Old Concepts, New Contents: The City, Cinema and the Stranger

Eski Kavramlar, Yeni Muhtevalar: Kent, Sinema ve Yabancı

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Abstract

This study is a cinematic portrait not of the real, but essentially of the updated İstanbul. In the case of the strangers of cinematic İstanbul, the most strategic, useful, as well as the most difficult step for updating the city's image is to shift the axis from its centres, touristic places, familiar characters, common values and usual events to its corners, secondary places and characters, minimalist conditions, ambivalent values and current changes. For this purpose this study analyzes five films as sociological testimonies without touching upon their details but by focusing on their references: *Politiki Kouzina/Bir Tutam Baharat/A Touch of Spice* (Tassos Boulmetis, 2003), *Köprüdekiler/Men on the Bridge* (Aslı Özge, 2009), *Kaç Para Kaç/A Run for Money* (Reha Erdem, 1999), *Uzak/Distant* (Nuri Bilge Ceylan, 2002), and *11'e 10 Kala/10 to 11* (Pelin Esmer, 2009). These films, which constitute the framework of this research, are breaking points of modern İstanbul's social and urban history and of changing form of strangers.

Keywords: Cinema, The Stranger, İstanbul, Urban Experience, Change.

Öz

Bu çalışma İstanbul'un gerçek değil; esasında güncellenmiş bir sinematik portresidir. Sinematik İstanbul'un yabancıları bağlamında, kent imgesini güncellemek için en stratejik, faydalı ve aynı zamanda en zor adım ekseni merkezlerden, turistik mekânlardan, alışıldık karakterlerden, malum değerlerden ve olağan olaylardan kenarlara, ikincil mekân ve karakterlere, minimal durumlara, müphem değerlere ve hâlihazırdaki değişimlere kaydırmaktır. Bu amaçla, detaylarına inmeksizin ama göndermelerine odaklanarak, birer sosyolojik tanıklık olan beş film analiz edilmiştir: *Bir Tutam Baharat* (Tassos Boulmetis, 2003), *Köprüdekiler* (Aslı Özge, 2009), *Kaç Para Kaç* (Reha Erdem, 1999), *Uzak* (Nuri Bilge Ceylan, 2002) ve *11'e 10 Kala* (Pelin Esmer, 2009). Araştırmanın genel çerçevesini oluşturan bu filmler modern İstanbul'un toplumsal ve kentsel tarihi ve yabancıların değişen dokusunun en kritik kırılma noktalarıdır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sinema, Yabancı, İstanbul, Kentsel Deneyim, Değişim.

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Introduction

> The world we live in seems to be populated mostly by strangers;
> it looks like the world of universal strangerhood.
> We live among strangers, among whom we are strangers ourselves.
> In such a world, strangers cannot be confined or kept at bay.
> Strangers must be lived with
> Zygmunt Bauman, *Thinking Sociologically*

The city, which has a heterogeneous and dense population, is a milieu of strangers (Sennett, 1978, p. 39). Therein, city dwellers establish an inevitable proximity with strangers—so much so that the sense of strangerhood spreads like an urban epidemic and absorbs all urbanites as if this is "their fate, and a *modus vivendi* must be experimented with, tried and tested, and (hopefully) found to make cohabitation palatable and life liveable" (Bauman, 2003, p. 28). This [inner] proximity at the same time constitutes the essence of perpetual ambivalence and tension within the city.

For this reason, strangers themselves establish an academic/intellectual ground for reading and analysing various types of conflict and contrast in the city. Their catastrophic existences exhibit how unstable and fragile urban life is. Based on this flexibility, as Zygmunt Bauman (1997) states, "all societies produce strangers; but each kind of society produces its own kind of strangers, and produces them in its own inimitable way" (p. 17). In this frame, analysing the strangers of İstanbul means to analyse the urban and social experience of the city because they are a sort of mirror that, by any means, reflects and reformulates the catastrophe of city living.

