

“The Distance” of Woman and Man in Nuri Bilge Ceylan Cinema

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Abstract

One of the most important young film directors of Turkish Cinema, Nuri Bilge Ceylan, has been setting the themes of his plot on the isolation of individual's placement of himself/herself in the world since his first film, a short film, titled “Cocoon”. In his black and white films “Cocoon” and “Town”, where his relatives played the parts, he had worked on the idea of “distance” between the people who knew each other very well. In his first coloured film “The May Dismay”, the lives of those who know each other and who wish to part from their surroundings and those who returned to their past surroundings but being aliens to the same surroundings are reflected. In the film “Faraway” the “distance” theme has been moved to Istanbul and the purpose is now to go even further to the overseas. “Seasons” carries this escape to the far East of Turkey and focuses on the relationship between man and woman which was examined in the film “Faraway” as well. Later, in the film “Three Monkeys” the danger created by the woman drifts the three members of the family - mother, father and the son – towards a catastrophe. Thus, distance and isolation becomes unavoidable.

In our study, while the conflicts, distance and isolation between man and woman are examined in the director's three films “Faraway”, “Seasons” and “Three Monkeys”, which can be described as the “Istanbul Trio”, the problematic of woman's image shifting to “femme fatal” will be discussed.

Key Words: Turkish Cinema, Nuri Bilge Ceylan, Woman in Cinema

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"...And what is more, the cliff between the depth of inner world and spoken word has always given me pain."

(Distant, 2004)

Through his first short film *Koza-Cocoon* shot in 1995, Nuri Bilge Ceylan gained a world-wide fame and introduced a new breath to Turkish cinema. Unlike samples of traditional cinema, Ceylan's films enable the audience to live a "long experience". In his films where time and space exist on their own independent of the narration, he positions the audience as himself/herself but not through the character towards whom s/he feels empathy (Özyılmaz, 2007).

As opposed to mainstream cinema with a time-space unity and offering a fiction world consistent in itself as well as narrating its plot via images, Ceylan's cinematography presents a reality where narration takes place through the situations that reach to actions. Defined as "time image cinema" by Gilles Deleuze, in such cinema type the situations that do not reach to action yet do not cause action in the analysis of observer and watcher characters are still capable of sustaining the distance between characters (Suner, 2006). Minimalism prevalent in Nuri Bilge films are apparent in his plots, themes, natural acting of players, conscious use of music, slowness of events and particularly in "timely distances" as observed in *Distant* (Akbulut, 2006). In present study, the attempt is to analyze the positioning of man and woman with regard to distance concept that is one of the main issues in Nuri Bilge Ceylan films.

"Pain enjoys itself under the shadow of silence."

(Distant, 2004)

In the first and last short film of Ceylan, *Koza-Cocoon* (1995) we watch the unification attempts of an old couple who split up earlier due to their bitter experiences. In *Cocoon* which prefers silence instead of speech, there is no dialogue at all if the words are good for nothing. The eyes of the woman coming from quite a distance and the eyes of man never once meet throughout the film. They watch one another with peeps. At the end of the film, the woman goes back to the place, the distant lands, where she came from.

In Nuri Bilge Ceylan's first long film, *The Town-The Town* (1997) the distance between the female characters and male characters and positioning of female characters before the males takes attention once again. The problem of "back country" prevalent in all his films, together with "distance" concept, makes a contribution to comprehending the film as of *The Town*. This mutual problem is one of the main causes of the tension betwixt the grandfather (Mehmet Emin Ceylan) who was captivated during the World War I, went as far as India then returned to his town; the father (Sercihan Alioğlu) who wanted to return to his town after finishing school in the U.S. and Saffet (Mehmet Emin Toprak) who never once in his life left his town except his military duty. For Saffet who had to live in the town not by choice but by necessity, the distance or in other words big city is a deep longing, terra incognita.

