

CHARACTER AND COMMUNICATIVE MEMORY IN THE FILM *NEW DAWN FADES* PSYCHOGEOGRAPHIC TRACES

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ABSTRACT

The relationship between character and cinematic space is analyzed in Gürcan Keltek's *New Dawn Fades* (*Yeni Şafak Solarken*, 2024) through the lens of psychogeography. The protagonist, Akın, demonstrates a deep and enduring connection to the city of Istanbul, where he lives. Istanbul's textures, rhythms, and roots are presented as an active agent that aligns with the character's emotional and cognitive being. Istanbul calls, reflects, absorbs, and reshapes the protagonist's psychological state, creating a symbiotic relationship between the character and his habitat, positioning psychogeography as a critical element in the film.

The study draws on foundational theories of cinema and urban space, with particular emphasis on Guy Debord's concept of psychogeography. Mentioning methods as a *dérive* to interpret the characters' movement through Istanbul is profoundly revelatory. Walter Benjamin's notion of the *flâneur* further elaborates on this analysis, positioning the protagonist as a drifting observer. Additionally, Mark Fisher's theory of hauntology is mentioned in understanding the concept of seeking the future through the lost future.

The topography of Istanbul in film is examined in relation to the character's internal mental map. This analysis reveals a story between space and character. The dancing camera by cinematographer Peter Zeitlinger and the sound design by Son of Philip intensify the main character's estrangement and associated psychogeography in the film, projecting the city as an experiential field where psyche, space, and cinema intersect.

Keywords: cinema and city, psychogeography, Istanbul, *New Dawn Fades*, Gürcan Keltek

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PSIKOCOĞRAFYA VE İLETİŞİMSEL BELLEK BAĞLAMINDA YENİ ŞAFAK SOLARKEN FİLMİNDE KARAKTER İNŞASI

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ÖZ

Gürcan Keltek'in Yeni Şafak Solarken (2024) adlı eserinde karakter ve sinematik mekan arasındaki ilişki psikocoğrafya perspektifinden incelenmektedir. Kahraman Akın, yaşadığı şehir İstanbul ile derin ve kalıcı bir bağ kurar. İstanbul'un dokusu, ritmi ve kökleri, karakterin duygusal ve bilişsel varlığıyla uyumlu aktif bir unsur olarak sunulur. İstanbul, kahramanın psikolojik durumunu çağırır, yansıtır, emer ve yeniden şekillendirir; karakter ile yaşam alanı arasında simbiyotik bir ilişki yaratarak psikocoğrafyayı filmin kritik bir unsuru haline getirir.

Çalışma, sinema ve kentsel alanın temel teorilerinden yararlanmakta ve özellikle Guy Debord'un psikocoğrafya kavramına vurgu yapmaktadır. Karakterlerin İstanbul'daki hareketlerini yorumlamak için *dérive* gibi yöntemlerden bahsetmek son derece aydınlatıcıdır. Walter Benjamin'in *flâneur* kavramı, bu analizi daha da detaylandırarak kahramanı sürüklenen bir gözlemci olarak konumlandırır. Ayrıca, kayıp gelecekler aracılığıyla geleceği arama kavramını anlamak için Mark Fisher'in hauntology teorisinden bahsedilmektedir.

Filmdeki İstanbul'un topografyası, karakterin içsel zihinsel haritası ile ilişkili olarak incelenmektedir. Bu analiz, mekan ve karakter arasındaki hikayeyi ortaya çıkarmaktadır. Görüntü yönetmeni Peter Zeitlinger'in dans eden kamerası ve Son of Philip'in ses tasarımı, filmin ana karakterinin yabancılaşmasını ve bununla ilişkili psikocoğrafyayı yoğunlaştırarak şehri bir ruh, mekan ve sinemanın kesiştiği bir deneyim alanı haline getirir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: sinema ve şehir, İstanbul, psikocoğrafya, Yeni Şafak Solarken, Gürcan Keltek

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INTRODUCTION: *NEW DAWN FADES* (2024) & GÜRÇAN KELTEK

Communication in Istanbul transcends verbal exchange and is deeply embedded in the city's spatial rhythms, cultural practices, and visual narratives. Cinema serves as a medium that translates these urban dimensions into collective stories, enabling the city to express itself through images, sounds, and atmospheres. The streets, waterfronts, and neighborhoods of Istanbul function as communicative agents, shaping the transmission of collective memory and identity across generations. This dynamic relationship between urban space and cinematic communication positions Istanbul as both the subject and the medium of dialogue. Within this framework, Gürçan Keltek's film *New Dawn Fades* (*Yeni Şafak Solarken*, 2024) demonstrates how Istanbul serves as an artistic platform when communicating with audiences.

Born in Izmir, Turkey, Gürçan Keltek studied film at Dokuz Eylül University. His films *Overtime* (2012) and *Colony* (2015) were screened at Visions du Réel and FIDMarseille, respectively. His first feature film, *Meteorlar* (*Meteors*, 2017), won awards, including the First Feature Film Award and the Boccolino d'Oro Film Critics' Award at the Locarno Film Festival. *Gulyabani* (2018) premiered at the Signs of Life section of the Locarno Festival and was screened at Tate Modern, Reykjavík, Rotterdam, and the Viennale.

