

## INTERVIEWS WITH TWO TRANS-NATIONAL DIRECTORS: TURKISH-AUSTRIAN MIGRANT CINEMA AND ITS ISSUES

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These two interviews<sup>2</sup> address to trans-national films, directed by two different directors based on Turkish culture, but living in Austria. Within the concept of migration and cinema, these two interviews aim to mention the representation of different cultural notions in Turkish-Austrian Migrant Cinema. Kenan Kılıç and Hüseyin Tabak's films based on migrant problem, hybrid identities and national values, taking Austria as a sample. Kılıç and Tabak's films include multiculturalism, Turkish national values and Turkish national cinema narrative by keeping optimism and hope. The films by both of these directors focus on traditional values of Turkish culture, the reflection of these values on Austria and cover the features of immigration from Turkey to Austria. The films portray Turkish immigrants going back and forth between Turkish and Austrian cultures in their daily lives. The films of these directors show the experiences in during and post-migration processes and emphasize the phenomenon of not belonging either culture.

Within this context, I, as a researcher, have searched regarding migrant problem, hybrid identities, national and trans-national values in these films by Kılıç and Tabak with a scientific approach (cultural studies and migration), on the other hand I made interviews with these directors about the keywords. I am confident that these interviews are useful for the scholars and moviegoers to understand the issues in Turkish-Austrian Migrant Cinema.

### **How could you describe the immigrants coming from Turkey to Austria?**

**Hüseyin Tabak:** There are various generations here. The families are the first that came to Austria by 1960s and 1980s. Many of these families were invited as worker by Austria government. The workers and their families settle down Austria making the necessary

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things. Their kids went to the schools and they have integrated Austria life. Austria stopped the labour recruitment by 1990s; however the migration was going on from Turkey. The life was too hard for those who were coming from Turkey to Austria, because it was a big problem to find a job for the immigrants. The integration of the immigrants, which came from Turkey to Austria on 1990s, was harder. It was not possible for their kids getting used to German language and riding high at their school. On 1970s and 1980s, political-intellectual immigrants were higher than on 1990s, therefore I can say that the immigrants from the countryside of Turkey to Austria. On the other hand, many young people from Turkey to Austria to get education on the last years. This is hopeful, because a new Turkish generation has been occurred with those young people.

**Which is the main group that is affected between the immigrants? Why?**

*Hüseyin Tabak:* I do not think there are not many problems among the immigrants. Even though there are, I think these issues arise from the political-social situation of Turkey. Tensions between the members of AK Party (AKP), Republican People's Party (CHP) and People's Democrat Party (HDP) or distinctions and otherization such as "are you Alawite?", "Are you Sunni?", "Are you Kurd?", "Are you Turk?" ... These distinctions are increasing between people in Turkey, and clashes are happening between the young groups.

**What is / are the biggest issue of the immigrant/s coming from Turkey to Austria?**

*Hüseyin Tabak:* Young people have many troubles in Austria. Turkish language is spoken, and Turkish TV channels are watched at their homes. For example many young people do not know who the Austrian prime minister is. On the other hand, Turkish families discriminate against Austrians. They use "gavur" (non-muslim) word. I hope that young generation may cross these borders and integrate Austria well.

**Have you ever had an opportunity to observe the other minorities in Austria? If so, what are the differences and the similarities with the immigrants coming from Turkey?**

**Hüseyin Tabak:** I can say that the immigrants coming from former Yugoslavia could integrate faster. The first reason of this is having the same faith. However the interesting point is that Muslim Bosnians have been integrated faster than the immigrants coming From Turkey. I think Turkish television channels effect negatively in this sense. For example, when there was no satellite system, we used to watch German movies as a family. My mother and my father used to watch main news bulletin as German, but they watch main news bulletin from Turkish television channels.

**How could you describe your films?**

**Hüseyin Tabak:** Cinema is cinema. There are some various. Comedy, dram, thriller, etc... However as I am writing a story, I always prioritise its story. I try to express the plot from the people's outlook. Realistic, but full of hope. Dram, but little hope inside it.