On the other hand at the end of discussions about leaving or staying, another drive doubling the tension within families emerges. There is a distance and lack of communication amongst the characters nanny (Fatma Ceylan) who is still mourning for Saffet's father that passed away at a young age and grandfather who accepted this bitter reality and father who feels anger towards his irresponsible brother. "Dead son" theme repeated in Nuri Bilge

Ceylan films is a distance drawn between man and woman; the main reason for the distance that keeps them away from living together or even if they are together the distance that comes in between as remembered (Akbulut, 2006). In this scene we see close shots of Saffet and other men. No one listens to crying nanny when uncle, Saffet, grandfather talk themselves. There is conversation taking place between men and the sobs of nanny are heard from a distance. “The reality already known but recently discovered belongs to men” (Suner, 2006).

Besides, mother (Semra Yılmaz) and nanny not so often join the talk taking place near the fire amongst men and they even do not listen to their talks which are none of their business. The female characters who represent stereotypical industrious, prudent Anatolian woman stand for immanence (Gültekin, 2007). All throughout the film, they cook meals and feed the ones around them. Only the women are the ones working along the film. Portrayed as obedient, the women are described as characters who perform their socially attributed duty “cooking”; talk only when asked and complain as opposed to father and grandfather figures who narrate the adventures of Alexander the Great that looked for his destiny and Saffet who also wants to go away to search for his destiny.

In the second long film of the director *Claud of May- Clouds of May* (1999), the director Mahmut (Muzaffer Özdemir) who came from distance or in other words the city to the town tries to shot a film about his own family. In *Clouds of May* that is a “film inside a film” he narrates himself via Mahmut character. Unwilling to participate in the film, the only thing that matters for his father (Mehmet Emin Ceylan) is to prevent the loss of his acres of land to the state forestry land. Saffet, the same character in *The Town*, agrees to assist the director once again hoping to go far away from the town. As opposed to a father figure who is obsessed with protecting his trees that he maintained diligently for years, a director who feels nothing wrong in exploiting his family to become famous and Saffet who is occupied with going away as soon as possible, the only female character of the film, mother (Fatma Ceylan) is once again stands before us as the representation of submission, spirituality and ungreediness and a self-enclosed life (Suner, 2006). She simply pretends to listen to the troubles of her husband and son; she complains about time that flows “We have gotten old, a lot indeed” but she also appreciates the gaining old age brings, she takes everyone under her arms, advises her husband to work less and particularly in the face of her urban son, she represents the town as the pillar of house. “The woman is mostly like that. Her primary duty is to ensure the harmony at home. She is the one who is always very good at ignoring her own desires, ideas and feelings. Actually such position makes her even more sophisticated. Her intuitions improve better” (Özgülven, 2003). In *Clouds of May* mother with her traditional position is portrayed in quite a distant from the world of men. Her simple and wise utterances, her self-contentment is narrated through the eyes of his director son (her real son Nuri Bilge Ceylan). Mother Fatma is a lively character; Ceylan gets quite close to his mother but can never manage to familiarize her (Kanetti, 1999).

“Good feelings cannot make Good Art”

(Köstepen, Yücel, Okur, Türk, 2003)

Nuri Bilge carries his uneasiness analyzed in the rural atmosphere of *The Town* and *Clouds of May* into the city in *Distant* (2002). He reproaches the town which in his earlier works labeled urban men as “exotica”. The film is not about rediscovering the lost town; it is about the visit of town- which you mistakenly thought to have left behind- one day to your house “your most unprotected place”. The vulgarity in the relationship between rustic man and the woman, betrayal to dreams, nourishing a false illusion of going away and leaving everything behind on a small car or ship are, amongst others, some of the sins of the characters (Özgülven, 2002).

The relationship between Mahmut and the “others” is a reference to state of “uncompromising opposition” Marx observed in bourgeois societies. Such opposition is not “personal” but rather “an opposition that comes into being due to social existence conditions of individuals”. Due to his own social existence and conditions, Mahmut has no choice other than being loveless and selfish (Aymaz, 2004). That is why he takes revenge by tormenting the others with the feeling of guilt as the new intellectual who, keeping up with the neo-liberalist movement of Turkey in the 1980s, sells all his artistic skills in return for money (Algan, 2003-2004). With his male identity, he ruthlessly persecutes the ones closest to him; his ex-wife and his lover. He does not call his mother, avoids his sisters’ phone calls. One day his nephew Yusuf, who comes from the town or in other words his past, enters his life and this time Mahmut, who became insensitive and outcasted while running away from his past, starts to torment this new guy (Romney, 2004). Since it is hard to put a distance between them as housemates, he revenges upon his own past and even today by tormenting Yusuf because in all of the acts of Mahmut, the sense of guilt is apparent; feeling of guilt for the person he longed to be but could not be (Akbulut, 2006).