New Dawn Fades (*Yeni Şafak Solarken*, 2024) is a thriller written and directed by Gürçan Keltek. The narration of the film is centered on Akın (Cem Yiğit Üzümoğlu), who lives in Istanbul with his mother (Suzan Kardeş) and has been discharged from a psychiatric hospital, but continues to struggle with his mental disorders. To alleviate his situation, he visits Istanbul's iconic religious sites and tombs, seeking solace, meaning, and refuge. As the main character's psychological attacks pulsate, the movie gradually shifts from reality to surrealism. In this disorienting realm, Istanbul's districts also begin to take on an alternative form as hallucinatory, rotated by the royal barge. In the film *New Dawn Fades*, the city is a living organism, emphasizing more than urban space or a neutral backdrop for action. The research aims to foreground the importance of psychogeography as a concept and track its transformative effects on the film.

Scope of the Study & Methodological Framework

The aim of the research is to appraise psychogeography as a concept when analyzing character in relation to its space. In the film, *New Dawn Fades*, a mentally struggling character is exhibited, triggered, and transformed by Istanbul's multi-layered historical topography. The analysis synthesizes theoretical research with director interviews, film reviews, and the historical research on the locations to demonstrate how *New Dawn Fades* includes spatial settings into fundamental ontological elements of character development.

The methodological framework employs psychogeography as both a theory and a practical tool that links cinema studies with urban cultural analysis. By examining how Akin's psychological states are mapped onto Istanbul's geography, the study shows how spatial environments and narrative structure influence one another. This method highlights how the film transforms architectural and historical sites into active sources of meaning, expanding the use of psychogeography beyond its usual literary and sociological fields.

This report analyzes the film through four primary axes, beginning with an exploration of theoretical concepts such as psychogeography, *dérive*, and the modern *flâneur*. The main character Akin's family history and traumas are described, and continue with the film's depiction of Istanbul's topography, including sites such as Hagia Sophia, Eyüp Sultan Mosque, Chalcedon (Kadıköy), cemeteries, and the Bosphorus, and are outlined to establish parallels between psychogeographic impact and the characters' mentality. Lastly, film aesthetics, as Peter Zeitlinger's cinematography and Son of Philip's sound design express psychogeography, is elaborated on.

To ensure methodological rigor, the analysis combined:

- **Film Textual Analysis:** Scene-by-scene examination of cinematography, sound design, and narrative structure.
- **Spatial Mapping:** Identification of historical and cultural layers associated with each site, linking them to Akin's psychological states.

- **Comparative Framework:** Integration of Guy Debord’s psychogeography, Walter Benjamin’s flâneur, and Mark Fisher’s hauntology to interpret the protagonist’s drifting and estrangement.
- **Supplementary Sources:** Director interviews, film reviews, and historical accounts of Istanbul’s topography were consulted to contextualize the cinematic representation of space.

By applying psychogeography in this structured manner, the study demonstrates how Istanbul’s geography functions not merely as a backdrop but as an active communicative memory in shaping Akin’s character arc. Specifically, the technique of *dérive* (drifting) is operationalized to trace the protagonist’s movements in Istanbul. The *dérive* method allowed the researchers to highlight the reciprocal relationship between urban environment and psychological experience, thereby situating the film within broader discourses of cinema and spatial studies.

The Relationship Between Cinema & City

Cinema and the city engage in a reciprocal relationship in which urban life shapes cinematic narratives, which, in turn, alter perceptions and experiences of the urban environments people watch. Nowell-Smith elaborates that the city emerges as a real, non-fictional protagonist and develops gradually through studio filmmaking in the 1910s and 1920s. The author continues that, prior to World War Two, filmmakers who departed from studio settings tended to focus on natural landscapes rather than on the interactions between characters and urban environments (2001, p. 104). Over time, cinema has positioned the city as a central visual and narrative space, emphasizing its distinctive textures, rhythms, and social dynamics. “Cinema has documented the special and detailed moments of the cities from different points of view and will continue to do so. When reinterpreted by cinema, cities acquire distinct features. Because cinema feeds on the aesthetic concerns of the art” (Toprak, 2016, p. 20). Houses, neighborhoods, streets, cities, and countries not only serve as backdrops; they offer dynamic spaces full of opportunities.

In the book *Language of Vision*, György Kepes emphasizes that the representational image never perfectly matches spatial reality; instead, it approximates it.

In Kepes's words, "... one selects and arranges the visual stimulations according to one's attitude toward these things" (1969, p. 68). Within this framework, representation transitions from objective depiction to expressive mediation. As a result, spatial reality is interpreted rather than directly replicated, influenced by perceptual habits and cultural conventions. John Orr describes the cinematic city as "refracts the designed world of the living city, and often adds its own signatures" (Orr, 2003, as cited in Demir, 2015, p. 22). Another author highlights the dialect between the city and cinema as: "City enhances the opportunities of the moving images on the screen with its stories, beauties and architecture. Cinema, in return, (re-)creates the images of cities on the minds of the viewers" (Yılmaz, 2009, p. 2). Cities are portrayed in cinema, selectively framing urban environments and employing visual and narrative motifs, thereby shaping spectators' perceptions and memories of these locations. Overall, audiences may interpret cities through the cinematic representations and associate them with specific moods, identities, or stereotypes.

Psychogeography on Character Design

Akın's Dérive

The author describes the film as "Kelttek's first foray into fiction, after the docu-features *Colony* and *Meteors*, is both a portrait and landscape; conjuring the mind's solipsistic act in tension with the broader visions it brings forth, *New Dawn Fades* straddles the delicate boundaries between detail and depth, mind and matter, city and man" (Yang, 2024, para. 1). *New Dawn Fades* has an inward and outward narrative, with Akın's exploration of consciousness and Istanbul's expansive meditation on the environment and society. The boundaries between these two, as well as the perception and reality is obscured. This approach results in both ways of seeing and creating the world itself.