İstanbul changes continuously and rapidly. Cinema, as a mean of capturing and reproducing moving images, is a kind of living memory of the city. Sounds, fabrics, tastes, traditions, histories and myths all embody the world of films; therefore, analysing films can be equivalent to archiving the city. As for the films I select in this research, they first and foremost involve stories about strangers who struggle to survive and to live in this strange city called İstanbul. Each of these strangers, who represent different intensive but shadowy dimensions of İstanbul, are also familiar and honest informers about the tragedies, conflicts, revenges, struggles, hopes, and disappointments of the city. They are bodily close, emotionally distant. The distance does not only refer to a measurable/physical/geographical but essentially to an inner/mental/emotional distance.

Strangers are both needed and disgusted acnes of the city; that is why I place an emphasis on social theory in order to gain insight into their deep lives in the *collective being* and *social organism* that is the city (Lefebvre, 1996, p. 95). In this analysis, I focus more on the relatively untouched but crucial turning points of modern İstanbul, from the second half of the 20th century up until today. In other words, the more I concentrate on the details of these films and the modern-day strangers of İstanbul which they depicted, the more I could reveal the multi-layered faces and dilemmas of the city. As a result, the complex notion of "the stranger" of cinematic İstanbul is elaborated in this study in terms of social theory and from an essentially interdisciplinary approach which focused around some miscellaneous concepts, events and facts, such as deportation, diversity, homogeneity, internal immigration, urbanisation, spatial segregation, home, poverty, the money economy, consumerism,

collection, freedom, virtuality, morality, security, isolation, urban transformation, temporality, death and memory.

Methodology and Approach

In this paper, it is mainly aimed to analyse, not merely the strangers of cinematic İstanbul who have highlighted the social, spatial, political, economic, institutional, constitutional, spiritual and temporal dilemmas of the city, but also how strangerhood has, itself, been transformed in due course and, more importantly, how this "new" sense of strangerhood has caught each one of "us". In this respect, this approach can be seen as a glance at ourselves—a form of introspection or self-examination. It is clear that focusing on strangers also enable "us" to realise and use new themes, heterogeneous figures and various intermediate colours with regards to cinematic city's image. This study, which deals mainly with the thoughts of Georg Simmel, Zygmunt Bauman, and Richard Sennett, however, offers the term *inbetweenness* instead of antagonism or conflict to describe the 'new' sense of strangerhood. This study focuses on five films in order to portray the new strangers of contemporary İstanbul: *Politiki Kouzina/Bir Tutam Baharat/A Touch of Spice* (2003) directed by Tassos Boulmetis, *Köprüdekiler/Men on the Bridge* (2009) directed by Aslı Özge, *Kaç Para Kaç/ Run for Money* (1999) directed by Reha Erdem, *Uzak/Distant* (2002) directed by Nuri Bilge Ceylan, and *11'e 10 Kala/10 to 11* (2009) directed by Pelin Esmer. These films, which constitute the general framework of this study, are thus witnesses to five of the most critical breaking points of modern İstanbul's social and urban history and changing notion of strangers. All of the analysed films had plain cinematography, a non-didactic narration and realist perspective, and, through the lives of these "new" strangers—those who exceeded the cinematic presuppositions, stereotypes, and clichés which have been fictionalised and solidified by tourist guides, promotional films, international television programs, Hollywood and *Yeşilçam*[1] throughout the years.

For this purpose, it is elaborated upon the extensions of the modernisation and urbanisation crises that have occurred during the last half century in particular. It is not aimed to produce an *original* or an *authentic* image of İstanbul. It is also not claimed that the description of the city is *the real İstanbul*; instead, it is attempted to expose the lives of strangers who have been pushed into the background and into the shade of the highlighted clichés and stereotypes above. I think that the best way to come to an understanding about what is not entirely known about the city is to gain insight into the experiences of the strangers of the city, who are crowded yet paradoxically invisible.

