings of wealth – the huge mansion, the valuable possessions, the spacious office – he is painfully aware of his own failure in raising two ‘wounded’ children, the unreliable and alcoholic son (Stack) and the promiscuous daughter Mary Lee. When he admits: ‘I failed my children, both of them’, it is suggested that this failure outweighs his material success. The last scene of the film, after the death of both the father and the son, shows Mary Lee sitting in her father’s chair cradling a model of an oil derrick kept on his desk. Throughout the film, attention has been continually drawn to the gushing phallic presence of the derricks. Now as Mary Lee holds the small symbol of her late father’s power, she strokes it with her hand, up and down.

The Oedipal theme is treated even more pointedly in Nicholas Ray’s *Bigger than Life* (1956), in which the father, played by James Mason, driven by paranoid delusions of self-importance, becomes obsessed by the perceived failings of his own son. In the climactic scene, Mason climbs the stairs of the family home, knife in hand, in order to kill his son, while his wife (played by Barbara Rush) frantically tries to prevent him from the dreadful act. In Vincente Minnelli’s *Home from the Hill* (1959), the drama turns on the issue of the patriarchal inheritance,

with the father (Robert Mitchum) and his frigid wife (Eleanor Parker) vying for the allegiance of their son. In Minelli's *The Cobweb* (1955), an anxious father (Richard Widmark) seems to be losing his place domestically and professionally because of the disruption of the paternal law, a disruption represented in the reversal of 'normal' roles between a sexually extrovert wife (Gloria Grahame) and a rather maternal 'other woman' (Lauren Bacall). The crude surface Freudianism of the scenario is underlined by the location of the narrative in a psychiatric clinic, with Widmark as the neurotic psychoanalyst.

What Elsaesser identified in melodrama was the 'interiorisation and personalisation of what are primarily ideological conflicts, together with the metaphorical interpretation of class-conflict as sexual exploitation and rape.' He insisted: 'The ideological "message" of these tragedies is transparent: they record the struggle of a morally and emotionally emancipated bourgeois consciousness against the remnants of feudalism' [Elsaesser 1987: 45/46]. According to this reading, the family acts as a microcosm of the society at large, the site of ideological conflicts which are essentially class conflicts. The inequalities and tensions within the family – the suppression of the women by the men and the dominion of the fathers over the sons – constitute a metaphor for the economic exploitation of the proletariat. Chuck Kleinhans also sees the expression of ideological conflicts in melodrama, substituting 'capitalism' for 'feudalism'. His basic premise is that: 'Since bourgeois domestic melodrama emerges with the ascension of capitalism, and since it deals with the family, it makes sense to look at the family under capitalism to better understand melodrama.' [Kleinhans, 1978: 41]. According to Kleinhans, the function of melodrama can be equated with that of the family itself, in that both offer a site for the displacement of the fundamental socio-economic contradictions inherent in class and gender.

Elsaesser observes that 'there seems to be a radical ambiguity attached to the melodrama', claiming that it appears 'to function either subversively or as escapism'. [Elsaesser 1987: 47]. Certainly, many of the films of Sirk, Ray and Minelli point strongly to something rotten in the bourgeois home, and the source of this rottenness is represented as a crisis of bourgeois values – a tendency to hypocrisy, aimless materialism and moral decadence. In *Written on the Wind*, the oilman's family at the big house consists of a weakened father, a nymphomaniac daughter and a violently alcoholic son, and the household is riven by a psychological tension which, as Elsaesser points out, is captured by Sirk's distinctive mise-en-scène. In *All That Heaven Allows* (Douglas Sirk, 1955), in which a middle class widow (Jane Wyman) is forced to give up her relationship with her gardener (Rock Hudson) in order to protect her children from the aggressive judgement of 'society', the equation is made between wealth and social status on the one hand and snobbery, intolerance and, ultimately, despair on the other. The problem is whether the symptoms of the family malaise are a reflection of the inherent injustices of the class system, or whether they should be seen as stemming directly from the inequities of the traditional family structure. In other words, are the moral and emotional tensions encountered by the bourgeoisie a reflection of economic relationships or of psychological ones? Whereas Elsaesser and Kleinhans emphasise the socio-economic contradictions, critics such as Mulvey and Nowell-Smith focus on the family as the site of sexual suppression.

Drawing on Freud for an understanding of the mechanisms of melodramatic narrative and mise-en-scène, Nowell-Smith [1987] concentrates on the relative familial roles of the patriarchal system and their places in the hierarchy, stressing in particular the anomalous position of women. 'Patriarchy is the law which decrees suffering and impairment,' he writes, 'and decrees them unequally for men and for women.'



The perpetuation of symbolic sexual division only takes place in so far as it is the Father who perpetuates it. It is not just the place of the man relative to the woman, but that of the parent (male) relative to the children, which is crucial here. Melodrama enacts, often with uncanny literalness, the 'family romance' described by Freud – that is to say the imaginary scenario played out by children in relation to their paternity, the asking and answering of the question: whose child am I (or would I like to be)? In addition to the problem of adults, particularly women, in relation to their sexuality, the Hollywood melodrama is also fundamentally concerned with the child's problems of growing into a sexual identity within the family, under the aegis of a symbolic law which the Father incarnates. What is at stake (also for ideological reasons) is the survival of the family unit and the possibility for individuals of acquiring an identity which is also a place within the system, a place where they can both be 'themselves' and 'at home', in which they can simultaneously enter, without contradiction, the symbolic order and bourgeois society.

[Nowell-Smith, 1987: 72/3]

In this analysis, the women and children in the family suffer from the father insofar as he incarnates and perpetuates the patriarchal law. Accordingly, if the father is weak or impaired, it is suggested that the patriarchal law is weak or impaired. Widmark's anxiety in *The Cobweb* is because the women are not obeying the 'law' which says that wives should be yielding and maternal while mistresses may be bold and sensual; the violence in *Bigger than Life* results from the father's paranoid obsessions, which upset the familial equilibrium. To take an example from more recent Hollywood melodrama, in *Legends of the Fall* (Edward Zwick, 1994), Anthony Hopkins, playing the patriarchal head of a family of tough cowboys, is paralysed by a stroke immediately after a fierce altercation with his oldest son in which the son asserts his independence and, effectively, leaves the family home for good.<sup>iii</sup>

To summarise the above: the writings of Elsaesser, Kleinhans, Nowell-Smith and Mulvey on the work of Douglas Sirk and Vincente Minelli, while differing in their explanations of them, agreed in identifying certain 'Oedipal' themes in Hollywood melodrama, which often features the weakness or impairment of the father. The ostensible reason for the appearance of this narrative element would seem to have been that the successful rebellion of the son (the actual or metaphorical killing of the father) required a weakness on the part of the father – in other words the father needed to be weak enough to be overthrown. (Although the critics of the 1970s only drew attention to the phenomenon, without actually explaining it). It seems clear that there could be no Oedipal drama in the *absence* of the father, which means in the case of the Turkish-German films that we would have to assume that the Oedipal drama had already been enacted before the start of the film, that what we are seeing is a kind of 'post-Oedipal' drama, which may indeed be so, but still leaves the reason for the missing father unresolved.

The usefulness of the seminal approaches to Hollywood melodrama – described by Christine Gledhill as the 'critical moments in the constitution of melodrama within film studies' [Gledhill 1987: 2] – is limited on two counts. Firstly, the writings belong to a period of film criticism which predated postmodernist, culturalist and neo-feminist critiques<sup>iv</sup>. Despite the first appearance in 1972 (in French) of Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus*, there was still during the 1970s a general acceptance among film critics of the authority of Freudian concepts in general, and that of Oedipus in particular, whereas by the 1980s there was a widespread movement away from Freudian theory<sup>v</sup>, a phenomenon which will be taken up later in this chapter. Secondly, the focus of all these studies was exclusively western, almost entirely omitting considerations raised by third world, post-colonial and transnational cinema.

If Freudian concepts provide one axis around which 20<sup>th</sup> century debates on the family have revolved, the other axis is provided by Marxism. Freud saw the problems associated with the family in terms of sexual tensions and repressions; Marx saw them – as he saw all social phenomena – in terms of class. As Gledhill has expressed it:

Freud and Marx compete to provide the terms of analysis of the family; according to which authority is given more emphasis, the family is viewed as the site of sexual repression (Nowell-Smith, Mulvey) or of displaced socio-economic contradiction (Kleinmans). From Freud is taken the Oedipal drama, particularly the moment of castration and repression; from Marxism the concept of a division between productive and personal life, in which the contradictions inherent in the alienated labour of capitalist production are supposed to be compensated for within the family, where, however, they are merely displaced.

[in Cook and Bernink (eds.) 1999: 159]

If the problem over the applicability of Freud to Islamic society is inextricably entwined with problems of cosmology and of deeply-rooted epistemologies, the problem with regard to Marx is more straightforward. It is, in essence, the same problem as Marxism encountered in its introduction from Russia into China: the absence of the bourgeois stage of development which Marx regarded as a crucial precondition for the proletarian revolution.<sup>vi</sup> In European Marxism, the ‘bourgeois stage’ remained a central ideological principle. What kind of ideological assessment could be made, therefore, in cases where no bourgeoisie existed or was likely to exist?<sup>vii</sup>

In the 1970s, Turkey was still a predominantly agrarian economy. The social and economic structure in the villages remained essentially feudal. This can be clearly seen in *Donus* [Turkan Soray, 1972]<sup>viii</sup> where no intermediaries of any kind (representatives of bourgeois or merchant groups) exist to mediate between the peasants and the near-absolute authority of the

*aga*. There is one powerful landowner on the one hand and poor landholding peasants on the other. Gulcan and Ibrahim own a single field from which to make their living. In the village she called 'Gökler', Carole Delaney did note a faint social division between the 'upper' village and the 'lower'. The houses of the upper village were somewhat more solidly built, slightly more spacious. But the division could hardly be seen in terms of class<sup>ix</sup>, more as subtle gradations within one homogenous community. The *muhtar* (village headman), the schoolteacher and the *imam* represented a superior trinity of civil, educational and ecclesiastical authority, but the divisions between them and the rest of the villagers were a function of their responsibilities and not of their social rank. The schoolteacher was normally appointed from outside the village and his education was respected, but he was also an outsider (*yabancı*) and therefore only important within his quite limited sphere.

Gurata proposes that the conflicts inherent in Turkish melodrama were essentially a question of class rather than that of culture, suggesting that 'it is class relations which overdetermine the problem of migration' [Gurata 2003:56]. In support of this position, he quotes Willemen's observation on Indian melodrama, as follows:

[Melodrama] can be seen to mobilise local ('traditional' as well as their own version of 'modern') cultural resources and to reshape them in the context of the local and national ... reworking 'the family problematic' within industrial cultural forms for populations caught in massively disruptive processes of social change managed by and for the local bourgeoisies.

[Rajadhyaksha and Willemen, 1994: 96]

Although the Turkish internal migrations were part of a process of urbanisation which was radically to increase the labour workforce available in the cities, and therefore might be understood as a necessary precondition for the transformation of an essentially agrarian society to

an industrial one, this process was still very much in its infancy in the 1960s and may not be described as in any sense 'managed by the local bourgeoisies', which were at that time notable by their absence. Thus any 'subversive charge' conveyed by Turkish melodrama must be thought of in very different terms from what was proposed for Hollywood melodrama by Elsaesser and Kleinmans. In *Gurbet Kuslari* (Halit Refig, 1964) and *Gelin* (Lutfi Akad, 1973) there is a tendency to 'subvert' the (divinely ordered) traditional family. In *Donus*, there is an implied attack on the absolutism of the *aga*, but even here the emphasis is mainly on gender, rather than economic or political, inequities. Only in *Yol* (Serif Goren 1982), are the links between political injustice and family oppression openly explored, and *Yol* is exceptional on several counts and cannot be classified as melodrama.<sup>x</sup>

The nature of the links between the institution of family and the institutions of politics had been clearly articulated by Althusser in his 1971 essay, '*Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*', in which the tensions within the family are seen as the refraction of a wider ideological struggle. Exploring the connections between the overt functioning of the repressive apparatus of the State and the implicit operation of the various 'ISAs', Althusser included among the latter, the Church, the school and the family. Defining ideology as that which 'represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence', Althusser wrote:

The Ideological State Apparatuses function massively and predominantly by ideology, but they also function secondarily by repression, even if ultimately, but only ultimately, this is very attenuated and concealed, even symbolic. (There is no such thing as purely ideological apparatus.) Thus schools and churches use suitable methods of punishment, expulsion, selection, etc., to 'discipline' not only their shepherds, but also their flocks.

The same is true of the Family.

[Althusser, 1971: 158]

In the same essay, Althusser also explored the links between the 'apparatus' of the Church with the 'apparatuses' of the family and the schools.

In the pre-capitalist historical period ... it is absolutely clear that *there was one dominant ISA, the Church*, which concentrated within it not only religious functions but also educational ones, and a large proportion of the functions of communications and culture. It is no accident that all ideological struggle, from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, starting with the first shocks of the Reformation, was *concentrated* in an anti-clerical and anti-religious struggle; rather this is a function precisely of the dominant position of the religious ISA ... Alongside the Church there was the family ISA, which played a considerable part, incommensurable with its role in capitalist social formations ... what the bourgeoisie has installed as its number one, i.e. as its dominant ideological state apparatus, is the educational apparatus, which has in fact replaced in its functions the previously dominant ISA, the Church ... In fact, the Church has been replaced today in its rule as the dominant ISA by the School. It is coupled with the Family just as the church was once coupled with the Family.

[ibid: 151-157]

Althusser's term 'Institutional State Apparatus' carries the indelible imprint of 1970s 'post-Marxism', and in retrospect, the concept, at least under that name, has had a limited lifespan in academic circles, yet Althusser's key lesson – that it did not matter whether institutions were 'public' or 'private', what mattered was how they functioned – was assimilated into the mainstream of leftist thought.

### 3.3 The Imperialism of Oedipus

Jung's objections to Freud are of particular relevance to this study for two reasons: first because he disagreed with Freud over the fundamental importance of infantile sexuality; secondly because Jung based his own approach on a much wider set of cultural, mythological and artistic data, in which Eastern religious and cultural motifs featured largely. In his autobiography, Jung recorded the disagreement as follows:

Above all, Freud's attitude towards the spirit seemed to me highly questionable.

Whenever, in a person or a work of art, an expression of spirituality (in the intellectual not the supernatural sense) came to light, he suspected it, and insinuated that it was repressed sexuality. Anything that could not be directly interpreted as sexuality he referred to as 'psychosexuality'. I protested that this hypothesis, carried to its logical conclusion, would lead to an annihilating judgement upon culture. Culture would then appear as mere farce, the morbid consequence of repressed sexuality. "Yes," he assented. "So it is, and that is just a curse of fate against which we are powerless to contend."

[Jung, 1963:147]

For both Freud and Jung, dream interpretation (and therefore also the interpretation of the unconscious sources of artistic and literary productions) was the primary instrument of psychoanalysis, but whereas Jung saw the symbolism of dreams as stemming from archetypal and mythological motifs concealed in what he called the 'collective unconscious' – and therefore accessible to a combination of intellectual effort and cultural/mythological researches (as well as to an exhaustive self-analysis) – Freud insisted that the interpretive key was to be found in the universal, though hidden, experience of infantile sexuality. As indicated in the passage from Jung above, the dispute between Freud and Jung over the central importance of sexuality involved 'the

spirit' as the alternative theoretical axis. 'For Freud, the essence of dreams lay in the expression of repressed desires, while for Jung they offered reassuring glimpses of the collective unconscious' [Ballard, 1997: 235].

An important element in the development of a 'scientific' (rational as opposed to irrational and metaphysical) theory of psychoanalysis by Charcot and Freud was precisely the need to defeat the 'spiritualists'. Freud wrote to Jung, 'My dear Jung, promise me never to abandon the sexual theory. That is the most essential thing of all. You see, we must make a dogma of it, an unshakable bulwark' [ibid: 147]. When Jung asked what it was to be a bulwark against, Freud said emphatically, 'Against *occultism*'. It was what Freud referred to as 'occultism' that was at the time competing with psychoanalysis for the exploration of the subconscious, and Jung's spiritual researches, including an exhaustive analysis of his own spiritual preoccupations, appeared to Freud (justifiably in many respects) to occupy the same ground as some of the researches of the 'occultists'. Etymologically, occult denotes 'hidden', and Freud's purpose was precisely to illuminate what was hidden, but through a strictly scientific methodology. Jung's objections were based on a different weighting of 'spiritual' and 'sexual' elements, especially in dream analysis, but actually comprised his notion of 'culture' in the widest sense, which he saw as a rich and complex intermingling of historical, artistic and religious forms. He also discerned that any universalist theory would fail to take into account the profoundly different attitudes prevalent at different stages of the human experience. In a rather lyrical passage from *L'âme et la vie*, he wrote:

Now that the stars have fallen from the heavens and our noblest symbols have faded, a secret life reigns in the unconscious. That is why today we have psychology, and speak of the unconscious. These things would be, and are in fact, superfluous in an age, or a form of civilization, which still possesses such symbols. For they are the spirit from



above, and while they exist the mind too is 'above' [...] But our own unconscious encloses a spirit akin to nature, liquefied so to speak, whose workings trouble it. And heaven has become a universal empty space, a beautiful memory of what used to be.

[Jung, 1963: 44/5]

Freud would have strongly objected to any notions of 'above' or of any suggestion that the validity of psychology was relative in terms of time and place, and it is these very objections that caused Jung to be marginalised in the academic/psychoanalytic debate. At the same time – and this is most important to the thrust of my thesis – Jung's awareness of, and respect for, other cultural paradigms is precisely what makes him interesting to non-Western thought.<sup>xi</sup> The nature of consciousness, he believed, changed through cultures and epochs. He saw these differences and changes as part of a necessary cycle, a kind of epistemological dialectic. 'Whenever an important segment of the consciousness loses value, and disappears as a result,' he wrote, 'a compensation appears somewhere else in the conscious mind' [Jung, 1960: 180]. Shayegan refers to this dialectic as 'a fading projection and a compensation'. In the West, the process lies at the heart of intellectual and rational development, in other words of the Enlightenment itself. But in the East, the process was painful or impossible.

In the non-Western cultures ... the two phenomena (a fading projection, and a compensation) remain disconnected. For a start, the fading of projections is hardly registered as a historical experience, one lived through internally, but rather as a series of shocks from outside ... the consciousness, unable to cope with the radically different paradigm confronting it, retreats into the musty but familiar archives of collective memory ... the subjectivity of the Cartesian *cogito* – an ego cut off from its symbols – necessarily corresponds to the objectivity of a geometrical order of reality purged of its substantive forms; in our case by contrast the ego remains very fragile. It suffers from a double deficiency: it is neither the conscious *cogito* behind a subjective discourse, nor

the collective ego distilled out of the experience of spiritual individuation (usually represented as an Angel or some other hieratic figure in the visionary recitations of our philosophers.) Our ego is still *underdeveloped*, alienated from modernity and from Tradition.

[Shayegan, 1997: 63/4]

A mental landscape made up of angels, visions and ‘the musty archives of collective memory’ was peculiarly unsuited to receiving or accepting the fundamental tenets of the Enlightenment. Shayegan suggests that ‘the common denominator of all these deprecatory views of the mind [the nihilism of Nietzsche, the occultation of being in Heidegger, the instrumentalization of reason in Adorno and Horkheimer, the loss of aura in Benjamin] converges on a central point: the fading away of something that used to be there’ [ibid: 63]. The problem for the East in general, and for Islam in particular, was that none of these ‘somethings’ could be allowed to ‘fade away’ because they served as planks in a divine cosmology.<sup>xii</sup> Freud, in particular, could be easily and carelessly dismissed by Islamic thinkers. In the east, according to Shayegan:

a philosophical atlas, locating the the areas and currents of thought in an appropriate overall framework, is sorely lacking ... Freud is seen as the promoter of sexuality and therefore ‘obscene’ (and the target of unbelievable enormities from the pens of Islamic ideologues), but people are unaware of the epistemological breaks his thought opened in the mainstream of modern rationalism, and makes very little of the vast scope of his psychology of the deep unconscious.

[ibid: 122]

In Turkish villages at the time of the 20<sup>th</sup> century migrations, there was naturally no knowledge of either Freud or Oedipus, but there can be no doubt that both would have been viewed not only obscene but incomprehensible. Delaney's comment that there could be no resolution of the Oedipus complex in Turkish rural society<sup>xiii</sup> is echoed by Fatma Mernissi's echoes these observations in her 1975 book, *Beyond the Veil*. These were based on village life in Morocco, but such was the rigidity – one might even say permanence – of Islamic divine law that the essential characteristics of Islamic attitudes towards marriage and the ordering of family relationships were constant throughout the Islamic world. According to Mernissi:

the close link between mother and son is probably the key factor in the dynamics of Muslim marriage ... Marriage, which in most societies is invested with a kind of initiation ritual function allowing the son to free himself from his mother, is in Moroccan Muslim society a ritual by which the mother's claim on the son is strengthened. Marriage institutionalizes the Oedipal split between love and sex in a man's life. He is encouraged to love a woman he can't engage in sexual intercourse with, his mother. He is discouraged from lavishing his affection on the woman he does engage in sexual intercourse with, his wife.

[Mernissi, 1975: 69/70]

This very close and enduring relationship between son and mother is always emphasised in 'Eastern' families.<sup>xiv</sup> Since it is allowed, even encouraged, by the culture, there is less reason for a sense of Oedipal rivalry with the father. Shayegan connects the 'symbiotic' relationship between mother and son in Hindu India with what he calls 'a weakened ego'.

The Hindu ideal of wisdom calls not for a strong ego, an autonomous subject supported by an authoritarian super-ego, but rather for a passive ego, based on the memory of a happy infancy, tending to regress towards a fusion with the origins. The symbiotic relationship between an Indian male infant and his mother is a major factor in helping to

weaken the ego. Until the age of five, the child is caressed, spoiled, over-protected, given his mother's full-time attention. When he reaches the age of five, the mother's role is abruptly reduced and the father takes over.

[Shayegan, 64]

A similar point is made by the Indian writer Sudhir Kakar:

In India, differentiation between the child and his mother (and thus between the ego and the id) occurs later and is structurally weaker than in the West, with this consequence: the mental processes characteristic of the symbiosis of early infancy play a relatively more important role in the personality of the Indian adult.

[Kakar, 1985: 90]

It would be unwise to generalise on the basis of these observations. The development and strength of the male ego may well appear weakened in India, not only by familial traditions but also by religious and cultural forms. However, a very different picture may be drawn in Islamic Pakistan or in Turkey. The point is not to generalise about 'the East' but to point out that the prevailing social and familial conditions which gave rise to the conclusions of Freud are by no means universal. As Judith Mayne succinctly puts it: 'Oedipal desire is the desire to become like the father, to take his place in the heterosexual and familial economy of *Western, industrialized culture*' [Mayne, 1993: 23; my italics].

Deleuze and Guattari, in their attack on what they called 'the imperialism of Oedipus' [Deleuze and Guattari, 1984: 51], set out to show how the prevalence of the critical discourse of the Oedipus complex actually produces and perpetuates Oedipal structures in culture rather than deconstructing them. 'Structural interpretation makes Oedipus into a kind of universal Catholic symbol, beyond all the imaginary modalities,' they wrote [ibid: 52], and again: 'the entire historico-political theme gets interpreted as a constellation of imaginary identifications depending

on Oedipus, or on that which the subject “lacks” in order to become oedipalized [ibid: 90]. Deleuze and Guattari criticize Freud for *personalizing* desire. For them, desire begins impersonally and collectively, and from a multiplicity of investments, and cannot be explained uniquely or even substantially in terms of the desire of the child for the parent. They conceptualised desire as free flow, creative difference and becoming. What can be seen in *Anti-Oedipus*, in fact is the unlocking of what had become a rather rigid post-Freudian structuralist stranglehold. ‘Becoming-woman’ is to be regarded as the opening for a new understanding of desire that does not begin with the loss or repression of an original object. Man is produced from social roles and such investments have to be collectively rather than personally realised. The nature of these social roles and investments, inevitably, will vary between cultures. Deleuze and Guattari point out for example that ‘a certain degree of comfort found in the bourgeois family is admittedly necessary to turn out oedipalized subjects’ [ibid: 96] and that in pre-industrial societies ‘the necessary conditions for Oedipus as a “familial complex”, existing in the framework of the familialism suited to psychiatry and psychoanalysis, are obviously not present’ [ibid: 166]. In other words, they see the Freudian Oedipus as requiring a quite particular set of familial conditions which are present only in the industrialised west. If ‘the photo of the father, expanded beyond all bounds, [is] projected onto the geographic, historical and political *map* of the world in order to reach vast regions of it’, this results in ‘an Oedipalization of the universe’. [Deleuze and Guattari, 2000: 10].<sup>xv</sup>

In the work of Michel Foucault, the concept of sexuality was seen not so much as a ‘flow’ as a ‘dense transfer point of relations of power’. In other words, the ‘flow’ did not comprise sexuality as such but power.

Sexuality must not be described as a stubborn drive, by nature alien and of necessity disobedient to a power which exhausts itself trying to subdue it and often fails to control

it entirely. It appears rather as an especially dense transfer point of relations of power: between men and women, young people and old people, parents and offspring, teachers and students, priests and laity, an administration and a population.

[ibid: 103]

The family, he wrote later in the same text, is 'an obligatory locus of affects, feelings, love'. This made it, 'the most active site of sexuality' and, even, 'a hotbed of constant sexual excitement' [ibid: 109].

The family, in its contemporary form, must not be understood as a social, economic and political structure of alliance that excludes or at least restrains sexuality, that diminishes it as much as possible, preserving only its useful functions. On the contrary, its role is to anchor sexuality and provide it with a permanent support. ... The family is the interchange of sexuality and alliance: it conveys the law and the juridical dimension in the deployment of sexuality; and it conveys the economy of pleasure and the intensity of sensations in the regime of alliance.

[ibid: 108]

Foucault pointed out that the family functions not only as a household-level organisation for the purposes of economics and domestic ritual but as what he calls 'the alliance', which was a *system* with the family at its centre and the many social, ritual and historical functions of the family comprising its web. 'The alliance', Foucault wrote, was 'the system of marriage, of fixation and development of kinship ties, of transmission of names and possessions' [ibid: 106], and it thus had extensive and tenacious links with customary law and social relationships. The ideological operation of the family according to Foucault was thus more complex than had appeared in Althusser's simplified model, and Foucault was to examine the repercussions more thoroughly and in a wider sphere. In particular, Foucault was concerned with the relation between

the family and what he called the *deployment of sexuality*. The structure of alliance, he claimed, had traditionally acted, through strict taboos and conventions, to *restrain* sexuality: to outlaw its expression within the immediate family, except in relations between spouses, and to channel its expression outside the family within narrowly conceived limits. This function of the extended family corresponds quite precisely with the function of the family (specifically the male members of the family) in traditional Islam, the ‘protection’ of daughters, wives and sisters actually serving as a strict constraint. But according to Foucault, the situation in the West began changing from the end of the eighteenth century, from which time the discourse on sex, and the role of the family within that discourse, underwent a radical transformation. The discourse on sex, he suggested, had centred on the practice of confession.

We belong in a society which has ordered sex’s difficult knowledge, not according to the transmission of secrets, but around the slow surfacing of confidential statements.

The confession was, and still remains, the general standard governing the production of a true discourse on sex. It has undergone a considerable transformation, however. For a long time, it remained firmly entrenched in the practice of penance. But with the rise of Protestantism, the Counter Reformation, eighteenth century pedagogy, and nineteenth century medicine, it gradually lost its ritualistic and exclusive localization; it spread; it has been employed in a whole series of relationships: children and parents, students and educators, patients and psychiatrists, delinquents and experts. The motivations and effects it is expected to produce have varied, as have the forms it has taken:

interrogations, consultations, autobiographical narratives, letters ... It is no longer a question simply of saying what was done – the sexual act – and how it was done; but of reconstructing, in and around the act, the thoughts that recapitulated it, the obsessions that accompanied it, the images, desires, modulations, and quality of the pleasure that animated it... A dissemination, then, of procedures of confession, a multiple localisation

of their constraint, a widening of their domain: a great archive of the pleasures of sex was gradually constituted.

[ibid: 63]

Foucault also points out: 'We must not forget that the discovery of the Oedipus complex was contemporaneous with the juridical organization of loss of parental authority'<sup>xvi</sup> [ibid: 130]. In other words, the weakening of parental authority was a corollary – and perhaps also a cause – of what Foucault sees as the re-ordering of sexual knowledge.

Thus Foucault clearly indicates that the Freudian Oedipus would have been impossible were it not for 'the rise of Protestantism, the Counter Reformation, eighteenth century pedagogy, and nineteenth century medicine' which together expanded the context of the confessional and made possible the replacement of the church by the medical profession in this respect. The Reformation, and the rise of pedagogical systems which were no longer under the control of the Church, were exclusively western phenomena, examples of what Shayegan referred to as the series of shocks with the Eastern – and specifically the Islamic – world were unable to absorb. Foucault's '*History of Sexuality*' is a western history, and Freud/Oedipus a western concept. Not only was there no Reformation in Islam, not only did the pedagogical system remain firmly under ecclesiastical control, but the whole notion of the confession was alien to Islamic practice. As in the West, the constraints as to what was or was not permissible in terms of sexuality were rooted in the law of the family, but unlike in the West, the family in Islam continued to be a microcosm of a divinely ordered universe. Therefore, those deviations from the norm – extra-marital intercourse, homosexual relations, sexual experimentation – which were to become characteristic of western sexuality during the latter half of the twentieth century, just because they had been explained and somehow legitimated by Freud and the Freudians, remained largely taboo in the Islamic world.



### 3.4 Oedipus or Abraham?

One particular illustration of the ‘imperialism of Oedipus’ may be found in the suggestion that it is in the biblical and Koranic story of Abraham and the near-sacrifice of his son, rather than that of Oedipus, that the mythogenetic source for the father/son tensions present in the traditional Islamic family should be sought. This argument is outlined in Carole Delaney’s book, *The Seed and the Soil*, and further developed in her later work, *Abraham on Trial* (1998). The Abrahamic story is kept alive in Turkey through the yearly *Kurban Bayram* (feast of the sacrifice), in which a sheep or goat is slaughtered by the father, traditionally in front of the son. The fact that the animal is a substitute for the son, and that the ritual is a substitute for ‘real’ violence, is explicitly acknowledged. As one Turkish villager expressed it to Delaney, ‘In ancient times we used to cut our sons. If God hadn’t given us a ram, we would still be cutting children’. A child’s version was as follows:

Allah wanted a child every year. Every year a boy was cut. One of the prophets [Abraham] gave his son, but this time Allah sent a sheep with an angel. Now at Bayram, we don’t cut people.

[Delaney, 1991: 300]

Delaney points out that in the posters to be seen throughout Turkey at that time (the early 1980s), ‘a boy is tied hand and foot, like the sheep, while his father stands over him brandishing a knife in upraised hand.’ ‘How do the boys react?’ she asks. ‘Were they imagining that if fathers were once capable of such a deed, they might be capable of doing it again? Does witnessing the spectacle help to strengthen and reinforce authoritarian values?’ [ibid: 300].

There exists at least one true story (from the 1970s) of a Turkish man who actually did sacrifice his son. This story was told, in somewhat fictionalised form, in a Turkish film called

*Adak* ('The Vow'). Delaney notes that 'the legal and ethical controversy that ensued never once questioned the morality of the original story, that of Abraham, on which the defendant modeled his action and based his case' [ibid].