Cinematic destinations and selections have become more than visual settings; they are also functional spaces. Settings may serve as strategic selections, which engage with characters' conscious or unconscious experiences, traumas, and internal conflicts. Psychogeography, an interdisciplinary approach that combines psychology and geography, examines characters' spatial experiences within the psychological impact of

their environments. Psychogeography was defined by Guy Debord as “the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, whether consciously organised or not, on the emotions and behaviour of individuals” (1955/2006, p. 23). The theoretical framework of psychogeography redefines characters as complex entities whose development is closely linked to their psychological processes and internal landscapes. This perspective significantly enhances the understanding of character development in cinema and contributes to a more nuanced narrative structure.

Schumacher characterizes cinema as “the art of psychogeography,” and continues, “films project our inner world by creating a condensed imitation of reality. They transform emotion into motion and thus evoke emotion again in the spectator” (Schumacher, 2022, p. 170). This concept suggests that cinema not only projects external spaces but also reconfigures the internal experiences of characters and spectators as a psychogeographic site.

Psychogeography is augmented with imaginative and technological components in fantasy and science fiction films. Universes, satellites, or dystopian cities in films, aside from providing a setting for the story, also shape the conflicts and transformations in their characters’ psychological states. Psychogeography becomes a narrative device that preserves such characters’ psychological complexity through spatial experiences. It forms an engagement with the audience’s understanding of the narrative.

In an interview, Gürcan Keltek notes, “There is an element of psychogeography in all of my films” (Kudláč, 2024, para. 7). Here, the director clearly explains the strong bonds formed between characters and space in his films. The film critic Arzu Arda Deger writes, “Istanbul, in addition to being positioned as a major metaphor, is one of the fundamental elements in the formation of Akin’s character archetype. In this way, Keltek establishes a strong connection between the character (Akin) and the city (Istanbul), shaping the psychogeography through the character’s relationship with the city and the forms of emotional engagement” (Deger, 2025, “Delilik Üzerine: Bir Psikotik Atağın 72 Saati” section, para. 6). While discussing psychogeography during an interview with Tuba Būdüş, director Keltek talks about his appropriation of the city in the film, as “I actually used Istanbul as the landscapes within the character.” (Fil’ m Hafızası, 2024, 20:03–20:08). Here, composition of being is also associated with the landscapes.

The author Richard Edkins discusses the concept of *dérive* as an essential method for exploring and wandering through spaces, stating that “A *dérive* (in English ‘drift’) is the means by which ‘psycho-geographies’ are achieved” (Edkins, 2015, para. 4). Through the *dérive*, individuals wander the city without a predetermined purpose, exploring and observing their surroundings. It allows emotional responses, memories, and sensory encounters to reveal how urban spaces subtly influence behavior, identity, and perception, thereby collectively forming a psychogeographical archive.

In *New Dawn Fades*, the act of drifting becomes inevitable for Akin due to his mental struggles, and he finds himself continuously wandering Istanbul. As Akin feels trapped in his life, he sees the city as his refuge more than the enclosed spaces. The effects of the heavy medication and the perceptual distortions caused by his mental illness (schizophrenia, as implied in the film) bring him even closer to the city as a way of escape or a relief. Director Keltek constructs the character through the silent, physical, and spiritual interaction he enters into with the space. Akin’s character arc results from the route he traces through the city streets, a psychogeographic map.

The practice of *dérive* closely resembles that of the *flâneur*, a wanderer and observer of their surroundings and society. Walter Benjamin popularized the term *flâneur* to analyze modern urban life, capitalism, and spectatorship, particularly in nineteenth-century Paris. In *The Arcades Project* (1999), Benjamin states, “The crowd is the veil through which the familiar city transformed to the *flâneur* into phantasmagoria. This phantasmagoria, in which the city appears now as a landscape, now as a room...” (1982/1999, p. 21). This passage illustrates Benjamin’s portrayal of the *flâneur* as an individual who perceives their habitat either as a dreamlike spectacle or as real, with the crowd serving as an intermediary. The statement warns that crowds serve as a veil that the being should be aware of. However, it is the *flâneur* who “seeks refuge in the crowd” (Benjamin, 1982/1999, p. 21), just as Akin, in *New Dawn Fades*, drifts through the streets of Istanbul and blends with the crowds.

The film *Giovanni’s Smyrna* (2024), directed by Ragıp Taranç, opens with a line from Simber Atay defining *flâneur*: “It’s one of the most popular norms in every culture in the world. This is a part of many idioms, states of being, and many choices. Being a *flâneur*. In other words, being a *flâneur* is to observe the past in order to understand the present”

(Taranç, 2024, 0:31-0:46). Here, it is possible to draw lines in the functionality of *flâneur* as not just a contemporary observer of it's surrounding, but as a transitional being able to seek to understand between timelines. Understanding of the contemporary involves the ability to detect traces of the past, which guides the *flâneur* to adopt a wider perspective. In the film *New Dawn Fades*, the main character, Akin, is a *flâneur* in Istanbul using *dérive* as a method.

Edkins continues to draw connections between Akin and Dziga Vertov, cinema's romantic traveler, and states, "The *flâneur* does not wander in straight lines, nor in temporal sequence" (Edkins, 2015, "Flâneur with a Movie Camera" section, para. 2). The author argues that the *flâneur* navigates the city in a fragmented, nonlinear manner, that urban experience is constructed through discrete moments, detours, and affective responses rather than through chronological progression.