Mahmut is aware of the fact that Yusuf is his own self. Yusuf’s failure as a man that is clearly displayed through his ignorance, poorness and banality is a pain for Mahmut. He is a man failed in his marriage and hungry for sex that is why he is, entrapped in a cynism, not hesitant to break several hearts in one single day (Aymaz, 2004). The impulse driving Yusuf to envy man-woman relations and beautiful women actually comes from the same origin of the question Mahmut directs his friends: “Where are the gals?” The fact that he prefers a porno movie instead of Tarkovski's *Stalker* or watches Fashion TV at his mother’s house make us believe that in essence, he is not that different from Yusuf. Indeed, Yusuf and Mahmut watch the same channel Fashion TV at the same time but in different houses. Yusuf has no idea about what to say even if he has a chance to talk to the girl he likes; similarly Mahmut never talks to his girlfriend and never reveals his true feelings to his ex-wife. Yusuf keeps away from women due to his poorness and rural morals whereas Mahmut, although seems to be physically intimate with women, always is spiritually kilometers away from women. “At the beginning of *Distant* Mahmut brings his mistress home. We do not witness the event but see his removal of the towel on the bed which was put for ‘sanitary purposes’. This is quite a private hint revealing his distantness to women and ‘lack of peace with women’ (Özgüven, 2006). Similar to Yusuf, for Mahmut as well, relationship with women is not more than a physical impulse like the porno movies he watches. Unrevealed feelings towards his ex-wife are exposed in the scene which is about the abortion of his wife who was pregnant at their break-up. The playing of Mozart’s symphony concerto second part narrates us a longing which is not displayed but which will never end (Akbulut, 2006). Once more, an unborn, lost child comes between man and woman and separates them.

In *Distant* female characters are portrayed artificially like rough copies. They are no more than accessories, distant objects. Although women step into his house, they can never manage to enter into the soul of the man (Özgüven, 2003). Mahmut makes himself accessible only when he needs that. The boundaries he created make him unreachable which in the end victimizes him to loneliness (Akbulut, 2006.) For Yusuf, even a physical contact with a woman is impossible. Both of his attempts are hindered by other men.

In *Distant* woman is depicted as an object observed from a distance. Just like the opinion of the doorkeeper who represents traditional family values and defines Mahmut’s mistress as “the woman who comes at night and laves at night” Mahmut sneaks at his ex-wife on her way to Canada at the airport. As regards Yusuf, he for a while walks after the girl next door who is the only female around. The woman is portrayed as the “other” being gazed.

The distance and “primitiveness” give birth to discomfort. Mahmut is a savage because he is also a man of town. He is away even from his own ideals and his wife to whom

he never reveals his love but sneaks at in a distance (Suner, 2006). His wife on the other hand goes to a distance longer than anyone else around (Canada). Now he is physically away from the wife to whom he was already a stranger.

Faraway lands in Yusuf's dreams, distant land Canada Mahmut's ex-wife Nazan leaves for, distant cities Mahmut longed for, Yusuf's town's physical distance to İstanbul are not the most wounding distances but the distance between human beings is the most painful one. A distressed middle class intellectual Mahmut suffers the pain of being thrown away from everyone he knows. He is always in a distance from Yusuf who left the town with hopes, his wife Nazan whom he loved in his heart but never confessed, his colleagues and comrades, the women he slept with, his mother and sister. The film *Distant* is the tragedy of Mahmut who represents degenerated, capricious and selfish intellectuals (Top, 2003). In this tragedy which focuses on the distance between humans, it is not surprising to see that female characters who are mere details but no more are also in a distance from male characters.