The yearly sacrifice of an animal in preparation for a seasonal feast is not of course exclusive to Islam. The same practice may be found, for example, in all Greek villages at Easter time. There are important differences, however. First, there is not the same insistence that the task should be performed by the father in company with his son. Indeed, the slaughter of the animal is in most cases carried out by the village butcher. Second, the mythic connection with Abraham has long been forgotten. In other words, the killing of the animal has entirely lost its ritual function and is seen merely as a customary part of the annual Easter feasting. In Christianity, Abraham is the original patriarch and the *godfather*, so to speak, of the religious tradition, but to most Christians he remains a remote and shadowy figure, connected with a prehistoric past. The situation is quite different for Muslims. As Asad points out:

The spiritual presence of Abraham is always felt in Arabia, as in the whole Muslim world, not only in the frequency with which his name (in its Arabic form *Ibrahim*) is given to children, but also in the ever-recurring remembrance, both in the Koran and in the Muslims' daily prayers, of the patriarch's role as the first conscious teacher of God's Oneness: which also explains the great importance given by Islam to the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, which since earliest times has been intimately connected with the story of Abraham.

[Asad, 1954: 377]

The explicit connection of the *Kurban Bayram* with Abraham, and also with the relations between father and son, may be seen in an account given by another American anthropologist, Joe Pierce, in his 1964 book, *Life in a Turkish Village*:

When Mahmud's father had finished praying, he came over to where the boy was standing. Mahmud held the rope as his father took a knife from his belt and straddled the tethered animal. The sharp blade was carefully placed over a ritually sanctioned spot on the sheep's throat, and Mahmud's father said a short prayer and severed the great arteries with a single quick stroke. For an instant life seemed to flicker in the animal's eyes, and then it was all over. Thus they had rendered unto God the sacrifice, as Abraham had done so long ago as a substitute for his son, that was now required annually of all good Muslims.

[Pierce, 1964: 54]

In giving a central importance to the Abrahamic, rather than Oedipal, myth in terms of father/son relations, Delaney points to what she sees as a *scotoma*, or blind spot, in Freudian theory.

Freud focused primarily on the son, and the son's feeling and relation to the father, and gave little attention to the father, and the father's feelings towards the son. This exclusive focus seems to have blinded him to the importance of including the father in his theoretical frame. Moreover, it prevented him from seeing that the meaning of *son* is constituted in relation to that of *father* and vice versa. Freud's neglect is systemic, not a minor oversight but a major distortion that has far-reaching implications for his theory, and ours – about the person, about religion, and about the nature of culture.

[Delaney, 1998: 189]

Even though she claims 'it is not my purpose to psychoanalyze Freud', Delaney sees the *scotoma* noted above as the possible symptom of something 'hidden away, ignored, neglected (dare I say repressed?)' in Freud's thought [ibid: 191]. She points out that Freud's own approach to 'striking omissions, disturbing repetitions, palpable contradictions' was to treat them as symptoms of repressed material. Freud's concentration on the feelings of the son, to the virtual exclusion of the feelings of the father, must have been the reason for his odd neglect of the figure of Laius in the Oedipus story, previously indicated by Devereux in his 1953 article '*Why Oedipus Killed Laius*' [Devereux, 1953: 134-141].

Robert Graves' reservations about Freud's application of the the Oedipus myth are based not on what Freud himself may have repressed, but on the validity of the original source material from which the myth was reconstructed. The original myth according to Graves concerned the suicide of the Sphinx, and of her priestess Iocaste, after the defeat of the Sphinx by Oedipus. Oedipus, he tentatively suggests may have been 'a thirteenth century [B.C.] invader of Thebes, who suppressed the old Minoan cult of the goddess and reformed the calendar' [Graves 1955: II,105.3, p.13].

Under the old system, the new king, although a foreigner, had theoretically been a son of the old king whom he killed and whose widow he married; a custom that the patriarchal invaders misrepresented as parricide and incest. The Freudian theory that the 'Oedipus complex' is an instinct common to all men was suggested by this perverted anecdote

[ibid]

Graves also questioned – and this is really a more serious charge – that the connection between blindness and castration was a literary distortion of the original myth:

Oedipus' remorseful self-blinding has been interpreted by psychologists to mean castration; but primitive myth is always downright, and the castration of Uranus and Attis continued to be recorded unblushingly in Classical text books. Oedipus' blinding, therefore, reads like a theatrical invention, rather than original myth.

[ibid, 105.6, p. 14]

What is at stake here is no less than the legitimacy of Freud's proposal that the tensions between father and son were rooted in *sexual* competitiveness, rather than any other power relations (familial authority, economic competence, physical strength etc.). There is nothing in the Abrahamic myth to suggest a connection between the projected sacrifice of the son and sexual rivalry or tension. On the contrary, the account of the would-be sacrifice in the Koran emphasises the joint dutifulness to God of the father and the son:

When he [the son] reached the age when he could work with him, the father said to him: 'My son, I dreamt I was sacrificing you. Tell me what you think'. He replied: 'Father, do as you are bidden. God willing, you shall find me steadfast'. And when they had both submitted to God, and Abraham had laid down his son prostrate upon his face, We called out to him, saying: 'Abraham, you have fulfilled your vision'.

[Koran, Sura 37:90]

It is true that the son submits to the father's authority, but what is more striking is that both of them together submit to the will of God. 'Tell me what you think' is unmistakably a consultation of the son's wishes, a need for his *consent* to the act. If the consent were not given there is no evidence that the sacrifice would have taken place. The myth does not so much refer to the power of the father over life and death but to the importance for the continuing health and good fortune of the family that the father and the son must unite in their submission to the divine will. According to this reading, the myth is not about struggle, rivalry, murder or the threat of castration, but about the essential collaboration of father and son. The passage in the Koran is so

brief and precise that it cannot be an accident that the episode comes at the moment when the son 'reached the age when he could work with him'. Etymologically, this is the very root of the word collaboration. This is not to say that that Delaney is wrong in suggesting that on the day of *Kurban Bayram* 'every male child is reminded that, but for the grace of God, he might have been the one sacrificed' [Delaney 1991: 7], but when she claims that 'in performing the Kurban, men ritually reproduce the metaphor of power over life and death' [ibid: 301], it may be that she is neglecting an alternative, and deeper, meaning of the myth.

If one were to look in Turkish custom and ritual for a prototype of castration anxiety, one would look not to the Abrahamic myth as re-enacted on *Kurban Bayram*, but to the circumcision ceremony (*sunnet*), in which knives, blood and the male genitalia are the dominant symbolic elements. Interestingly, the circumcision ceremony is the moment when the boy symbolically puts away the remaining traces of his feminine side, which echoes the final stage of Freud's Oedipal trajectory. For the young Muslim boy, the approach of *sunnet* involves a considerable anxiety. Irfan Orga was not quite six when he first heard it mentioned.

Nobody ever explained what this terrible ordeal was which lay before me, requiring the courage of a lion, and I was too timid to ask though becoming more and more curious about it. My mother ... told me that all little Muslim boys had circumcision and that it would be the start of my 'manhood' ... What had she meant by the word 'manhood'? Had it anything to do with my father, whom I had heard referred to as a 'man'? It was all very odd to a small boy's mind, but all these conversations had the desired effect of making me impatient and eager to experience circumcision. Every evening I used to climb on my father's knee and ask when it would happen. He would pretend to look very grave and would ask my mother if I had been a good boy that day. The answer was always yes. Indeed, since the idea of circumcision had taken hold of me, I had walked in

saintliness. So then my father would promise to arrange everything before my birthday and I would swell with pride and the days could not pass quickly enough.

[Orga, 1993: 29/30]

A little later, Irfan's little brother Mehmet cries because he is not also to have a brand new robe. He was quieted with sweets and told that he was lucky not to be facing circumcision, because it would hurt. 'It was the first time anyone had mentioned anything about hurt and I felt the first chill of apprehension,' Irfan writes [ibid: 30]. He was 'consumed with impatience', but the impatience was mingled with dread.

My shadowy fears began to grow bolder, threatening to swamp my mind ... I began to have frightening dreams but had nobody to whom I could run for consolation ... My mother would ask me to tell her what was the matter but shame and pride forbade me discussing such a purely masculine thing as circumcision with her.

[ibid: 31/32]

When the big day arrives, Irfan feels 'like a lamb being led to the slaughter-house'. But there were several other boys present (the oldest was eight), the house was decorated with flowers and streamers, and clowns were brought on to entertain them before the main event. Finally the moment came.

My father lifted my robe, baring my legs and the lower part of my body. 'Open your legs!' commanded the doctor ... 'Wider!' he roared. I tremblingly obeyed. I remember that the Colonel held my ankles from behind me whilst my father pinioned my arms tightly. I closed my eyes and was ready to die. There was a slight stinging feeling and suddenly it was all over.

[ibid: 36]

There can be no doubt that *sunnet* constitutes an anxious and dramatic moment in a Muslim boy's life. Irfan 'was ready to die'. But the role of the father, and presumably his presence at

the circumcision itself, is one of reassurance not threat. The clowns, the streamers, the sweets and gifts combine to make the occasion more of a celebration than a surgical operation. Irfan himself seemed little scarred by the event. 'To be looked back on with amusement and a certain lingering shame,' he concludes. The shame is because he had screamed out, it should be added, not because he had been humiliated.

The *sunnet* ceremony may be linked with what Delaney referred to as the greater seriousness of the boys of her village, the sense that more was expected of them. As the principal rite of passage into manhood, *sunnet* separates not only the men from the boys, but the boys from the girls. It is in fact the symbolic entry into the Muslim 'brotherhood'. Like the *Kurban* ritual, it is something that essentially unites father and son rather than dividing them. Yet if one is looking for a source of castration anxiety, the *sunnet* ceremony remains a much more likely candidate than the *Kurban* sacrifice. In the film *Ucirtmayi Vurmasinlar*, the six-year-old Baris undergoes his *sunnet* in the women's prison and when he enquires of one of the women prisoners what will happen, she says bluntly: 'They will cut your penis off'.



### 3.5 A Structuring Absence

Freud notes in *Moses and Montheism* that distortions in a text are ‘like a murder’, [Freud, 1939: 52]. One possible explanation would see the absence or impairment of the father as the result of unconscious elements, constituting what symptomatic interpretations refer to as ‘a structuring absence’ and concealing an Oedipal, or parallel, scenario – in other words: an unconscious omission indicating a collective psychological tendency in a cycle of cultural production.

Structuralist writers in the journal *Screen* of the 1970s such as Paul Willemen [vol 12.] and Steven Neale [vol. 13] agree with Elsaesser in recognising some kind of ‘subversive charge’ in Hollywood melodrama, believing that certain fissures and contradictions in the films undermine a superficial ideological coherence. Mulvey takes issue with them, claiming that that to view melodrama as ‘a safety valve for ideological contradictions centred on sex and the family’ is to ignore that ideological contradiction ‘is the overt mainspring and specific content of melodrama, not a hidden, unconscious thread to be picked up only by some special processes’ [Mulvey, 1987: 75]. In terms of the Turkish and Turkish-German melodrama, however, the phenomenon of the missing father can hardly be seen as an ‘overt mainspring and specific content’ since its manifestation is precisely an *absence*. According to the structuralists, what was absent defined what was present, in the same way as planetary bodies are defined by the spaces between them.<sup>xvii</sup> The relations between presence and absence are described by Macherey in terms that correspond very nearly to those between substance and essence in a theological context (although Macherey’s use of the word ‘matter’ and ‘form’ in the first sentence is confusing):

The speech of the book comes from a certain silence, a matter which it endows with form, a ground on which it traces a figure. Thus the book is not self-sufficient; it is

necessarily accompanied by *a certain absence*, without which it would not exist. A knowledge of the book must include a consideration of this absence. This is why it seems useful and legitimate to ask of every production what it tacitly implies, what it does not say. Either all around or in its wake the explicit requires the implicit: for in order to say anything, there are other things *which must not be said*. Freud relegated this *absence of certain words* to a new place which he was the first to explore, and which he paradoxically named: the unconscious. To reach utterance, all speech envelops itself in the unspoken. We must ask why it does not speak of this interdict: can it be identified before one might wish to acknowledge it? There is not even the slightest hint in the absence of what it does not, perhaps cannot, say: the disavowal [*dénégation*] extends even to the act that banishes the forbidden term; its absence is unacknowledged.

[Macherey, 1978: 85; *author's italics*]

Macherey is referring to books, and to speech, but the same principle has been applied to any cultural production, including cinema. This passage articulates the important elements in the structuralist approach to absence: the explicit which requires the implicit, as well as the connections with the Freudian unconscious, since artistic structures are brought to consciousness by an act of analysis and interpretation. This act takes place primarily through an examination of *clues* or *symptoms* within the text, and for this reason the process is referred to, in literature as well as in film studies, as symptomatic interpretation. The identification in films of 'structuring significant absences' has been a characteristic of this critical process, with an absence – particularly an absence which recurs over a body of films and over a length of time – taken as a symptom of a meaning in the film that has been concealed or repressed. As Bordwell points out [Bordwell 1989: Chapter IV, *passim*], 'symptomatic' interpretation was by no means invented in the 1970s, but was also present in the more culture-based critiques of the 1940s and 1950s. As

early as 1947, Parker Tyler referred to the gaps in a film's logic as its 'crevices'. His declared purpose was 'to reveal a weightier entertainment value in films than Hollywood is aware of' [Tyler, 1947: 115]. All symptomatic interpretation has pursued broadly the same goal of uncovering what is neither explicit (or 'conscious') in the text.

Freud's justification for treating contradictions, gaps, and disruptive elements as indicative of concealment or repression was based on his discovery in therapeutic practice that certain spasms and paralyses contain traces of repressed psychic disturbances. The equivalent process in terms of film means, in Nowell-Smith's words, that: 'material that cannot be expressed in discourse or in the actions of the characters furthering the designs of the plot' may appear as displaced or 'hysterical' moments'. [Nowell-Smith, ref.] He also noted a correspondence between such displaced elements and the 'parapraxes' observed by Freud – the so-called Freudian slips, the lapses of memory, the inexplicable fissures of consciousness that to Freud indicated something obliterated or hidden. For Nowell-Smith, the parallel between film and the psychoanalysed patient was direct, with the text serving as 'the body', but after Metz, the majority of symptomatic critics preferred to think of film as 'language'; consequently Freud's model was amended by the structuralist linguists such as Saussure<sup>xviii</sup> and anthropologists such as Levi-Strauss. Freud's model of the unconscious was, in Macherey's words, 'a place of structures'.

The unconscious [is] a peculiar speechless language from which nothing will ever emerge but structures, the images of the discourse and the words of the dream. To analyse an utterance is not to trace its genesis but to illuminate that other thing from which it is produced; in this sense structure is radically different from genesis.

[Macherey, 1978: 151]

The essential notion linking these various interpretations is that a film, like a person's mind, possesses an 'unconscious'. This was defined by Bordwell as 'its repressed material that may surface in the slightest details of form and style' [Bordwell, 1989: 87]. Films were thus approached by symptomatic film critics somewhat as the therapist approaches the patient, an approach that has taken a strong hold in psychoanalytic schools.

Any interpretive practice seeks to show that texts mean more than they seem to say. But, one might ask, why does a text not say what it means? The symptomatic approach has a straightforward answer: the text cannot say what it means; it tries to disguise its actual meaning. The principle analogy here ... is to the discourse of the psychoanalytic patient.

[Bordwell, 1989: 65]

The critical foundations of this approach lie in what have become known as 'the hermeneutics of suspicion', a term coined by Ricoeur to describe the attitude of Freud, Marx and Nietzsche to the need to reveal what had been concealed. Nietzsche himself recommended that any 'manifestation' should be subject to a careful enquiry: what is it meant to conceal, what is it intended to draw our attention from, what prejudice does it provoke and how subtle is the dissimulation. The 'hermeneutics of suspicion' became deeply embedded in much of film and literary criticism during the 1970s and after. Barthes' *Mythologies* was derived from a reading of Marx and Levi-Strauss; Althusser undertook a symptomatic reading of Marx; Foucault recognised Freud's work as a paradigm of sceptical scientific method; Derrida claimed that Western thought was haunted by a variety of repressions; Macherey suggested that all literary texts might be read as built around concealed absences [Macherey 1978: 122]<sup>xix</sup>. In the seminal *Cahiers* essay on *The Young Mr. Lincoln* (John Ford, 1939), the character of Lincoln is seen as constituted by absences, for example that of his mother, his real origins and his sexuality. The symptoms in the text are

identified in such elements as Lincoln's 'castrating stare' and 'paranoid self-confidence'

[*Cahiers du Cinema*, August 1970: 29-47].<sup>xx</sup>

The underlying assumption in all symptomatic approaches is that the critic, from his or her standpoint, is capable of understanding more about the meaning of a film than the combined intelligence of the scenarist, the director and the cinematographer, an assumption which might seem arrogant were it not for the fact that it is precisely the critic's task to stand aside from the process of cultural production in which filmmakers are themselves involved and to cultivate and develop such an understanding, based on all the available data whatever their source. Symptomatic critics have established ways in which the significant 'clues;' may be identified. Bordwell includes in the list: contradictions, crevices, false resolutions, arbitrary closures and disruptive elements. Although Bordwell treats this list rather dismissively (taking issue as he does with the tendency of symptomatic critics to select whatever critical devices suit their theoretical purpose), the majority of even positivist critics of literature and film accept that whatever is conspicuous, different, unassimilated, contrary or surprising in a text is worthy of their special attention, and this broad acceptance has certainly outlived the structuralist 'moment' in the film studies of the 1960s and early 1970s. In Chapter 6, when considering the classification of Turkish-German film, I shall suggest that the absence of the father may be considered as a structural characteristic of a generic cycle of films.

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<sup>i</sup> Quoted by Ernest Jones in *Sigmund Freud: Life and Work*.

<sup>ii</sup> Perhaps the most discussed case of the 'Oedipal' preoccupations of an 'auteur' is that of Kafka. Deleuze and Guattari devote a chapter of their book on Kafka to the issue, under the title of *An Exaggerated Oedipus*, referring to the 'many unfortunate psychoanalytic interpretations' based on Kafka's *Letter to the Father*. (p. 9) 'As Kafka himself says', they write, 'the problem isn't that of liberty but of escape. The question of the father isn't how to become free in relation to him (an Oedipal question) but how to find a path there where he didn't find any' (p.10). Max Brod points out that: 'Kafka knew these [Freudian] theories very well and considered them always as a very rough and ready explanation which didn't do justice to detail.' [Franz Kafka, *A Biography* (New York: Schocken Books, 1960: p. 20)] In a letter to Brod, Kafka wrote of a book of psychoanalysis: "It shares the quality of other psychoanalytic works that in the first moments its thesis seems remarkably satisfying, but very soon after one feels the same old hunger' [Kafka, letter of November 1917 in *Letters to Friends, Family and Editors*, (New York: Schocken Books, 1977)]. In his Diaries, Kafka wrote: 'I cannot grant that the first beginnings of my unhappiness were inwardly necessitated; they may indeed have had a necessity, but not an inward one – they swarmed down on me like flies and could have been as easily driven off' [Diaries p. 210].

<sup>iii</sup> There is really nothing in *Legends of the Fall* to distinguish it, in narrative and stylistic terms, from the family melodramas of the 1950s, despite the gap of forty years that separate them.

<sup>iv</sup> Gledhill's collection of essays in *Home Is Where the Heart Is* was published in 1987, but the key essays mostly date from the 1970s.

<sup>v</sup> Psychoanalytical approaches in fact retained their dominant position in film studies in the 1980s, but the 'cutting edge' was by that time associated with the more sceptical attitude associated with Deleuze in particular.

<sup>vi</sup> In practical revolutionary terms, Mao Zedong easily circumvented this problem by declaring that the Chinese peasantry rather than the (almost non-existent) industrial proletariat would constitute the revolutionary force.

<sup>vii</sup> Marxism has never been a powerful ideological force in Turkey, apart from a period of time in the late 1970s when it informed and fuelled the radical student movements in the universities of Istanbul and Ankara. Nazim Hikmet, widely thought of – at least by the left – as Turkey's 'poet laureate', was a Marxist, and ended his days in exile in the USSR. Yasar Kemal and Yilmaz Guney also embraced a broadly Marxist ideology. The extent of the radical student activity of the late 1970s may be gauged from the fact that in 1979, one newspaper published no less than forty-nine leftwing party manifestos [Pope, 1997: 131]. This period was brought summarily to an end by the coup of 1980, and although radical Marxism survived in small cliques and revolutionary movements, such as the extremist left-wing faction *Dev-Sol* of the 1980s and 1990s, Kemalism has remained the dominant 'leftish' movement. Kemalism had in fact partly appropriated Marxist doctrine – in terms of *étatist* economic policies and anti-ecclesiastical secularism – but was resolutely opposed to the ending of private ownership as well as deeply suspicious of Turkey's northern neighbour, the USSR. It should be remembered that Turkey joined NATO as early as 1955. All this meant that even in the metropolitan universities, Marxism remained a marginal intellectual force. The radicalism of the Village Institutes (*Koy Enstitutleri*) – an area where some Marxist influence might have been expected – was strongly Kemalist.

<sup>viii</sup> *Donus* is discussed in detail in 4.3.

<sup>ix</sup> This is a very large topic, impossible fully to investigate here, However, it might be said in general terms that the concept of 'class' is foreign to Islamic communities, just as Islam itself has a strongly egalitarian element. As Gellner puts it: 'No distinct sacramental status separates the preacher or the

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leader of the ritual from the laity Such a person is naturally expected to be more competent, above all in learning, but he is not of a different social class, Formally, there is no clerical organisation. Muslim theology is in this sense egalitarian. Believers are equidistant from God' [Gellner, 1992: 8].

<sup>x</sup> *Yol* won the best film award at Cannes in 1982 (sharing the prize with Costa Gavras' *Missing*), and was one of a dozen films banned by the National Security Council at the time of the 1980 military coup. Yilmaz Guney wrote the script while in prison, but soon fled to exile in France and it was during his exile that the film was made, directed by his collaborator Serif Goren. Shot in documentary style, the film follows five prisoners allowed out from Imrali gaol to spend the weekend with their families in various parts of Turkey. The first goes to the south-east where a violent struggle against martial law is taking place. Another finds his unfaithful wife chained up by her own family, who are waiting for the husband to come in order to allow him the privilege of killing her and thus clearing his name. The third becomes entangled in a bitter family quarrel in which the rule of the father is supreme. The fourth visits his fiancée under the guardianship of her whole family and lectures her about how subordinate she has to be once they get married. Finally, the last one fails to make it home because he mislays his papers. The film thus addresses the links between political suppression on the one hand and patriarchal tyranny on the other. The family, in Sylvia Harvey's words' acts as 'a legitimising metaphor for a hierarchical and authoritarian society' [Harvey 1979: 24].

<sup>xi</sup> See, for example, Coward, 1985; Spiegelman and Miyuki, 1985.

<sup>xii</sup> See argument in 2:1.

<sup>xiii</sup> Quoted in the introduction, 1.3. It should be pointed out that Freud himself did not propose that the Oedipal conflict could be 'resolved', only that its effects might be successfully managed through the therapeutic process. The difference here is one of familial relations and attachments within families in the East and West.

<sup>xiv</sup> Or perhaps one should say in all families except the Anglo-Saxon/northern European where an over-close relationship between son and mother is thought of as somehow weakening or effeminate. What Mernissi and Delaney refer to here is common not only to the 'East' but also to Mediterranean cultures such as the Greek and Italian. These are generalisations, of course, but the point is that Freud's Oedipus was built on an exceptionally narrow cultural/geographical basis, yet he claimed for it universal relevance.

<sup>xv</sup> According to Deleuze and Guattari, the influence of the father in Freud is in fact too narrowly conceived. In their examination of Kafka, they wrote: 'Thus, the too-well formed family triangle is really only a conduit for investments of an entirely different sort that the child endlessly discovers underneath his father, inside his mother, in himself. The judges, commissioners, bureaucrats, and so on, are not substitutes for the father; rather, it is the father who is a condensation of all these forces that he submits to and that he tries to get his son to submit to' [Deleuze and Guattari, 2000: 12]. Kafka himself seems to have recognised as much. 'I cannot grant that the first beginnings of my unhappiness were inwardly necessitated,' he wrote in his Diaries. 'They may indeed have had a necessity, but not an inward one – they swarmed down on me like flies and could have been as easily driven off' [Kafka, Diaries p. 210]. Max Brod points out that Kafka was indeed well acquainted with Freudian theory. In a letter to Brod, Kafka wrote of psychoanalytical works which initially seemed 'remarkably satisfying' but 'very soon after one feels the same old hunger.' He saw them, comments Brod, as 'a very rough and ready explanation' [Brod, 1960: 20]. This is important because, as Deleuze and Guattari point out, Kafka's *Letter to the Father* is a work 'on which so many unfortunate psychoanalytic interpretations are based' [Deleuze and Guattari, 2000: 9]. 'As Kafka himself says, the problem isn't that of liberty but of escape. The question of the father isn't how to become free in relation to him (an Oedipal question) but how to find a path there where he didn't find any ... It's not Oedipus that produces neurosis; it is neurosis – that is, a desire that is already submissive and searching to communicate its own submission – that produces Oedipus. Oedipus, the market value of neurosis' [ibid: 10].

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<sup>xvi</sup> In France, this was formulated in the laws of 1889 and 1898.

<sup>xvii</sup> In other words, space is seen not simply absence of matter but as in a real sense having given birth to it.

<sup>xviii</sup> Although Saussure did not study Freud.

<sup>xix</sup> Rodowick has an interesting example of 'the structure of absence': 'In a film like *Magnificent Obsession* [Sirk, 1954], the symbolisation of patriarchal authority can be played out across a purely imaginary figure (the saintly Dr. Phillips, whose death causes a deep structural wound in the social-ideological fabric of the text which can only be repaired by gradually moulding the character of Bob Merrick to fill his place in the economy of the narrative)' [Rodowick, 1987: 271].

<sup>xx</sup> Geoffrey Nowell-Smith's *Visconti*, which predated the Young Mr Lincoln essay by three years, studied the 'hidden structural connections which bind his [Visconti's] work together': 'The purpose of criticism,' he wrote, 'becomes therefore to uncover behind the superficial contrasts of subject and treatment a structural hard core of basic and recondite motifs. The pattern formed by these motifs, which may be stylistic or thematic, is what gives an author's work its particular structure, both defining it internally and distinguishing one body of work from another' [Nowell Smith, 1968: 9]. This is really the essence of what was to become known as 'auteur structuralism'.



## CHAPTER 4: TURKISH CINEMA AND THE AUTUMN OF THE PATRIARCH

*What kind of national identity can be formed from a cinema renowned for its failures rather than its successes, or for its endless efforts to mimic others rather than to produce films that are 'Turkish to the core'?*

*Nezih Erdogan: Narratives of Resistance*

*Without the example of a revolutionary party, the economic and social relations which create and maintain rural poverty appear to be unchangeable. Therefore those with the most initiative do the one thing which seems to offer hope: they leave.*

*John Berger: The Seventh Man*

This chapter begins with an examination of the East-West tension in Turkish cinema, which has struggled to establish a recognisable identity in the face of the powerful forces stemming from the West in terms both of cultural influence and sophisticated commercial and promotional strategies. In the following section, I show how the clash of values between the morally and socially conservative countryside and the modernist and secular cities is represented in Turkish melodrama. In particular, I examine the work of two Turkish directors, Halit Refig and Lutfi Akad, whose work of the 1960s and 1970s focused on the migrant experience. Significantly, it can be seen that re-makes of Hollywood originals (very common in Turkish melodrama of the time) were altered to in order to replace what had been racial or class themes with the village/city opposition.

Finally, I analyse four Turkish films of migration from the 1970s and 1980s. The last of these is the first of the Turkish-German films and thus provides the link with the succeeding chapter. In these four films, as well as in the earlier films made by Refig and Akad, the position of the patriarch is seen to undergo a progressive transformation.

#### 4.1 East versus West in Turkish Cinema

The confrontation between East and West has found an expression in an enduring tension in Turkish cinema. Since the inception of the Turkish film industry in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Turkish filmmakers (producers, directors, scriptwriters) have been strongly influenced by western styles and techniques, and they have also been, almost without exception, living in urban environments and educated in western style schools and universities. The attitudes towards village life apparent in Turkish melodrama, although not generally characterised by an outright hostility to village ways and values, was nevertheless marked by a tone of condescension and the inherent judgement that village life was backward or unprogressive.

The boom period for Turkish cinema began in 1960, with over 100 films a year being produced in Yesilcam (the area of Istanbul where the Turkish film industry was based), and over 300 in a single year (1972). In 1966, Turkey produced the fourth largest number of films, after Japan, India and Hong Kong. This was the great age of the Turkish melodrama.<sup>i</sup> The majority of Yesilcam films were popular melodramas which drew large audiences, mostly from the urban middle classes. There were special matinee showings for women only. The plots followed a largely predetermined pattern, generally along the following lines: (i) the male and female protagonists meet and fall in love at first sight; (ii) they are forced apart by conspiracy or circumstance; (iii) they seek to re-unite, surmounting terrible difficulties including physical maiming and seduction by others; (iv) they recover, find each other once more and either marry or die [Gurata, 1997].

The influence in these films may still appear to contemporary eyes to be rather Eastern than Western, but it is significant that when the new European-style 'art' cinema (*Yeni Sinema*, or New Cinema) began to appear in the 1960s, Yesilcam melodrama was the site of considerable nationalistic resistance to what was perceived as a western takeover. In an unprecedented move in 1967, a group of Turkish film directors, which included well-known figures such as Lutfi Akad and Halit Refig, declared their opposition in the magazine *Yeni Sinema*, the home of the new movement. 'We refuse to collaborate,' they wrote, 'with the Turkish cinematheque and its publication *Yeni Sinema* for their hostility to the Turkish cinema in general and Turkish filmmakers in particular'. [*Yeni Sinema*, no. 4, July 1967, p. 34]. In his book *Ulusl Sinema Kavgasi* ('The Row over National Cinema'), Halit Refig complained:

The criteria for the evaluation of this art are provided by the West. To be able to make a good film, one must do whatever a western filmmaker would do. There is no point in taking an interest in Turkish films as they do not subscribe to Western criteria ...