The Archaeology of Akin's Character: Trauma & Family

Akin's character depth is not confined to Istanbul; his trauma extends to the Balkans, to Serbia. "It is unclear what has caused his issues, although it might have to do with his absent father, currently living in Serbia, a man who earned the nickname 'The Butcher of Belgrade'" (van de Klashorst, 2024, para. 2). His father's nickname implies that he was involved in crimes, violence, or had a dark past. This detail takes the character's psychogeography to a transnational dimension. Also, the historical past of Istanbul (sieges, executions, coups) overlaps with his father's personal history of violence. Akin begins to see his father in the form of hallucinations in the corners of the city, in its dark streets. Akin tries to escape the mental pressures by seeking refuge in Istanbul's sacred places, but the legacy of violence follows him. However, "Akin's mistrust of psychiatry and the system manifests in his perception of reality, as he soon begins to perceive his psychiatrist in various forms, not only as a representation of evil and the occult but also as ordinary people in the city who seem to lurk around every corner" (Kyska, 2024, para. 7).

At the same time, his Bosnian mother (Suzan Kardeş) tries to cure her son's illness beyond modern medicine, using traditional and religious methods (bloodletting, leech therapy, prayers). However, Akin dislikes these methods and throws himself outside, onto the streets of Istanbul.

Michel Foucault in *Madness and Civilization*, states that “We must try to return, in history, to that zero point in the course of madness at which madness is an undifferentiated experience, a not yet divided experience of division itself” (1961/1988, p. ix), referring how madness has been shaped by social norms and power relations. Akin’s struggle is related to his perceiving his surroundings and norms differently from others, hearing voices, and seeing layers that others do not see. “I made ‘New Dawn Fades’ because I believe insanity is just another social construct” (Keltek, as cited in NDF_Press_Kit_SON_düşük kalite, n.d., p. 5). This sentence foregrounds the film’s documentary style, as if it were Akin’s personal documentary. In which *New Dawn Fading* takes this social construction of madness and extends it to a spatial dimension. There is a search or a haunt in the city to alleviate the character’s mental condition. The city of Istanbul is a living being that Akin seeks refuge in and healing.

Topography of Istanbul and the Mental Map of a Character

Istanbul is presented in this film not as a tourist panorama, but as a layered palimpsest stretching from Byzantium to the Ottoman Empire, from Paganism to Orthodoxy, from the modern Republic to today’s metropolis. The protagonist, Akin, functions as an individual caught between these historical and spatial layers, feeling the city’s suppressed traumas in his human flesh. At this point, psychogeography reflects the character’s struggle with their pathology and the city’s topography. Akin’s delusions are triggered within the spaces he enters.

The film’s locations are in a dialogue with the main character Akin’s inner world. Table 1 presents the film’s key locations, their historical and mythological dimensions, and their psychogeographical effects on Akin, including associated delusions.

Table 1: *Psychogeographical Functions of Space in New Dawn Fades*

SPACE & LOCATION	HISTORICAL & MYTHOLOGICAL LAYER	PSYCHOGEOGRAPHIC IMPACT ON AKIN	TRIGGERED DELUSION
HAGIA SOPHIA (AYASOFYA)	Byzantine Empire, Transition from Christianity to Islam, Sacred Wisdom	Shrinking Under the Crushing Weight of History, A Sense of Chosenness	Auditory Hallucination, Hearing Voices from the Past
EYÜP SULTAN MOSQUE	Religious Belief and Practices	Performance of Rituals, Mystical Solitude, Congregation	Sense of Lost, Disconnection with Earth & Reality
CHALCEDON (KADIKÖY)	The Land of the Blind, Underground Tunnels	Gnostic Identity, Engagement with Subterranean Forces, Pagan Origins	The Ghost of the Father, Visions of the Underworld
CEMENTERIES	Death, Memory, Silence	Separation from the World of the Living, Dialogue with the Dead	Peace & Fear (Sublime), Desire for Death
THE BOSPHORUS & FERRIES	Asia-Europe Border, Water, Fluidity, Transition	State of Liminality, Detachment From Reality, Mythological Journey	Vision of the Apocalypse

Note. This table categorizes the various urban spaces depicted in the film and their psychological impact on the protagonist.

The Sacred Hagia Sophia

The opening scene of *New Dawn Fades* takes place in Hagia Sophia. The film's documentary approach begins with a detailed view of its interior, as the audience adjusts to the scene and the holy space. Not just a tourist destination, Hagia Sophia is an existential space for the main character as he touches the walls, columns, and decorations. Aside from the sense of touch, he acts as if he can hear and read the memories embedded in the stone. The sound design augments the experience as if a faint whisper of an unseen past becomes perceptible. This situation hints at psychometry, meaning he can sense the past through touch, or that he is experiencing a delusion of such an ability. Akin becomes absorbed in the site's historical temporality.

The close-up of the marble floor in *New Dawn Fades* foregrounds Hagia Sophia's material surfaces as symbolic agents rather than static architectural backdrops, mimicking Rorschach's inkblot patterns. The veined marbles catch and refract ambient light, transforming the walls into a liquid plane. As Pentcheva notes, "the movement of the waves and the quiver of glittering gold mosaic reflected from the marble floor create an image of a world in flux" (2011, p. 99). In the film still, this flux is visually reactivated: across the stone, blurring distinctions between the solid and the immaterial, the ground and the image, the present and the past (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Close-Up Shot of the Marbles in Hagia Sophia in *New Dawn Fades* (2024)



Note. This still illustrates the multisensory aesthetics discussed in the text. Adapted from *Yeni Şafak Solarken* [Film], by G. Kelttek, 2024, Vigo Film.