These five films shift the axis from familiar to secondary lives, from highlighted to shadowed elements and from natives to strangers. Also, by shifting the spatial axis, they underline the reality that İstanbul does not simply consist of the Bosphorus and the Historical Peninsula. Although all these films are character-based films, they do not try to exaggerate the lives of its simplest characters. Fanis, Vasilis, Saime and Mustafa in *A Touch of Spice*; Fikret, Umut, Cemile and Murat in *Men on the Bridge*; Selim in *A Run for Money*; Mahmut and Yusuf in *Distant*; and Mithat in *10 to 11*—all of these are the city's strangers who enable the cinema to portray the *updated* social and urban experiences of

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1   Yeşilçam was an İstanbul-centred era in classical Turkish cinema between the 1950s and 1980s.

İstanbul. None of them put on an act. In fact, most of the actors are not even professionals. Rather, they are ordinary people who face similar problems and expectations as we do. Indeed, they—the strangers who represent the most alienated faces of the city—could pass off as *us*.

While selecting films, I am inspired by Italian Neo-realism because of its competently portraying the faces of social reality. The Neo-realist film school was based on the traumas and deadlocks which the Second World War had caused. This perspective keeps its significance even today—so much so that the criticism, hermeneutics, and suggestions which it proposed about life and cinema can easily be adapted to İstanbul—which, itself, is not a complete European city—because they relate specifically to rags and problems. Indeed, not only I, but also the New Wave Turkish cinema of the 2000s, have been nourished by it; that is why I prefer focusing on this period and selecting films that were made in the 2000s.[2] These films, just like in Italian Neo-realism, use streets rather than studios and daylight rather than artificial light. They set more premiums on naturalness and artlessness than on strict rules, static scenarios, and far-fetched dialogues. Also, these films do not give credit to exaggerated shots, ornamental effects, tricky stories, and theatrical acting.

I give priority to films that are realistic, simple and plain, in parallel with the ideal film as understood by Siegfried Kracauer. As there are also films that have "refrained from facing social reality" (Kracauer, 2004, p. 143), I deliberately chose films that are able to face social reality in a daring way. The films here are all co-productions: neither only Turkish nor wholly European.[3] The co-production background of these films plays the role of a *balancing function*. Moreover, in order to gain insight into İstanbul and its strangers, I think that the city should be perceived neither from too distant nor from too close, a perspective. Distance may be blinded and closeness may be alienated.

Co-productions may, in this respect, minimise these obstructive and deceptive possibilities. Since I do not think that urban experiences reflected through the projector are coincidental and exceptional fantasies, I view the films which I analyse in this paper as *eyewitnesses* or *informers* that whisper the truth by offering some important clues about İstanbul. Finally, there is no doubt that this research would have been easier, but more superficial, had I analyse the city through documentaries instead of fictional films because documentary films *directly* indicate the exterior surface of the city. However, the city does not only consist of buildings, walls and bridges, but also of extraordinary stories, deep relationships, elusive antagonisms and ambiguous figures. I think that the fiction is the essence not only of films but also of city life.

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2   There is a minor exception here. Only the film, *A Run for Money*, was released in the 1990s—although hanging on by its bare teeth in that its exact release date is December 17, 1999.

3   Again, only, *A Run for Money* is an exception. Nevertheless, many of the film's crew, such as the music director, the cinematographer, the film editor, etc., were foreigners.

Analysis

View on Films

If one looks at the brief history of İstanbul, s/he may discern that the 1950s had significant breaking-points with regard to the modern city's urbanisation.[4] According to Kemal Demir and Suat Çabuk (2010), these years also refer to a remarkable increase in internal immigration and urban population (p. 193) as well as in housing and city planning (Esen, 2011, p. 455). Meanwhile, the internal immigration with regards to the cinematic context signifies a flow from Anatolia[5] into İstanbul. Another point that makes these years distinctive for İstanbul is the Menderes period between 1950 and 1960. Adnan Menderes, the leader of the Democratic Party (*Demokrat Parti*), won the elections of that time and thus became the first elected prime minister after the single-party regime. In other words, the Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*), which was established by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in 1923, suffered a dramatic loss during the first pluralist elections.