[Refig,1971: 47]

Through this strong conflict of views, an explicit debate concerning the definition and direction of the national cinema was initiated for the first time, and the tensions between what was indigenous (and therefore authentic) and what was exotic (and therefore in a sense spurious) are seen as deriving from the 'East-West' divide. The movement towards a truly national cinema – as expressed here by Halit Refig – represents to an extent an argument coming from the periphery against the centre, if the centre is conceived as the ideal Kemalist concept of nation<sup>ii</sup>, for Kemalism from its beginning and continuously since contains a strongly westernising tendency<sup>iii</sup>, and any 'national cinema' was bound to call on elements of 'Turkishness' which did not – indeed could not – correspond with the Kemalist ideal. To take a small but significant example, the banning of Arabic music was really an impossible aim. The distinction between what was

'Arabic' and what belonged to south-eastern Turkey did not clearly exist. Besides, most of the population of the Turkish region known as Hatay, by the Syrian border, was Arabic by language and culture. Was their Turkish citizenship (which was the last major issue that Ataturk had fought for before his death) to mean that they could not play their ancestral music?<sup>iv</sup>

Besides, the western influence on the Turkish melodrama was also strong. In his study of Yesilcam melodrama between 1965 and 1975, Nezih Erdogan stresses the links between Turkish melodrama and western, mainly Hollywood models. 'To the Turkish eye,' he writes, 'the cinema was a western form of entertainment right from the start' and filmgoing was 'a western-style ritual' [Erdogan, 1998: 259/60]. The narrative conventions of Hollywood melodrama, he claims, were perfectly suited to adaptation by Yesilcam, which often simply plagiarised existing plots. The cheapest and least original of Yesilcam productions were frankly referred to as '*konfeksiyon*' (confection) films, hurriedly put together to meet the growing demand, with the plots 'borrowed' and quickly adapted. *Yeni Sinema* magazine noted in 1968 that more than half the films made during that year were adaptations. According to a Turkish scriptwriter of the time, Arda Uskan:

Firstly the producer decides on the male and female stars. And then he gets in the projectionist of the Atlas movie theatre, Sarkis, who would know all the Hollywood movies. When Sarkis was told the stars and the main theme, he would say: "I know an Ava Gardner-Gregory Peck movie which would exactly suit your project." Then I would record the soundtrack of the movie and adapt it into Turkish.

[Quoted in Gurata, 1997: 51]

Yet for all their repetitiveness, theatricality and sentimentality, the Yesilcam films constitute the first, and perhaps the only, distinctively Turkish film genre, and whatever may have been its aesthetic shortcomings the Yesilcam industry was for many years a vibrant commercial success<sup>v</sup>, against which the subsequent 'failure' of Turkish cinema would inevitably be matched.

Like Hollywood genres, Yesilcam melodrama was characterised by stereotypical characters, parody and an absence of realism. Non-diegetic music was usually plagiarised from Hollywood or European movies. However, in spite of the obvious mimicry of Hollywood plots and stylistic devices, Yesilcam was also strongly influenced by Turkish popular theatrical traditions, including those of puppet theatre, shadow theatre (*Karagoz*) and the art of dramatic storytelling known as *Meddah*.<sup>vi</sup> From shadow theatre is drawn the convention of dialogues and relationships which feed continually on a strong mutual antagonism, as between *Karagoz* and *Hacivat* (not unlike the British *Punch and Judy*), and from *Meddah* is taken the habit among Yesilcam protagonists of turning to the audience and addressing them directly. These correspondences are significant in that they indicate an existing dramatic tradition that was neither Western nor Egyptian. However, it is also an indication of Turkey's multi-ethnic and multi-cultural history that the *Karagoz* shadow theatre survives as a very active form in Greece – where the mutual antagonism, predictably, is between the Greek peasant (*Karageozi*) and the Turkish *pasha* – and that the origins of *Meddah* can be found in Persian medieval traditions. Any search for authenticity in the Turkish context loses itself in a multiplicity of cultural traditions, a point emphasised by the anti-essentialists.

The influence of the West was also felt in terms of the distributing and marketing of films within Turkey. American giants such as Fox and Paramount had been powerful in this respect since the 1930s. In 1937, the Kemalist government had passed protectionist legislation which restricted foreign investment, and for nearly fifty years the control of the distribution networks as well as of many of the movie theatres themselves passed to a few Turkish family firms.<sup>vii</sup> The influence of these firms grew steadily, and by the 1950s distributors were paying advances to film producers and in return dictating their preferences in terms of plots and casting. In the 1960s, the distributors were organised into five powerful regional distributors which exercised a dominant

influence over both stories and stars, so that in effect Turkey had its own 'studio system' during the great age of Turkish melodrama. However, two linked developments were to re-establish the U.S. domination of the industry. The first was part of the general liberalisation of the economy under the Özal governments of the 1980s, during which protectionist measures restricting foreign investment were repealed. In 1988, an 'offshore media project' was initiated and within a few years United International Pictures and Warner Brothers had both launched Turkish branches. By the mid-1990s, these two, together with other distributors representing major international companies, controlled most of the cinemas in the country. The result of this is that Turkish filmmakers have become increasingly dependent on American distributors to screen their films, and these films have had to compete with the big-budget American pictures, professionally and expensively marketed on an international scale. The second development was the increasing U.S. domination of the small screen, a process that can also be traced to the 1980s. Huge audiences tuned in to contemporary American soap operas such as *Dallas* and *Dynasty*, as well as crime-thrillers such as *Miami Vice* and *Moonlighting*. Children's television, such as it was, consisted of standard American fare such as *Little House on the Prairie* and European children's classics like *Heidi*.<sup>viii</sup>

According to Erdogan, the Turkish cinema should and could have played a significant part in the forging of a national identity, but was prevented from doing so by its tense and ambivalent relationship with the West, marked by both imitation and resentment. The result was a huge corpus of melodrama on the one hand, which finally could not compete with the advent of mass television and the growing control of film distribution by U.S. companies, and on the other hand, a European-influenced art cinema that, in the words of Roy Armes, was 'an ambiguous cinema which is too complex in form for local audiences and too esoteric in substance for western spectators' [Armes, 1989:7]. French had traditionally been the language of the Istanbul educated

classes, and the cultural influence of France remained strong. Until the mid-1940s foreign films shown in Turkey were subtitled in Turkish and French. The French *Nouvelle Vague* was very influential on the filmmakers of the 1960s and 1970s, when interviews with Truffaut, Chabrol and Godard appeared in the pages of *Yeni Sinema*. During the 1970s as a whole, the number films imported from France was second only to those imported from the US. Italian filmmakers such as Fellini and Pasolini, however, were also popular, and in one year (1976) 34 percent of all imported movies were Italian.<sup>ix</sup> The film critic John Gillett dismissed Turkish films shown at the 1992 Istanbul Film Festival as ‘silly melodramas and pretentious allegories drawing on influences from Bunuel and Bergman’ [*Sight and Sound* 2/4, 1992].

Turkish director Ayse Sasa complained of the dominance of western styles and influences, but attributes it to the Ottoman legacy:

‘Make films in Western style’... ‘Cinema is a Western art’ Because of such comments, we tried to be western, while at the same time opposing the idea. What lies behind this is an urge inherited from the Ottomans: to remain aloof from the general public, and to come up with a distinct language and attitude ... The attempt to imitate the West ironically derives from this desire for an elevated status.

[Sasa, 1993: 150]

What is clear from these observations is that Turkish filmmakers have been subject to a close but uneasy relationship with their western counterparts, and that the cultural influence of the west has been continuously active in terms of narratives, soundtracks, cinematic techniques and distribution. Whether Turkish filmmakers have reacted by imitation or by opposition, the influence has not been escaped. This is certainly one powerful ingredient in the ‘cultural schizophrenia’ of Turkish and, especially, Turkish-German directors and producers, whether this



'double identity' be positively viewed as 'hybridity' or negatively as 'otherness'. According to Naficy, accented films 'inscribe amphibolic character types who are split, double, crossed, and hybridized' [Naficy 2001: 32], while the people who make them 'acquire one set of voices ... from the cinematic traditions, and from the exilic and diasporic traditions they acquire a second. This double consciousness constitutes the accented style' [ibid: 22]. The 'hyphen' (as in Turkish-German) 'may suggest a divided allegiance ... a divided mind, an irrevocably split identity, or a type of paralysis between two cultures or nations' [ibid: 15/16]. Following Naficy, the evidence for these manifestations of cultural schizophrenia may be found in narrative elements of the films such as problems of language, racial discrimination and sexuality, and unaccountable and pervasive anxieties (and in extreme cases neurosis). In Turkish-German films, these manifestations tend to be internalised within the family unit, in the same way as the economic (class) and psychological tensions were seen by Elsaesser and Nowell-Smith as 'internalised' in classic Hollywood melodrama. In Turkish-German film, it is actually neither class conflict nor economic pressures that provide the 'exterior' tension (although economic conditions clearly play a part), but the diasporic experience of 'otherness'. The father, who represents and indeed embodies pre-modern (i.e. Islamic) tradition, if he were present in the films as a fully-functioning patriarch, might be expected to have been the key figure in the resolution of the tension, either by insisting on the traditional forms of behaviour and thus acting as a social and moral 'anchor' or by taking the lead in the restructuring of the diasporic family.<sup>x</sup>

## 4.2 The Father in Turkish melodrama

The father figure of traditional Islam appears regularly – it might be argued that his appearance is *de rigeur* – in Turkish melodrama, the dominant cinematic genre in Turkish cinema at least until the 1970s. According to Nezih Erdoğan, Turkish melodrama ‘resolves conflict using the father figure as its agent ... The Father regulates the economy of desire and power’ [Erdoğan, 1998: 265/66]. Billed as ‘family entertainment’, the Turkish melodrama was an essentially conservative form, in which the often predictable narratives served to buttress customary notions of the legitimate roles of men and women, fathers and sons, brothers and sisters. As Osman Sezgi succinctly puts it: ‘Yesilcam melodrama maintains the patriarchal ideology of Turkish society’ [Sezgi, 1995]. Gurata points out that in Yesilcam, ‘the wise man of popular theatre is superseded by a strong father figure’ and that the reputations of Turkish screen actors such as Hulusi Kentman and Nubar Terziyan have been built on their portrayal of this stock character [Gurata, 1997: 50]. The strong father figure typical of Turkish melodrama is in fact the cinematic representation of the absolute dominance of the male head of the traditional Turkish household in religious, economic, legal, cultural and political terms.

The continuing process of internal migration in Turkey involved a powerful shock to families from a conservative agrarian background as they struggled to adapt to city life. Cinematically, this is recorded in a number of films of the time, notably in the films of Halit Refig and Lutfi Akad.<sup>xi</sup> These include *Gurbet Kuslari* (Halit Refig, 1964) and Akad’s ‘migration trilogy’ – *Gelin* (1973), *Dugun* (1973), *Diyet* (1974), as well as in Turkish re-makes of Hollywood movies such as *Anneler ve Kizlari* (Halit Refig, 1971) a version of Douglas Sirk’s *Imitation of Life* (1958). What is striking in these ‘migration’ films of the 1960s and 1970s is that the moment of confrontation between rural and urban, traditional and modern, naive peasant and wily city

dweller is that the sympathies of the films can generally be seen to lie with the 'innocent' newcomers.<sup>xii</sup> Often, the plot revolves around the problem of the sexuality of daughters exposed for the first time to the snares and seductions of urban life in the absence of the protective rules and conditions of a sheltered village existence.<sup>xiii</sup>

Halit Refig's 1964 film *Gurbet Kuslari* (Birds of Exile) concerns the arrival in Istanbul of a family from the Southeast. The opening shots of the film show the family arriving at the main (Anatolian) railway station in Istanbul, having migrated from the Southeast. The family, consisting of the father, the mother, three sons and a daughter, is not of the poorest class: they have sold their small business in order to finance their move to the city and their purchase of a car repair workshop. Their behaviour is exemplary in terms of manners and discipline, and even though the sons at the start of the film are in their early twenties, no one takes an initiative without the permission of the patriarch. The father is portrayed at the start of the narrative as an authoritarian but also a reassuring figure: in the family's move to Istanbul, where they must lose the familiarities of home and of extended kinship, his role is pivotal. The representation of the five family members on the platform at Hyderpasa railway station provides a singularly clear image of the traditional Turkish family: the tall figure of the father is at the centre of the family, physically and metaphorically 'shepherding his flock', which is arranged about him, attendant upon his word and his authority, a representation which coincides with the traditional and symbolic function of the patriarch.

This cinematic moment is of particular relevance in the present context, since it concerns exactly that juncture where the traditional family stands at the threshold of radical change. A similar moment may be found at the start of *Gelin* ('Daughter-in-Law', Lutfi Akad, 1973), which also portrays a family that has migrated to Istanbul, this time from Yozgat in Central Anatolia.

When they arrive, the son's wife gets a job in a factory. Her father-in-law is so violently opposed to this 'shameful' arrangement that he urges his son to take a gun and kill his wife. What may seem to the contemporary, westernised mentality among the educated classes of Istanbul and other large Turkish cities as an 'enlightened' or 'progressive' attitude constitutes a direct threat to the traditional family structure, dependent as it is on the unchallengeable authority of the patriarch.

In *Gurbet Kuslari*, the sale of the car repair business turns out to have been fraudulent. The family has sold up to make the move to Istanbul but now has no means of subsistence. One by one, the three sons find work, but the self-confidence – and therefore the authority – of the father has been badly dented. Increasingly, during the action of the film, he is shown as impotent in the face of the unforeseen circumstances that now confront him. The economic disintegration of the family is mirrored by a 'moral disintegration', in which the daughter, Fatma, is seduced, dishonoured and finally driven to suicide. Her father is powerless either to appreciate what she is going through, or to save her from the final, desperate act. When she throws herself from the roof of the apartment block in the last scene of the film, the three brothers are there but the father is simply absent, as if his place in the family has effectively been taken by his eldest son, who takes the lead in trying to prevent his sister's suicide.

The moral (essentially sexual) dangers associated with city life were, and are, seen as the inevitable concomitant of a move from the traditional and 'respectable' countryside to the immoral and threatening city. In Yesilçam melodrama, the degenerative agent is frequently alcohol. Frowned upon, if not actually forbidden, by the Koran, the use of alcohol, above all by women and girls, was unthinkable in conservative village communities. As Erdogan points out: 'Luxurious American cars, blondes wearing revealing dresses, crazy parties and whisky all

connote moral corruption, and construct an iconography of the West' [Erdogan, 1998: 265].

Mehmet Acar notes that an innocent girl is always offered a western drink, often whisky, when she is about to be seduced [Acar, 1966: 88]. The start of the seduction process in *Gurbet Kuslari* takes place at a party which is hardly 'crazy' by western standards, but it does permit what is impermissible according to traditional family values: the free and unsupervised mingling of young people of both sexes. Fatma cautiously tries one illicit glass of whisky, and in the actual seduction scene that takes place privately later, she drinks several glasses before being persuaded to 'surrender her honour': the moral lapse that will drive her to suicide.

According to the established canons of Turkish family life, the girl's seduction carries an additional significance, for the honour of the family as a whole is connected in a particularly rigid way to the honour of its women. As Delaney explains:

The vigilance with which the 'protection' of women is carried out has often been remarked as a distinctive feature of Middle Eastern and Mediterranean societies. The system of behaviour has been referred to as the honor/shame complex, or simply the honor code ... [by which] honor is primarily an attribute of men and shame of women ... male honor is, or at least has been, inextricably tied to women.

[Delaney, 1991: 38/39]

In Delaney's opinion, Western interpretations of this phenomenon offered by Pitt Rivers, Gilmore, Herzfeld, Blok and others have been guilty of detaching sexuality from the process of procreation and have therefore failed fully to explain it. Her own explanation is that the protection of women in Muslim societies is:

intimately and essentially related to the protection of seed; in other words, it is an integral part of the theory of conception ... A man's power and authority, in short his value as a man, derives from his power to generate life. His honor, however, depends on his ability to guarantee that a child is from his own seed. This in turn depends on his ability to control 'his' woman.

[ibid: 39]

The honor/shame allocation provides the rationale for the unfolding of the tragedy in *Gurbet Kuslari*. The girl commits suicide because of her inability to bear the shame of bringing dishonour to her family. Her brothers are unable to prevent her, and indeed, the eldest brother, who runs half-way forward to prevent her, is shown as partly reluctant to do so. He himself has been dishonoured, and only his sister's death can cleanse the stain. Yet it is ultimately the father who must bear the responsibility, for it is he who 'regulates the economy of power and desire'. The progressive weakening and marginalisation of the father is given as the parallel – if not actually the cause – of his daughter's moral fall. At the end of the film, the father, mother and two sons are seen once more at Hyderpasa station, preparing to return to their home in the Southeast. The third of the sons, who has managed to acquire education, a job in a laboratory and an educated wife, announces his intention of trying his luck in Germany. Education, it is suggested, provides the escape from both economic hardship and from an oppressive (and anachronistic) family environment. The patriarch has failed, initially by being the victim of a fraud, then by being unable to save his daughter from shame and suicide and finally by being unable to keep the rest of the family together. These failures, and the consequent erosion of his authority, are reflected in the contrast between his weak and almost peripheral presence in the final scene and his absolutely central importance in the opening scene, on the very same platform.

It can be argued that the removal of the father figure, with his authority ordained and enshrined by the immutable principles of Islam, is an absolutely necessary condition for any kind of independence of thought or autonomous initiative on the part of other members of the family, whether sons, daughters, daughters-in-law or spouses. As long as the father remains powerful,

there can effectively be no social or psychological development in terms of the roles and attitudes within the family or in the way the family relates to the outside world. In this context, as Gurata has pointed out, there existed ‘a set of historical determining factors in 1960s Turkey’ [Gurata, 2002: 126]. Among these he lists ‘the anticipation of a female audience’ and notes the introduction of women’s matinees for Turkish films at this time. He also draws attention to women’s increasing ‘presence and participation in the social arena’ and in particular to the very high profiles of certain female screen stars. According to a 1967 survey, three of the five top earning stars of the time were women: Turkan Soray (see *Donus* below), Hulya Kocyigit and Fatma Girik.<sup>xiv</sup> Gurata claims that the so-called ‘family’ films (*aile filmi*) of Turkish melodrama ‘represented ... the curiosity and anxieties generated by women’s emancipation,’ suggesting that ‘this was conceived as a clash between traditional and modern values threatening the patriarchal authority’ [ibid: 127].

Lutfi Akad directed a re-make of the Douglas Sirk 1959 classic *Imitation of Life* entitled *Anneler ve Kizlar* (‘Mothers and Daughters’, 1971), and Halit Refig followed this with *Fatma Baci* (1972) which was inspired by the success of the earlier film and took for its heroine the middle-aged housekeeper Fatma Baci (Annie Johnston in the Sirk original). Sirk’s film had centred on the theme of race, highlighting the very different destinies of two girls, one white and one black, both brought up by the same (black) woman, Annie Johnston. In Akad’s version, and also in Refig’s follow-up, the racial theme was replaced by the conflict between tradition and modernity arising from migration. Fatma Baci’s daughter’s problem is not her race or colour but her poverty, her lack of education, her sense of being an outsider in the sophisticated urban world. ‘Think of someone’ she says, ‘who comes from a little village and finds herself in the middle of Istanbul, who is neither a city girl, nor a villager; who is neither rich nor poor; who is neither well-educated nor illiterate; who is neither a slave nor a master’.<sup>xv</sup> She rejects her mother’s

outlook, her clothes and her Islamic observance, and even changes her name to the westernised 'Suzi'. 'I don't want to be a slave like my mother,' she says.

In both *Anneler ve Kizlar* and *Imitation of Life*, the father is absent, his absence being a necessary condition for the development of a narrative centering on economically and psychologically independent women. In *Sofor Nebahat ve Kizi* ('Nebahat the Taxi-Driver and her Daughter', Surreya Duru, 1964), Gurata points out that it is 'the father's absence [that] leads to the collapse of social and moral order' [ibid, 128]. But in another Turkish remake of a 1950s Hollywood melodrama, *Yarin Baska Bir Gundir* ('Tomorrow will be Another Day', Nejat Saydam, 1968), a version of Sirk's *Written on the Wind*, the father is a much stronger figure than in the original<sup>xvi</sup> and does not die in the film. Gurata explains that the change came about because 'a woman inheriting the patriarchal power must have been considered unacceptable in the remade version'. According to Gurata, all four movies (*Anneler ve Kizlar*, *Fatma Baci*, *Yarin Baska Bir Gundir* and *Sofor Nebahat ve Kizi*) 'can be read as critiques of a dysfunctional family where the patriarch is absent' [ibid 127].

Thus in the Turkish melodrama, the decline of the patriarch is inextricably connected to the emergence of strong female characters, even if the tendency still was for the heroine to be punished for her 'crime' of challenging the existing order, a sentence on the heroine that can be seen with exceptional clarity in the Turkan Soray film of *Donus* ('The Return', 1972).



### 4.3 *Donus*

Contemporaneous with *Gelin*, *Donus* was the first important Turkish film to deal directly with the subject of external migration. The story concerns a peasant heroine pursued by the local landlord (*bey*) in the absence of her husband who has been forced by their economic circumstances to seek work in Germany. The heroine, Gulcan, struggles against the suspicions of her fellow villagers and against the unwelcome attentions of the *bey*, as well as against the harsh economic realities of village life. In the climactic scene, her small son is murdered by the *bey*'s stooges and she walks with his body through the village. When her husband Ibrahim returns for the first time, he comes loaded with the spoils of life in Germany – a new suit, toys, dolls, clothes and a smart transistor radio which he carries wherever he goes as a portable status symbol. He goes back to Germany, this time, it is indicated, not strictly out of economic necessity but out of choice. When he next returns to the village, he arrives in a Volkswagen car, bringing with him a German woman and their child. The car crashes, Ibrahim and the woman are killed and in the final scene Gulcan accepts their young son as her own in the place of the child she has lost.

The treatment of the early scenes, in particular, conforms closely to the conventions of Turkish melodrama. Peasant life in the village is shown in a montage of brief shots: ploughing with animals on a ridge of land against an orange sunset; bending over the sod to plant the crops; drawing water from the well. Both acting and dialogue tend to be theatrical. The camera is generally static, with the cinematic space imagined as a stage. There is a preponderance of front shots and a number of rather heavy-handed close-ups. The *bey* on horseback is shot from a low angle, emphasising his dominant social position. Gulcan and her handsome young husband are shown dancing at their wedding, and when they acquire the field that is their whole farm and livelihood, Ibrahim gets on his knees and lifts a handful of soil towards the sky. Dramatically, and

symbolically, Gulcan gives birth in the field. On Ibrahim's departure, husband and wife say a long farewell against a backdrop of the red rim of the world in the dawning sun before the bus disappears in its own smoke down a long and winding road. The musical score is characterised by single piped notes and wistful melodies.

Erdogan emphasises that the similarities between Yesilcam and Hollywood were more to do with narrative than cinematic style.

The technical and stylistic devices of Yesilcam differ radically from those of Hollywood and European cinema. Lighting, colour, dubbing, dialogue, shooting practices, point-of-view shots and editing create a very specific cinematic discourse in even the most faithful of adaptations. In trying to meet a demand for two hundred films a year, production processes had to run at great speed and thus by default a visual tradition of shadowplays, miniatures and so on was revived. To save time and money, shot/reverse shot and other point of view shots were avoided as much as possible. This meant the domination of front shots: characters mostly performed facing the camera and did not turn their backs to it.

[Erdogan, 1998: 267]

Such stylistic limitations, whether caused by economic constraints or whether simply permitted by generic convention, tended also to militate against convincing characterisation. The figure of the bey in *Donus* is really no more than a stereotype of the 'wicked landowner', and even the husband, Ibrahim, is little more than a version of the handsome young villager whose good looks conceal a deceitful nature. The bey's stooges are just stooges, without individuation of character, and the villagers, similarly, are just villagers.

Turkan Soray, who both directed the film and played the lead role, identified as her main concern as a director the tensions and divisions created in the village by the very different experiences of migration abroad. This concern survives in the title of the film and in the scenes

after Ibrahim's first return: his excessive pride in the goods and baubles he has brought back, and the widening gap between himself and the villagers. But the film's producer had other ideas about what was to be the central theme of the film. Soray recounted the difference of opinion in an article for the film magazine, *Yedinci Sanat*: 'I wanted to show the alienation<sup>xvii</sup> of a man returning from Germany, but the producer said: "I'm making a Turkan Soray film, and the emphasis will be on Gulcan." So that's what we did.' [Turkan Soray, 1973: 27]. This remark of the director sheds an interesting light on the relationship between the producer and the director, and on the primary function of Yesilcam melodramas – like many of its Hollywood counterparts – as 'star vehicles', but it is nonetheless true that Gulcan is represented as a bold and forceful person, which suggests that the patriarchal character of village life and institutions did not exclude the emergence of powerful women and also that the existence of popular female filmstars such as Soray herself actually encouraged this phenomenon.

The key scene in the film's denouement is the moment of Ibrahim's second return, when he comes back with his new car and his new wife. From a western or 'modern' perspective, his behaviour is inconceivable, yet in reality, for him to 'take' a second wife in Germany, a practice allowable under Koranic law, is not only conceivable but in the circumstances reasonably likely. For him then to bring this second wife back for a visit to the village may seem extraordinary but is actually a logical extension of the traditional rule that entirely hands a woman over to her husband and her husband's family. Delaney records in her book on 'Gökler' a rumour that one of the married men was going to bring a second wife (*kuma*) to the village. This never in fact materialised, but it was significant that the rumour did not seem unduly to disturb those who heard it. The man's first wife was no doubt alarmed, but she was already forced to accept her husband's visits to the city for wine and women. "*Ne yapayiyim?*" (What can one do?) was her response [Delaney 1991: 182].

Gulcan's vulnerability – not only to her husband's faithfulness, but also to the unwelcome sexual advances of the *bey* – is both permitted and magnified by the fact that she and Ibrahim are both orphans. There is neither father nor father-in-law to protect Gulcan in her husband's absence, no family home to return to in the event of the collapse of her marriage. The absence of the two fathers may be seen here as a necessary narrative device to create the vacuum that surrounds Gulcan and turn her into a solitary and embattled heroine, the object of suspicion on the part of the villagers, of sexual aggression on the part of the *bey* and of abuse by her husband. What has been removed from the social equation is the key sources of power and authority that would have provided her with a position and status within the community, for it is the structures of the traditional family that alone can fulfil this role. The 'narrative device' of making both Ibrahim and Gulcan orphans also permits an exceptional form of narrative closure: Gulcan's adoption at the end of the film of her husband's child by another woman. The man is the *cocuk sahibi* [child-owner], and Ibrahim's father would normally have become 'owner' of his grandson after his son's death.

Even the temporary absence of a husband from the village for reasons of work or other duties would have been unusual in the traditional Turkish village. During such an absence the wife would have been under the protection of her father-in-law, and her behaviour at such times would have been very closely controlled. The family system simply did not allow of transgressions to the rule that a married woman was 'closed' to any unwanted advances. Ibrahim's absence, however, was exceptional, both in terms of its duration and of the distance involved, and there was no extended family on either side to act as her protection. The village leader (normally the *muhtar*) is the temporal representative of the spiritual law, but in Gulcan's village, there is no *muhtar* either. *De facto* if not *de jure*, the bey himself is the dispenser of the patriarchal law. His

sexual advances towards Gulcan therefore come from her most vulnerable quarter, from the person to whom she might otherwise have looked for some protection. It is in a sense as if her own father-in-law had made advances to her in her husband's absence. The significance of this is partly that it leaves Gulcan literally defenceless but also that the customary proprieties have been overturned by the man who might have been expected to uphold them.

As the central protagonist of a 'Turkan Soray' film, it is hardly to be expected that Gulcan will not in the end salvage some kind of moral victory, so that the final scenes of the film may portray her as having not only survived the deceit of her husband and the aggression of the *bey*. Ibrahim's young child, whom she carries off in her arms at the end, symbolises that victory. There is moral satisfaction for the audience in the fact that the offspring of Ibrahim's infidelity should return to her. Yet the central episode of the film is her own child's tragic death – with the rather contrived ending merely a melodramatic artifice. When Gulcan is shown as accepting their child as a replacement for her own, it is not justice, either legally or morally, but really a kind of emotional compensation. Ostensibly pointing to the injustice of a patriarchal and feudal system, the film in fact interiorises and personalises the problem within the emotional life of the heroine. The death of her child is a personal tragedy rather than the result of an inherently unjust system, thus the 'solution' is a surrogate child. According to this reading, Gulcan might be seen as having being punished for her independence of spirit – her refusal to yield to the established hierarchical authority of the village – by the death of her child. However, the patriarchal law is not left intact in *Donus*. Gulcan herself avenges her son's death by murdering the landowner and, according to the conventions of the genre, the legal repercussions of this act are left unstated.

#### 4.4 The World of *Otobus*

In 1972, the Turkish newspapers proclaimed that the 500,000<sup>th</sup> worker was being sent to Germany, and the occasion was celebrated with gifts and speeches. The Turkish writer Adnan Ozyalciner described the individual at the centre of these celebrations as follows:

Necati Guven is from the region of the Black Sea Coast and grew up in the village of Sariyarli near the city of Giresun. He is a young man who earns his living by running the village grocery store. Like the rest of them, he decides to leave his village to go to far-away Germany at the time when his earnings from the store become insufficient to feed his family. In 1964, he applies to the *Is ve Isce Bulma Kurumu* (Institute for Finding Jobs and Workers) as an unskilled worker. As the years pass, he forgets about his application. He gets married and has a baby girl, born just three months ago. Then comes his turn to go ... His foreign destination (*gurbet*) is away from his own country: it is exile. He will become a slave in front of a machine never encountered until the very day he starts work. Away from his people, in a country he has not seen, not known. His home (*sila*) is all of Turkey.

[Ozyalciner, *Yeni A Dergisi*, Sept. 1972]<sup>xviii</sup>

Despite the imaginative nature of the piece ('far-away Germany', 'exile', 'slave'), the portrait can be taken as broadly representative of the first-generation migrant. Turkish workers of the first phase migration were mainly men aged between 20 and 39. A survey revealed that in 1969 over 50% of Turkish workers fell within the 25-35 age group [Castles and Kosack 1973: 51]. Initially, in the period up to 1965, the migrants tended to have some education and skills and originated in the main from the economically more developed regions of Turkey [Abadan-Unat 1975]. Abadan [1974] estimates that 78% of migrants during this period were skilled industrial workers, civil servants, shopkeepers and the self-employed and that only 17.2% came from the villages. However, the proportion of unskilled workers from the countryside, particularly from

the villages of central and south-eastern Anatolia, rose sharply during the late 1960s [Gokdere 1978: 178]. According to Caglar, the number of Turkish migrants in Berlin in 1973 had reached nearly 80,000 and the majority of these were uneducated and unskilled Turkish men from the eastern provinces. [Caglar 1994: 3,4]. The great majority of immigrants became unskilled or semi-skilled labourers in major German industries such as car manufacture, railways, textiles and food processing.

As John Berger points out in his book, *The Seventh Man* (1975), the peremptory treatment to which the labour migrants were subject from the moment of their recruitment tended to arouse in them a feeling of suspicion and resentment. At the Recruitment Centre:

they are medically examined and undergo tests to prove that that they possess the skills which they claim to have ... The fit are being sorted from the unfit. One in five will fail ... Outside the recruitment centre would-be migrants can buy 'good urine' on the black market; they do so because they fear their own may be unhealthy.

[Berger, 1974: 46,55]

Berger comments that the examination must have seemed 'a gross indignity' and, for him at least, there were 'shades of the concentration camp'. Those that passed the medical examination at once signed a contract with the German firm which was going to employ them. 'Then they get into a labour train and travel for three days. When they arrive they are met by representatives of the German firm and taken to their lodgings and the factory' [ibid: 46].

As far as the acquisition of the German language is concerned, a 1968 survey found that 14% of male and 20% of female immigrant workers (of all nationalities) did not speak German at all and that 53% of men and 52% of women spoke it only haltingly. The survey goes on to say that 'the picture is even less favourable for Southern Europeans and Turks since the overall figures includes immigrants from Austria and the Netherlands' [Castles and Kosack: 181].