Chalcedon: The City of the Blind

According to resources, the history of today's Kadıköy (known to be Chalcedon) dates back to "... 7th century B.C., Greek settlers from Megara in Attica arrived and founded Chalcedon near the modern Moda headland" ("Unearthing the Secrets," 2025, "From Harhadon to Chalcedon: A City Born of Trade and Myth" section, para. 2). The region has gained strategic, commercial, and religious significance over time, with major empires of the Roman and Ottoman periods transforming the ancient port city into a cosmopolitan heritage in modern-day Istanbul. In fact, "The archaeological site at Fikirtepe offers an even deeper glimpse into Kadikoy's past. Digs here have revealed Neolithic-era dwellings, tools, and evidence of agriculture—tracing human settlement in the area back 8,500 years" ("Unearthing the Secrets," 2025, "Fikirtepe: Pushing History Back 8,500 Years" section, para. 1). This shows that the region speaks to a deeper, more distant history of humankind. Akın's hallucinations are fueled not only by Islamic or Christian symbols, but also by archaic, pagan energies that burst forth from beneath the concrete of the modern city. Excavation sites are like dissecting the city's guts; Akın is

dissecting his own mind, bringing suppressed family traumas and his father's crimes to the surface.

According to the ancient historian Herodotus, when Byzas looked across the Bosphorus from the historic peninsula of Sarayburnu, the people failed to recognize the region's unique beauty and strategic importance, and settled in Chalcedon, which they called the city of the blind (Erdogan, 2025, "Prophecy behind the 'Chalcedon' name" section, para. 3). As a psychometric being, Akin has the capability of augmented senses, making him the opposite of the initial settlers of the city of the blind. This region is a critical metaphor in the construction of Akin's character, since he is the one who can be considered as the one who visualizes a truth that the inhabitants of the modern city cannot. In the city of the blind, he interacts with ghosts, mythological layers, rituals, activities, and what lies beneath the city that others cannot see. This situation blurs the line between his madness and his wisdom, as well as between what is real and what is fiction.

In Kerem Akça's review, the documentary and fictional approaches of the film *New Dawn Fades* are evaluated over Peter Watkins' *Punishment Park* (1971) and the occult and horror themes in Kutluğ Ataman's *Dark Waters* (*Karanlık Sular*, 1995) and Nehir Tuna's *Dormitory* (*Yurt*, 2023) (Film Ölçer Kerem Akça, 2024, 2:25-3:37). The film explores the mysterious tunnels beneath Istanbul, lost texts, and the city's mystical side. Istanbul as a labyrinth that rational thought cannot unravel, one that holds ancient secrets. The historical past of the destinations serves as the narrative. It carries a trajectory within a city's ancient history. It prepares a faster platform for an individual experiencing psychological delusions to become absorbed in the city's history and transition into its reality and possible fictionalities.

The last quarter of the film captures the cinematography of 1990s vampire films. Ayla Algan, listed as the librarian in the cast information, plays a narrative lead in the story's fictional segment. As Akin transitions between words, characters such as Algan fill the gap in the fictional construct (Figure 2). She plays a symbolic and transitional role as the librarian, conveying knowledge within the context of ancient teachings.

Figure 2: *Close-Up Shot Between Akin and the Librarian*

Note. This image shows a close-up shot between characters. From *Yeni Şafak Solarken* [Film], by G. Keltek, 2024, Vigo Film.

The Bosphorus & Ferries

The geographical location of Istanbul, where people cross the Bosphorus by ferry, serves as a passage for its inhabitants as well as for the character Akin. In *New Dawn Fades*, the focus on water reflects the protagonist's floating mental state and detachment from reality. Ferries serve as liminal spaces, connecting Asia and Europe, and the characters' experiences of reality and delusion. The passage across the Bosphorus symbolizes the protagonist's transitions between the dualities he faces (Figure 3). The combined sounds of the ferry's engine, waves, and wind isolate and link to Akin's inner voice.

Figure 3: *Akin Crossing the Bosphorus on a Ferry*

Note. The protagonist of the story crosses the Bosphorus on a ferry. From *Yeni Şafak Solarken* [Film], by G. Keltek, 2024, Vigo Film.

In the scene, the bridge carrying heavy traffic is contrasted with the royal barge sailing, transposing the story into the surreal (Figure 4). An associative connection exists between the bird's-eye view, also called the drone shot, and miniature art. As noted by the authors, "In drone footage, flying over ancient cities, the top view, apart from the divine perspective, also came to the fore in the 16th century as topographical studies

within the field of miniature art” (Koştumoğlu et al., 2000, p. 53). The royal barge evokes a surreal journey into Akin’s mind and the city’s ghostly underworld, reminiscent of the mythological voyage across the River Styx in Greek mythology, which leads to the realm of the dead.

Figure 4: *Bird’s-Eye View Shot Over Galata Bridge with the Ottoman Royal Barge Sailing*



Note. This image is a shot over the bridge with a royal barge sailing as the story unfolds to surreal events.
From *Yeni Şafak Solarken* [Film], by G. Keltek, 2024, Vigo Film

The setting is an agent that reflects and determines the character’s emotional state. Such experiences are spatially reflected through the city’s verticality and horizon lines. While minarets and domes point vertically to the sky, ferry routes across the sea, with bridges and skyroads, create horizontal forms. The emotional landscape in Akin merges with Istanbul’s physical landscape until the two become indistinguishable.