Menderes had both a liberal and a conservative worldview. It was under his regime that the most extensive attempts at destruction and construction in the city's history (Kuban, 1994). He made it his goal to make İstanbul one of the world's leading trade centres, with hopes of eventually conquering that sector once again (Singer, 2013). For this purpose, he tried to rehabilitate the "imperialness" of the city which had been overshadowed by the official "republican" ideology which Ankara represents.[6] The constructive, or perhaps destructive, vision that Menderes aimed to graft upon İstanbul—and, to a larger extent, Turkey itself—discomforted the deep-seated military regime; and, in the end, he was executed by hanging in September 1961 after the military coup of May 27, 1960, in Yassıada. During these years, Turkey was dominated by military tutelage, with İstanbul being purified from 'infidels'. In due course, İstanbul continued to be Turkified and cleansed from any *apparent strangers*. As a first step, ethnic minorities, in particular Greeks, were deported from the city. Thus, the modern story of İstanbul started with the Turkification of İstanbul.

A Touch of Spice, a film about a Greek family who were deported from İstanbul and moved to Athens by virtue of some political disagreements during the first years of the 1960s, deals with this change by examining the deportation process which catalysed the large-scale demographic and cultural transformation which has ethnically made İstanbul more homogenous and monophonic. The mass deportation issue is important in terms of its showing us how İstanbul (or, more precisely, Constantinople), which was once a multicultural city, became, in due course, a race-oriented city. Fanis, the main character of the film, experiences exclusion and strangerhood when alienated and exiled, not only from the city but from the culinary tastes that he had come to love during his childhood there.

The exclusion process is not the last, but perhaps the first step in social changes in modern İstanbul. Namely, while İstanbul is 'cleansed' with the removal of the Greeks, Anatolian immigrants

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4   The Turkish population had generally been agricultural until the 1950s (Isik, 2005, p. 57).

5   The Asian part of Turkey.

6   İstanbul, the capital of the Ottoman Empire and of *holy* caliphate, delegated its status to Ankara in 1923. Atatürk focused more on Ankara; meanwhile, İstanbul remained the city of Ottoman nostalgia and religious dreams.

filled the void. The newcomers rushed into the city as a result of the push factors of Anatolia (e.g. agricultural mechanisation, the division of hereditary lands, and unemployement) as well as pull factors of the city itself (e.g. industry, education, and health services). The new strangers reshaped the city's social and economic conditions as well as the spatial structure of İstanbul—so much so that they generated their own living spaces and maintained their rural culture inside İstanbul.[7] Thus, İstanbul, which once upon a time consisted of a number of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, shows a tendency to be a city that consists of thousands of villages. Consequently, new communication styles, new understandings of security, and new ways of surviving in the city are the new, but idiosyncratic, result.

In this regard, *Men on the Bridge*, in contrast with the Yeşilçam era, enters the untouched streets and communicates with the lives of strangers. This film enables viewers to realise their problems, values, plans, hopes and, disappointments. *Men on the Bridge*, which is neither a documentary nor a fictional film, attempts to change the meanings of some urban images, with the image of the "bridge" being one of them. Indeed, the bridge has been metamorphosed from a connector between the West and East into a symbol of distance, traffic jams, unemployment, and life's daily struggles. The characters in the film (Fikret, Murat, Umut, and Cemile) lead different lives and may reflect the deadlocks of communication, identity, family institutions, homelessness and unemployment within İstanbul. In this film, the stories which are told are about four newcomers who live underground and try to climb up.

The only image of İstanbul that evolves in time is surely not the bridge. The spiritual atmosphere of the city, which once was associated with the refulgent silhouette of the imperial periods, has also been reformed in due course as a consequence, not only of national politics and immigration but also of globalisation, consumerism, and the changing money economy. Hence, new intermediate forms, which are references of the new contrasts and conflicts in the city, come out as soon as spirituality meets money. *A Run for Money* is a film that depicts this complicated confrontation by focusing on the reality of how money changes people and reformulates the spiritual heritage and traditions of the city. According to the story, one day, Selim, the stranger and the main character who plays a well-behaved and honest merchant, finds a bag of money and succumbs to its evil—changing his life entirely.