Language courses were laid on for migrant workers, but there are no figures available as to the proportion of migrants taking advantage of them. Castles and Kosack observe: 'the unsystematic way in which courses are organised leads us to assume that the number participating is only a small proportion of those in need of such course' [ibid: 187]. What is certain is that language remained a permanent problem for many migrants. It was calculated in 1967 that of those who had been in the country for over five years, only 41 percent spoke German fluently. [*Ausländische Arbeitnehmer*, 1967: 18]. Even as late as 1996, thirty-five years after the first migrations, Tan and Waldhoff are able to conclude:

In both languages, German and Turkish, this [first] generation has inadequate competence. First-generation Turks have thus far enjoyed few opportunities to develop their command of Turkish beyond its original level, or to adapt to recent changes in language use. Since this first cohort of migrants originated predominantly from rural or impoverished urban milieus, had not received a formal education and had only known local dialects, their language competence in Turkish had never gone beyond a restricted colloquial level.

[Tan and Waldhoff, 1996: 142]

The initial journey and first arrival of the workers in a European city was portrayed on screen by Turkish director Tunc Okan in his 1974 film *Otobus* ('The Bus'), a grim tale told in a spare, unadorned style. Seven Turkish peasants travel to find work in Stockholm. Their guide is the driver of the minibus in which they travel, who claims to have organised their permits, their jobs and their accommodation. It is midwinter and the first part of the film shows their journey through a frozen European landscape. There are some moments of cheerfulness, but the dominant mood is nervous and sombre, just as the landscape and the skies are grey and somehow foreboding. The journey is undertaken by men apparently in their twenties and thirties who are driven by economic necessity to undertake a desperate initiative. The bus is not only their means of transport but their refuge, their cocoon. The alien landscape is seen through the frosted



windows of the vehicle. Stockholm arrives as a bewilderment of flyovers, underpasses, roundabouts and traffic signals. The bus is parked in the middle of a large square near a railway station. The driver collects the passports of the men, supposedly in order to obtain their permits from the police, and then disappears, with all their money, their means of identification, and the key to the bus.

What follows is the slow unfolding of a tragedy. The men cling to the bus as their only familiarity and shelter. A visit to the public toilet is an ordeal. They do not even know how to manage the moving escalators of the railway station, struggling upwards on the descending stair. Hunger drives them out to search for food. Sticking together, they act as so many limbs of a single creature, yet there is curiously little communication between them, as if their dumbness to the outside world has infected their own mutual relations. Two of them go off on their own and both die. The first ends up perched like a bird on a frozen wall above the river and drops dead into the icy water. The other, in the hope of finding food, is lured by a homosexual to a club where he witnesses what are to him unspeakably shameful sex acts. Ravenous, the Turk thrusts the homosexual away and starts devouring whatever food he can grab hold of. He appears to the members of the club like an animal, a savage. They turn on him and kill him in the street outside. The bus, meanwhile, with all its curtains drawn, remains immobilised in the square, finally coming to the attention of the police. The vehicle is towed away and impounded. The last frame of the film is the discovery by startled policemen that the bus is still occupied by five dishevelled, starving men, crammed together on the back seat, hiding and terrified.

*Otobus* is the direct cinematic equivalent of Berger's *The Seventh Man*, published one year after the film was released. Both depict the profound and terrible alienation<sup>xix</sup> experienced by labour migrants in cities with no familiarities. Berger sees the Turkish workers in Germany as the

dumb victims of economic forces. 'The migrant's intentionality is permeated by historical necessities of which neither he nor anybody else is aware' [Berger, 1975:68]. *Otobus* hints at a similar conclusion, for the driver/villain travels to Switzerland to turn over the proceeds of the deceit to a capitalist/mafia figure who is his employer.

The lack of familiarities extends even, and especially, to the language. Their inability to communicate excludes the Turks from even the most commonplace exchange with shopkeepers and citizens. For Berger's imagined immigrant:

In the beginning, there is only silence, then the first words are painfully acquired. But even when the sounds are right, the precise meaning remains elusive. He treated the sounds of the unknown language as if they were silence. To break through his silence, he learnt twenty words of the new language. But to his amazement at first, their meaning changed as he spoke them. He asked for coffee. What the words signified to the barman was that he was asking for coffee in a bar where he should not have been asking for coffee. He learnt girl. What the word meant when he used it, was that he was a randy dog.

[ibid: 132]

Homi Bhabha examines 'the Turk as randy dog', in his *Nation/Dissemination*, pointing out that it is precisely the failure of language, the untranslatable silence, that creates the space for the various sexual anxieties that underlie racism. This is important because of the dominant place occupied by sexual insecurity concerning the 'black' (i.e. non-white) man in race relations. In Bhabha's words: 'The silent Other of gesture and failed speech becomes ... the Stranger, whose languageless presence evokes an archaic anxiety and aggressivity' [Bhabha, 1990: 336].

Without the language that bridges knowledge and act, without the objectification of the social process, the Turk leads the life of the double, the automaton. It is not the struggle of master and slave, but in the mechanical reproduction of gestures a mere imitation of life and labour. The opacity of language fails to translate or break through his silence and 'the body loses its mind in the gesture.

[ibid: 316]

The 'silence of failed speech' is continually apparent in *Otobus*, and the gestures of the seven Turkish migrants are especially expressive – cowering, shrinking, trying to 'make themselves small'. In the absence of verbal language, it is the body language that speaks, and what it speaks of is a furtive, self-deprecatory confusion.

Sexual themes also have a recurrent presence in the narrative of *Otobus*. On their first, nervous, trip to the public toilet, two of the men are shocked to witness a couple making love in a telephone booth. When the group venture further afield in search of food, they gaze in a mixture of bewilderment and excitement at the contents of the window display of a sex shop. Even the lifeless fashion mannequins seem sexually revealing and provocative. But the emotions aroused in the men are depicted as an innocent astonishment rather than a knowing lust. The Turk who is killed, *like a dog*, outside the nightclub, lacks the means to explain that he is 'only' hungry, and his desperate attempts to feed himself are mistaken for the crazed antics of an 'animal'. The irony of the attack lies in the fact that the sexual appetites of the urban sophisticates, perverted and decadent according to customary morality, are here quite normal. It is the 'ordinary' appetite of hunger that is made to seem abnormal. Similarly, the driver/villain, after delivering the money to his employer in Zurich, goes out, gets drunk and goes to bed with two Swiss prostitutes. The reward for his deceit is the fulfilment of sexual fantasy. The fact that he immediately goes to sleep and the prostitutes steal all the money gives this part of the narrative a satisfactory moral closure, but it is incidental to the main plot.

*Otobus* does not in any sense belong to the tradition of Turkish melodrama. There is no family, no hero or heroine, no emotional manipulation through identification. The camera follows the journeying and the dilemma of the seven immigrants in a manner that is closer to documentary

than to the theatrical staging of the action typical of Turkish melodrama. There are few close-up shots and the dominance of front shots has been replaced by a more fluid positioning of the camera, which looks over the men's shoulders as they stare in amazement at the contents of the shop window of a sex shop, and watches them from the top of the escalator as they struggle down against its movement upwards. There seems to be always a certain dispassionate distance between the camera and the protagonists. The first death, in particular, is treated with a singular lack of emotion. There are no dramatic speeches or heartfelt monologues. The spectator is not accorded the privileged position of a theatre audience but rather that of an objective witness. Although he/she will no doubt identify with the desperate situation of the protagonists, this identification is not manipulated by the usual techniques of close-up and point-of-view shots. Significantly, none of the seven occupants of the bus emerge as dominant or even conspicuous. There are no flashbacks to the villages or the loved ones they have left behind and no attempt to explore individual psychologies or circumstance. The dialogue, like the cinematography, is spare and minimalist. The musical soundtrack is unmelodic, even discordant.

The generic influences on *Otobus* appear to derive more from the work of Truffaut and Godard than from the melodramatic conventions of Yesilcam – or even the growing social realism discernible in the work of Turkish directors such as Refig and Akad – particularly in the lack of emotional involvement. Of Godard's *Vent d'Este* (1970), James Roy MacBean wrote:

What Godard attacks in *Vent d'Este* is what he calls 'the bourgeois concept of representation', which encompasses not only a certain acting style but also the traditional relations between image and sound – and ultimately, of course, the relations between the film and the audience. Godard accuses bourgeois cinema of over-emphasising and playing on the deep-seated emotional fears and desires of the audience at the expense of their critical intelligence ... he believes strongly that the filmgoer should not be taken advantage of, that he should not be manipulated emotionally but

should instead be addressed directly in a lucid dialogue which calls forth all of his human faculties.

[in Nichols (ed.), 1976: 96]

What is striking in *Otobus* is precisely the absence of attempts at audience manipulation, either through music, camerawork or representation of character, even though dealing with a potentially emotive theme. Unlike *Donus*, and unlike the entire tradition of Turkish melodrama, *Otobus* offers no satisfactory moral or narrative closure. The men are stranded in their vehicle, unable to communicate or explain. What lies before them is arrest and imprisonment, or repatriation to the villages they had been forced to leave. In *Otobus*, which provides the starkest cinematic depiction of the initial experiences of the Turkish labour migration, the effect on the family is not examined simply because there is no family. The seven migrants are of a single generation, without parents or children, and their collective existence appears more that of a primitive and dislocated tribe than of the family which in rural Turkey would have structured their social and cultural lives. The achievement of *Otobus* is to depict this 'lost tribe' – and to represent the problems of language, race and culture – with an unusual clarity and objectivity and, without any overt moral didacticism.

#### 4.5 Male and Female in the First Generation Diaspora

The world of the first-generation Turkish labour migrants was almost by definition a world without family, entailing abrupt and radical changes in the essential structures and conditions of the household. As Tan and Waldhoff put it: 'No migrant family escapes a transformation of its established pattern of authority and structure'[Tan and Waldhoff, 1996: 139]. 'Home' generally meant overcrowded and sparsely furnished rooms shared with other workers.

Most workers were accommodated in worker hostels. Men and women were kept strictly separate, a curfew was effectively implemented and there was a 'lights out' time which was strictly adhered to. The arrangement 'involved a great measure of dependence on the employer, who controlled their lives day and night, including their political activities and their social lives.

[Castles and Kosack, 1973: 261]

The alternative to the worker hostels was private accommodation of the cheapest and most basic kind. Adverts for lodgings often proclaimed: '*Gastarbeiter unerwünscht*' (Guestworkers not desired) or '*Nur für Deutsche*' (Germans only) [ibid, 269]. According to figures published by the *Bundesanstalt für Arbeit* in 1967, one-third of Italian, Greek, Spanish and Turkish families lived in 'emergency or provisional accommodation' like wooden huts or unconverted attics. The remaining two-thirds lived in 'normal' dwellings, but even 'normal' accommodation was subject to rent racketeering and much of it consisted of dark, grimy apartments that no one else would take. Castles and Kosack record that four flats in Hamburg had been converted to accommodate Portuguese workers at around *sixteen* workers per flat. Each worker paid a rent of 75 DM per month so that the landlord was making ten times as much as before. The noise and dirt caused by overcrowding made life virtually unbearable [ibid: 268-70]. The authorities meanwhile tended to

ignore or deny the problems. A 1968 official report claimed: 'Germany's biggest housing shortage is a thing of the past' [ICFTU, 1968: 5].

It was not until 1974 that regulations were put in place in Germany allowing wives and families to join the Turkish *gastarbeiter*. Until that time, all male migrants were effectively fatherless sons and all female migrants fatherless daughters, at least for the duration of their exile (*gurbet*), or until their families joined them. In 1968, it was estimated that 72% of Turkish men in Germany were living without women and that the surplus of males over females was higher among Turks than any other immigrant population – there were only 348 women per 1,000 men [Castles and Kosack, 1973: p. 51]. Strict regulations, known as the *Unterkunftsordnung*, excluded women (even wives) from the workers' rooms.

However, the proportion of women among Turkish migrants had gradually grown during the late 1960s, as the demand for female labour – which was cheaper than male – expanded in sectors such as the textiles and electronics industries of Berlin [Keyder, 1988]. The majority of single women also lived in hostels, where they were carefully shepherded and supervised. According to an article in a Frankfurt newspaper about Turkish women working in a chocolate factory, the women lived four or five to a room, no smoking was allowed and there was a strict time for lights out: According to one account, 'the girls are protected like upper-class daughters in a Swiss finishing school' [Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, June 20, 1968]. Castles and Kosack described the atmosphere in such hostels as 'paternalistic and authoritarian' [Castles and Kosack, 1973: 261].

The arrival of wives from 1974, although solving problems of solitude and isolation for the men, brought other problems in their wake. Castles and Kosack wrote:

As a rule, women adapt more quickly if they work. Their behaviour may change at a speed that is often resented by their husbands. In Germany and Switzerland many wives follow their husbands as workers themselves, as this is the easiest way of being allowed into the country. With the acquisition of some economic independence, these women have a stronger position to demand emancipation from their traditionally subordinate role.

[ibid: 362]

The desire for emancipation might often be the primary motivation for women to emigrate, as Granjeat points out: 'The migration of the women is less often caused by a desire to earn more than by a wish to enjoy more liberty in another country. Their own country does not permit them – in fact if not in law – to have true equality with men'<sup>xx</sup> [Granjeat, 1966: 65].

The reaction of the men to the increased freedoms of their women, predictably, was one of suspicion. A study carried out among Turkish male workers found that 'a third of the male Turkish workers regard family structure in the Federal Republic as decadent and worthy of utter condemnation', [Castles and Kosack 1973: 362], whereas working Turkish women considered German family life, according to Granjeat, as 'almost suitable for them. They like the equality of rights between husband and wife and appreciate the high status of women'. [Granjeat, 1966: 65].



#### 4.6 *Almanya Aci Vatan*

The central character of *Almanya Aci Vatan* ('Germany Bitter Homeland', Serif Goren, 1979) is a woman, Guldane, and like Gulcan in *Donus* she is betrayed by her husband, Mahmut, who tries to force her into aborting their first child and then takes up with a German woman. In this case, with the exception of the opening scenes in a Turkish village, the action of the film takes place in Berlin. The treachery of Mahmut's behaviour is exacerbated by the fact that he has pursued Guldane to enter into a formal marriage solely in order to obtain permission to travel to Germany. She agrees but, in accordance with the spirit of their agreement, leaves him to his own devices as soon as they arrive at the railway station in Berlin. The following episodes, in which he is intimidated by the incomprehensible language, scared by the flashing lights of German police, and disturbed by the alien sound of the church bells, are reminiscent of comparable scenes from *Otobus* in terms of their narrative content, but the treatment is less minimalist, less detached. For example, the disorientation caused by the unfamiliar language is represented by a loud and imaginary 'yakking' inside Mahmut's head, which would have been quite out of place in the documentary style of *Otobus*. However, there are strong elements of social realism in the film in terms of the urban settings and the factory routines.<sup>xxi</sup> Most of the film was shot in Germany and the factory sequences were enacted in real factory spaces, with real workers as extras [Ozguç, 1993: 78].

*Almanya Aci Vatan* depicts the Berlin of the 1970s in which the Turkish workers have jobs and accommodation, but the accommodation is a men-only dormitory and the jobs are menial. One of Guldane's friends is a refuse collector. "We're clearing up the German rubbish!" he calls out to her. When asked what he will do when he returns to Germany, he replies: "I will die. After all this work, I will go back there to die".<sup>xxii</sup> Guldane herself works in a factory that

assembles typewriters. The task is repetitive and mechanical, and the day's labour is punctuated by continual announcements over the PA system. "Achtung! Achtung!", they cry, before zeroing in on one or other of the numbered employees. To reinforce the sense of big-brother-controlled automation, an unmanned electronic trolley delivers parts. When Guldane is driven out of her wits at the end of the film, it is indicated that it is partly her husband's treachery that has caused it, and partly the accelerating drive for impossible levels of robotic efficiency at the factory. However, the implied attack in *Almanya Aci Vatan* on the means of mass production and their depersonalizing effects is secondary to the main theme of the film, which is the victimisation of Guldane herself.

In the first scenes of the film, during which Gulcan is represented as successful and empowered – able to sell and distribute gifts and to make economic and practical arrangements for her life – no father, mother or extended family appears, even though the film does not actually highlight the fact that she is an orphan. She is a villager, but a villager without a family. Her life in Germany before the arrival of her token husband seems comfortable in a material sense. She is able to save money and lives with other single Turkish women in a relatively comfortable flat, complete with telephone and television. On the street, however, she is shown as unable to shake off the unwelcome sexual attentions of a Turkish man who makes a daily target of her 'unprotected' status. There is neither father nor brother (nor the familiar domestic and social culture of her homeland) to make her safe against male sexual aggression. Encouraged by her flatmates, she eventually decides that to enter into an actual married relationship with Mahmut is preferable to her continued vulnerability.

According to Makal, these marriages of convenience burgeoned into a kind of commerce: 'Many German women and foreign workers, finding themselves in financial difficulties, see the

opportunity of using their skills as matchmakers, leading to the emergence of an organisation, a kind of trade, a “marriage market” [Makal, 1994: 82, note 52]. The emergence of this ‘trade’ or ‘market’ indicates a forced abandonment of the complex traditional systems, sanctioned by local custom and religious usage, which regulated the choice of partner and the terms and conditions of marriage and by which an unmarried woman was effectively transferred from one family structure to another. What can be seen in *Almanya Aci Vatan* is Gulcan’s initial success (leading to a novel form of economic and social independence) undermined by a vulnerability to which she can find no solution except by entering a marriage contract. This represents an advance, in a feminist sense at least, since it was the woman alone, without instruction from the father and without support or interference on the part of her family, who initiated the contract. However, once the deal has been made, she becomes subject to exactly those gender inequalities – and in fact male oppressions – that she had hoped to avoid. As Cook and Johnston expressed it when analysing *The Revolt of Mamie Stover* (Walsh, 1956), ‘Jane Russell/Mamie makes her biggest strides in the absence of men: she threatens to take over the power of exchange. By promising to marry and give it all up, she is reintegrated into an order where she no longer represents that threat.’ [Cook and Johnston in Erens 1997: 24].

A montage of brief scenes show how Gulcan and Mahmut form a romantic attachment. The treatment of this passage in the narrative – a passage which is common to all forms of melodrama, not only Turkish – relies heavily on the conventions of the genre. The couple are shown running and laughing on the bank of the river; they hold hands and watch the boats. The exigencies of the plot indicate that she has turned to him only for a kind of physical security and that he has turned to her as a way out of a men-only dormitory and a life without sex. A realistic treatment of the episode would either content itself with portraying the decision to live together as

a desirable compromise or it would need to convince the audience that something has surprisingly and dramatically changed. What actually happens is little more than melodramatic pastiche.

Guldane and Mahmut start living together, spending their first night on a mattress on an empty floor, overlooked by a huge advertisement for Marlboro cigarettes, which is actually an advertisement for a kind of *machismo*, on the wall above. The man's first words in the morning are not a request but an instruction: "Bring me a glass of water!" he says. When she casually suggests that he get it himself, he insists harshly that it is her place as his wife to carry out such menial chores. This is not in fact the first time that Mahmut exercises his masculine prerogative, for when Guldane went to remove her headscarf and let down her hair – as the coach carrying the workers entered Germany – Mahmut forbade her to do so. Such explicit statements of the male hegemony are reinforced by shots of another Turkish worker who locks his daughter in their flat before going out to work, and of another who beats his daughter because she has gone out (innocently enough) with a German boy. Meanwhile, a German radio programme goes on about the virtues of ethnic integration.

At the end of the film. Guldane refuses to go through with the abortion that her husband insists on. Instead she buys a ticket back to Turkey, and the final scenes are of her at the airport preparing for her departure. What awaits her in Turkey can hardly be an improvement on what she is fleeing from, because as a married, pregnant but solitary woman she has lost whatever status she may originally have enjoyed.

#### 4.7 40m<sup>2</sup> Deutschland

*40m<sup>2</sup> Deutschland* (Tevfik Baser, 1986) was released seven years after *Almanya Aci Vatan*, and in thematic terms represents a logical development of the earlier film. In *Almanya Aci Vatan*, the 'marriage of convenience' entered into by Gulcan and Ibrahim represents for both of them a quest for the security that the married state offers. She needs him to protect her from the state of being – in traditional terms – *acik* ('open'). He needs her ultimately because he needs a home. Their respective urges for security are seen against the wider context of the anxieties of migrant life. But in *40m<sup>2</sup> Deutschland*, there is only a couple: a man and his wife (who is played by the well-known Turkish jazz singer Özay Fecht) and their tiny apartment. Their relationship is not only unequal, there is an air of savagery about it. When he locks the door each morning, she is in a prison. Whereas *Almanya Aci Vatan* referred incidentally to a man 'imprisoning' his daughter within a flat, *40m<sup>2</sup> Deutschland* shows us the actuality of such an imprisonment. The interior of the flat is dimly lit and sparsely furnished, emphasising the grim nature of the woman's existence. The film makes clear that Turna's role and function in her husband's life is to satisfy his sexual appetite, do his laundry, prepare his meals and bear his child. "Am I an animal that you lock me in?" she demands at one point. Shortly after this, he takes her 'like an animal', with both of them on all fours before he mounts her from behind. She is not only much younger than her husband, but physically much smaller, emphasising the inequality of their relationship. Through flashback, it is shown that the marriage has been 'arranged' in the accepted manner of Turkish village life. The man had visited her father, made his proposal and negotiated – while the daughter watched, unseen, through a half-open door. When she marries, she becomes his, but she joins a 'family' that is stripped to its barest essentials: there are no in-laws, no older generation, no children, no home with many rooms, no courtyard, no access to the street or to the shops.

Although the theme of the film has similarities with that of *Almanya Aci Vatan* – the suppression of a Turkish woman by her husband in the alien and alienating conditions of immigrant life – the treatment lacks any kind of melodramatic features at least in stylistic terms.<sup>xxiii</sup> Almost the whole of the film is shot in one small apartment (the forty square metres of the title). Views of the street are from the window of the apartment, and only at the very end, after the death of her husband, Dursun, following an epileptic seizure, does the woman, Turna, emerge on to the street. *40m<sup>2</sup> Deutschland* perhaps paints an even starker and more minimalist picture than *Otobus* in that it lacks even the relief of movement and of changing settings. The camera is kept at eye level almost throughout, there are hardly any variations of lighting set-ups, the colours are subdued. A Sunday outing is promised and there is some anticipation of escape, of fresh air, as Turna puts on cheerful peasant clothes, but this anticipation is dashed when the husband instead spends the day drinking tea with his friend.

The extremely limited number and nature of external ‘happenings’ during the film puts much significance on Turna’s internal dialogue: her inner reaction to her impossible situation. This is shown in two ways. Firstly through what she sees in the street and through her brief and wordless communication with a young girl who lives in the flat opposite, and secondly through flashback sequences of her meeting and marriage with her husband in Turkey. The latter show that her marriage was arranged by Turna’s father and Dursun without any consultation with Turna herself. As far as her glimpses of the Berlin street is concerned, all she can see is one street corner, the haunt of a German prostitute. As she watches the prostitute about her business, the parallels between their situations are made obvious. The one almost-human relationship allowed Turna during these long months consists of a few mimed exchanges with the little girl living in the flat across the street. The

human contact is an important relief to the grim solitude, but the iconography of the exchange again emphasises the inhuman nature of the woman's existence. She holds up a Turkish doll to the window for the child to admire, and the girl fetches her own doll to hold up. The implication is that Turna has no more freedom of action than the doll. The contact is ended by the child's disapproving mother, who pulls her away from the window. Whereas the figure of the prostitute signifies Turna's physical exploitation, that of the doll signifies her powerlessness, the way in which she is manipulated by her husband. When, in an explicit gesture of renouncing her femininity, she cuts off her long hair, she then cuts the doll's hair too.

The film is intended as a metaphorical representation of a much wider issue of gender relations, an intention clearly signalled in the title of the film: the forty square metres of the apartment represents, on one level, the whole of Germany. Writing in the Turkish magazine *2000'e Dogru* in 1987, the film's director Tevfik Baser points out that the physical incarceration of Turna reflects an isolation which Turkish village women would experience even out on the streets of a German city.

If the same woman goes out into the street, she will be an outsider. She will have a headscarf; she will walk behind her husband; she will be unable to communicate with foreigners [Germans] or with any men; she will be outside society, isolated from it. The [Turkish] woman from the time of her childhood is always relegated to the status of second class citizen. Living in the West, this becomes even more apparent.

[Baser 1987: 53]

Dursun's attempt is to create a family of his own in these alien surroundings, and Turna's principal function in his eyes is therefore to provide him with a child, more specifically a son. "You still haven't given me a son," he complains to her at one point. But the notion of a 'normal' family (in the sense that this would be understood in traditional terms) is shown as vain and

misguided, actually impossible, under the circumstances, because a family does not consist only of a flat, a couple and a baby; it must also comprise an existence bounded by certain regulations and conventions, not all of which tend to the suppression of the woman. Turna herself sees no difference between her previous situation in Turkey and her present incarceration. "I was a prisoner in my father's home, and now I am a prisoner in yours," she tells her husband. Yet in Berlin she is isolated even from the contacts with other women and extended family members to which she would 'normally' have had access in the village. It is not only that her 'status of second class citizen' is 'more apparent', it is actually worse in practical and social terms, so much so that in her desperation she cries out at one stage, "I just want to go back to the village!"

Apart from the husband leaves for work in the morning and returns in the evening, there is only one visitor to the flat, a Turkish *imam*, who has been summoned by the husband to perform a fertility ritual to invoke the much-desired pregnancy. The detailed peculiarities of this strange rite, involving the banishing of the 'evil eye' (*nazar*) and the tracing of runic lettering on Turna's belly, emphasise the arcane and indeed 'regressive' character of Islamic ritual, its anachronistic aspect. When the *imam* arrives, Turna covers her head and bows to him submissively, but it is notable that the woman, imprisoned by her husband to keep her free from all outside contacts, with their threats and temptations, is allowed to uncover a private part of her body, her stomach, to this stranger, and that the ritual takes place in the absence of the husband (to whose withdrawal from the room the film draws particular attention). What is indicated, therefore, is not only the arcane nature of the rite but the fact that the Islamic law has priority over the ordinary conventions respecting the seclusion of women. In effect, customary family law is thus set within the framework, or under the authority, of what is depicted as mere superstition. In the context of my argument, and given the paucity of references to Islamic practice in the Turkish-German films, this is an important scene.



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<sup>i</sup> The classification of films in Yesilcam has always varied somewhat from the classic Hollywood classification. Melodrama is often grouped under the wider heading of 'family films', which also included comedy and light drama. The appellation was invented to protect the industry against the invasion of soft-porn films during the 1970s.

<sup>ii</sup> This issue has been explored by Robins and Aksoy in their essay 'Deep Nation: The national question and Turkish Cinema Culture' (2000). The search for 'the ideal' was so intense that even apparently harmless minutiae of documentary material were the subject of censorship. Anything that was felt to undermine the portrayal of the ideal state was blue pencilled, especially if it appeared to cast doubt on the degree of progress and modernisation achieved by the nation. Robins and Aksoy list several of the more ludicrous examples: a plough used in a film made by Istanbul University in 1956 was found to be too primitive, so the film was prevented from being shown at the Berlin Film Festival; a film by Metin Erksan showed the wheat as insufficiently bountiful; another film by the same director 'depicted rural life in a "grotesquely" exaggerated way'. As Nijat Ozon notes, the message must be strictly positive: Turkish land is not unproductive, Turkish peasants do not go around in bare feet or wear torn clothes [Ozon, 1995: 141].

<sup>iii</sup> Kinross wrote of Atatürk: 'What he was seeking to do, in making a nation of Turkey, was to wean his people away from their old sense of identity with the supra-national 'fatherland' of Islam and to create for them a new allegiance to their own national fatherland. One of his problems was to link this in their minds with a past which fitted the history of Turkey into that of the world as a whole, thus eliminating the conflict, which for ever possessed him, between East and West, and lead them towards that civilization to which in his own mind only the West belonged' (Kinross 1995: 468).

<sup>iv</sup> A contemporary version of this same debate surrounds the '*arabesk*' in popular song and dance, although the connotations of the word *arabesk* are not ethnic so much as geographical. It represents those influences stemming, particularly, from Egyptian traditions of music and theatre of music and theatricality. The effect of the word is in fact not unlike the word 'gypsy' in English.

<sup>v</sup> In 1966, Turkey produced a total of 229 movies, the fourth largest production after Japan (442), India (322) and Hong Kong (300). See Kerry Segrave, 1997: 199.

<sup>vi</sup> See Metin And, *Türk Tiyatrosu'nun Evreleri* (1983).

<sup>vii</sup> For details of distribution, see Huseyin Kuzu, 1996, p. 260 ff.

<sup>viii</sup> See Kerry Segrave, *op. cit.*

<sup>ix</sup> Source: UNESCO Year Books, 1970-1980.

<sup>x</sup> In reality, some fathers must certainly have acted in these ways. According to Tan and Waldhoff: 'Retaining religious customs and an Islamic upbringing after migration provides a means for some Turkish families and in particular some Turkish fathers and brothers to protect the traditional family structure from unwanted social influences. Here, "lived Islam" becomes a device to legitimise and prop up the patriarchal family' [Tan and Waldhoff, 1996: 140]. It should be stressed that the basic problem to be addressed here is why such resolutions do not figure in any of the examples of the Turkish-German cinema.

<sup>xi</sup> It will be remembered that both these directors were involved in the heated debate in 1967 between the supporters of a distinctive national cinema and other directors who were strongly influenced by European arthouse film.

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<sup>xii</sup> The lack of films concerning the life of the *gecekondus* – which one might have thought fertile territory for filmmakers – may be explained by a continuing reluctance to show on screen the ‘worst’ sides of Turkish life, a reluctance connected with the concept of the ideal state and with the consequent censorship.

<sup>xiii</sup> The connection between the decline of patriarchal authority and the spread of sexual immorality had in fact been a common theme in Turkish literature for several decades. See for example Duben and Behar, 1991, p. 199

<sup>xiv</sup> Cited by Buker and Uluyagci, 1993: 50-51. The highest-earning male star (on a par with Turkan Soray) was Yilmaz Guney, later to become Turkey’s best-known film director.

<sup>xv</sup> Quoted in Gurata, *op. cit.*

<sup>xvi</sup> See following chapter.

<sup>xvii</sup> ‘*Yabancilasma*’, literally ‘the estrangement’.

<sup>xviii</sup> *Yeni A Dergisi* is a Turkish film periodical.

<sup>xix</sup> I use the term ‘alienation’ according to its accepted usage at the time of the film. In the ongoing theoretical debate concerning identity and the ‘decentred self’, the concept of alienation tends to be treated as ontological, in other words common to all human beings. In the writings of Stuart Hall and others, the word has dropped out of use, being replaced by less pejorative terms as dislocated or hybrid identity [see for example: Hall, 1988; Hall, Held and McGrew (eds.), 1992; Hall and du Gay (eds.), 1996; Hall (ed.), 1997]. See also 2.2.

<sup>xx</sup> The quote betrays the rather condescending tone of contemporary European sociology, a condescension that would gradually disappear in the more ethnically sensitive academic climate of ensuing decades.

<sup>xxi</sup> It should be noted that the film’s director, Serif Goren, is the man who directed *Yol* in the enforced absence of Yilmay Guney. The stylistic and ideological differences between the two films clearly suggest the importance of Guney’s vision in *Yol*, which will strike most viewers as a more penetrating work than *Almanya Aci Vatan*.