During the film’s ending, the sun sets over the Bosphorus, becoming intertwined with Akin’s apocalyptic vision. “Is the glowing red sunrise at the end of the film the redemption of Istanbul’s past – and at the same time Akin’s redemption from his illness or from the notion that his reality is an illness?” (Kyska, 2024, para. 10). The question of truth in his lifetime is a central human inquiry that correlates with frequent transitions between reality and fiction in the movie. Such a distressed protagonist is situated and observed within a spatial depiction enhanced by camera techniques and audio, heightening the psychogeographical theme and advancing the character’s development.

The Psychogeographic Function of Camera & Sound

Peter Zeitlinger & The Dancing Camera

Gürcan Keltek utilizes image and sound design as phenomenological instruments that transcend traditional narrative frameworks to convey the character’s psychogeographic experience to the audience. Peter Zeitlinger, the film’s

cinematographer, uses the camera not as a passive observer but as an active participant, establishing a dynamic choreography and energy field with actor Cem Yiğit Üzümoğlu. In an interview, Zeitlinger characterizes his approach: “The camera is my dance partner: as I move around the set, I hold it in my arms, taking little steps left and right, forward and backward, while the actors perform their own choreography at the same time. We are immersed in this scenery, in this energy field, and we interact—invisible strings bringing us closer together or further apart” (Zeitlinger, as cited in Guarneri, 2015, last para.). The camera adapts to Akin’s breathing, his steps, his stumbles. This enables the viewer to move beyond passivity and become a partner who moves with Akin. The camera and the character are connected.

Frequently used wide-angle lenses present Istanbul’s architecture as both magnificent and hegemonic. The bird’s-eye view of Istanbul visualizes the city’s labyrinthine structure, intensifying the main character Akin’s sense of helplessness and loss, as if he were trapped like a cockroach. Spaces become extensive, perspectives elongate, as well as Akin’s distorted perception of reality. The abrupt transitions between close-up facial shots and wide cityscapes bridge the gap between the character’s inner world and the outer world, allowing the audience to perceive both simultaneously. In the context of the film’s tempo, “The cinematography by frequent Werner Herzog collaborator Peter Zeitlinger, with its flowing camerawork and frequent use of a wide lens, adds to the restless nature of the film, perfecting the cinematic representation of the mental state of the film’s protagonist” (van de Klashorst, 2024, para. 4). Thus, camera movements, angles, and framing all serve the film’s tempo.

Figure 5: *Bird’s eye view over Hagia Sophia*



Note. The shot over Istanbul from Hagia Sophia. From *Yeni Şafak Solarken* [Film], by G. Keltek, 2024, Vigo Film.

Sound of Son of Philip

Tom Smith, AKA Son of Philip, is a Nottingham-born music producer, composer, and audio engineer who is the sound designer of the film *New Dawn Fades*. The composer describes his music as “richly textured and evocative sound” (Son of Philip, n.d.). During the film, his music and sound design enhance the mystical and spiritual experience of a psychologically struggling character, Akin.

The film’s sound design relies on atmospheric sounds, noise, and electronic music. Istanbul’s soundscape (ferry whistles, sirens, call to prayer, seagull cries, or construction sounds) is mixed with the sounds in Akin’s head (auditory hallucinations, whispers). There is a blurred sense between internal and external sounds heard in the movie. The author describes, “A sound design filled with hisses, plops, and static mixed with the undecipherable voices in Akin’s head at times drowns out the dialogue he has in real life, creating an unnerving and jittery soundscape that keeps the viewer as much on edge as it does the protagonist” (van de Klashorst, 2024, para. 4). The rustling, dripping, and static noises not only augment the breakdown of the character’s nervous system but also create a crosstalk between the diegetic and non-diegetic realms in perceiving auditory information.

Sudden drops from sound to silence within cemeteries or mosques create dynamism, as the mood swings of the character. Post-production sound design elements follow and sometimes lead the character’s emotional rhythm.

The ambient and industrial tones add to Istanbul’s metropolitan urban side, with a dark, mysterious, and past-laden aspect. This notion of feeling stuck between eras applies to the protagonist, relying on Mark Fisher’s concept of hauntology. What has been missed and still haunting is also associated with the music, “The futures that have been lost were more than a matter of musical style. More broadly, and more troublingly, the disappearance of the future meant the deterioration of a whole mode of social imagination: the capacity to conceive of a world radically different from the one in which we currently live” (Fisher, 2012, p. 16). Fisher links hauntological music to the failure of futurist sound, once symbolized by electronic music. Music is associated with human history, and what is being lost in the city of Istanbul is represented over soundscapes and

the electronic tonalities in the film. The sounds that may seem haunted or otherworldly Akin hears are the city's history, now locked in lost futures beneath its landscapes.

CONCLUSION

Gürcan Kelttek's film *New Dawn Fades*, a docu-drama, employs psychogeographical elements when establishing its main character. Akin is located in one of the greatest metropolises in the world, Istanbul, which is not simply an atmospheric backdrop but also an ontological foundation and a constitutive factor for many reasons. Akin drifts toward the moral life through the streets of Istanbul, beneath the dome of Hagia Sophia, on construction sites in Kadıköy, and on the Bosphorus. Human psychology is intertwined with the geography of its surroundings, and psychogeography is one of the tools in understanding such relationships. The memory of a place permeates the consciousness of its inhabitants, and that individual madness may be triggered and mirrored by the city's collective psyche, which *New Dawn Fades* is a crucial example of this.