The crisis which the money economy has stimulated can be observed through the tides in mental attitudes of the blasé and isolated urbanites of the city. *Distant* describes this condition by means of a mental distance between Yusuf and Mahmut who are obliged to stay in a home together for a while. Due to unemployment, Yusuf sees no future in his village and comes to İstanbul in order to find a job on a merchant ship. Mahmut, an urbanite photographer, hosts Yusuf in İstanbul. *Distant* implies the message: "everybody is distant in the city".

One of the most popular and active agendas nowadays is that of urban transformation. Escaping from risk can be a risk itself. This involves various conflicts; for instance, between old and new,

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7   Immigration is perhaps the most common issue which is treated by Yeşilçam era; so much so that this period is defined as being the "immigrant cinema" in the history of Turkish cinema.

traditional and modern, sensual and rational, virtuous and valuable paradigms. In the İstanbul of today, everybody is continuously having to make decisions about whether to live or to survive. Briefly, the film *10 to 11* criticises the changing face of İstanbul, the conflict between de(con)struction and (re)construction through the Mithat's tragic story.

Debates on the New Form Strangerhood

I attempted to penetrate into the world of secondary and intermediate colours, people, spaces, lives, relationships, and values without entirely ignoring the importance of the established narrative and clichés of the city. This paper is the story of strangers, not only those who are seen as "worthless", "dangerous", "marginal" and "enemies" and who perceptively live in distant places; or those who are one of us and who live with us (Bauman, 2003, p. 6); but also those who *whisper* the reality of "we are all strangers"—or, at least, the reality that "we are very close to being strangers". In other words, each of us is indeed actors in the film of strangerhood. Sometimes it might be one's self who is the stranger. At others, it is the naysayer spouse, friend, relative, boss or neighbour who is the stranger.

In most early studies about the stranger, the term "strangerhood" tended to be analysed principally through an antagonism between two opposite parameters, such as natives and foreigners, locals and newcomers, hosts and sojourners, insiders and outsiders, friends and enemies, normals and deviants, etc. Also, in Simmel's (1971) sense, the strangers were generally dealt with in the context of the acts of "coming" and "staying" (p. 143). Accordingly, they were coming to a place as a guest or a newcomer. And then, since they could easily be realised and discriminated against based on their accents, clothes, skin colours, eating habits and so on, with time, they were conveyed as intruders/enemies by inciting a sense of fear, unreliability, distrust, and insecurity in those who looked for order, safety, and stability. At the end of this process, they were mostly excluded from certain social groups based on their identity and sense of belonging (Levine, 1977, pp. 23-27). The cinematic reflections of the discussion were in concordance with this theoretical perspective and understanding. This may show how theoretical approaches on the stranger are nourished by cinematic representations and vice versa. Not only in Hollywood and Yeşilçam but also in some examples of the New Turkish Cinema, the strangers of cinematic İstanbul have been depicted as "aliens" with different nationalities, identities, and belongings. These "visible" threatening "monsters", for whatever reason, were living in different, self-enclosed, dangerous, and, more precisely, distant towns.

In later studies, this sort of strangerhood started to become extinct both in theoretical discussions and in cinematic representations. In place of this, a more ambivalent notion of strangers emerged. In the meantime, the transformation in the representation of cinematic strangers has continued to accompany theoretical discussions. The concept "ambivalence" (in Bauman and Sennett's sense) essentially relates to the uncertainty and doubt about where and when they come from, where they live now, who they are with, what they want, etc. All these and more unanswerable questions have rendered previous knowledge about strangers meaningless because they are now, as Bauman (1991) points out, "undecidables" (p. 55) and "the great unknown" (Bauman, 2002, p. 115).