<sup>xxii</sup> It is this Turkish refuse collector whose long and loyal service is honoured by the Berlin municipality in a public ceremony. This display of civic gratitude underlines the irony of his earlier remark to Guldane.

<sup>xxiii</sup> Gokturk describes *40m² Deutschland* as a ‘*kammerspiel*’. Referring to the fact that the film received the *Bundesfilmpreis* in 1987, an award given by the Federal Ministry of Internal Affairs, she claims that this ‘dutiful national acknowledgement ... paradoxically seemed to cement the sub-national status of *Ausländerkultur*’ [Gokturk, 1998, p. 7]. The concept of a ‘cinema of duty’ is further examined in Chapter 6.

## CHAPTER 5: ELEMENTS OF TURKISH-GERMAN FILM

*During a computer course in Uppsala in 1996, Fadime Sahindal, whose father had emigrated to Sweden from the Turkish countryside many years earlier, met and fell in love with a Swedish boy called Patrik Lindesjö. Fadime was under no illusions about her father's reaction. She knew that he would think she was dishonouring the family. They kept their relationship secret for a year. When her father eventually found out, his first reaction was to beat them both up. Her father disowned her but the couple refused to be intimidated and Patrik's parents went to Fadime's family to propose on his behalf, but were turned down. Fadime moved to another town, only to be pursued and threatened by her brother. The police simply advised her to stop talking to her family. Instead, Fadime turned to the press, giving interviews about the conditions faced by Kurdish girls in Sweden, instigating a debate about integration and double standards. The police's inaction in the face of her father's threats infuriated the public.*

*On a visit to Uppsala her father spotted her with Patrik. He attacked her, spat in her face and screamed: 'Bloody whore. I will beat you to pieces.' She told police: 'He said I was rejected from the family and was not allowed to come back to Uppsala. If I did I would never leave the city alive. Her father was charged and in 1998 was convicted of making unlawful threats. Her brother, who had cursed Fadime as a whore during the trial, was also found guilty. It was a bittersweet victory for Fadime who had stood up for her beliefs but lost her family. She often said she loved her father, that he*

*understood no better way of treating her. Then, on 3 June 1998, as the couple prepared to move into a flat together, Patrick was killed when his BMW crashed into a concrete pillar. A police investigation, which found nothing suspicious, has now reopened.*

*Fadime carried on and last November spoke to the Swedish parliament about her struggle for freedom. Then, last Monday, her father caught up with her... Just before 10 pm, as she sat in her sister's flat in Uppsala, the doorbell rang. Her father burst in and shot her in the head. She died in her mother's arms.*

*Six groups representing foreigners in Sweden want to turn her funeral into a demonstration against patriarchal cultures which allow 'honour' killings. Fadime, who had said she did not want a funeral according to the rites of her native religion, may be laid to rest at Uppsala's Protestant cathedral.*

[The Observer, London, January 27 2002]

The first two sections of this chapter consist of an overview of Turkish-German communities during the 1990s, emphasising the emerging multiculturalism in big cities such as Berlin. The remaining sections set out a detailed examination of the Turkish-German films of the 1990s under various headings. The purpose of my argument here is to show that even though the themes of the films in question are disparate, tensions within the migrant family will be found to be at the root of the various conflicts represented. Ostensibly, conflicts may revolve around ethnicity, economics or sexuality, but in each case problems within the family constitute their underlying cause and rationale. Thus what can be observed is not – as in the case of Hollywood melodrama of the 1950s – an interiorisation of class or gender conflicts (see 3.2), but actually the reverse: a partial or complete ‘exteriorisation’ of what are essentially familial issues such as the rivalry between fathers and sons, the struggle of daughters for self-empowerment, the breakdown of familial authority, the greater ‘Germanisation’ of younger generations. These issues are not, and according to my hypothesis cannot be, directly confronted, and this has the rather striking effect of removing from the narratives what might have been their principal dramatic element.

Inevitably the films are very different in many respects, not only in their choice of theme but also in their stylistic approach. A certain progression towards multiculturalism may be noted, as well as the predictable differences of authorial style and emphasis. *Der Schöne Tag*, the most recent of the films, has as its protagonist a young Turkish woman who has achieved a great measure of independence and, apparently, a full acceptance and enjoyment of her hybrid status. The film has nothing in common stylistically or thematically either with the Turkish films of migration considered in the previous chapter nor with the earlier and tenser<sup>1</sup> examples of Turkish-German films analysed here.

At no time in the cycle of Turkish-German films is the death or departure of the father screened or highlighted, nor, where he is present in the family, is there any episode constituting a direct challenge to his authority or a confrontation between him and his children. The emotional content of the films is characterised by a sullen repression of anger and frustration, recalling Elsaesser's comment with regard to 1950s Hollywood melodrama, which he saw as 'fixed by the claustrophobic atmosphere of the bourgeois home' with 'an emotional pattern of panic and latent hysteria' [Elsaesser, 1987: 62].

Although the purpose of the films is not to document social and economic conditions, they all are all realistic rather than expressionistic, their geographical and chronological settings are clearly delineated, and the majority of them have a clear economic and domestic focus in terms of family, employment and an interlinked set of close relationships. The iconographic elements of everyday costume and urban location (apartments, bars, restaurants, streets, kiosks, public transport) all appear to reflect at least some aspects of the physical realities of the contemporary urban scene in Berlin, Hamburg or Munich. With a single exception (*Im Juli*), there are no surreal, abstract or fantastic elements of either narrative or editing. Even the use of such 'expressionistic' techniques as flashback and montage is very limited. It is therefore legitimate to start by providing some indications of social and economic conditions prevailing among Turkish-German communities by way of background and comparison, which is the subject of the first section of this chapter.

### **5.1 The Family in the Second Phase Diaspora**

It was estimated in 1992 that only one-third of 5 million foreigners in Germany were workers, the remainder dependents.<sup>ii</sup> Thus the Turkish communities in Germany had fundamentally changed their character. Households existed on a more permanent basis. Most immigrants stayed in Germany a minimum of 10 to 15 years, and an increasing proportion of them became permanent residents. At the same time, the range of their jobs and occupations grew broader, with educated and qualified Turks working as engineers, journalists and academics as well as setting up their own businesses. What had started as a temporary community of immigrant workers became a permanent feature of German society, as well as by far the largest population of Turks outside Turkey itself. In contrast with the situation in the 1960s and 1970s, the average household size among Turks was 4.1 persons, with one household in 13 owning their own house and the great majority of occupants having their own room [Sen, *op. cit.*].

There were 2,183,579 foreigners on Germany's labour market in 1994, of which around 29 percent (631,837), the largest group of foreign workers, were Turks (Sen 1996: 21]. Whereas in 1984, 36 percent of Turkish workers in Germany were unskilled, 40 percent semi-skilled, 14 percent skilled, 2 percent self-employed and 2 percent white collar, the corresponding figures ten years later (1994) were 19 percent unskilled, 40 percent semi-skilled, 21 percent skilled, 8 percent self-employed and 5 percent white collar [Seifert 1998: 90]. The unemployment rate for Turks was still high, however. In 1994, the rate of unemployment amongst all foreign workers was 15.9 percent and amongst Turkish workers 19.6 percent, while in Germany as a whole it was a mere 6-7 percent [ibid].

In 1995, there were an estimated 40,500 Turkish businessmen or entrepreneurs, twice the number in 1985 and second among foreigners only to the Italians (Kizilocak 1996:44). Turkish businesses employed 168,000 workers and generated a gross income of 34 billion DM with a total investment of 8.3 billion DM, also twice the 1985 figures. Of these businesses, trade accounted for 53.8 percent, services for 38 percent, construction for 4.8 percent, and industry for 1.6 percent. (ibid: 49). Turkish women comprised the largest category among foreign businesswomen and 13 percent of Turkish business persons [ibid: 62/3]. By 1999, there were a total of 50,000 Turkish-owned businesses of various sizes in Germany, employing an estimated 330,000 people, indicating that the trend towards self-employment continued during the second half of the 1990s.<sup>iii</sup> According to Soysal, in Berlin alone there were no less than 1,300 kiosks (*imbiss*) and small restaurants selling 25 tons of doner kebab daily. The doner kebab, Soysal comments, 'has attained a status of indisputable Turkishness' [L. Soysal 1999: 51].

The 'official' German attitude to the Turkish '*gastarbeiter*' has been ambivalent. Up until 1991, the Turks did not enjoy the right to become German citizens, and even after the liberalisation of the immigration laws in 1991, there remained conditions of citizenship which effectively excluded the majority. Three categories of foreigners qualify for naturalization: those between the ages of 16 and 23 who have lived in Germany regularly for at least eight years and have attended a school there for at least six years; those aged 24 and above who have lived in Germany on a regular basis for a period of at least 15 years and are able to make a living for themselves and their families; and thirdly, spouses and children of foreigners aged 24 or more who have lived in the country for at least 15 years [N. Soysal, 1996]. Thus, young people who have spent parts of their childhood or undergone all or part of their education in Turkey (a common pattern) are excluded. Besides, the interpretation of the ability to make a living depends not only on capacity but on changing economic conditions. In times of recession, the Turks are

more vulnerable to unemployment, being often the first to lose their jobs and the last to get them back again when conditions improve. Similarly, in spite of an apparently liberal asylum policy, a very small percentage of those requesting asylum are successful. Of 1,516,000 people who had taken refuge in Germany up to December 1992, only 230,000, or 15 percent, were granted legal asylum.<sup>iv</sup> The majority of asylum seekers remain as stateless foreigners, in other words refugees. In addition, the official treatment of Turks in terms of legal status has been inequitable compared to that of other minorities within Germany. Poles, Czechs and Romanians, many of whom lived within the boundaries of the German Reich during the 1930s, even if they were not themselves of German origin, tend to be viewed as 'ethnic Germans' and are able to claim citizenship if they can produce evidence, however slim, of 'German' ancestry. Such 'ethnic Germans' may have less actual connection with modern Germany than second- or third-generation descendants of Turkish migrant workers, born and brought up in Germany itself.

The unique position of Turks among Germany's foreign immigrants is in part the function of sheer numbers, as well as the tendency for the Turkish population to collect and coalesce in inward-looking communities with a kind of ghetto mentality reinforced by the perceived hostility of indigenous groups. In areas of high unemployment, such as Kreuzberg in what was West Berlin, these Turkish areas formerly acquired the atmosphere of ghettos, with low rent accommodation which often lacked basic amenities such as inside toilets and central heating. In Kreuzberg and elsewhere, Turkish communities had their own restaurants, bars and tea-houses, their own shops, housing associations, football supporters clubs and of course mosques.

According to Mandel:

Most socialising is carried out with other Turks in private homes, mosques, public restaurants, and coffee houses (the exclusive domain of men), and on structured occasions such as the large parties frequently held in rented halls to celebrate



engagements, weddings, and circumcisions. In nice weather, picnics in several parks in particular are so popular that Germans have nicknamed a couple of parks 'Turkish meadow'.

[Mandel, 1990: 155]

According to Kaya, writing in 1997, 'Kreuzberg 36 resembles a kind of *Kleines Istanbul* (Little Istanbul) which is surrounded by the images, signs, rhythms, music, foods, shops, banks, traditional cafes, and major political issues of Turkey' [Kaya, 1997: 108]. He also notes the existence of a 'community network' including not only Turkish restaurants and kiosks but also Turkish bakeries, dentists, accountants, printing houses and television stations. There is even a bilingual telephone directory [ibid: 112].

The prevailing response of the German population to the large and growing Turkish immigrants in their midst is reflected in the terminology used to describe them. The term '*gastarbeiter*' remains formally courteous, and includes not only Turks but also Italians, Greeks, former Yugoslavs, Poles, Czechs, Spanish and Portuguese. Apart from a certain number of Bosnians, only Turks are non-Christian and, in the eyes of most Germans, non-European, and the term more often used to describe Turks is *Auslander*, a harsher and more pejorative term. The literal translation is 'out-lander', thus simply foreigner, but the word carries the implication of 'alien' or 'outsider', an implication attaching itself naturally to the Turks as Muslim and non-European and not to the Italians and Greeks. Mandel has pointed out that there exists in effect an unofficial ranking of foreign immigrants.

Christian European *gastarbeiter* clearly rank at the top. Italians, Greeks and what were once Yugoslavs compose this group. Spaniards and Portuguese, although less numerous, also would be ranked here. Italians would probably be at the top of the pecking order. The more distant and different from German society – in terms of social, cultural and physical proxemics – the further down a group finds itself.

[Mandel 1994: 120]

The same point is made more graphically by a character in Franci Biondi's novel, *Aufstieg*. "It's obvious," he declares. "German: biggest fish. Italian, big fish. Turk, little fish. You [Pakistani], even smaller fish. African: all the worst jobs. Where there's rich and poor, always like that."

The common perception of Turks as 'more foreign' than other groups can hardly be based on skin colour, since many Italians and most Greeks have similar complexions. Religion certainly plays an important role, with the conspicuous minarets of the mosques and the loud call to prayer five times a day signalling the very different religious practices. But six hundred years of history, during much of which the Turks were seen as the barbarians at the gates of Europe, is also clearly a powerful influence. The historical image of the Turk – cruel, rapacious, pagan – which emerged from the centuries of religious and political antagonism has persisted.<sup>vi</sup> What is under consideration here is the image of Turks in popular perception and media, subject to cultural stereotyping and uninformed value judgements<sup>vii</sup>. In the words of Azade Seyhan:

... in every age facing real or imagined threats from the outside, cliched representations of the Turk as the outsider or the other are recycled, recirculated and lent renewed currency. (Mis)representations of other cultures can be the most pervasive form of bigotry and bias. The unilateral and monocultural control of representational power, which operates through official channels and institutions, such as schools and the media, and invisible or untraceable networks of dissemination, e.g. rumour and graffiti, can legitimize cultural stereotyping and cliches which cultivate the ground for xenophobic or racist sentiments. The subliminal power of words, images and (video) games in promoting anti-foreign sentiments is economy and commerce blind.

[Seyhan, 2000]

The Turkish family which emigrates to a foreign country is likely to experience in even greater measure the pressures to transform itself by abandoning, whether suddenly or gradually,

its traditional regulations in terms of structure and relationship. As Tan and Waldhoff note, the effects of this transformation is often confused with the cultural effects of migration as a whole:

No migrant family escapes a transformation of its established pattern of authority and structure. These problems may overlap with and/or take the same form as the usual conflicts between generations, but those directly involved frequently perceive them in 'ethnic' terms and tackle them accordingly. Indeed, migration itself and living as a minority in Germany is frequently cited as the dominant reason for any kind of problem, be it family-based or rooted in society more generally. Researchers often confirm such arguments or even propose them themselves in lieu of more probing explanations.

[Tan and Waldhoff, 1996: 139]

These family-based and inter-generational tensions showed no signs of disappearing as the years passed. In particular, the problems of gender roles, and the insistence among Turkish men that 'their' women remain subject to the traditional conventions, stood out in German eyes as indicative of a 'backward' mentality. A study commissioned by the *Zentrum für Türkeistudien* in 1994 concluded:

On the one hand, kinship networks and neighbourhoods constitute an important informal support system, on the other hand they exercise massive social control and constitute a rigid and conformist environment in which any kind of deviation elicits fierce punishment. The control exercised by Turkish males over female members of their families is also intended to prevent a potential loss of honour, since the standing of a family and the esteem in which it is held is presumed to depend above all on the blameless behaviour of its female members.

[Opladen, Leske and Budrich, 1994: 127]

The inter-generational conflict has been aggravated by the fact that the children of Turkish-German families have acquired the values and usages of the host country more rapidly and with greater facility than their parents. As Tan and Waldhoff point out: 'The children import the norms of German society into the family and interact with their parents according to these norms, i.e.

following the model they have derived from their German environment' [Tan and Waldhoff, 1996: 139]. The interaction between children and parents still takes place in the majority of Turkish-German families in the language of the parents, Turkish, whereas the language of schools, commerce, officialdom, and everyday contacts with the non-Turkish world is German. Second- or third-generation Turks 'have a firm command of German. Most speak German better than Turkish. When they speak Turkish it is often with a German accent or even modelled on a German dialect. Some modify their Turkish by adding German grammatical and syntactical structures' [ibid: 142]. Parents, on the other hand, especially housewives and mothers spending much of their lives indoors or with their own kind, and older men whose social life was restricted to Turkish tea-houses and whose work required only the barest essentials of language, may still struggle with German even after decades.

In the Turkish-German films, families without exception utilise the Turkish language within the family and home, whereas siblings may often prefer to communicate with each other in German. The superior command of German by the younger generation means inevitably that they will take the lead in the family's 'external' relations. In the film *Ich Chef Du Turnschuh*, Dudie, an Armenian, gets a job working for a Turkish restaurateur. This man, who runs the business, does the work and keeps the books, has a loud and idle son, who carelessly spends the profits. 'My Father can't even speak German, he's a nobody,' the spendthrift son tells Dudie. In *Aprilkinder*, Kurdish is the language of communication within the family, and the mother appears to speak nothing but Kurdish. In *Der Schone Tag*, the young Turkish woman, Deniz, has such fluency in the German language that she works as a film dubber, dubbing foreign films into German.<sup>viii</sup>

## 5.2 Emergent Multiculturalism

It must therefore be stressed how far both the conditions and attitudes of second- and third-generation Turkish diasporic communities in Germany have changed since the grim days of *Otobus* or *40m² Deutschland*. Levent Soysal, for example, referring to Berlin as ‘the Holy City of youth organisations’, gives the following description of one aspect of the lives of Turkish youth in that city:

Migrant youths of Berlin are vibrant participants in and creative producers of the cultural projects that endlessly parade through the metropolis. The multitude of cultural projects are manifestations of their appropriations and innovations of culture and their contributions to cultivating the image of Berlin, the Culture City. They dance through the streets of Berlin the entire day in the Carnival of Cultures, print poems on love and justice in short-lived literary periodicals they publish, write articles on bi-lingualism, circulate petitions to name a school after Nazim Hikmet, the ‘poet laureate’ of Turkey, and appear in rallies to protest the draconian budget cuts proposed by the State. They stage concerts, poetry readings, parties, dance shows, and plays. As writers, they paint with graffiti the somber brownish yellow walls of old Berlin houses and faded exteriors of subway cars. As rappers, they write hip-hop anthems, preach brotherhood and sing ghettos songs.

[Soysal, 1999: 84]

For every witness to the city’s pleasurable hybridity, however, another can be found that contradicts it. Ayhan Kaya says that youthful members of Berlin’s migrant population are ‘unwanted as workers, underfunded as students, undermined as citizens, and wanted only by the police and the courts’, and concludes that: ‘Minority youth recently seems to be subject to a state of structural outsiderism’ [Kaya, 1997: 56]. These very different versions given by Soysal on the one hand and Kaya on the other are partly accountable to the differences between social classes.

Kaya attributes this mainly to the influence of the media, an influence in this case not dissimilar to that of Gozturk's social worker (see above). Both have a vested interest (although differently motivated) in highlighting or prolonging the 'ghetto mentality'.

The working class youths, who are relatively away from the manipulation of media, seem to be quite content with their identity without problematising it. On the other hand, since the middle-class youths have been in a dialogical relation with the media, they tend to conceive the 'identity question' as granted ... Middle class youth have dual nationality, dual sense of home, miss Germany while in Turkey, don't have document and residence problems, enjoy the richness of a cosmopolitan identity...

[Kaya, 1997: 182/3]

The Turkish community in Germany had never been homogenous. As observed previously, the very earliest migrants were educated and skilled technicians and only later did the migration of workers without education or capital take place. Nor has there ever been religious homogeneity: the difference between Turkish Sunnis and Turkish Shi'ites (Alevi) is conspicuous not only in Turkey itself (where the Alevi have been subject to considerable vilification and a series of attacks)<sup>ix</sup> but also in Germany and to Germans. As Tan and Waldhoff point out: 'In their conduct and appearance, these liberal Muslims [Alevi] are perceived as less alien by Germans ... and are therefore taken to be more Europeanised and integrated' [Tan and Waldhoff, 1996: 142]. In addition, the ethnic diversity of the mother country is reproduced in Turkish-German communities. The clearest division (underscored by separate languages) is between Turks and Kurds. In 1993, according to Sen it was estimated that between 300,000 and 500,000 of migrants in Germany were of Kurdish origin (Sen, 1993:32).

There is also the problem of the rate of social and economic change during the 1990s. Kaya's thesis (1997) is based on fieldwork in the Berlin of 1994/5, only two to three years after a series of violent anti-Turkish outrages. In 1991, there was an attack on refugee hostels at Hoyerswerda. The following year, there was an arson attack at Rostock in which Turks had died, and a siege of refugee hostels at Molln which targeted Turks in particular. In 1993, Turkish residents in Solingen were murdered in a racist assault. The German newspaper *Der Tagesspiegel* had noted in April 1992:

Currently, hardly a day goes by without the reporting of some violence by Germans towards foreigners, such as the recent attacks on Poles by neo-Nazis, rowdies and skinheads at the initiation of visa-free entry. Brutal racial violence has led to the death or near-death of black Africans, Vietnamese, Pakistanis and Turks in the east and the west. The ruthless violence of groups of young men towards persons perceived as phenotypically or otherwise different continues.

[*Der Tagesspiegel*, 15 April 1992]

By the late 1990s, when Soysal was conducting his fieldwork in Berlin, the situation had considerably improved.

The problem of generalising in terms of diasporic communities or ethnic minorities is an ever-present pitfall for the academic researcher. As Edward Said said of the Palestinian identity, 'There are many kinds of Palestinian experience, which cannot all be assembled into one. One would therefore have to write parallel histories of the communities in Lebanon, the occupied territories and so on' [Quoted in Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands*, p. 178].

Similarly, there are profound differences between Berlin and Hamburg<sup>x</sup>, Stuttgart and Frankfurt, Alevi and Sunni Turk, Kurd from Southeast Turkey and Kurd from Istanbul, middle class intellectual migrants and working class unemployed youth, just as there are between the first-phase migrant of John Berger's book and the relatively affluent and well-

educated third-generation Turkish-Germans of today. Even within a single chronotope, what is remarkable is the disparity between diasporic attitudes and opinions, as can be seen among the characters in Guney Dal's 1979 novel *Wenn Ali die Glocken läuten hört* ('When Ali Hears the Bells Ringing'). These include: 'the politically active, the apathetic and the ignorant ... the strike-breakers ... the Turkish government agents hand-in-glove with the German employers ... the religious fundamentalists.'<sup>xi</sup>

Much of the *primary* writing on ethnicity and diaspora dates from earlier decades. Said's *Orientalism* was published in 1978, Rushdie's *Imaginary Homelands* in 1982, Stuart Hall's *New Ethnicities* in 1988. Homi Bhabha's *Nation and Narration* is now twelve years old. Even five years is a long time in the history and cultural development of migrant communities, the length of time between the murders in Solingen and the Berlin Day parades witnessed by Levent Soysal. Turkish diasporic culture, as Caglar points out, is:

the product of several interlocking histories and cultural traditions, mediated and transplanted by the media and the host society. The traces of different cultural traditions and languages are visible in these new forms, created by the fusion of these distinct traditions, but the emergent forms are reducible to none of them. Hence, they can neither be explained in relation to a fixed, unitary, and bounded traditional Turkish culture, nor within an acculturation framework. In fact, migration is one of those processes that aggravate the flow of images and cultural forms bringing about results in surprising combinations and crossovers of codes and discourses. The emergent cultural forms and practices of German Turks need to be understood first as products of such processes.

[Caglar, 94: 7]

Third-generation Turkish-Germans are separated from their fathers and grandfathers by their fluency in the German language, their education in German schools, their understanding of and



sympathy with contemporary German culture (and their corresponding lack of sympathy for traditional Turkish culture) as well as by all the effects of the process of globalisation and the global culture. The urban landscape, in Germany as elsewhere, has been replaced by a series of other '-scapes':

ethnoscapes produced by flows of people: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles and guestworkers ... technoscapes, the machinery and plant flows produced by corporations and governments ... finanscapes produced by the rapid flows of money in the currency markets and stock exchanges ... mediascapes, the repertoire of images of information, the flows which are produced and distributed by newspapers, magazines, television and film ... ideoscapes, linked to flows of images which are associated with state or counter-state movement ideologies which are comprised of elements of freedom, welfare, and rights.

[Featherstone, 1990: 6/7]

### 5.3 Claustrophobia and Anxiety in *Aprilkinder* and *Satici*

The tensions of family life in Turkish-German society occupy centre stage in *Aprilkinder* (Yavuz Yuksel, 1998), in which the son, Cem, is bitterly opposed to the marriage with a distant cousin from Turkey, arranged many years before by his parents. The family live together in a small and rather overcrowded flat. The mother argues with the father, and neither can endure the rock music played by the daughter, who repeatedly shuts herself in her tiny room. The slamming of the internal doors emphasises the sense of claustrophobia and non-communication within the family. Deniz Gokturk records that there are certain elements in the film that derive from the early life of the director, 'whose first experience of "Germanistan" was a twelve-metre-square shed which he had to share with his father' [Gokturk 2000: 72]. We might therefore expect the film to aim at a realistic treatment of the diasporic experience, and certainly the atmosphere of the film is unremittingly grim. The street locations are the usual bars, kiosks and nightclubs, rather dimly lit. Cem works in a meat processing factory, surrounded by carcasses. But the characters are little developed and rather stereotyped: the moody teenaged girl, the harried mother, the rebellious younger son and, especially, a villain (a drugs boss) of excessive vanity and vulgarity who drives a brand new Mercedes.

The ethnic divide between ethnic migrants and indigenous citizens is explored through Cem's relationship with a German prostitute, Kim, whom he picks up in a bar and then falls in love with. Naturally such a relationship is unacceptable to the family and clashes with the arranged marriage. The narrative follows Cem through a series of longish dialogues, with his girlfriend and the various members of his family. Throughout the film, Cem's behaviour is marked by the sense of internal oppression and frustration. He barely smiles. The incidents of his

life appear to him as a series of unendurable restrictions. The demands of the traditional family, particularly in regard to the arranged marriage, are forcing him against his will to lead his life according to the accepted pattern. In the climactic scene, Cem meets his girlfriend for the last time, on the morning of his wedding, and makes violent love to her there on the staircase outside his flat, before succumbing to his 'fate' and marrying his young bride from Turkey. The violence of the lovemaking scene is the one outward expression of his internal turmoil, and the link between frustration and violence needs no comment. What is important is that the source of frustration is not the schizophrenia of an immigrant minority, but the oppressive structure of family life. The fact that the key scene takes place on a staircase, whether or not it is a function of deliberate *mise-en-scène*, recalls the symbolism of the staircase, especially the spiral staircase, which has in the cinema frequently connoted the ascent/descent of the inner journey.<sup>xii</sup> One recalls Turna's first attempt to escape the confines of her forty square metres, during which she nervously descends a few stories before climbing once more to her 'prison'. The staircase here is dark and sombre; in the scene in *Aprilkinder*, the lovemaking takes place by a window, the 'light from outside' perhaps signifying the possibilities of escape in Cem's relationship with his German girlfriend.

*Satici* ('Dealer', Thomas Arslan, 1998) also focuses on the grimmer aspects of immigrant existence, although this time the dilemma facing the main character, Can, centres round his (ultimately futile) struggle to detach himself from the world of drug dealing. On one level, it is an explicitly moral tale, with Can paying the price – arrest and imprisonment – for his involvement with drugs, but there is also a suggestion that it is the lack of employment opportunities for a semi-educated Turkish worker that forces him into an illegal trade. When Can does get a job, it is as a dishwasher in a restaurant owned by the uncle of a Turkish friend. His co-worker there lists his own previous jobs: shovelling snow during the winter freeze, cleaning telephone booths,

worker in a wholesale bakery.<sup>xiii</sup> The friend who got Can the dishwashing job, however, is a law student paying for his university education by working in his father's hardware store. Can's father also has a business, a small textile factory, where Can has refused to work because of his differences with his father. Thus it is implied that it is once again a failure within the Turkish family that is the root cause of Can's problems. The mother has had a nervous breakdown, apparently as a result of being mistreated and beaten by her husband. This reading is reinforced by a sub-plot in which Zeki, a young Turkish drug addict, is forced into (male) prostitution in order to feed his habit. When he is beaten up by the drug dealers for failing to pay a debt – and also as a punishment for being a 'queer' – the attackers are themselves Turkish.

The similarities between the behaviour of Can in *Satici* and Cem in *Aprilkinder* are striking. Both performances are marked by the same combination of frustration and anxiety, expressed by the actors (Tamer Yigit and Erdal Yildiz respectively) in a taut, sullen, humourless demeanour.<sup>xiv</sup> In both films the urban iconography is almost identical, even though *Satici* is shot in Berlin and *Aprilkinder* in Hamburg. There are the same run-down apartment buildings with peeling paintwork and graffiti-covered entrance lobbies. Typical shots of the cities' 'concrete jungle' include rusted corrugated iron fences, scraps of urban wasteland and green trees glimpsed momentarily between bare breeze-block walls.

#### 5.4 Gender and Sexuality in *Lola und Bilidikid*

Of the Turkish-German films of the 1990s, *Lola und Bilidikid* (Kutlug Ataman, 1998) stands out on various counts: its narrative complexity, the number and variety of its central characters, its innovative take on gender and sexuality in the Turkish diasporic community, and the drama of its climactic scene. On one count alone – its frank portrayal of homosexuality in the Turkish diasporic community – it could not avoid being provocative to Islamist Turks and more conservative German audiences.<sup>xv</sup> Men are seen kissing and sharing a bed. ‘We’re in Germany,’ says Bili to ‘Lola’. ‘Nobody gives a shit what we do to each other.’ The film also contains a bold depiction of racial stereotyping and racial abuse. Turks during the film are referred to variously as ‘kebaps’, ‘faggots’ and even, with a careless disregard for geography, ‘camel-fuckers’.

*Lola und Bilidikid* is set in the Berlin of the migrant underclass, with most of the locations in Kreuzberg, the centre of Turkish life in the city. Many of the key scenes of the film take place in the flat occupied by a family consisting of the mother and two sons: the older son, Osman, the macho, bullying ‘head of the family’<sup>xvi</sup>, and the younger son, Murat, a gay student struggling with the fact of his homosexuality. The third son is Lola, a crossdressing performer, who has left the family home and shares her life with her gay lover, Bili. These two are the eponymous heroes of the film’s title. The family flat is cramped and lacking in amenities. When Murat takes a bath, it is in a tin tub positioned in the middle of the kitchen floor. Much of the rest of the action takes place in seedy nightclubs and dilapidated warehouses. Three important scenes take place in public toilets. The first shows Bili getting paid for performing oral sex on a German customer in the toilet of the nightclub where Lola performs. The second shows Murat doing the same for a German fellow-student and then getting abused and beaten by the student’s friends. The third shows Murat, after leaving home, having his first ugly experience of prostitution.

The way in which the film dwells repetitively on such scenes indicates their importance. Paid oral sex in a public convenience would seem an extremity of moral degradation, yet the characters concerned, Murat and Bili, are portrayed with sympathy, unlike the bullying Osman. The ideological message appears to be that the indignity of male prostitution is forced on the characters not by their lack of moral values but by their economic deprivation and their status as social outcasts. Lola, the crossdresser, is routinely threatened by German neo-fascist and homophobic thugs. One day she is found murdered and the audience is led to assume that the murder was carried out by these thugs, on whom Bili takes a terrible revenge by killing two of them and castrating the third. It transpires, however, that the murder of Lola has been carried out not by the thugs but by his/her own brother, Osman. At first it seems that Osman was motivated by the fact that Lola represents a terrible threat to the family honour, and that he/she might lead Murat 'astray'. In the final scene, however, Murat confronts Osman, in front of their mother, and accuses him of having himself 'used' Lola sexually before throwing him/her out of the house, thus suggesting that it is Osman's own latent homosexuality that split the family and led to Lola's death. Thus it is not German racism or homophobia, or indeed any external threat, which leads to the violent collapse of the family but internal dissensions and repressions within the family itself.