**If you were living in Turkey, would your movies' themes be the same?**

**Hüseyin Tabak:** If I were living in Turkey, my movies would be the same but more political. Because I cannot tolerate injustice. Proletarians, Kurd or Turk in Turkey unfortunately are hard done and are manipulated. This situation starts with the serials, and goes up with the news. For example, Kurd-Turk issue, which is the biggest issue of Turkey, has been handled since 15 years as objectively? 50-60 serials are produced in every year. This number passes over 500 in 10 years. 4 or 5 of this number handle a bit of these issues but not freely

**The film *A Horse on the Balcony* is more different the film *Your Beauty is Worth Nothing* in terms of theme. What is the reason?**

**Hüseyin Tabak:** Indeed, both of these films different, but still the same. *A Horse on the Balcony* was filmed for the children; therefore its narrative is childish. Many of directors say "We love kids", however how many of them film for the children? The narrative was set from the perspective of a kid whom nobody takes care of with in the class or at school in the film of *A Horse on the Balcony*. He makes friends by using his good abilities, and he does not change himself at the end. I like kids, all of them is hopeful. I am proud of making films for kids.



**Dram of a family is told in the film of *Your Beauty is Worth Nothing*. On the other hand, Kurd-Turk issue is handled in the film. Is this issue is experienced in Austria? Have you handled this issue in your films as a big problem?**

**Hüseyin Tabak:** How the life is changed for a kid coming from Turkey to Austria? Indeed my starting point was this. On the other hand, being half Kurt and half Turk of this kid brings the troubles with. All the troubles of the film are ended with the folk song of Aşık Veysel. All the prejudices disappear immediate. This is so easy! However if the capitalist powers dominate Turkey and the World, they determine these borders of the people. If peace is dominated in somewhere, capitalist powers cannot be the power. However there is a chaos or a war in somewhere, capitalist powers could direct the people where they want by startling.

Kurt-Turk issue cannot be known well. This is a big deficit of Austria. Many people came here from Turkey, but this issue is handled neither at schools nor at the other fields. American or British histories are taught. Well how many do Americans or British live in Austria? This problem is included of the theme I talked about capitalist powers.

**Which one is appropriate for the characters in the film *Your Beauty is Worth Nothing* such as Turk, Kurd, and Austrian? For example the elder brother of Veysel blames his father as a terrorist...**

**Hüseyin Tabak:** All the characters in the film have some troubles. These problems are not regarding their ethnicities. Turks and Kurds love each other; or kill and vandalize, but somehow love each other. For example the elder brother of Veysel says to his father "terrorist" and shows his chest to his father. We see the Turkish flag as a tattoo on his chest. There is no connection being a nationalist of Veysel's brother. He does this as a reaction for his father left them and went to the hells as a guerrilla when they were children. If his father were a Turkish soldier, he would be Turk nationalist. These are humanistic matters.

**Do you think of filming a film tells about the issues between Turkey and Austria?**

**Hüseyin Tabak:** Yes, I think. It will be similar *Your Beauty is Worth Nothing*.

**What do you say about trans-cultural cinema and global cinema?**

**Hüseyin Tabak:** Trans-cultural cinema is a good cinema language. Many films have trans-cultural values. Even a story of a man and a woman is also trans-cultural. The worlds of a man and a woman are different from each other; but they can meet in the same point somehow. This case is the same trans-cultural. For example, the film *Revenant*, directed by Alejandro Gonzalez Inyarritu, and was a candidate for Oscar in the last year, is such as a trans-cultural film. The film is about a story between an American father and his American-Indian son. The father learns his son's language and his son becomes his everything with time. The father can know the mountains, and wildwoods as well as his son, but he will be white forever. However he will never be typical American white people. He lives in between.

***Happy Is Who Says I Am a Turk***

**How could you describe the immigrants coming from Turkey to Austria?**

**Kenan Kılıç:** If we talk about the first generation, we can say that they are kind of poor, innocent and smart at the same time. This first generation also feels neither Turkish nor Austrian. Their children, their ages between 25 and 30, can accommodate neither Austria nor Turkey. They prefer to be here or to be in Turkey when suited their books.