The Effort to Verbalize what cannot be Visualized

In *Climates* (2006) we see that female protagonist has an identity, a profession besides her name and girl friend identity. Bahar (Ceylan's wife in real life) who acts in TV serials and her boyfriend İsa's (Nuri Bilge Ceylan) vacation scenes welcome the audience at first. Bahar who watches in a distance İsa that works selfishly for his PhD thesis is once again by herself in the next scene, the beach. The uneasy mood İsa attributes to Bahar is the definition of a never-closing distance. "Distance" hurts (Sönmez, 2006).

Mood changes in İsa and Bahar are supported via the changes in spaces but despite these changes, the distance between characters never closes. That is because Ceylan's characters do not bear a distance which gets narrow once the characters are better solved. The distance within them cannot be overcome despite making headway (Sönmez, 2006). İsa is now very distant from Bahar with whom he was together in the beginning, they are now two strangers. On the very same bed, although Bahar is very close to İsa, her lover has already spiritually gotten away. He fails to get close to her in Ağrı where he aims to make peace. He follows her secretly, watches her through the iced glass and once Bahar rejects him, he does not disappear at once. While Bahar visits him in the motel, the tiny distance between them symbolized by the table and chair inside the small room never shortens but extends even farther.

The male character who hides under a shell in all products of Nuri Bilge Ceylan comes to life through İsa in this film. The women these typical male characters have a relation with are embodied in female characters who are, in a last attempt, hoping to unite with them despite knowing that the distance between them shall never close. That is the sorrow fed upon the tragic existence of humans, not being able to do what one wants; not being able to go where one longs for. As mentioned earlier, all these characters who come into existence with their silence form the cinema of image along with space and flow of time (Sönmez, 2006).

It is possible to establish a relationship between İsa and Mahmut in *Distant*. Both are in favor of having casual sexual course with women which makes them associated with 'turtle' motif repeated in *The Town* and *Clouds of May*. Turtle is an animal imprisoned to carry its house on its back. What gives them comfort and protection gives them at the same time imprisonment. That is exactly what İsa and Mahmut feel after making unemotional love with women; hollowness and alienation towards self (Colin, 2008).

Exhibiting the general states of humanity, in *Climates* we witness the ways of experiencing loyalty, honesty and selfishness through the character İsa. We feel that the anguish visualized on Bahar's face in the close shots is actually the distance İsa fails to get over in his own self and relations (Sönmez, 2006).

Regardless of the fact that leading actress is a woman Ebru Ceylan or Bahar character, throughout the film the relationship is narrated through the eyes of a man. "It seems to me that mostly men guide a relationship. Man's world looks more complex to me and sorrow looks better in man" says Ebru Ceylan, who is at the same time the scenarist of the film. She defines the film as "The tale of a macho who tries hard not to end up being a macho" (Aytaç, Yücel, 2006). Depicted as a Mediterranean macho stereotype, İsa is incapable of communicating even with the innocent and affectionate Bahar. He tries to forget Bahar by using a woman who defeats him in his own game by offering a wild sex (Colin, 2008).

In *Climates* where the silence attributed to women in Turkish society and cinematography narrates Bahar's anguish and confusion, because of his ups and downs, İsa - similar to Mahmut in *Distant* -blows about the women around him. Deep in his soul, İsa is also a "man of town" like Mahmut. Parallel to all the other male characters in Nuri Bilge, İsa does not live in different climates but only one climate that belongs to him. We do not witness Bahar's climate either throughout the film, she appears before us as a medium İsa uses in climate changes he needs (Özgüven, 2006). It is impossible for this couple to be in the same climate or in other terms space.

Climates which is a male tale narrated through a male point of view, the story is merely told in a female parenthesis. The scene starting with affectionate tears in Bahar's face is closed with the scene Bahar looks at departing İsa. However, despite all his lacks, stupidities and irrationalities, Bahar gives another chance to İsa only to see him leaving her again and that drives us to reevaluate *Climates*.

"I am making an effort to grasp human nature. I have an interest to the evil inside us".

(Küçüktepepınar, October 2008)

Nuri Bilge Ceylan follows a new route with 2009-dated film *Three Monkeys* that adds new national and international awards to his career and wins Golden Palm Award in 2008 Cannes Film Festival as the best director. Ceylan who shoots the film independent of his own life with a professional team of players chooses to narrate the drama taking place in a slum dog family in İstanbul.