The narrative of *Lola und Bilidikid* is conveyed by a cinematic style marked by full, bright colours, a fluid cinematography and settings which are not confined to cramped flats and grim urban landscapes. The plot is characterised by diversity of character, dramatic action and narrative unpredictability. All this contrasts strikingly with the minimalism in terms of colour, light, dramatic action and characterisation, as well as with the dour monotony of pace and dialogue, of other Turkish-German films. The explicit theme of the film is sexuality, which is conveyed in a relatively complex narrative construction consisting of three parallel plots (the

Osman-Murat-Lola story; the Bili-Lola romance, attended by Lola's cross-dressing friends and colleagues; and a further sub-plot dealing with a Turkish male prostitute, Iskender, and his aristocratic German lover, Frederic). The theme of sexuality is treated both with deep seriousness (Lola's death; Murat's beating) but also in the spirit of comic masquerade in the scenes featuring Lola's fellow performers, 'Scheherazade' and 'Calypso'. The names immediately suggest an element of the multicultural picaresque<sup>xvii</sup>, and these men/women with their extravagant costumes and witty dialogues serve to leaven the drama with humour. 'Normal' gender roles and sexual preferences are turned upside down. In one scene, 'Calypso' is leaving the flat where 'she' lives, provocatively dressed. On the staircase, she meets her respectable, headscarfed neighbour. The neighbour complains about her going out 'dressed like that', and about how previously she had wandered about dressed as a man. 'Calypso' explains. 'Girl, I told myself,' she says, 'it's a man's world out there. In order to protect your womanly honour, you have to dress as a man.' A man's world... a man dressed as a woman ... the womanly honour of a man. The gender confusion is complete.

Of all the Turkish-German films, *Lola und Bilidikid* is the one that most nearly approaches 'classic' melodrama: the exteriorisation of family tensions, the violence of repressed emotion, the tragic fate of a 'woman' (Lola), victimised for her impermissible desires. Even the ethnic conflict partly assumes a class basis, in the Iskender-Frederic sub-plot, in which an earthy, plainspoken Turk outwits a sophisticated aristocratic German. What the film achieves, and it is done with considerable skill and boldness, is to interpolate the issue of 'deviant' sexuality into what would otherwise be a typical melodramatic plot: the 'girl' is ejected from the family for making an inappropriate sexual alliance, pays the price for giving up the security of family and family values, is revenged by her lover and causes an irreparable split within her own family. As

in classic melodrama, there is a real 'villain', the brother whose failure to confront his own sexuality drives him to fratricide.

The castration scene, which I have referred to as 'climactic', requires some further elaboration. Having mistakenly decided that the gang of neo-fascist Germans are responsible for Lola's murder, Bili sets out to take revenge. Bili is, *de facto*, Lola's husband. An early scene of the film – when the two are in bed – shows that Bili clings to the illusion that one day he and Lola will be able to marry and to set up a 'normal' household. Naively, and rather touchingly, ignoring the problem of Lola's gender, Bili sees his role as the traditional husband/protector. When he seeks revenge for Lola's murder, he is accompanied by Murat, Lola's younger brother. For both of them, Lola's killing is actually their dishonour as well as a personal tragedy. In the chase, Bili exhibits an intense, passionate brutality. He chases the gang down into a maze of deserted cellars, kills one, wounds another, and finds the third trying to climb up through a manhole entrance to the safety of the street. Catching him from below, he castrates him with a butcher's knife.

The act of castration, which in Freudian analysis constitutes the essential source of anxiety underlying a boy's ambiguous relationship with his father, is, perhaps surprisingly, rarely represented in cinema. Partly this may be due to the shocking nature of the act itself, but no doubt also because Freud indicates the anxiety as an archetypal fear hidden in the subconscious. In order for it to fulfil its central role in the Oedipal scenario, it is sufficient for it to exist as an unrealised threat. Therefore when the act is represented on the screen, it necessarily commands the attention of the film critic. In *Lola und Bilidikid*, the peculiar violence of the act is not dictated by the narrative. Osman might have killed the boy in another way, as with his first victim. The effect of the castration is to force the Oedipal issue into the discourse of the film. The issue is already



there, implicitly, for Osman has replaced his (dead) father as family patriarch and then ejects his own brother/son. The castration scene both echoes and highlights it.

The chase after the German boy takes place in a maze of underground cellars and the castration itself inside a manhole leading up to the street above. It is conceivable that the location was determined by purely practical considerations. The budget was limited, the number of suitable venues for a wild and violent chase perhaps also limited. Yet it is very difficult to believe that the director Kutlug Ataman was unaware of the symbolic value of the underground site. Any Freudian or Jungian dream analysis would recognise underground cellars as connoting the subconscious. The fact that the number and layout of the cellars suggested a 'maze' would underline this, as would the fact that the castration took place as the German boy struggled to force his way out of the underground maze also suggests an explicit symbolism.

What is at stake here is an attack on the traditional family from all sides: the patriarchy is shown as violent and hypocritical; the 'normal' loving relationship between a man and a woman is represented by the same sex relationship between Lola and Bili, and the extended family by their cross-dressing friends. It is to this 'family' that Murat is welcomed when he leaves the patriarchal home: from the old, homogenized, repressive version to the new, hybrid, libertarian one. At the end of the film, even the mother leaves the family home – which up to this point in the film she has not left even once. She too is shown as forced out by the brutality of the 'patriarch' (her eldest son Osman). Taking to the street, she makes the powerful symbolic gesture of tearing off and throwing away her headscarf. This is not so much a gesture of emancipation as a gesture of rejection, the rejection of the family as she has known it. The headscarf is the symbol of her subordination, her 'coveredness' (*kaplama*), which in turn is the corollary of the authority of the patriarch.

### 5.5 Orphans and Roads: *Mercedes Mon Amour*, *Auslands Tournee* and *Im Juli*

*Mercedes Mon Amour* (Turkish title: '*Fikrimin Ince Gulu*', 1992) was directed by Tunc Okan, who had directed *Otobus* eighteen years before.<sup>xviii</sup> After long years working in menial jobs in Munich, the central character, Bayram, is able at last to buy the car of his dreams: a bright yellow 350SE Mercedes, which he will drive home to Turkey to show off to his fellow villagers in a poor Anatolian village. The first part of the film is treated as comedy, as Bayram and his precious car are involved in a series of bumps and scrapes as the car loses first a wing mirror, then a bumper, then a door and the windscreen, and finally almost everything but a battered hull. By the time Bayram arrives in the neighbourhood of his childhood, the car is a symbol not of his wealth and success but of his ruination.

At one level, this is a simple morality tale: caring only for oneself and one's material assets leads to disaster in the end.<sup>xix</sup> However, the interest of the film is in its examination of the issue in a rather specific case. Bayram discovers, as many returning migrants to Turkey and elsewhere have discovered, that he is not, as he had anticipated, welcomed with open arms, but is in fact treated with distrust and even distaste. '*Ey! Almanya'dan!*' they call out to him ('Hey! You from Germany!'). In one scene on the ferry across the edge of the Marmara Sea, Bayram has so far forgotten the polite conventions of his native land that he forces his attentions on an elegant Turkish woman, simply assuming that he can 'buy' her through his status as the owner of a Mercedes.<sup>xx</sup> She retorts by slapping his face. When finally he arrives at the location of his village, he finds that it is no longer there, having been destroyed to make way for archaeological excavations.<sup>xxi</sup> Turkey itself has changed in his absence. The familiarities have disappeared. It is not home any more.<sup>xxii</sup> With his car destroyed, Bayram has literally no one and nothing to turn to.

He has staked his whole working life on the acquisition of wealth abroad, and when the symbol and product of this wealth is gone, there remains nothing.

Bayram's progress eastwards is punctuated by scenes in flashback which recall his desperate attempts to be recruited as a migrant worker. The process involves applications, medical checks and a lengthy period of waiting. Bayram is helped through the process by a friend, whose place (and identity) Bayram steals in his impatience to be gone. His girlfriend Kezban loves him but he abandons her without a word. At the start of the film, in Munich, there is another woman to whom he has promised a lift (in return for sex). She too is summarily abandoned. It transpires in fact that Bayram's whole life has been lived in a terrible selfishness, and finally the flashback scenes explain the reason. Bayram was an orphan, brought up by his uncle. He is a man without family. He is pictured in the village as set apart by this, and in a dramatic scene, the other boys in the village surround him and taunt him. 'Orphan! Shithead! Dirty orphan!' they cry.

The loss of the past is examined in a quite different way in the recent film *Auslands Tournee* ('Tour Abroad'; Turkish title: *Yurtdisi Turu*, Ayse Polat, Germany 1999), in which a gay Turkish performer, Zeki, is reluctantly saddled with the responsibility of caring for a young Turkish girl, Senay, who has recently lost her father. Zeki seems an unlikely candidate for caring for a fatherless child, and his initial distaste for the task closely resembles that of Ryan O'Neal in Bogdanovich's classic *Paper Moon* (Peter Bogdanovich, 1973). Like *Paper Moon* and also the more recent *A Perfect World* (Clint Eastwood, 1993), *Auslands Tournee* focuses on the relationship between the man and the young girl as it develops from resentment on his side and dependence on hers to something more like a partnership in adversity. The vulnerability of Zeki, because of his sexuality and his profession, is emphasised in a rather clumsy and predictable

assault at the hands of violent homophobes, and the resulting injury temporarily reverses the roles of the two main characters, with the girl forced to look after the man during his convalescence. When Zeki's Mercedes is stolen and they are left by the road with their baggage, the psychological and symbolic importance of the car, not only in terms of transport and status but as the nearest thing they have to home, is highlighted. All they have now is each other and the elusive dream of finding the girl's mother. When they finally arrive in Istanbul, the mother is located, but wants nothing to do with her abandoned child. This rejection is mirrored in a meeting with Zeki's own ageing mother, whom he has not seen for fifteen years and who, while not actually rejecting him, can no longer summon up any real affection for him or offer a home to the girl. 'Are you married?' she asks her son, and the implication is that if he had been able to say yes, their relationship might have been mended. The return to 'home' and family depends on the acceptance of certain norms impossible for Zeki to agree to.

This double rejection lies at the heart of the film. If, for the immigrant, Turkey remains the symbolic 'homeland', then the mother/child relationship is the key to this relationship, and there comes a point where this cannot be restored. The single long look cast by Senay's mother at her child contains more bitterness than affection, as if the girl was the one to abandon her rather than vice versa, as if all immigrants are deserters in a sense. In *Auslands Tournee*, the search for family has failed. Zeki and Senay get in a taxi and go looking for his 'friends'. In the new world of the immigrant, friendship must replace the traditional family ties that are lost or broken. The 'subject' of the film may be said to be the relationship between Zeki and Senay, with Zeki's sexuality providing an important thematic element, but the narrative itself begins with the death of the girl's father and ends with the 'death' of her mother, and it is this that gives a 'structure' to the narrative.<sup>xxiii</sup>

In *Im Juli* ('In July', Turkish title *Temmuz'da*, Fatih Akin, Germany 2000), the central character is a timid and bespectacled German teacher, Daniel, who grows in confidence and stature as the film progresses, losing his spectacles at some point and apparently needing them no longer, his shortsightedness left behind with his innocence. For Daniel, the road to Istanbul is a rite of passage: his first fight, his first illegal smoke, victim of theft and finally a thief himself. The nice irony of the piece is that he is chasing the wrong girl, the Turkish girl Melek, whereas his real soul mate is there right next to him, July herself. Melek's name (Angel) even suggests that she is part fantasy, like the exoticism of Istanbul. In their first meeting, she tells Daniel of the *yakamoz*, the phosphorescence of the waters of Istanbul, which to him is a fragment of Oriental mystery. At the very end of the film, Daniel and July walk over the Bosphorus bridge, which separates Europe from Asia. This, then, is the end of their journey, the bridge from East to West.

The symbolic and connotative nature of the story is underlined by a vague underlying fatalism which is also reminiscent of the 1960s counterculture. July gives Daniel a ring which carries an image of the sun, telling him that he must find someone bearing the same image. Melek has this image on her T-shirt, but July, it is later discovered, carries it as a tattoo. The image of the sun suggest the East, as if the whole journey is a search for the rising sun. The sense of fate or destiny is a rather obvious narrative device necessary to explain or reflect the many coincidences on which the story depends, although the love story, and in particular July's artless insistence that Daniel is the man for her, manages to remain quite touching in spite of the contrivance.

Daniel has not only lost his spectacles but his passport. He is therefore legally, even if temporarily, stateless. Again we may see this as a metaphor for his having torn up his roots for the sake of a quest. The passport represents his old identity. Along the road are to be found the frontiers, from Germany to Austria, Austria to Hungary, Hungary to Bulgaria and so on, and each

of these frontiers not only represents a real problem to someone without a passport, but also symbols for the stages in the voyage of self-discovery. This symbolic value is explicitly pointed out when Daniel's 'marriage' to July actually takes place across the barrier at one of the frontiers. He must say yes to the marriage in order to cross the frontier. Actually what he is saying 'yes' to is a commitment, reiterated at the end of the film. This commitment is a frontier in his voyage of self-discovery.

In determining the purpose and scope of *Temmuz'da*, the omissions and absences are as significant as what is included. There is almost no sense of life going on beyond the immediate concerns of the narrative. The road is there, but the camera never once dwells on the farms or gardens or mountains or villages along the way. There is in fact no sense of landscape, its atmosphere and moods, no lakes, no trees, no birds, There is no one leaning over a gate or walking along the road and July herself is the only hitchhiker. The scenes in the roadside cafe and the Viennese club appear like staged studio events, with their strictly limited cast of characters and lack of incidental detail. Even the Danube boatmen who throw Daniel and July off their barge are scarcely more than an ensemble of silhouettes, voices and gestures. There is only a single border guard at the frontier where they get married, and this character, who also 'conducts' the marriage is played by the director himself. There could be no clearer evidence of the fact that the film is expressionist rather than realist, mythic rather than narrative. Everything that does not relate directly to 'the journey' is treated as a distraction, and it really makes no difference whether their route takes them among mountains or over flat plains, through charming villages or suburban wastelands. What signifies is the road, and the borders. There is one river, but this is also a border, and it must be crossed because the frontier post cannot be used by someone without a passport. The river is too broad and full to be forded, and Daniel therefore accelerates up a ramp

and attempts to leap it in the car. This unlikely feat fails and the car lands in the water, but it is the boldness of the attempt that matters, another stage in Daniel's odyssey.

*Im Juli* is essentially a road movie, and like the classic Hollywood road movie, one function of the chronotope of the road is the absence of parents.<sup>xxiv</sup> In *Im Juli*, the four main characters (two Turks and two Germans) are all in their twenties. There is no mention of parents or of siblings or of any family at all. It is a fantasy of escape, an abnegation of 'home'. The appellation 'fantasy' does not condemn a film to being without meaning, but what is significant is that once again the parents, with their conventions and objections, can only be handled by being *absent*.

## 5.6 Schizophrenia in *Yara*

In *Almanya Aci Vatan*<sup>xxv</sup>, the gradual disintegration (in its literal sense of losing integrality) of the character of Guldane may be taken to indicate the onset of a kind of psychosis. What drives her to this is shown as a combination of the pressures of the workplace and, more importantly, the impossible demands of her husband, culminating in his insistence on an abortion. In *Yara* ('The Wound', Yilmaz Arslan, 1998), the psychosis of a young Turkish-German woman, Hulya, appears to have been instigated precisely by a form of cultural schizophrenia. She had been brought up in Germany, which she had grown to think of as home. After the departure of her mother, who goes off to live with another man, her father decides to send Hulya back to Turkey to be looked after by her uncle (his brother) and aunt. The opening scenes take place in the uncle's home in a Turkish village, with Hulya indulging in various eccentric and anti-social forms of behaviour, wrapping herself in silence, refusing to eat, endlessly rocking the small family dog, snapping at her cousins. The rest of the film follows her attempts to escape from this situation and return to Germany, without either money or ticket. Her feelings of extreme antagonism towards her family and of disdain for the society at large, as well as her indifference towards her own health and safety, are taken – first by the Turkish police and then by the doctors and nurses of the asylum to which she is sent – as signs of mental illness. Through the help of a Turkish-German girlfriend, Nermin, she is released from the asylum and returns to Germany, but the last scenes of the film show her still acting in a disturbed and anti-social manner, apparently threatening the one relationship, with Nermin, that has sustained her during the action of the film.

In *Donus*, *Almanya Aci Vatan* and *40m2 Deutschland*, the women's dilemmas, although pointing to deeper social and ideological tensions, are ostensibly caused by the behaviour of the respective husbands. In the case of *Yara*, the source of her 'wound' (*yara*) seems more purely



existential. She desperately wants to return to Germany, yet when she gets there, she is still unable to behave in a 'normal' or socially acceptable fashion. Partly, it is suggested, this may result from the tension of 'in-betweenness'. Certainly she is unable to feel comfortable in Turkey after acquiring the different social habits and values of a German city. This is symbolised by her craving to smoke cigarettes (continually emphasised), a habit still unacceptable in a young woman in a traditional Turkish village. "Why do you want to go back to Germany?" her uncle asks her. "I even let you smoke." Yet Hulya is not really represented as caught between cultures. On the contrary, the girl is portrayed as having nothing in common with her Turkish family or with Turkish culture and society. All her sympathies and desires point to Germany. What lies at the root of her anguish/psychosis is not apparently a cultural tension but the failure of her own nuclear family.

Her father has 'rejected' her by sending her back to Turkey. When her uncle accuses her mother of being 'a whore', she takes her mother's side. "Maybe she's happier with the other man," Hulya suggests. "You'll end up a slut like your mother," is his retort. Here, 'sluttishness' refers not only to the action of a woman who abandons her husband for another man but also to the contagion of 'German' values to which emigrant families are vulnerable. The uncle is emphatic in his judgement of those who go abroad to work. "They only think of money and return as cripples," he says. Hulya defends her mother (and also by implication 'German' values), but when later she goes to find her mother, now living with her new husband and two stepchildren, she suffers a renewed rejection. Her mother insists that she cannot openly acknowledge Hulya as her daughter, and will not even refer to her by her own name. It is this rejection that leads directly to Hulya's troubles with the police and admission to an asylum. While trying to find a way of obtaining a release from the asylum, she is told by one of the other inmates: '*The only person who can get you out of here is your father*'. The audience would naturally assume this to refer to a

legal regulation, but in the event it is Hulya's friend Nermin who arranges for her release, at which time no such regulation is mentioned. Thus the remark would appear have more of a metaphorical meaning, indicating that the father-daughter relationship is at the root of Hulya's condition.

The cinematic treatment of *Yara* is both more melodramatic and more expressionistic than *40m2 Deutschland*. The scenes both in the police station and in the asylum have the appearance of being exaggerated to produce the maximum dramatic and emotional effect. Every policeman is excessively unsympathetic and the police chief's verdict that Hulya be taken to the asylum is delivered in an ostentatiously mannered, almost oracular style. Inside the asylum, the extreme behaviour of the inmates, the extreme severity of the regime and the extreme brutality of the environment produce an atmosphere of unreality, of deliberate artifice. This 'expressionist' style is underlined by several dream sequences, in which Hulya sees an endless repetition of human figures on a flat, featureless landscape, or sees herself transported on railway wagons which carry motionless upright figures like cardboard cut-outs in the style of Magritte.<sup>xxvi</sup> These dream images are unique within the cycle of Turkish-German films and are strongly reminiscent of the dream sequences of certain of Fellini's films, notably *Juliet of the Spirits* (1965). In fact, the similarity is so strong as to suggest a direct influence, an influence which may be reflected in the choice of the heroine's name. The English equivalent of Hulya is Julia, thus Juliet, or Giuletta in Italian. Whether or not this is so, there are discernible in *Yara*, both in terms of the theme of madness/existential alienation and in the surrealist dream imagery, echoes of the European arthouse cinema. The recurrence of dream sequences during the film, together with the schizophrenic or hysterical nature of the main character are sufficient to indicate a 'Freudian' scenario. Unfortunately – and there is no telling whether this is as a result of a deliberate opacity – the dreams resist an easy interpretation. The 'Magrittesque' figure of the man who appears to float

repeatedly over her mental horizon certainly has a symbolic weight, but whether he is father, lover, brother or 'everyman' is not clear. The railway carriages may signify that Hulya is being 'shunted' involuntarily between stations – between Germany and Turkey for example – but there is no indication of any sexual content as in other more phallic representations of trains, railway lines, tunnels and bridges. The railway here would seem to be more connotative of an impersonality or loss of control than of sexual aggression.<sup>xxvii</sup>

There is in the film one further example of deliberate but puzzling symbolism. It has been mentioned that one of the symptoms of Hulya's neurosis at the beginning of the film is an obstinate refusal to talk, and in fact the first real discussion she has is with a puppeteer, a fellow passenger on the bus that carries her away from her uncle's house. Apparently sensing Hulya's reluctance to communicate, the puppeteer addresses her through his puppet, and the girl is happy to talk to the lifeless mannequin. "I'm afraid of Germany," the puppet tells her. "*Germany's on fire!*" After a while, Hulya has relaxed enough for the puppeteer to talk to her directly, and his last words to her, as he returns the puppet to its case, are: "The world is no bigger than *this suitcase.*" The irony of the speechless talking to the speechless is clear enough, and is echoed in a subsequent scene in the police station where Hulya makes friends with a dumb child who performs menial tasks around the station. The dramatic effect of a doll uttering strange epigrammatical statements is also considerable. We might take the words as constituting a vague insinuation of danger, an abstruse warning, were it not for the fact that the puppet reappears at the very end of the film. As Hulya walks through the streets of Hamburg, apparently unable to control her inner demons, we see the puppet cast in the gutter, motionless and masterless. It is, perhaps, an image of herself: abandoned, speechless. If so, the puppeteer's words indicate simply that we take our own world with us wherever we go. Just as the puppet is confined to his case except when his strings are being pulled by someone else, so Hulya is confined within her own solitary

psyche, cast away by her parents. In the absence of other clues within the text, the decoding of this overt symbolism remains problematic. But together with the dream sequences, it does indicate generic links with the cinematic language of Fellini and Bergman.

There are thus at least three 'intrusive' or anomalous episodes in *Yara*: the dream sequences, the scenes with the puppet and the inexplicable remark about the father in the asylum (also somehow 'like a voice from a dream'). Together they encourage the critic to attempt a 'symptomatic' interpretation, as if a series of clues have been furnished, none of which has the appearance of being accidental or incidental. My own reading is as follows: Hulya is a schizophrenic personality and the source of her schizophrenia is the separation of her parents, thus the destruction of 'the family'. She herself does not understand this, believing that a return to Germany would 'cure' her, which is shown as not being so. Without a family, she is exposed to the world (the endlessly repeated man in her dreams), and at the mercy of impersonal forces (the dreamed trains, as well as the police and the doctors). The primary symptom of her condition is her inability or unwillingness to speak, which recalls the divide that in Zenocak's words, 'runs right through my tongue', yet in the final scenes of the film, her problem is that of speaking incessantly, inconsequentially, as if her tongue has been freed but the 'illness' remains. The puppet which is her alter-ego is abandoned and useless because there is no longer anybody to pull the strings. The puppeteer, who is the only adult in the film to show her any real sympathy or understanding, and is in fact, an image of the 'good father', has disappeared, left behind in Turkey.<sup>xxviii</sup>

### 5.7 Fathers and Sons in *Ich Chef Du Turnschuh* and *Kurz und Schmerzlos*

*Ich Chef Du Turnschuh* ('Me Boss, You Running Shoe', Hussi Kutlucan, 1998) has an Armenian asylum seeker as its main character, and Afghans, Iranians, Indians and Nigerians among its minor roles. Kutlucan himself plays the Armenian protagonist. Making the central character an Armenian – although there is nothing in the diegesis to prevent him from being Turkish – indicates a deliberate attempt to distance the film from purely bilateral concerns. Besides, the problems faced by asylum seekers are shared by all nationalities and are intrinsically separate from those of long-term labour migrants and their descendants. As Gokturk points out, there are scenes in the film which deliberately highlight 'masquerade and performance of ethnicity, (an asylum seeker from Turkey masquerades as an Indian, a German child has his hair coloured brown and accordingly starts talking in broken German)' [Gokturk 2000: 73]. In addition, there are Indians who try to communicate with the asylum camp manager in English, and Nigerians who speak to the Armenian in German, which also serves as the *lingua franca* of a roomful of Afghans and Iranians. The irony of a Turkish director electing to play the part of an Armenian, given the extremely sensitive nature of the relations between the two countries, should not be missed. The effect of this multi-ethnic melange is to cast the focus of the film on the problems of asylum rather than on any narrower ethnic issues and also to indicate the blurring of national identities that can occur as European cities struggle to cope with increasingly heterogeneous populations. The tone of the film is comic, but there are still some poignant comments on the fate of the illegal immigrant. On the building site<sup>xxix</sup>, they are paid 5 DM per hour rather than the normal rate of 16 and in fact remain unpaid for six weeks. They can be fired without notice and without cause. 'I Hassan. I almost German,' says a North African pathetically.

In order to stay in Germany, the Armenian, Dudie, has first to abandon his own girlfriend and then to pay 1,000 DM to a German prostitute to get her to marry him. When she is killed by the father of her child, Dudie is left looking after the boy. Like Zeki in *Auslands Tournee*, he is very reluctant to do so, but the boy attaches himself to him, having no one else. "I'm not your father!" "You wanted to marry my mother, so you're my father now. I don't want to go back to the orphanage, please." For a while, an odd family is reconstituted when Dudie and the boy find a home with an elderly German lady<sup>xxx</sup> before Dudie is arrested by the police and deported. The film thus moves through three broken 'families' – the separation of Dudie and his lover at the beginning, the (accidental) killing of the boy's mother by his father, the arrest of Dudie and their departure from the home of the elderly German lady. In the end, however, despite Dudie's protestations, the boy will not say to the police that Dudie is not his real father and leaves with him on the plane back to Armenia.

*Kurz und Schmerzlos* is on the surface a gangster movie which has as its three main characters a Serb, a Greek and a Turk. Again, this seems to be a deliberate device to avoid a narrow concern with Turkish ethnicity. The problems faced by the three protagonists are shown as broadly similar and the camaraderie that exists between them suggests 'the pleasures of hybridity'. There is also a defusing of the racist issue through a casual racist badinage – "Kick the gypsy's arse"; "Never trust a Serb!"; and Greeks accused of being 'stinking cheats'. When the Serb is entrusted with a criminal task, given to him as a test by an Albanian mafia boss, he manipulates a gang of Kurds into doing the dirty work for him. The film ends with the Albanian killing the Serb and the Greek, and the Turk, Gabriel, avenging their deaths by killing the Albanian.

With a Turkish director, a largely German crew and a multi-ethnic cast, funded by German money and featuring four main protagonists of different national origins, *Kurz und Schmerzlos* indubitably qualifies as transnational cinema. But the film is also a gangster movie, and in terms of narrative, dialogue and dramatic action, it is the gangster genre that provides the film with its generic conventions. There are the choreographed action scenes, the usual emphasis on guns, the characteristic milieu of the criminal underclass, the ruthless mafia boss, the violent denouement. There is the 'hardboiled' dialogue concerning 'chicks' and 'babes' and guns. Most telling of all, there is an explicit allusion to Al Pacino. "Pacino is the king," says Kosta, the Greek. "With balls as big as a dinosaur's," says Bobby, the Serb.

The world of petty gangsterdom is the narrative setting for the internal struggles of Gabriel, who is recently released from gaol and who dreams of returning to Turkey to sell jewellery in a Turkish coastal resort. He defends his sister against mistreatment by her boyfriend, is concerned about his own 'machismo' ('Do you think I'm macho?' he asks his girlfriend at one point) and about what is the 'honourable' course. Unusually, for Turkish-German films, his own father is alive and well and unimpaired. Yet the only relationship between father and son consists of the father's repeated pleas for Gabriel to pray with him. Almost every time the father appears, he is on the way to the mosque or engaged in prayer. Gabriel's refusal to join him in his devotions consists of a sullen, almost wordless, denial. If this is the revolt of agnostic youth against the Islamic traditions of the patriarchy – and the reiteration of the scene suggests that this is so – it is made without confrontation, without drama, without exchange of ideas or arguments: it is done in an uneasy silence.

### 5.8 *Berlin in Berlin*: a Celebration of Hybridity

In *Berlin in Berlin* (Sinan Cetin, 1993), a young German, Thomas, is pursued by three Turkish brothers out to revenge the death of their older brother at Thomas' hands. By an almost farcical coincidence, Thomas is forced to seek refuge in the men's own home, and as long as he stays there, he is protected by the strict law of Turkish hospitality: it is not permitted to do harm to anyone sheltering under your own roof. What follows is therefore an elaborate stand-off, with Thomas unable to leave the flat and the brothers unable to carry out their revenge. Thomas' original 'crime' had been to take photographs of the wife of the dead brother, Dilber, who had worked in the same factory. The brother had become jealous and confronted Thomas, who had accidentally killed him by shoving him on to the sharp end of the iron upright of a picket fence. The eldest of the remaining brothers, Murtuz, a man of fiery temperament, was committed by the rule of Turkish family honour, to avenge his brother's death. However, it becomes clear that Murtuz is motivated more by simple jealousy than by the desire for revenge. He is seen keenly eyeing the sleeping form of his sister-in-law and later, in a crucial scene, he watches her masturbating, through the keyhole of her bedroom door. In characteristically melodramatic style, the scene is accompanied by a non-diegetic soundtrack featuring a swelling chorus of angelic voices.

Murtuz is the proprietor of a small coffee shop, which he runs with the help of his brothers. The ownership of the coffee shop reveals the family to be not of the poorest class economically (self-employed rather than paid labourers), but the shop is the setting for only two scenes in the film, one brief and incidental. The second shows a German skinhead loitering close to the shop and shouting out racist abuse. Murtuz crosses the road to deal with him, whereupon the rest of the gang appears and beats him up. Interestingly, this episode plays no significant part



in the main plot of the film. Its narrative function is precisely the exteriorisation of inner tension.. The street is the exterior space, which allows the overt expression of violence, and the skinhead attack on Murtuz appears as a kind of displacement. It should also be pointed out that Cetin's film was made at the height of the racially inspired attacks in German towns. To an extent, therefore, the scene in *Berlin in Berlin* can be seen as mirroring disturbing events in the real world of the time, but this is the only example of the 'intrusion' of the actual into what is essentially family melodrama with strongly comic and even farcical elements. In *Der Tagesspiegel*, German film critic H. Martenstein referred to *Berlin in Berlin* as '*multikulturelle Melodram*' [13.5.1994].