This study examines Guy Debord's concept of *dérive* (drifting), Walter Benjamin's figure of the *flâneur*, and Mark Fisher's theory of hauntology, interpreting Akin's city wanderers as a process of character construction and breakdown. The analysis demonstrates that Istanbul functions as an active agent that inherits the character's traumas, as it transforms him, and imbues his consciousness with its historical ghosts. The film's cartography features transitional spaces that reinforce the character's sense of alienation and mental states. Peter Zeitlinger's dynamic camerawork and Son of Philip's atmospheric sound design are essential phenomenological tools that convey the film's psychogeographical experience to their viewers.

There is an established set of moods between the character Akin and the city's identification. Istanbul is not romanticized in *New Dawn Fades*; it is portrayed as a calling, consuming, and transformative force. Istanbul's contradictions, sanctity, and transgressions, both physical and psychological, seem to be projected onto the character. Akin seems aware of this transfer. The film stands as one of the most accomplished examples of psychogeography in cinema. The character placement and wandering in the city has a ghostly, navigator-like role, almost like a guide. Cinematic angles, movements, and framing, with associated audio design, composite an image of the city. Istanbul is

scrutinized and analyzed as thoroughly as the protagonist Akin's progression. The boundaries between the region and its inhabitants dissolve, resulting in a unity of place and humans. Akin fades into the consciousness of the living-organism city-being. Through this drifting process, dawn fades, leaving only the city, the mind, and the psyche.

GENİŞLETİŞMİŞ ÖZET

Gürcan Keltek'in *Yeni Şafak Solarken* (2024) filmi, İstanbul'un çok katmanlı tarihsel ve kültürel dokusunu bir karakterin psikolojik dünyasıyla iç içe geçiren ve sinemada psikocoğrafya kavramını öne çıkaran önemli bir örnektir. Filmde başkahraman Akın, Cem Yiğit Üzümoğlu'nun canlandığı bir karakter olarak, zihinsel rahatsızlıklarıyla mücadele eder ve bu süreçte İstanbul'un mekânsal hafızasıyla güçlü bir ilişki kurar. Şehir, sadece bir arka plan değil, karakterin ruh halini yansıtan ve etkileyen aktif bir unsur olarak öne çıkar. Bu çalışma pratik olarak *dérive* (sürüklenme) kavramına, Walter Benjamin'in *flâneur* figürüne ve Mark Fisher'in hauntology teorisi üzerine kuruludur. Debord'a göre psikocoğrafya, mekânın insanlar üzerindeki duygusal ve davranışsal etkilerini inceler. Akın'ın İstanbul sokaklarında amaçsızca dolaşması, hem zihinsel durumunun bir sonucu hem de şehrin tarihsel katmanlarıyla kurduğu bağın bir göstergesidir. Benjamin'in popülerleştirdiği *flâneur* kavramı, Akın'ın kalabalıklar arasında sürüklenen, gözlem yapan ve mekânla bütünleşen bir figür olarak görülmesini sağlar. Fisher'in hauntology yaklaşımı ise filmdeki ses ve müzikte kayıp gelecekler temasını açıklamak için kullanılır.

Akın'ın kişisel travmaları, İstanbul'un tarihsel travmalarıyla bütünleşir. Babasının Sırbistan'daki karanlık geçmişi ve annesinin geleneksel tedavi yöntemleri, karakterin içsel çatışmalarını derinleştirir. Akın, şehrin kutsal mekânlarında (Ayasofya, Eyüp Sultan Camii) huzur arayışındayken, aynı zamanda halüsinasyonlar ve seslerle çevrelenir. Bu durum, Michel Foucault'nun delilik kavramsallaştırmasıyla ilişkilendirilebilir. Akın'ın deliliği, bireysel bir patolojiden ziyade kentin kolektif hafızasıyla bütünleşen bir olguya dönüşür.

İstanbul'un topografyası ile karakterin zihinsel haritası arasındaki ilişki analiz edilmektedir. Filmde İstanbul, turistik bir panorama olarak değil, bir palimpsest olarak sunulmaktadır. Bizans'tan Osmanlı'ya, modern Cumhuriyet'ten günümüz metropolüne uzanan katmanlar, Akın'ın zihinsel haritasıyla bütünleşir. Ayasofya'da geçmişin seslerini duyması, Kadıköy'de (eski Chalcedon) pagan köklerle karşılaşması, mezarlıklarda ölümle yüzleşmesi ve Boğaz'da liminal geçişler yaşaması, şehrin mekânsal hafızasının karakterin psikolojisini şekillendirdiğini ortaya koyar. Bu mekânlar, Akın'ın delüzyonlarını tetikleyen etkin unsurlar olarak işlev görmektedir.

Film, izleyiciyi İstanbul'un gündelik yaşamına ilişkin ayrıntılarla karşı karşıya getirir. Vapurların ritmi, sokak satıcılarının sesleri, martıların çığlıkları ve kalabalıkların hareketi, Akın'ın içsel dünyasıyla sürekli bir etkileşim içindedir. Bu unsurlar, kentin yalnızca tarihsel bir arka plan olmadığını, aynı zamanda yaşayan bir organizma olduğunu vurgular. İzleyici, Akın'ın zihinsel dağınıklığını deneyimlerken İstanbul'un çok katmanlı atmosferini de algılar. Böylece film, bireysel psikoloji ile kentsel deneyim arasındaki geçirgenliği etkili bir şekilde ortaya koyar.