**Have you ever had an opportunity to observe the other minorities in Austria? If so, what are the differences and the similarities with the immigrants coming from Turkey?**

**Kenan Kılıç:** They are not as the same as the immigrants coming from Turkey. For example, the immigrants, coming from Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, can accommodate Austria easily. Because their geography is close to Austria, it may help their adaptation process. Their traditions and customs bring with adaptation. They are closer to Western culture than Turkey in the meaning of socialization. The first immigrants, coming from Turkey to Austria, are more different. Their beliefs trust relationships and communication systems are more different.

**As I was watching your documentary (*Gurbet*), I thought that there was an injustice to the immigrants. I mean these people move from their homeland and to a new country whose culture is more different. Even though they cannot get educated well in their country, everybody wants them to live and to accommodate to new country.**

**Kenan Kılıç:** The first immigrants were not highly qualified people in Austria. Those people did not have well-educated and even a job. However Germany wanted highly qualified, well-educated people. Austria caused only men to bring as manpower, but Germany caused both men and women to bring as manpower. The working conditions, learning German, social conditions are better in Germany. In Austria, the immigrants were worked for the hard works that Austrian could not do. In the first time, everybody thought that all the immigrants worked for a while and then they return to their homeland, but the things were not occurred as planned. In the meanwhile, neither Austria nor Turkey supported to those people. Just a few employers helped to those immigrants regarding German language course and quality of life. Those workingman's houses were clean and had a standard, but many of those houses were neglected and worse as seen in the documentary.

#### **How could you describe your films?**

**Kenan Kılıç:** I think every film is a reflection of an era. Once I started to film, my films included of surrealistic specialities. Those films were between 5-7 minutes, and were filmed with 8-16 mm. I wanted to know myself in cinematography, editing, and motion pictures. I call this era as a meeting process. The first plot that I wrote was a long story. Yılmaz Güney, who was an actor, a script writer, a producer and a director, influenced me. I think it was impossible not to be irresponsible. All I want is to deal social reality and social criticism in every genre of films. I think every film covers the issues based on social reality and social criticism.

I started to film in Austria. My focuses on my films are naturally immigrant issues. I am also an immigrant. This is a natural process that I have minded and I have filmed. Austrian Government expects from the immigrant directors. The art worker is independent; can do whatever s/he wants; but what is expected from us is own community's unknown stories indirectly.

#### **How can multi-culturalism be experienced in Austria?**

**Kenan Kılıç:** Because the local people see you as a foreigner, they have some judicial molds about. Some troubles arise when a person stays for a long time: Is s/he one of us, or not? Be a citizen or not! There are still some prejudices about this topic.



**Have you ever thought of filming Kurdish issue as a Kurdish?**

**Kenan Kılıç:** No, I have not. I do not need to emphasize this issue, since my stories do not need this issue. My focus is alienation issue. Many of characters, in my film *Night Travelling*, are Kurdish, but my focus was to be a foreigner in another country. My starting point was the people coming from Turkey.

**Kenan Kılıç: How could you describe yourself?**

I feel both Kurdish, Turkish and Austrian. I am the human of the world.

**What do you think about trans-cultural cinema and global cinema?**

**Kenan Kılıç:** To be trans-cultural must exist in another land. Such a kind of place brings with multi-culturalism. Then you perceive all people and everything differently. Trans-culturalism changes the term of nation. For example I cannot say “happy is who says I am a Turk”; since I am also both Austrian and Kurdish, and Turkish. However no one does not describe their selves as trans-cultural.

People expect from you something new and unknown with trans-cultural cinema. I call this as a selling of exotic stories. There is a threat here, and we directors jeopardize. We capture some secret things.

Trans-culturalism also alienates people from their socialization and their family-relative-friend circle as negatively. For example the immigrants move away from their homeland.

**Why can the immigrants not return to their homeland?**

**Kenan Kılıç:** The first immigrants have stayed here as they came. However Turkey has changed. The immigrants have experienced the nostalgia and culture as they came here. They do not prefer to socialize with new people, other minorities or Austrians. They live as if they are in Turkey and they have tried to do that. They are in dilemma.