A further comment on the inner tensions engendered within the family, and by implication having little to do with ethnic conflict or other external agents, is provided by the viewpoint of the mother, who blames Dilber, her daughter-in-law, for the death of her son and not their German 'guest'. When she sees the photographs of Dilber taken by Thomas, she spits at Dilber's image, as if even the photographs were somehow her fault. Both mother and grandmother (there are four generations of the family living in the one flat) appear quite taken with Thomas, who entertains the family by playing the guitar and even starts to learn Turkish with the grandmother. The younger brothers also come to accept the presence of Thomas in the household. Together they drink beer and watch football on the television. When Thomas finally decides to leave the flat, regardless of what Murtuz will do, Murtuz comes after him with a gun but cannot pull the trigger. The last scene of the film shows Thomas and Dilber leaving together, suggesting what Gokturk calls 'a step in the direction of ... celebrations of mobility and mutual exposure, rather than victimisation and closure.' [Gokturk, 2000: 69] The hostile reaction of Dilber's young son to his mother's decision ('I'm not your son any longer!') shows that the patriarchal traditions of Turkish family life are kept alive in the person of the family's youngest representative.

### **5.9 *Der Schone Tag*: the Emancipated Woman**

In important respects, *Der Schone Tag* ('The Fine Day', Turkish title, '*Güzel Bir Gün*', Thomas Arslan, 2000) represents a new development in the Turkish-German cultural production, most evidently in the independent lifestyle of the heroine. Deniz is a twenty-one-year-old Turkish girl living in Berlin. While trying to build her career as a screen actress, she works as a dubber for foreign films. Her job emphasises her absolute mastery of the German language. It is not so much that she speaks it 'like a native', but that she is to all intents and purposes a 'native'. She is in fact representative of a radical and permanent alteration in the younger generations of Germanised Turks. As Tan and Wadhoff point out.

In the third generation, even body language, facial expressions, gestures and postures have visibly changed. These changes suggest that the individual's emotional and cognitive reference points have also changed from the culture of origin to the German host culture.

[Tan and Waldhoff, 1996: 146]

Deniz lives alone in a smart studio flat, furnished in the spare, modern style of an educated and independent young woman: desk, computer, answerphone, bookshelves full of books. Her mother also lives in the city, but they live separately. The father is dead. At one point, Hulya says to her mother that it is not good for her, the mother, to live alone. The fact that they both ignore the solution that would be obvious and natural to Turkish families – that they live together – is an indication that the 'old ways' of Turkish culture have been left behind. As a young woman making her own way in the world, it is more 'natural' for her to have her own flat.

The plot of *Der Schöne Tag*, which as its title suggests takes place inside twenty-four hours, is minimal. Deniz takes the initiative in separating from her German boyfriend and that same day meets a Portuguese-German boy with whom she strikes up a relationship. The narrative of the film consists basically of five extended dialogues between Deniz and, respectively, her boyfriend, her mother, the Portuguese boy, her sister and a German woman met in a café who turns out to be a university lecturer in the social sciences. Each of the dialogues, in their different ways, concern the subject of emotional attachments. Her mother gives her advice about relationships; her married sister tells of her decision to have an abortion without informing her husband; her conversation with her German boyfriend shows the boy discovering his need for her only at the moment of losing her; the university lecturer tells her of the history of romantic love; and Diego, the Portuguese boy, while obviously interested in Deniz herself, tells her that he is expecting the return of his fiancé from abroad the next morning.

Deniz is attempting to make a career as an actress, but is meanwhile employed as a dubber of French films into German. This employment not only underlines her mastery of the German language, but emphasises the limited frame of social reference of the diegesis. Deniz is a would-be actress and dubber of films, the Portuguese boy, Diego, works in broadcasting, the German woman in the café is a university lecturer, Deniz' sister is concerned with her career in an architect's office. The explicit generic connections of *Der Schöne Tag* are made clear by the self-reflexive allusion to Eric Rohmer's *Conte d'Ete* (1996), the film that Deniz is currently working on as a dubber. Fragments of dialogue from the film are shown in scenes in the dubbing studio, and there are clear parallels between the narrative of Rohmer's film and that of *Der Schöne Tag* itself. In *Conte d'Ete*, a young man awaiting the arrival of his girlfriend, while away his time with another girl. The film is structured as a series of extended dialogues concerning the nature of love, fidelity and delusion. Indeed, one could read Arslan's film almost as a kind of homage to

Roehmer. This may represent a quite deliberate statement on Arslan's part that his film has cut its links both with the Turkish cinematic tradition and with the tense concerns of diasporic cinema (which provide the themes for Arslan's earlier films). Deniz is shown as being at ease with herself, both as a Turk and as a woman. In contrast with the earlier Turkish-German women's films, the cinematography of *Der Schone Tag* is marked by full, bright colours, well-lit interiors and an urban iconography which suggests a cheerful optimism. Several scenes are set in the Tiergarten, with the trees in their lush summer foliage. Meetings are in pleasant, spacious cafes. Even the underground trains and public buses are clean and quiet. The acting is naturalistic, even overly so. When Deniz auditions for a starring role in a film, she is asked to tell a story and does so in a flat, clipped, neutral style which exactly mirrors the unemotional tone of the rest of the film, but is oddly inappropriate for the purposes of an audition. In terms of character, narrative, lighting and iconography, *Der Schone Tag* is far removed both from the melodrama of *Donus*, the grim realism of *Otobus* or *Deutschland 40m<sup>2</sup>*, the oppressive patriarchalism of *Almanya Aci Vatan* and the existential angst of *Yara*. It reveals a world in which a single Turkish woman may live confidently and independently in a German city, pursuing a career, experimenting with different relationships, even swiftly and efficiently dealing with a gang of German street kids who call out sexual taunts to her in the park. The major difference between *Conte d'Ete* and *Der Schone Tag* is that *Der Schone Tag* lacks the very tightly structured narrative denouement of Rohmer's film. It might be argued that this is because *Der Schone Tag* is so lacking in tension, in potential conflict, that no denouement is necessary, or in fact possible.

### 5.10 Transnational Cinema versus 'the Cinema of Duty'

Deniz Gokturk uses the term transnational to refer to a selection of Turkish-German films in the title of her recent article, *Turkish Women on German Streets: Closure and Exposure in Transnational Cinema*. For her, the description 'transnational' signals a certain progression. 'Turkish-German film,' she writes, 'might be breaking out of its subnational status and venturing into the realm of transnational cinema which has recently discovered global diasporas as subject and market.' [Gokturk, 2000: 74]. The term 'transnational' is thus used in contrast with national or sub-national or with such theoretical positions as postcolonial and postmodernist, indicating the emergence of a cinema that in different ways transcends national boundaries and identities. Gokturk proceeds to examine how far recent Turkish-German films have moved towards celebrating 'the pleasures of hybridity'. Such celebrations are marked, she suggests, by 'humorous enactments of ethnicity, repudiating an essential racial identity by offering fluctuating points of identification, playing on modes of performance and incorporating elements of comedy, irony, pastiche and self-conscious masquerade' [ibid: 3]. *Ich Chef Du Turnschuh* is given as an example.

Bergfelder notes that 'pan-European production initiatives' date back to the 'Film Europe' project of the 1920s and 1930s, but that the real impact does not seem to have extended much beyond the question of finance, as in the case of films funded by Eurimages [Bergfelder, 2000: 140]. Certainly, it is the financing of films that constitutes the key element in the Turkish-German context. Only one of the films considered in this chapter, *Yara*, was co-financed by Eurimages, but several others (*Kurz und Schmerzlos*, *Satici*, *Ich Chef Du Turnschuh*, *Aprilkinder*, *Der Schone Tag*) were subsidised by grants from the Hamburg municipality or the

Berlin/Brandenburg film board. These were generally co-produced with the German television company ZDF (*Zentrales Deutsches Fernsehen*). Whereas Eurimages funding depends on a lengthy selection process and the involvement of production companies from more than one European country, municipal grants are designed to assist and promote the cultural productions of the city in question. Certain conditions are set, for example that the films should be shot and produced within the city. As Gokturk points out, there are problems associated with these schemes of *Filmforderung* (film funding). Such productions, she writes:

... have sometimes proved to be counterproductive and limiting, in the sense of reinforcing a patronising and marginalising attitude towards 'Auslanderkultur', the culture of foreigners. Film-makers from an immigrant or minority background often saw themselves reduced to producers of a 'cinema of duty'. In order to receive funding, film-makers were expected to make films about the problems of their people and represent the 'other' culture in terms of common assumptions and popular misconceptions.

[Gokturk, 2000: 67]

The reference to 'a cinema of duty' is taken from an essay by S. Malik<sup>xxxi</sup> which comments on similar pressures in terms of the 'Black British film' [Malik, 1996]. In both cases, the implications are profound, for it is suggested that funding designed to promote inter-cultural or inter-ethnic understanding may actually result in the exact opposite: the continuation of a kind of ghetto mentality. This well-meaning but ultimately counter-productive tendency in schemes designed to promote minority cultural production has been widely commented on. Bergfelder, indeed, considers that the process has undermined the value of much recent European cinema which, he says, has been 'largely conjured up by cultural politicians ... it has become a byword, less for creative initiatives, than for a Byzantine process of subsidy allocation and distribution.' [Bergfelder, 2000: 140]. Gokturk suggests that 'current discourses about migrants or exiles and their diasporic cultures are often informed by a social worker's perspective and haunted by

residual notions of cultural purity, community and authenticity' [Gokturk, 1998: 1]. These observations form part of the wider debate concerning the subtle ways in which migrant communities are obliged to present themselves as 'different' or 'other'. Turkish novelist Aras Ören<sup>xxxii</sup> has already been quoted on the notion of the 'cultural ghetto' in which, he claims, Turkish-Germans have been locked as an unintended result of the 'championing' of Turkish culture by German 'conservatives'. Soysal Nuhoglu makes a similar point: 'Ironically, as guestworkers are increasingly incorporated into the membership schemes of European host politics, the debate over how well they "adjust" intensifies, and their cultural otherness is accentuated. *Guestworkers become 'symbolic foreigners' in migration stories.*' [Soysal Nuhoglu, 1994: 135; my italics].

All of these reservations refer essentially to the question of official recognition and, by extension, to the matter of funding. The critic therefore seems justified in approaching 'the cinema of duty' with a degree of caution or suspicion. What is the validity of comments about 'authorial intention' or even 'the creative process', if the source and purpose of the funding strongly influence, or even dictate, the parameters of the work? In a sense, the critic's suspiciousness is qualitatively the same as when he or she approaches commercial Hollywood productions, the primary object of which is to maximise studio profits. If money is either the object or the rationale for the making of the film, the production is devalued in a very specific sense. In terms of Hollywood, the critic's suspiciousness is so thoroughly established as almost to constitute an essential critical attitude. In my reading of the Turkish-German films, I have tried as far as possible to focus on the elements of narrative, *mise en scène* and cinematic style which, regardless or even despite the film's ostensible purpose, may indicate either the real conditions of migrant existence or the underlying, and possibly concealed, preoccupations of the filmmakers. The main conclusion is that the cause of the 'alienation' of the protagonists should be sought not in the

ethnic opposition of *Alman* versus *Turk*, but within the threatened structure of the traditional family. As Gokturk points out, 'well-meaning multiculturalist projects often result in the construction of binary oppositions between "Turkish culture" and "German culture"' [Gokturk, 1998: 6]. The danger in 'the cinema of duty' is that the representation of migrant communities becomes caught in a time-warp, as if the occupants of the bus in *Otobus* have been caught forever in the final freeze-frame of the film, discovered by the astonished members of the Stockholm police force.



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<sup>i</sup> I have chosen to use the word 'tense' precisely because *Der Schone Tag* is characterised by an almost complete freedom from tension (see below, 5.6). The film may in fact prove to mark the end, or the beginning of the end, of the 'cycle' I refer to.

<sup>ii</sup> Muenz and Ulrich, 1997

<sup>iii</sup> Official statistics of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, June 1999.

<sup>iv</sup> Federal Government figures, 1993.

<sup>v</sup> Quoted by Fischer and McGowan, *From Pappkoffer to Pluralism*, in Horrocks and Holinsky, 1996.

<sup>vi</sup> Compare the European idealized vision of its own past. For example: 'If American culture is a melting pot, in which identities have to be recreated by families in each generation, European culture seems more like a set of municipal heraldic shields mounted on a wall. Europe sees itself as a world of local communities in small towns and cities whose roots stretch back to the nineteenth century, to the Enlightenment, the Wars of Religion and the Middle Ages to the distant Ottonian and Carolingian past. This is a highly attractive, indeed and enviable, heritage, but it can also be a rather static one. The icons of the past - the late medieval town hall perhaps or the now sparsely attended romanesque cathedral - and the commercial icons of the super-prosperous present, stand side by side, on guard against alien influences.' [David Barchard, 'What Future for Turkey's rapprochement with Europe?', unpublished paper, February 2001.]

<sup>vii</sup> The shadow of earlier times is not yet dissipated. John Berger had listed various common terms of abuse, including *Zigeuner* (gypsy), *Lumpenpack* (riff-raff), *Kameltreiber* (camel-rider), *Zitronenschuttler* (lemon squeezer) and *Schlangenfresser* (snake eater) [Berger 1975: 115]. These taunts may have become less frequent in recent decades, but the evidence of *Lola und Bilidikid* (see 5.4) suggest that some do survive.

<sup>viii</sup> It will be seen in the penultimate section of this chapter that *Der Schone Tag* – released in 2000 – in many ways represents the last stage in the development of Turkish-German film.

<sup>ix</sup> Notably in the notorious hotel fire in Sivas (1992) where (32) Alevi leaders and intellectuals were deliberately burned.

<sup>x</sup> It is interesting that the distinctions between these very different cities are hardly apparent in the Turkish-German films, which tend to concentrate on the grimmer aspects of life in both cities.

<sup>xi</sup> Fischer and McGowan in Horrocks and Holinsky, 1996, p. 8.

<sup>xii</sup> For a discussion of staircase symbolism, see Naficy 2001, Chapter 5.

<sup>xiii</sup> While it is true that *Satici* depicts life for the immigrant as a struggle, it is significant that the prospect for Can of deportation – a possibility raised in the film – is more awful to him than the prospect of prison.

<sup>xiv</sup> As Gokturk succinctly puts it: 'Humour is not a strength of these productions' [Gokturk 1998:7].

<sup>xv</sup> The Islamic attitude to homosexuality is based on certain very explicit passages from the Koran, as : 'If two men amongst you commit a lewd act, punish them both' [Sura 4:16]. 'You lust after men instead of women. Truly you are a degenerate [or 'ignorant'] people [Sura 7:71 and 29:27]. Such a judgement consigns a significant proportion of the Western cinematic corpus of the last twenty years to the categories

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of 'degeneracy' or 'ignorance', including such very successful films as *The Adventures of Priscilla Queen of the Desert*, *My Beautiful Laundrette*, *My Own Private Idaho*, *La Cage aux Folles*, *Four Weddings and A Funeral*, *The Music Lovers*, *The Pillow Book*, *Kiss of the Spider Woman* and, according to the Time Out Film Guide of 2002, around 150 others from the US, Canada, Australia, the UK, France, Italy, Germany, Belgium, Greece, Brazil, Mexico, Cuba, Peru, India, China, Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea and the Philippines. The sole Islamic country represented on this list is Egypt (*Adieu Bonaparte*, Youssef Chahine, 1985), although Turkey would also be there, if *Lola und Bilidikid*....] It will be argued that the Bible is also intolerant of 'deviant' sexuality, but what is important here is not so much the content of the ancient texts but the severity with which they are interpreted and applied in the contemporary world.

<sup>xvi</sup> Osman is the surrogate, but flawed, patriarch, and indeed his name may have been chosen for its echo of the first leader of the *Osmanli*, known to western history as the Ottomans.

<sup>xvii</sup> An element of the 'western' picaresque may be suggested by the title, in which the character Bili becomes Bilidikid (Billy the Kid), in what is presumably a playful reference to the supposed homosexuality of 'the left-handed gun'.

<sup>xviii</sup> The two films are complementary in that *Otobus* dealt with the theme of the initial arrival of Turkish workers in Europe and *Mercedes Mon Amour* with the return.

<sup>xix</sup> The film critic Wally Hammond suggested a link between Bayram's obsessive selfishness and the experience of typically 'German' values: 'The film has a moral - thinking about No. 1 German-style leaves you stranded' [Time Out Film Guide, 1997]. The observation is casually made yet does indicate the contrast between the individualist 'European' ethic and the more collectivist ideal of 'the East'.

<sup>xx</sup> The film suggests that his car is in a real sense 'his woman'. On the way from Germany, he caresses it and talks to it, calling it his 'honey-bee'.

<sup>xxi</sup> There is a deliberate irony in the reason for the village's removal. The archaeologists are German, their interest in Turkey's remote past sufficient reason for the uprooting and relocation of an entire community. Not only has Bayram been corrupted by the materialism of life in the West, but 'the West' has in the meantime caused his own home to be demolished.

<sup>xxii</sup> 'The past is a country from which we have all emigrated' [Salman Rushdie, 1991: 12].

<sup>xxiii</sup> Both *Mercedes Mon Amour* and *Auslands Tournee* may be described as 'road movies' in the sense that events and episodes of long journeys by road provide the central narrative motif. Both are concerned with the search for, or loss of, family. A connection between the road trip and the issue of family is unsurprising, since setting out on the road means in most cases a temporary or permanent separation from 'home'. However, the link appears often to have a distinctly Oedipal aspect. In particular, as in *Auslands Tournee*, the absence of fathers and their replacement 'on the road' by surrogates – for example in *Paper Moon* (Bogdanovich, 1973), *A Perfect World* (Eastwood, 1993) or *The Time of the Gypsies* (Kusturica, 1989) – occurs too regularly in road movies to be mere coincidence. In *A Perfect World*, Butch takes on the role as father to Phil, whose own father is absent and, even when present, inadequate. Butch himself is also (effectively) fatherless, the only memory of his father that he retains being a single postcard containing a promise that was never kept. According to Roberts, 'the film suggests that being without a father is at the bottom of all Butch's problems, and that the consequences of being fatherless, for Butch, are either to be on the road, or to be dead.' [Roberts, 1997: 59]. Finally, in a specifically Oedipal episode, he is shot by the boy to whom he has tried to be a father. In Kusturica's *Time of the Gypsies*, the Oedipal connection is made even more emphatically. The central character, Perihan, is a bastard who has met neither his father nor his mother. He is taken up by a vicious 'sheikh' who runs a circus of pimps, con-men and thieves whose job is to fill his wallet and see to his every need. Perihan, although tricked into leaving his invalid sister behind (supposedly in a hospital), becomes attached to the sheikh in a relationship of utter dependence and servile

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devotion. 'He is my benefactor ... my father,' he declares. When the sheikh's deceit finally becomes apparent, he kills him. The killing of the 'false' father is paralleled by his reunion with his own son (whom he had taken to be the child of another), and the penultimate scene in the film shows him forced to leave his son, promising to return. 'I know you won't come back, Daddy,' says the boy, and such is the bleak mood of the work, that the audience at once understands this to be the truth. Much of the action of the film takes place on the road – which is where the sheikh recruits his troupe of misfits (orphans, cripples, unmarried mothers) – and when Perihan dies, it is on a bridge over a railway track.

<sup>xxiv</sup> 'Captain America doesn't have no fucking parents!' as Peter Fonda's character in *Easy Rider* (Dennis Hopper, 1969) has it.

<sup>xxv</sup> See 4.6.

<sup>xxvi</sup> In Gokturk's opinion, 'The attempts to render the subjective visions and dreams of this disturbed girl, however, are staged like fashion photography and appear rather implausible.' [Gokturk, 2000: 73].

<sup>xxvii</sup> The railway, with its tracks, signals, carriages and timetables, may signify an 'external agency' and thus the removal of individual will, or something like fate. This might be connected with the symbolism of the puppet (see below).

<sup>xxviii</sup> The puppeteer is indeed an arresting figure both because of his unusual metier and means of communication, but also because of his unique status as sympathetic adult. There is in fact a fairy-tale aspect to his appearance in the narrative, one of those fairy godmothers or guardian spirits who turn up regularly in folk tales and help the hero/heroine in his or her quest. But the puppet in the gutter shatters any illusion that the quest would be rewarded with success.

<sup>xxix</sup> One corner of 'the biggest building site in Europe' during the second half of the 1990s, the rebuilding of Potsdamerplatz between East and West Berlin.

<sup>xxx</sup> 'It's more fun with you here!'", the respectable old German lady says to Dudie, which appears to be an implicit comment on the immigrants.

<sup>xxxi</sup> The term 'pleasures of hybridity' is also taken from Malik.

<sup>xxxii</sup> Oddly, Ayhan Kaya includes Oren, along with Yuksel Pazarkaya, Zafer Senocak, Emine Sevgi Ozdamar and Zehra Cirak, as one of the proponents of the *Gastarbeiterliteratur* who 'express their feelings and emotions generically as a member of Turkish minority, not as a member of the German literary system' [Kaya, 1997: 86].

## CHAPTER 6: A CINEMATIC MYTHOPOESIS

*While rational thought distinguishes between image and reality, mythological thought unifies the reality and its image symbolically and through analogy, reifies its own images, attributes physical reality and autonomy to characters and events of its own invention, and installs them in its own space and time, which are and are not the same as ours.*

*Edgar Morin, La Connaissance de la Connaissance<sup>1</sup>*

*The oral tales of tribal society, the fairy tales that are the irrepressible voice and expression of the underclasses of the great systems of domination, adventure stories and melodrama, and the popular or mass culture of our own time are all syllables and broken fragments of some single, immense story.*

*Frederic Jameson, The Political Unconscious, 1981: 104/5*

*I am not saying that I have become what I am only as a result of your influence. That would be very much an exaggeration (and, in fact, I lean toward this exaggeration). It is quite possible that even if I had grown up entirely free of your influence, I could still not have become a person after your own heart. I would probably still have become a weakly, timid, hesitant, restless person ... but still very different from what I really am, and we would have got on with each other excellently. I would have been happy to have you as a friend, boss, uncle, grandfather, yes, even (though rather*

*more hesitantly) as a father-in-law. It is only as a father that you were too strong for me.*

*Franz Kafka: Letter to the Father*

My thesis has proposed that the disappearance of the father in Turkish-German films represents a form of collective forgetting which is the outcome of radical social and demographic changes in the Turkish family caused by the twin effects of migration and modernisation. It is suggested that because of the absolute authority of the Islamic cosmology and of the traditional deference to the patriarch which is the central axis of the traditional family structure, it has been impossible for the Turkish-German filmmakers directly to confront the demise of this authority. What is observable in the films, therefore, is not the familiar Oedipal scenario of Hollywood melodrama in which the conflict with the father provides the main dramatic elements, but only an absence, a gap, a void where the father used to be.

This final chapter sets out to answer the question posed by Frederic Jameson in his 1995 essay *The Geopolitical Aesthetic*: ‘Under what circumstances can a necessarily individual story with individual characters function to represent collective processes?’ [Jameson, 1995: 4]. In *The Political Unconscious* (1981), Jameson suggested that literature may be legitimately regarded as ‘a weaker form of myth’, and that ‘all literature must be read as a symbolic meditation on the destiny of community’. But does not cinema have an even more powerful claim to be regarded as a ‘form of myth’? Here I review the main approaches to the relation between cinema and myth in critical studies – emphasising in particular the idea, promulgated by both Jameson and Barthes that myth represents a ‘transformation of history’ which can ‘enter’ a film in the shape of ideology.<sup>ii</sup> My argument in the

case of the missing father is that because of the (divine) mythological basis for the Islamic patriarchy, the 'de-throning' of the patriarch can only be achieved through the replacement of one mythology by another, and that the disappearing father in Turkish-German film must be explained in the context of this process<sup>iii</sup>.

One essential step in the argument is to establish the connection between cinematic genre, history and the operation of myth, a connection initially drawn from Peter Wollen. As the means by which individual films transcend their specificity, the concept of genre thus provides the necessary link between 'individual stories' and 'collective processes' in earlier critical work. This link is explored firstly through a brief examination of how the Western genre (seen as the most fertile source of myth in cinematic terms) continually adapted itself to changing historical circumstances, and, on the other hand, how *film noir* is ineluctably associated to a very specific historical era.

## 6.1 Cinema as Myth

'The true field of the movies is not art but *myth*,' wrote Parker Tyler in 1947. 'The movie process is a complex myth of sheer synecdoche.' [Tyler, 1974: 725, 728]. Constance Penley suggested that 'film is perhaps the major mythmaking force of our time' [in Nichols, 1976: 205], while Sam Rohdie concluded simply that 'movies ... are ideology or myth' [ibid: 475]. All such observations would appear to concur with Tyler's remark: 'Essentially myths are not factual but symbolic. I assume that movies are essentially likewise.' [Tyler, op. cit. 727].

In studies of American film, it was the western that attracted the particular attention of film critics emphasising the mythic nature of film. The western was connected with territorial expansion, nation-building and the imposition of law, as well as being built around powerful American archetypes, the pioneer and the patriarch, the lawman and the outlaw, the settler and the cowboy. It was also concerned with the (mythical) American way of life which valued freedom and independence and the conquest of physical and psychological frontiers. Will Wright claimed that 'the western, though located in a modern industrial society, is as much a myth as the tribal myths of the anthropologist', proposing that 'the structure of myth corresponds to the conceptual needs of social and self-understanding required by the dominant social institutions of the period' [Wright, 1975: 187]. But it was not only the western that was treated as inherently 'mythical'. According to Sam Rohdie: 'Contents and style as between national cinemas may exist but this serves only to create different types of mythology – neo-realism is no less mythical than the western' [in Nichols 1976: 475].

The word *myth* is susceptible to a great variety of definitions. In common parlance, we use myth to mean simply falsity, and this usage also penetrates into academic writing, as in this comment of Bazin's: 'The cinema was born ... out of a myth, the myth of total cinema'. [Bazin in Mast, Cohen and Braudy 1992: 37]. He describes how this 'myth' of total cinema was produced by 'the fanatics, the madmen, the disinterested pioneers ... men obsessed by their own imaginings' [ibid]. In other words, myth here is equated with a false and misleading notion born of imaginings and obsessions. Yet later in the same passage, Bazin talks of the 'myth' of Icarus, a very different kind of myth, designed to express some universal truth. To confuse the matter further, Bazin then suggests a link between the classical, universalist myth of Icarus and the modern 'myth of cinema':

The myth of Icarus had to wait on the internal combustion engine before descending from the platonic heavens. But it has dwelt in the soul of everyman since he first thought about birds. To some extent one could say the same thing about cinema, but its forerunners prior to the nineteenth century have only a remote connection with the myth which we share today and which has prompted the appearance of the mechanical arts that characterize today's world.

[ibid: 37]

This type of semantic confusion is almost inevitable in speaking of myth, because no single definition will serve. Even Levi-Strauss, whose exploration of myth represents the fullest and most methodical of its kind, was actually concerned with a rather limited variety of myth, namely tales and legends evolved among primitive societies. According to Levi-Strauss, the function of these tales was to express the moral and philosophical dilemmas which primitive peoples were unable rationally to resolve. 'A dilemma or contradiction stands at the heart of every living myth,' he wrote. 'The impulse to construct the myth arises from the desire to resolve



the dilemma' [Levi-Strauss, 1970: 16]. What film studies took from Levi-Strauss were primarily the oppositional patterns and structures that could be represented in a series of binary oppositions. These became a familiar theoretical tool for film critics, with the underlying assumption that film was in an important respect *like* myth, at least in terms of its structures. The use of this theoretical tool, whether it was explicitly stated or not, was legitimised by Levi-Strauss's insistence that myths 'express unconscious wishes which are somehow inconsistent with conscious experience' [quoted in Leach, 1966: 57].<sup>iv</sup>

According to Roland Barthes, myth was 'a pure ideographic system' [Barthes, 1993 (1957): 127] or, more precisely, 'a second-order semiological system' [ibid, 114]. Like Levi-Strauss, Barthes was concerned with systems and structures that might be decoded by the appropriate semiological tools. Myth was therefore a kind of language – in his terms a 'metalanguage' – that could be read and interpreted, during which process its 'distortions' would become clear. In Barthes' version, there is still the element of falsification. The function of myth is certainly not clarification, or even picturesque exposition, but 'the relation which unites the concept of the myth to its meaning is essentially a relation of *deformation* ... Its function is to distort' [ibid: 121/22]. This distortion is then utilized, whether for commercial gain or political control, for what are essentially propaganda purposes. 'We can say that the fundamental character of the mythical concept is to be *appropriated*' [ibid: 119].

The word myth can also be used to describe something closer to an inscribed idea, as in the following comment: 'the road movie has repeatedly worked to set in opposition two contrasting myths central to American ideology, that of individualism and that of populism' [Cohen and Hark,

1997: 3]. In this sense, the word still has the sense of something distorted or falsified – or perhaps only exaggerated – but now has no association with a legend, story or indeed with the imagination. Both individualism and populism may be supported or illustrated by myths, or conveyed in myths, but they are not themselves myths. The importance of this is not only semantic; it indicates the way in which the word myth is used – in film studies and elsewhere – to cover a very wide spectrum of meaning. Parker Tyler attempted a definition: ‘Assuredly myth is a fiction and this is its bare link with art,’ he wrote, ‘but a myth is specifically a free, unharnessed fiction, a basic, prototypic pattern capable of many variations and distortions, many betrayals and disguises, even though it remains imaginative truth.’ [Tyler, 1992 (1947): 725]. The concept of ‘imaginative truth’ runs strongly counter to that of distortion in the sense that Barthes implied, but still allows for exaggeration, metaphor and the kind of odd displacements that are familiar to us both in mythological cycles and in fairy stories. Frederic Jameson, when discussing David Lynch’s film *Blue Velvet*, has this to say: ‘History therefore enters *Blue Velvet* in the form of ideology, if not of myth: the Garden and the Fall, American exceptionalism, a small town ... lovingly preserved in its details like a simulacrum or Disney land under glass somewhere’ [Jameson, 1991: 204]. Since Jameson is known for his very meticulous approach to semantics, the implications of this passage are interesting. Myth appears as the extension (or perhaps *medium*) of ideology (presumably in the relation of what Tyler Parker called synecdoche). American exceptionalism can be thought of as ‘ideology’, but ‘the Garden and the Fall’ clearly belongs to mythology. Together, ideology and mythology – or mythology in the form of ideology – provide for the entrance of *history*. This is similar to what Barthes meant when he wrote of ‘the very principle of myth [that] transforms history into nature’ [Barthes op. cit.: 129]. In both cases there is a transformation: in Jameson’s version myth represents the transformation undergone by

history when it 'enters' a film; in Barthes' version, myth is also a transformation of history, but into 'nature' or, given that he sees myth as a semiological system, into a series of natural signs.

My concern is with the possible *relations* between myth and cinema. Tyler's claim in *The Myth and Magic of Cinema* suggested a link of the most direct kind: 'Those modern vestiges of the old Greek divinities I have dubbed "the gods and goddesses of Hollywood" ... the actors of Hollywood are an enlarged personnel of the realistically anthropomorphic deities of ancient Greece' (Tyler, op. cit.: 728). Barthes' description of Garbo's face as 'an event' would presumably be a specific example of the same general idea – that Hollywood stars acquire a kind of mythic (Olympian) presence. (Indeed the whole cult of celebrity which has accelerated in recent times attests to just this.) 'Garbo offered to one's gaze a sort of Platonic Idea of the human creature,' wrote Barthes, ' ... The name given to her, *the Divine*, probably aimed to convey less a superlative state of beauty than the essence of her corporeal person, descended from a heaven where all things are formed and perfected in the clearest light' [Barthes, 1993 (1957): 57]. Thus the mythological function of cinema is to represent to the popular imagination a kind of divine essence, in other words to act as the link between the domain of forms (the Platonic Idea) and the domain of matter. According to Barthes – and also to Tyler – this transposition is executed by an illusion or distortion. In other words, myth in this sense is still a kind of falsification, expressive of the 'contingent, historical, in one word: *fabricated* quality of capitalism' [ibid: 143]. As Coupe points out:

*Mythologies* is more about ideology, in the pejorative sense of mystification. For Barthes, ideology and myth are interchangeable ... Barthes exposes 'mythology' as the systematic presentation of bourgeois thinking as if it were the only possible way of thinking.