Kamera ve ses ile ilgili sanatsal tercihler, İstanbul şehrinin karakterle kurduğu psikocoğrafik ilişkiyi sergilemek ve güçlendirmek amacıyla özenle seçilmiştir. Peter Zeitlinger'in sinematografik yaklaşımı, karakterin nefes alışları, adımları ve tökezlemeleriyle uyumlu bir şekilde ilerler. Geniş açılı lensler, İstanbul'un mimarisini hem görkemli hem de baskıcı biçimde sunarken; kuşbakışı çekimler, şehrin labirentvari yapısını öne çıkarır. Bu estetik tercihler, Akın'ın çaresizlik hissini ve zihinsel dağınıklığını görsel olarak ifade eder. Ses tasarımında, Son of Philip'in atmosferik ve elektronik müzikleri, İstanbul'un gündelik sesleriyle (ezan, vapur düdükları, martı sesleri) bütünleşir. İçsel halüsinasyonlarla dışsal seslerin birleşimi, izleyiciyi karakterin zihinsel dünyasına dahil eder. Fisher'in hauntology teorisiyle ilişkilendirildiğinde, bu sesler kayıp geleceklerin yankısı olarak değerlendirilebilir. Elektronik müziğin bir zamanlar geleceği simgeleyen, ancak günümüzde geçmişe ait bir estetik haline gelmesi, filmdeki ses tasarımına yansımaktadır.

Filmdeki psikocoğrafik yaklaşım, yalnızca mekânın karakter üzerindeki etkisini göstermekle kalmaz, aynı zamanda izleyicinin algısını da dönüştürür. İzleyici, Akın'ın sürüklenmelerini takip ederken İstanbul'un sokaklarında kendi duyuşsal deneyimlerini yeniden yapılandırır. Bu durum, sinemanın yalnızca bir anlatı aracı değil, aynı zamanda bir deneyim alanı olduğunu ortaya koyar. Kamera hareketleri ve ses tasarımı, izleyiciyi pasif bir gözlemci konumundan çıkarıp aktif bir katılımcıya dönüştürür. Sonuç olarak film, hem karakterin hem de izleyicinin zihinsel haritasını İstanbul'un topografyasıyla bütünleştirir.

Film ayrıca, mekânın tarihsel katmanlarını çağdaş bir bağlamda yeniden yorumlar. Bizans'tan Osmanlı'ya, Cumhuriyet'ten günümüz metropolüne uzanan geçişler, Akın'ın zihinsel kırılmalarını yansıtırken izleyiciye de şehrin süreklilik ve kopuşlarını sorgulatır. Bu çerçevede, *Yeni Şafak Solarken* yalnızca bireysel bir hikâyeye değil, aynı zamanda İstanbul'un

kolektif hafızasına dair bir meditasyon olarak değerlendirilebilir. Kentin sesleri, görüntüleri ve ritimleri, karakterin içsel çatışmalarıyla birleşerek hem kişisel hem de toplumsal bir anlatı oluşturur. Film, izleyiciyi İstanbul'un çok katmanlı hafızasıyla doğrudan karşı karşıya getirir. Mekânın tarihsel sürekliliği ile karakterin zihinsel kırılmaları arasında kurulan ilişki, şehrin hem bireysel hem de kolektif bir hafıza mekânı olduğunu vurgular.

Ayrıca, filmde kullanılan görsel ve işitsel öğeler, izleyicinin pasif bir gözlemci konumundan çıkarak aktif bir katılımcı haline gelmesini sağlar. Kamera hareketleri ve ses tasarımı, izleyiciyi karakterin zihinsel dünyasına dahil eder ve İstanbul'un sokaklarında dolaşan bir *flâneur* konumuna yerleştirir. Bu açıdan *Yeni Şafak Solarken*, yalnızca bir karakter portresi sunmakla kalmaz, aynı zamanda şehrin ruhunu deneyimlemeye davet eder.

Film, psikocoğrafyayı yalnızca teorik bir kavram olarak değil, aynı zamanda karakter inşasının temel bir aracı olarak kullanır. Akın'ın şehirdeki sürüklenmeleri, karakterin ruhsal dönüşümünü ve parçalanmasını görünür kılar. İstanbul, karakterin içsel dünyasıyla bütünleşerek tek bir organizma oluşturur. Bu bağlamda, *Yeni Şafak Solarken* sinemada psikocoğrafyanın en güçlü örneklerinden biri olarak kabul edilebilir.

Bu araştırma, İstanbul'un filmde sadece bir arka plan olmadığını, karakterin psikolojisini etkileyen aktif bir unsur olduğunu gösteriyor. Akın'ın deliliği, kişisel bir sorun olmaktan çıkıp kentin ortak hafızasıyla birleşiyor. Kamera hareketleri ve ses tasarımı, bu yakın ilişkiyi izleyiciye hissettiriyor. Yöntem olarak *dérive*, Benjamin'in *flâneur* figürü ve Fisher'ın *hauntology* teorisi, filmdeki karakter ve mekân ilişkisini anlamak için önemli araçlar sunuyor. Sonuçta, *Yeni Şafak Solarken*, sinemada psikocoğrafyanın karakter oluşumunda nasıl rol oynadığını gösteren etkileyici bir örnektir. İstanbul, filmde hem bir mekân hem de bir karakter olarak yer alıyor. Akın ise bu şehrin ruhuyla bütünleşerek ya kendini yeniden buluyor ya da kaybediyor.

Çıkar Çatışması/Conflict of Interest

Yazarlar çıkar çatışması olmadığını beyan etmiştir. /The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Yazarların Katkıları/Author Contributions

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