Strangerhood no longer refers to a specific individual and group but rather to a characteristic and presence that has the power to cover everybody regardless of who one is and of what one has. This sort of strangerhood essentially does not relate to explicit distinctive characteristics such as ethnicity and spatiality. It is primarily an inner dilemma that reflects not only on social relations and spatial design but also mental, emotional, spiritual and temporal patterns. In this case, even being powerful like Murat, being a good spouse like Umut and Cemile, being honest and a believer like Selim, being educated and propertied like Mithat, and being a talented professional like Mahmut are no longer easy and exact solutions for escaping from the state of strangerhood. Moreover, the new strangerhood is not based on poverty or indigence but, paradoxically, on comfort, wealth and affluence. Even isolation and desertedness (in Simmel's sense) is experienced in these new strangers' lives, not as a compulsory fate but as an 'inner' preference. Just as they are not simple outsiders or marginal men, the concept of "the other" is no longer sufficient to describe them. Earlier strangers were, just like Fanis and Fikret—an obvious part of certain identities; similarly, their addresses and streets were certain and apparent; therefore, it was also easy to draw spatial boundaries in order to exclude these "labelled" strangers and exclude them from the circle of common society.

As for Murat, Cemile, Selim, Mahmut and Mithat; who are they, indeed? When looked at the article as a whole, it can be comprehended that "they are us". In other words, all of "us" live with the strong potential of being a stranger, because today, this strangerhood does not simply refer to a particular person or group; rather, it—as a close potentiality—resides within us and which are catalysed by our inner dilemmas which the liquidity of modern life largely creates. Nedim Karakayali (2006) must be right: For him, the modern individual is very much like the stranger (p. 324). It is perhaps for this reason, as Bauman suggests, that focusing on the liquidity of modernity requires one to analyse strangerhood, and vice versa.

In the sight of the strangers and non-strangers of the past, strangerhood was interpreted as an illness that must be cured. Also, they aimed to be respected, accepted and beloved. Modern-day strangers, however, place more of a premium on reserve, antipathy, aversion, indifference, repulsion, self-preservation and having a blasé attitude (in Simmel's sense) in order to remain free and independent. Since they may perceive every kind of contact as somehow being a kind of premeditated harassment, they attempt to create mental distances in order to control their relationships with others. This may show that they experience the anomalousness of strangerhood as a sort of shield or shelter that proudly protects them from the outer world—not always, but frequently. Besides, these fictional distances give them neither a complete happiness nor a permanent independence that they can look for. Instead, with time, their emotions and actions begin to be occupied by a sense of isolation and despair seeing as strangers are inured to mental distances. This is a situation in which the solution is more trouble than the problem.

The Sense of Inbetweenness

Modern-day strangerhood, in contrast to how the concept is portrayed by the existing literature, does not necessarily have to be based on a visible and measurable antagonism. Indeed, I prefer using

the concept "inbetweenness" instead of "antagonism" in order to describe the deadlocks of today's strangers. This "inbetweenness" itself can be realised principally in details regarding the strangers' "inward-oriented world" because most of the multiple catastrophic dualities which annihilate distinctions between modern-day individuals and today's strangers are embodied initially in those strangers' own mental realms themselves.[8] With respect to this argument, as demonstrated by the strangers of the five films I analyse in this research, one of the most prominent and common results of the condition of inbetweenness is the sense of melancholy and despair which they all shared. Accordingly, the current notion of strangerhood shows a tendency to affect melancholic, pessimistic and unhappy individuals, while melancholic individuals affect strangerhood. Although they, in contrast with the previous notion of strangerhood, have enough socio-economical qualifications and opportunities to escape spatially and physically from the tangible oppressions of others, they cannot overcome the inner turmoil of inbetweenness residing within themselves. It is not as easy today as in the past because the enemy is no longer someone else—rather, the enemy is inside. Once upon a time, the existence of strangers was the raw material of a culture of fear. High-tech securitised houses, closed-circuit TV cameras, unbreakable windows, sensitive alarms, etc., were all being promoted and reproduced due to the threat that strangers presented. Namely, strangers were the source both of a living-desire and of an anxiety (in Bauman's sense). In other words, the will to be free paradoxically lived alongside a sense of doubt and insecurity.