[Coupe, 1997: 156/7]

Coupe's purpose is not to find fault with Barthes' analysis of the subtle operation of the propaganda of bourgeois capitalism but to indicate that Barthes' viewpoint in *Mythologies* is a rather partial one. Myth may function to support ideology, but the two terms are not actually interchangeable.

Ricoeur, whose writing on myth was both more extensive and more expansive than that of Barthes, argues that it is necessary to go beyond the view of myth as 'false explanation' to a sense of its 'exploratory significance and its contribution to understanding'. He speaks of the 'symbolic function' of myth, its power of discovery and revelation. For Ricoeur, myth is synonymous with a 'social imagination' which functions by virtue of a dialectic between 'ideology and utopia': 'We must try to cure the illness of utopia by what is wholesome in ideology – by its element of identity, which is once more a fundamental function of life – and to cure the rigidity, the petrification, of ideologies by the utopian element' [Ricoeur, 1986: 312]. For Ricoeur, the dialectic of past and future as expressed in myth is less one-sided than in Barthes' version. Whereas for Barthes, myth is manipulated by the present to shore up its own hegemonies, Ricoeur is more aware of the scale and grandeur of classical myth – the extraordinary metaphors, the implausible happenings. Bracketing myth with poetry, he sees it as constituting 'a disclosure of unprecedented worlds, an opening on to other possible worlds which transcend the established limits of our actual worlds' [Ricoeur, 1984: 40].

Jameson, in his discussion of the work of Northrop Frye, also proposes a more creative role for, and attitude to, myth.

The greatness of Frye, and the radical difference between his work and that of the great bulk of garden-variety myth criticism, lies in his willingness to raise the issue of community and

to draw basic, essentially social, interpretive consequences from the nature of religion as collective representation ... The religious figures then become the symbolic space in which the collectivity thinks itself and celebrates its own unity; so that it does not seem a very difficult next step if, with Frye, we see literature as a weaker form of myth or a later stage of ritual, to conclude that in that sense all literature, no matter how weakly, must be informed by what we have called a political unconscious, that all literature must be read as a symbolic meditation on the destiny of community.

[Jameson, 1981: 69/70]

The question then arises whether cinema may also be seen 'as a weaker form of myth or a later stage of ritual', and whether, as for literature, it 'must be informed by ... a political unconscious'.

## 6.2 Genre and Myth

Peter Wollen, in his essay *Cinema and Semiotics*, proposes that myth should be linked in cinematic terms with the concept of genre, that genre is 'a proper subject for the study of myth'. In support of this he quotes Jakobson's insistence that

the entry [of the tale] into the folklore habit depends entirely on whether or not the community accepts it. Only a work that gains the consensus of the collective body ... becomes an actuality of folklore ... The socialised sections of the mental culture, as for instance language or folktale, are subject to much stricter and more uniform laws than fields in which individual creation prevails.

[quoted in Wollen, 1976: 490] <sup>v</sup>

For Wollen, genre is the means by which the collective consensus is established in cinema. My argument here is no more than an extension of this idea: that genre is the principal interface between myth and cinema, providing a legitimate way of approaching the operation of myth in cinematic terms.

Genre in film studies ought to be a concept of primary importance, and this is clearly indicated in the way that critical studies of genre have continued amidst the various theoretical shifts of the last five decades. Yet somehow genre has the appearance of a key theoretical coordinate kept empty, a concept of unutilised, or wrongly utilised, potential. Even Steven Neale's recent *Genre and Hollywood*, with its fifty pages of 'definitions and dimensions', its one hundred pages of 'major genres' and its close examination of genre theory, with a very interesting study of the industrial/commercial aspects of genre including the language of film advertisement, even this

comprehensive book seems strangely disoriented, as if there was both too much to say and somehow not enough.<sup>vi</sup> Neale himself identifies the problem as genre theory's over-meticulous concern with taxonomies, referring to 'the taxonomic tendencies both of genre criticism in general and iconographic analysis in particular' [Neale, 2000: 16]. In 1973, one glossary of film terms listed no less than 75 genres of fiction and non-fiction film including sub-categories and divisions of sub-categories [Geduld and Gottesman, 1973], and Neale himself includes thirty more or less distinct types of melodrama alone [Neale, op. cit: 323]. 'By and large,' Ryall wrote in 1975, 'genre criticism has confined itself to producing taxonomies on the basis of "family resemblances", allocating films to their position within the generic constellation, stopping short of what are the interesting and informative questions about generic groupings' [Ryall, 1975: 27].

Behind these taxonomies, however, lies the understanding that, as Alloway put it, 'the meaning of a single movie is inseparable from the larger pattern of content-analysis of other movies' [Alloway, 1963: 5]. This is very close to Wollen's comment quoted above. Both propose that it is the concept of genre that allows films to be spoken of collectively. In its relation to mythopoesis, genre is the equivalent of the cycles of folklore tales examined by Propp and Jakobson, or the collection of Greek legends that centre on the Olympian gods, and it has its exact correlative in literature, from which, besides, the term 'genre' was derived. Kress and Threadgold point out that 'literature had to be generic to be considered literature, and notions of genre were so intimately tied up with what was to be literature that *they overtly and in very conscious ways affected both the reading and writing of literary texts.*' [Kress and Threadgold, 1988: 219/20, my italics]. A further example may be taken from the strict codes of Japanese painting in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, by which individual works of art were required to contain the prescribed seasonal motifs in order to qualify for

display. What is suggested by the existence of such codes is that individual cultural productions contributed to a collective body of work which was greater than the sum of its parts, which is another way of saying that genre stands in cinema for the collective, what Jakobson calls 'the socialised sections of the mental culture'.

It is in fact for this reason – the exact reason that Japanese art connoisseurs were so particular about the inclusion of the seasonal motif – that genre classification matters. If the classification is apt, then the conventional rules and judgements may be applied. Otherwise, there will be invidious and inappropriate comparisons of like with unlike. Individual works must have enough in common to be comparable, and equally it is what they share – thematically, stylistically, ideologically – that affords to them a collective influence. In other words, it is through genre, rather than through individual films, that cinema acquires its enduring presence in culture.<sup>vii</sup>

There must be, in genre, a chronological dimension. If *Stagecoach* (John Ford, 1939) is compared with *The Unforgiven* (Eastwood, 1992), the comparison must address the fact that the two works, ostensibly belonging to a single genre, the Western, have nothing in common beyond certain iconographic elements such as guns, horses and saloons. The physical territory is different, the historical epoch of the diegesis is different and, above all, the dates of the two films are separated by too much history, both film history and American history. It is in fact surprising that so little attention has been paid to the historical dimension of genre. Sometime during the late 1950s or early 1960s a new element of suspiciousness and self-deprecation began to emerge in the Western. James Monaco dated this specifically to John Ford's *The Searchers* (1956), which he said 'critically examined elements of the Western myth that had hitherto been taken for granted as truths' [Monaco, 2000:



305]. From this time, the various 'myths' conveyed by the western – the myth of the frontier, the myth of individualism, the myth of the freebooting cowboy dispensing rough justice from the end of a gun – began to dissipate and were replaced by altogether more critical attitudes, especially towards the ethnic and cultural relations between the white colonialists and the indigenous peoples.

According to Monaco, 'the underlying text of racism was brought to the surface in *The Searchers*' [ibid]. This constituted not so much a development within the genre as its transformation into something quite different, so that finally (actually quite rapidly) it was possible for the western to critique and even to parody itself. The process took place at various levels during the decade of the 1960s, either through a more realistic approach to character as in *The Misfits* (Huston, 1960), through direct parody as in *Cat Ballou* (Silverstein, 1965) or through a closer examination of casual violence as in *The Wild Bunch* (Peckinpah, 1969) and *Soldier Blue* (Nelson, 1970). Tudor called *Once Upon a Time in the West* (Leone, 1968) a 'fairy-tale collection of western conventions' [Tudor, 1986:5], and in his analysis of *Ride the High Country* (a.k.a. *Guns in the Afternoon*, Peckinpah, 1961), Buscombe shows how this transformation of a genre can be achieved through the deliberate disturbing of generic conventions. Traversing the familiar setting of a western town, the camera discovers:

a policeman in uniform, a car, a camel, and Randolph Scott dressed up as Buffalo Bill. Each of these images performs a function. The figure of the policeman conveys that the law has become institutionalised ... the car suggests that the west is no longer isolated from modern technology and its implications. Significantly, the camel is racing against a horse. Such a grotesque juxtaposition is painful. A horse in a western is not just an animal but a symbol of dignity, grace and power. These qualities are mocked by its competing with a camel; and to add insult to injury, the camel wins.

[Buscombe 1970: 44]

By the time of *The Unforgiven*, the proprieties of good and evil were almost completely reversed, in the ruthless disrespect for the law shown by the central character, a disrespect that the film fails to

judge or punish in the accepted fashion. In *The Quick and the Dead* (Sam Raimi, 1995), the staging of main street shoot-outs has become a performance in a tournament. To drive home the point that the familiar western is dead, the most accomplished shootist in the whole collection of smooth villains and rugged ruffians is a woman, played by Sharon Stone.

It is quite clear that the transformation of the western, which effectively resulted in the emergence of a distinct genre, was part of a radical ideological revision of US history, as if the western – perhaps the most enduringly popular of Hollywood film genres – were acting as a mirror and archive of socio-political changes in the world outside the cinema. There is of course nothing new in this observation. What I wish to emphasise is the relation between film genre, myth and ideology in this process, by which myth is the *means* for history to enter the cinema.

Significantly, ‘critical’ genres – genres whose definition has been a function of critical rather than commercial or industrial considerations – depend on fairly strict historical as well as stylistic and narrative contexts, in particular in the case of *film noir*. Neale gives *noir* a separate chapter in the second part of his recent book, whereas ‘classic’ genres such as the western, the gangster movie, the costume drama and science fiction are dealt with together. *Noir* belongs firmly to a particular historical period, approximately the 1940s and early 1950s, and also has very distinct stylistic elements, which did not survive the return of affluence to US society in the mid- to late-50s. *Noir* expressed a certain fatalistic angst connected with the Depression and the war years. It required an atmosphere of urban decay that was gradually dissipated by the regeneration of the cities, the building of the motorways and the universities and a more optimistic, some would say complacent, economic

mood of the later Eisenhower years. By this time, the 'harsh, uncomplimentary look at American life' [Schrader in *The Film Genre Reader II*: 213] typified by *noir* was in a sense anachronistic.<sup>viii</sup>

The only other genre to which Neale devotes a separate chapter is 'melodrama and the women's film' but this chapter lacks the coherence and precision of the chapter on *film noir*, perhaps just because the chronotopical dimension is missing. The 'classic' melodramas of Sirk, Minelli and Ray belong to one recognisable epoch – actually to a single decade of filmmaking – and even to a recognisable social class at a particular juncture in the history of the family. There are similarities of cinematic style (as examined by Elsaesser) as well of narrative. The weakness of the father and the strong influence of popular Freudianism are two of the most striking.

In some respects, the genre of 'classical melodrama' still exists in a rather unadulterated form. Should it be argued, therefore, that synchronicity is not an important element in this genre? Or is it rather that the relevant historical context has endured over a long period than the synchronic features of, for example, *film noir*? *Legends of the Fall* (Zwick, 1994) presents a characteristic Oedipal scenario, treated in popular, commercial (Hollywood) fashion, with the father in the first being crippled by a stroke immediately after a violent argument with his eldest son, and the father in the second an awful old tyrant (Anthony Hopkins) who is finally killed by his hard-drinking, hard-thinking son (played by Nick Nolte). Stories like this handled by Minelli or Sirk would no doubt have looked very different. The commercially successful directors of the 1990s were not masters of the close-shot, claustrophobic tension which is characteristic of Hollywood melodrama; in these two cases, at least, they are more interested in the potentials of cinematography, with fine panning shots of farmhouses set in acres of snow, rather in the style of the painter Andrew Wyeth, or of the mountain

slopes and green forests of Montana. It might in fact be argued that the generic links between *Legends of the Fall* and *Written on the Wind* are restricted to the shared Oedipal theme. Stylistically they have very little in common, and technically – in terms of colour tones and spatial effects in both landscapes and interiors – the more recent film exhibits cinematographic possibilities simple not available to earlier filmmakers. Perhaps it was the very limited tones and flattened cinematic spaces that gave to Hollywood melodrama of the 1950s its peculiar and characteristic sense of claustrophobia. There is neither physical nor psychological claustrophobia in *Legends of the Fall*. On the contrary, the landscapes are expansive and there is even a montage of storms at sea and remote exotic places. But still the sons love/hate their father, and still the patriarch occupies large, expensive desks or one end of an elongated family dining table. The melodrama is present in the familiar dramatic situations, but the treatment of the situations is not *melodramatic*, in the sense of excessively stylised or musically exuberant. Classic melodrama must itself partly be defined by the technical limitations of a cinematic era. The generic link between *Written on the Wind* and *Legends of the Fall* does not consist of melodramatic features but of Oedipal features, suggesting that the genre of classic Hollywood melodrama was more strictly determined in terms of historical period than the Oedipal narrative has proved to be.<sup>ix</sup>

There are repercussions in the length of time that a film genre survives. A short-lived genre like *film noir* can be associated with a single generation of actors and directors and in this way, the genre will give rise to, then feed off, the glamour of a particular set of screen figures. All of the individuals involved in film production, from scenarist to cameraman to boom operator to extra, belong to a specific generation with a shared set of historical experience. In the case of *noir*, and of classic melodrama, this is the generation that was born during the First World War or between the

wars, but had some memory or knowledge of both, and who also knew the Depression. Most of them had witnessed, or were to witness, the birth of the United Nations, the McCarthyite tribunals and the Korean War. Retrospectively, it can be appreciated that this set of direct experiences cuts these people off from ourselves, in the same way as we are cut off from our fathers by what used popularly to be known as the generation gap.<sup>x</sup> Even a genre which survives through generations, like Science Fiction or the horror movie, is influenced, one suspects, by each generation through which it is passed on. McArthur argued that genre was characterised by 'the continuity over several decades of patterns of visual imagery, of recurrent objects and figures in dynamic relationship.'<sup>xi</sup> 'These repeated patterns,' he writes, 'might be called the iconography of the genre' (McArthur, 1972: 23].

### 6.3 Conclusion

Throughout the thesis I have emphasised that the phenomenon of the disappearing father in Turkish-German must be understood as *remarkable*, as remarkable as the parallel phenomenon in 1950s Hollywood melodrama and perhaps, given the extreme and divinely sanctioned authority of the Turkish patriarch, more so. Certainly it is part of a gradual process, whose origins can be seen in the Turkish films of migration of the 1960s and 1970s in which the loss of patriarchal authority in traditional communities formed part of the first confrontations with modernism. The chief narrative distinction between these films and those of the later Turkish-German cycle was that in the earlier films the crisis of the father provided a central dramatic element, whereas in the Turkish-German films, the father quietly surrenders or even disappears. I believe that this distinction can be explained in two ways. The Turkish-German filmmakers were representing changes in which they themselves were directly implicated (by this I mean no more than that they were themselves migrants), whereas the Turkish filmmakers of the 1960s and 1970s were looking at events from the outside, as it were. They were townspeople and therefore their attitude of the 'shock of modernity' was to an extent a dispassionate one. They may have been very sympathetic to the plight of migrant country folk (and indeed this can clearly be seen in the films of Akad and Refig), but they were still able to adopt an objective viewpoint.

As I have argued, however, the problem cannot be restricted to the matter of authorial intention<sup>xii</sup>. Nor is it enough to delineate the nature and extent of the migrations and to provide an essentially 'sociological' description of how they affected the structure and equilibrium of a family shaped by

very different forces and firmly attached to an ancient religious tradition. This provides the socio-cultural setting for the phenomenon, but it cannot at all explain why the expression of the familial tensions and problems should revolve around a kind of *denial*. It was the sense of denial or concealment, conveyed by the absence of the father, the lack of dramatic confrontation and what I have called the ‘exteriorisation’ of what were essentially familial conflicts, that made it necessary to consult interpretations addressing the issue of unconscious motivation. In film studies, as in critical studies generally, despite the many reservations and amendments, Freud is still the chief authority in terms of unconscious motivation. The ‘attacks’ on Freud have come on a variety of fronts: the first has been from those believing that Freud had been mistaken in conceiving of a unitary ‘centred’ self<sup>xiii</sup>, including: object-relations theorists proposing that that the mind should be seen as a society of inner agents or ‘unconscious suborganizations of the ego capable of generating meaning and experience, i.e. capable of thought, feeling and perception’ [Ogden, 1983: 227]; Lacan and his followers, who also believed that there was no core self, only the sense of an ego emerging from chains of linguistic associations, ‘something we create with smoke and mirrors’ [Turkle, 1996: 139]; the postmodernists who rejected the concept of alienation – as well as Oedipal complexes and even schizophrenia – because the self should be seen as ontologically decentered and multiple, and ‘all that is left is an anxiety of identity’ [ibid:49]; and finally those thinkers for whom the digital computer provides the most convincing model for the human mind, ‘connectionists’ who see consciousness as a technical device by which the brain represents its own workings to itself, ‘like the monitor on a computer system’ [Olds, 1994: 600]. The connectionists have moved away from stressing inborn tendencies and infantile conflicts and ‘place more emphasis on the interpersonal field where perception is more important than program’ [ibid, 603].<sup>xiv</sup>

Broadly, one may see these various developments as part of a general shift towards cognitivist explanations, and what these two epistemological approaches have in common is a rejection – not necessarily explicit or abrupt – of the concept of the unconscious. As Judith Mayne points out: ‘What threatens to get lost completely in the move towards perception studies and cognitivism is the unconscious’ [Mayne, 1993: 58]. According to Torben Grodal:

The evolution of cognitive skills has pragmatic origins ... The cognitive processes, which Freud and others call ‘secondary’ processes, are, from the point of view of evolution, the primary ones, which we share with the rest of the animal kingdom because we want to perceive and represent the world in such a way that by actions we can implement our body-brain preferences in an optimal way.

[Grodal, 1997: 5/6]

Grodal describes his approach as ‘evolutionary/ecological’, in which what is important for the understanding of language and visual phenomena (including cinema) are ‘the mechanisms and structures by which these activities are processed by the human mind-brain’ [ibid: 13]. The nature of the ‘processing mechanisms’ have been variously described, whether following a digital model as in connectionism or whether by neuro-biological analysis of the operation of the senses, but in both cases the Freudian structures of the unconscious have effectively been abandoned.<sup>xv</sup> The trend towards cognitivism in psychology and film studies may be one of the reasons why the notion of cinema as myth has been gradually disregarded. However myth is defined, and whatever the workings of mythopoesis, it cannot be seen as other than a collective and an unconscious process – collective in that ‘a myth’ never consists of a single story (and certainly never a single version of a story), and unconscious in that the emergence of a myth is not traceable to deliberate (‘conscious’) intention. All myth-analysis, from J.G. Frazer to Northrop Frye to Levi-Strauss to Ricoeur, clearly acknowledges this.<sup>xvi</sup>



The mythology that sanctioned and sustained the Turkish patriarchy was all the more tenacious for being the result of divine revelation, as well as being buttressed by centuries of Islamic jurisprudence. It was a mythology expressed not only in the Kuranic 'stories' (of Abraham, specifically) but in the conventions regulating everyday human behaviour and relationships. Therefore the dismantling of this mythology could not be achieved on only one level of society, for example the political. It was possible for Ataturk to reform the law, and the alphabet, and the judiciary, and to abolish the dervish *tekkes*, but it was not possible for his reforms to penetrate the fixed forms and rituals of village existence.<sup>xvii</sup> As Vattimo points out, the process of demythologisation (he terms it 'demystification') does not take place either rapidly or smoothly:

The secularization of the European spirit of the modern age does not consist solely in the exposure and demystification of the errors of religion, but also in the survival of these 'errors' in different, and in some sense, degraded forms. A secularized culture is not one that has simply left the religious elements of its tradition behind, but one that continues to live them as traces, as hidden and distorted models that are nonetheless profoundly present.

[Vattimo, 1992:40]

It is precisely the 'profound presence' of the mythological traces that is confronted by a modernism trying to turn its back on the 'errors' of religion, and what Ricoeur called the 'social imagination' was the arena where the confrontation took place. The sub-genre or cycle of Turkish-German cinema can be seen as one expression of the social imagination.

Finally, it is necessary to consider the 'status' of the Turkish-German cycle and where it fits into the broader picture of contemporary European cinema. The element of ethnic or minority duty – as in 'the cinema of duty' – can be discounted, on the grounds that its fulfilment

brings its own (financial) rewards. Its transnational status can be seen as a function both of an emergent cultural hybridity as well as the generalised growth of super-national links and associations. Its links with the Turkish cinema, and specifically with the Turkish melodrama, have been progressively transcended, and its links with European arthouse cinema, clearly identifiable in certain films (notably *Der Schöne Tag* and to some extent in *Yara*) are nonetheless limited. There are also links with contemporary German cinema, in particular in the sense of a 'crisis of identity' which Corrigan identifies as one of the characteristics of the German 'New Cinema' [Corrigan, 1983: 19] and which is connected to the violent disruption of an indigenous tradition. As Wim Wenders put it:

I do not believe that any other people have experienced as great a loss of confidence in their own images, their own stories and myths, as ours. We, the directors of the New Cinema, have felt this loss most acutely in our own work. The lack, the absence of an indigenous tradition has made us parentless ... There was good reason for this mistrust. Never before and in no other country have images and language been handled as unscrupulously as here, never before and in no other place have they been so debased as vehicles for lies.

[ Wenders 1977]<sup>xviii</sup>

According to Corrigan, 'thematically, stylistically, and geographically, Wenders's cinema is dislocated between two cultures, between that of Goethe and Heidegger and that of Ray and Ford: the crisis of identity that the characters experience in his various films is the crisis of the films themselves, as they aim concomitantly to speak, learn, and reinvent a language, whose traditional syntax now tends more and more toward insignificance' [Corrigan, op. cit. p.19]. The unscrupulousness to which Wenders referred was the outcome of a very specific political and ideological episode, but the disruption of the indigenous tradition and the need for a new 'language' has very clear parallels with the Turkish diasporic experience. Werner Herzog, too,

declared that for him, 'it was particularly important to define my position about this country and its culture' [quoted in Walsh, 1979: 11], and claimed that this was one of the reasons he made *Stroscek*. He was thinking not so much of the experience of Nazism as the 'strong domination of American culture and American films', which Turkish filmmakers had also needed to confront and which remains part of the crisis of identity to which Nezih Erdogan referred [see 2.4].

Turkish-German film is the expression of creative impulses whose primary rationale is to represent and expound the diasporic experience: the experience of economic hardship (*Satici*), of racial tension (*Berlin in Berlin*), of the suppression of 'deviant' sexuality (*Lola und Bilidikid*), of otherness or 'in-betweenness' (*Yara, Kurz und Schmerzlos*). As discussed in the previous chapter, this has largely been carried out in a diegesis notable for a sense of pessimism rather than optimism, diffidence rather than confidence, anxiety rather than security, and tension rather than light-heartedness. All these characteristics – which I suggest are the defining characteristics of the cycle – indicate a struggle for a new identity, and within the family this means especially a redefinition of roles, a familial revolution which can only be achieved by a transformation of mythology.

In the novel *Wenn Ali die Glocken Llauten Hort* ('When Ali Hears the Bells Ringing', 1979), the central character, Kadir, is 'a parody of the ignorant, helpless, powerless, speechless, Turkish migrant' [Fischer and McGowan, 1996: 8]. He relies on his elder son to interpret the German that his younger son mumbles in his sleep. He takes hormone pills which have been carelessly recommended to him for his recurrent stomach pains. As a result of these pills, he begins to develop breasts and finally, horrified by what is happening to his body, and too ashamed to seek advice, takes a kitchen knife and mutilates himself. In their discussion of this story, Fischer and McGowan see it as 'a

grotesque metaphor for German treatment of *Gastarbeiter*, especially Turks, as subhuman beings, and for the helpless and self-destructive response of a man unprepared for the bewildering complexities of urban technological society' [ibid].<sup>xix</sup> The awful fate of Kadir is indeed a metaphor, but not, I believe, for German treatment of the Turks. What is represented is a *self-mutilation*, a much more powerful and more poignant image than an oppression. This is the father's desperate response to the fact that he is turning into a woman, one terrible footnote to the demise of Turkish patriarchy.

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<sup>i</sup> Quoted in Shayegan, 1992:61.

<sup>ii</sup> 'For Barthes, ideology and myth are interchangeable. Barthes exposes "mythology" as the systematic presentation of bourgeois thinking as if it were the only possible way of thinking' [Coupe, op. cit. 156].

<sup>iii</sup> Because of the rather 'grand' illusions involved in the study of myth, there is a danger that such a comment be criticised as somehow inflating the importance of the phenomenon. I should emphasise that the disappearing father is only one symptom of the mythological shift. The study of myth during the last century has been subject to a number of abrupt fluctuations, the end result of which have been that the term is no approached with some circumspection. As Bell points out, the word 'has fallen from its central and honorific status in the early decades of the century to being either an object of suspicion or tedium by the end of it; and not the least of the reasons for this was the banalizing critical use of myth, for several decades, as a quick-fix recuperative profundity; a ready-made culturally prestigious, nostalgia for the pre-modern' [Introduction to Bell and Poellner (eds.) 1998: 1].

<sup>iv</sup> It is worth noting how close this statement of Levi-Strauss comes to the Freudian concept of wish-fulfilment.

<sup>v</sup> Jakobson is here referring to folktales but the question may be asked as to what, if any, are the differences between established folkloric cycles – such as those collected by the Grimm brothers – and the Greek or Nordic tales and sagas to which we agree to give the appellation mythology. In this context, it is interesting that Jameson continues his discussion of *Blue Velvet* by referring to the film as a 'fairy story'.

<sup>vi</sup> This somewhat cryptic remark requires some explanation. By 'too much to say', I mean that the history of genre studies is already voluminous; by 'not enough', I mean that the essential significance of these studies seems to remain elusive.

<sup>vii</sup> It might be argued that there are certain individual films that have acquired the power of myth: perhaps *Gone with the Wind* for pre-WWII America, or *Star Wars* for contemporary youth (although in this case there is actually a *Star Wars cycle*). A film such as Kurosawa's *Seven Samurai* has some kind of mythic quality, but Kurosawa's cinematic style - the weightiness of the characters, the stylised dress and physical attitudes, the spare, clipped patters of speech, the extremes of heroism - was designed to foster just such an image.

<sup>viii</sup> The emergence of an identifiable 'sub-genre' in *neo-noir* might be taken to militate against this suggestion. However, I would argue that *neo-noir* is in all respects dissimilar from *film noir* of the 1940s. What distinguishes *neo noir* is the deliberate *imitation* of the classic noir, and such imitations, viewed generically, should not be described as a sub-genre but as a distinct genre, with a very different underlying purpose and an appeal to the audience which is sentimental rather than ideological. Despite its historical setting, *LA Confidential* (Curtis Hanson, 1997) is unmistakably a film of the 1990s.

<sup>ix</sup> It is not only in Hollywood that 'Oedipal' themes appear in contemporary cinema. *Affliction* (Schrader, 1997) provides an interesting non-Hollywood example of a very clearly 'Oedipal' scenario, in which a young man returns to the house where he had grown up under the eye of a very severe father – a real French *patriarch* – and ends up by killing him. In Andre Téchiné's *Alice et Martin* (1998), the narrative deals with the illegitimate son of a stern French patriarch whom he eventually murders. The murder is represented as revenge for the father's insensitivity and cruelty towards himself, his mother and his (homosexual) half-brother. In Emir Kusturica's *Time of the Gypsies* ('*Dom za Vesanje*', 1989), referred to in the previous chapter, the whole

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scenario can be read as the playing out of 'Oedipal' tensions, and indeed it is hard to see how it can be read in any other way.

<sup>x</sup> It may be no accident that the word generation and the word genre should be so close etymologically, indicating that both derive from an idea of 'kind' defined to an extent by chronology.

<sup>xi</sup> 'Several decades' is imprecise, but indicates perhaps three to five, or a single generation.

<sup>xii</sup> As has been pointed out earlier, authorial intention is anyway very hard to identify with any certainty in the case of perhaps twenty different films and a dozen different filmmakers. Thus the most that can be done is to offer certain generalisations, which really are only assumptions.

<sup>xiii</sup> It is only in early Freud that one finds 'the self' built around the idea of a centralized bodily demand or drive. He later modified this in his theory of the development of the super-ego which, since it involved the gradual acquisition of a 'conscience' through a process of internalization, actually constituted a move towards a decentred self. It was Anna Freud and the 'ego psychologists' such as Hartmann who restored the central authority of the ego.

<sup>xiv</sup> Sherry Turkle recorded that students at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the mid-1980s spoke of their minds as 'a lot of little processors'. 'In my mind, nobody is at home – just a lot of little bodies', one student told her. Another student explained one of Freud's examples of 'parapraxis' not as the product of unconscious feelings or confusions but as a 'processing error'. "A bit was dropped – the sign bit. There might have been a power surge. No problem." [see Turkle op. cit. 144 and footnote, 299].

<sup>xv</sup> It may also be pointed out that such 'cognitivist' approaches depend on a sophisticated understanding of physical sciences which is beyond the reach of most critical theorists of cinema.

<sup>xvi</sup> Barthes did recognise an intentionality (as in his analysis of the *Le Monde* cover), but as argued above the distinction between *myth* and *ideology* in Barthes is by no means clear. Ricoeur also referred to a form of utopian intentionality in modern myth-making, as well as the possibility of a conscious resistance to this phenomenon. 'We must try to cure the illness of utopia by what is wholesome in ideology – by its element of identity, which is once more a fundamental function of life – and to cure the rigidity, the petrification, of ideologies by the utopian element', he wrote [Ricoeur, 1986: 312]. But Ricoeur also stressed that the dialectic of myth was an imaginative process, a function of the 'social imagination', which approximates my argument here.

<sup>xvii</sup> This was supposed to have been achieved by the *Koy Enstituleri* (Village Institutes) but that for all their dynamic idealism, they ultimately failed to produce the desired shift in village attitudes and values [see Karpat, 1959, pp. 377-80 and Makal, 1954].

<sup>xviii</sup> Quoted in Corrigan, op. cit. p. 20.

<sup>xix</sup> The book, according to Fischer and McGowan, 'has many typical themes of Gastarbeiterliteratur, ironic memories of the dreams of wealth that had motivated migration, hostel life, isolation, puzzlement at the alien language and culture, experience of everyday prejudice and racism, stress-related illness, corruption of traditional values, a sometimes crude location of the roots of migrant misery in capitalism' [op. cit. p.7]. These listed features are strongly reminiscent of some of the Turkish films of a similar period (the 1970s), especially *Otobus*.

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