As for modern-day strangerhood, not only has the security regime changed drastically, but also the meaning of the State for strangers and the meaning of strangers for the State have also altered significantly as well. In this regard, in the past, just as Fanis experienced, the State perceived strangers as being an apparent threat, just as the strangers perceived the State as being an apparent threat. Thus, both actors were dialectically legitimising and reproducing each other. In addition to this, both sides were sure about which strategies they needed to utilise against the other. Likewise, as Sara Dorman, Daniel Hammett and Paul Nugent (2007) point out, the State was creating strangers in order to maintain their sense of nationhood (p. 20). Besides, as was shown in the film *Men on the Bridge*, the State also attempted to bring strangers together around a communal sense of belonging. In other words, this reflects the search and desire of numerous marginalised and excluded strangers who aimed at coming closer together both socially and spatially to the town center. But, then again, as was seen in Selim's story, the State started becoming a hidden hand that indirectly manipulated the lives of strangers. It is no longer visible or absolute, yet it is still active. More obviously, although the relationship between the State and strangers is not necessarily based on a tangible conflict or threat, many of the required policies and regulations regarding urban transformations are made and implemented by the State (e.g. Mithat's flat being destroyed by the State). Nevertheless, the dialectic of present-day strangers is not against the local, the native, the owner or the host.

In the presence of such dilemmas and the condition of inbetweenness, the thing which has changed most drastically towards the negative is the meaning and usage of the word "home". For previous strangers, the home was like a shelter which protected them from the bothersome paradoxes

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8   The deep relevance between urbanity and mental life was first analysed perhaps most comprehensively by Georg Simmel. See Simmel (1997).

and annoying contradictions of the outside world, as well as that of urban living. Similarly, many clichés about the home in most of the cinematic representations of İstanbul have been fictionalised as a quasi-sacramental place of serenity, solution, sharing, and solidarity. Not only in cinematic İstanbul, but also in literature, as Stephen Castles and Alastair Davidson (2000) state, the home had mostly been dealt with as a place embodying a sense of protection and security (pp. 130-132) and which prompted common feelings, goals, and ideals (Spykman, 2009, p. 152). For the first strangers of the city, the home was an imaginative and perfect geography in which all kinds of disagreements could easily be resolved. Fanis, for instance, was one of these strangers.

However, the home has dramatically turned into a place of agitation rather than serenity, confrontation rather than catharsis, disconnection rather than communication, melancholy rather than joy, hesitation rather than confidence, distance rather than nearness. In this respect, the home refers to a spatial deadlock in which problems are not solved but privately reproduced. Bauman (1994) defines this as a type of "privatised prison" (p. 33); furthermore, this sort of confinement refers to the end, not only of there being a distinction between the inside and the outside, but also there being a space in which current strangers feel themselves as being free and happy. Strangers simply play the role of being free and happy at home. In other words, the privatised prison is essentially a mask portraying them "as if" they were satisfied with themselves and their possessions.

The home itself is no longer an indestructible fortress protecting the senses of intimacy, cooperation, loyalty and commitment. Instead, all of these elements, which were all once associated with the very essence of İstanbul, maintain their existence merely as "a weak possibility" against the common traumas which the money economy essentially generates. As mentioned, there is no room for permanence in the realm of strangers. They always live with the potential of losing what they have. Their possessions are as temporary as their social ties. For this reason, they are frequently paranoiac, as if being pursued by an unrecognisable shadow. This is another tragedy of the inbetweenness which strangers have to face within the city on a daily basis.

Conclusion

In the lives of yesterday's strangers, there was also the essential meaning behind visible boundaries and spatial segregations. Today, however, as a result of the inner inbetweenness which transcends the power of space, it is no longer possible to prevent these fears and threats—at least if they do, in fact, exist—about strangers which are caused by drawing borders, putting up walls or creating gated communities between urbanites, groups, towns, cities and states. In the meantime, most of these precautions are based on artificially-designed reasons that feed consumerism. Furthermore, in a situation where everybody in some way becomes a stranger and where strangerhood primarily transforms into an internal/mental condition, spatial and physical separations, segregations or divisions naturally become non-functional and unnecessary. Under these circumstances, strangers themselves turn into their own borders; that is why they have also rendered the duality between inside and outside meaningless. In this respect, the previous strangers were those outsiders who were exposed to borders and thus became the innocent side of the conflict; as for the current strangers,

however, they tend to determine their existence as an indivisible border between various inner and irreconcilable inbetweennesses.[9] This is what Selim subjected to A.R[10] in *A Run for Money*, what Mahmut subjected upon Yusuf in *Distant*, and what Mithat subjected to his wife in *10 to 11*.[11] It is clear that we, the new strangers, are more capable, yet, nevertheless, are less innocent than the previous ones.

Simmel (1971) invites "us" to exceed those boundaries because, according to him, "only for whoever stands outside his boundary in some sense knows that he stands within it, that is, knows it as a boundary" (pp. 355-356). Indeed, it is not difficult to detach ourselves from social belongings for the sake of standing outside our boundaries. Namely, identity-based issues (such as ethnicity, education, occupation, ownership and so forth) can be reformulated in order to allow the tangible faults to be corrected. But how can we change our inner habits and our sense of belonging, which both have vital meanings in our lives but which, nevertheless, frequently lead us astray? We tend to be attached to a specific object, place or emotion which becomes the breath of our lives under any and all circumstances. More crucially, each of these attachments, whether special or ordinary, with time turn into indispensable instruments between us and everyone else around us—nothing less than the social belongings. To attach ourselves to them, or to detach ourselves from them?—that is the question!

If this choice was easy, at least one of the strangers in the five films could have surely achieved it. Fanis could not detach himself from his gustatory pleasures, and Murat was addicted to online experiences. Likewise, isolation was the only resistance for Mahmut. As for Mithat, he lost everything for the sake of his 'non-significant' collections. All of these characters, on the one hand, were faced with problems, and on the other hand, made life unbearable for their friends, neighbours, spouses, and relatives. More importantly, their inner paradoxes at every turn collided, not only with other people but also with the liquidity and temporality of urban life. There is no room for "stopping" or "storing" in the liquidity of modernity which encourages us to move, replace, change and consume. In other words, the inbetweenness that refers to actionlessness and petrification is not an appreciated form for this-worldly values. Instead, the desired thing is to be an intermediate form that is a reference to a flexible mental condition which is always ready to be everything simultaneously.

Upon this slippery ground, any small change in the economy, policies or politics of today may require one to partially or entirely revise the realities which had already previously been claimed, stated, written or filmed. In this respect, İstanbul is both a spectacular laboratory and a greasy field in which almost nothing is static, clear or constant. With regards to this situation, the answers that

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9   I suppose this is the exact time to use the pronoun "we" instead of "they" for the current strangers because their using the pronoun "they" in order to indicate "strangers" tacitly means that we are positioning ourselves as non-strangers—or, at least, as completely different from strangers. I think this is a considerably problematic approach—especially in terms of "stranger studies"—because gaining insight into strangers' lives requires for us to initially realise our own strangerhood.

10   The viewers never learn the exact name of the man. According to a report in a newspaper that Selim reads, his initials are AR. Interestingly; 'ar' is a Turkish moralistic word which literally means 'pudicity'.

11   Besides, their acts were not without cause: Umut's boss, Cemile's neighbour, Selim's wife, Mahmut's sister and Mithat's son all represent the superego of society forcing them to become like everybody else (i.e. those who change, sell, buy, move, desire, etc.).

I have attempted to give are not absolute and indisputable. Instead, all these arguments and the answers which have been given should stimulate new questions and suggestions, not only for future researchers and filmmakers but also for those who wish to try to understand their own—as well as others'—strangerhood.

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