Although the main problem in all Nuri Bilge Ceylan films –human relations and distancing in these relations-remains to be the same, in *Three Monkeys* there is no difficulty of communication unlike the characters who were culturally and spritually away from one another in his earlier works. Instead, the story of the distance taking place amongst the members of one family is narrated.

With its topic and narration, *Three Monkeys* is a sample of "film noir" movement having emerged in the 1990s Turkish Cinema. As of 1990s, there was an increase in the number of products narrating mafia-police relations on Turkish channels. Even in the works outside the scope of such issues, night, back streets, shadows, broken lives were presented as tales that reminded people that aside from own their sheltered houses and lives, other worlds totally different were also lived in some places. In the modern world, genre films were no longer shot in the old manner, a new genre hybrid with periodic trends emerged. In these Turkish films that started in the 1990s and selected spaces and characters in a way opposing to traditional reflective features of dark films, it adds ordinary characters into privatized public space of dark films and even more, places them into the center of plot (Süalp, 2001).

In *Three Monkeys* the story of Eyüp (Yavuz Bingöl) who goes to jail in return for money instead of the actual criminal, his boss; his wife Hacer (Hatice Aslan) who has an affair with his boss while he is in prison and their son İsmail (Ahmet Rıfat Şungar) who

keeps his mouth shut despite knowing this affair are narrated. In *Three Monkeys* there is an allegory concerning the strong insecurity which arises from the reorganization of labor -which is one of the main themes of new dark film- and difficulty in grasping the new changing gender roles. “The specific chronotope of dark film allegorizes the strategies to stand upright despite current social conditions by using expressionist style in particular and while narrating the story of new urban people who are in search of identity to grasp the reason of their existence, it visualizes their own city” (Süalp, 2001).

Nuri Bilge Ceylan narrates his story by avoiding exaggerations, by focusing on the impacts of events rather than directly focusing on events, or in other words ‘by showing without pointing and focusing on the psychology of characters. In this dark film which also bears the features of psychological drama, the moods of characters entrapped in conflicts and feelings of guilt, the story is narrated without a dialog, through the close shots on the sweaty and tense faces and silenced looks so that this entrapment of characters is one-to-one reflected on the general atmosphere of the film (Dönmez, 2008).

In *Three Monkeys* which also bears the features of a melodrama that aims to complete the moral gaps in social life and join them to a new morality and value system within this new worldliness (Arslan, 2005), the most significant element contributing to dark film is “femme fatale” Hacer who prepares a terrible end for all three male characters.

Unlike the other family members, Hacer has a melodramatic stand on her own (Küçüktepepınar, May 2008). However differing from female presentations in classical Turkish melodramas, she is a free spirit in return for which she is harassed by her son, husband and even lover all through the film.

Women are all alone with their ideas and feelings in this patriarchal family system. In this film Ceylan materializes this loneliness; in their family photo Hacer is not present near Eyüp, İsmail and their deceased child. If we ignore Servet's wife and the secretary whose presence is not shown but known, Hacer is the sole female character both in the family and film. Such details can be seen as indicators of the surrounding and exclusion of femaleness within family institution constructed with patriarchal system (Özdemir, 2009).

Throughout the film, the family is presented consciously in an isolation from the outside world. Rather than narrating their pasts, Nuri Bilge Ceylan creates characters who are pushed into a situation. He creates each character separately, establishes relations amongst themselves and then reacts in this created situation and he himself makes an analysis. That is because as the protagonists get away from the class Ceylan belongs to, the director's view also gets distant towards the protagonists. As a middle-class eye, he views the low class members in a distance and enables his middle class audience to sneak at low class (Genç, 2009).

Three Monkeys is a film centered around four characters. Plans are simple, mostly for one or two people. For instance we see only Servet in his own office. In the apartment he lives, only Servet and his wife from a distance. In the mess hall Hacer works, aside from the scene İsmail comes for a visit and eats a dish of meal, we see Hacer all alone. Inside Eyüp and Hacer's house there is Hacer and İsmail or Hacer and Eyüp. In the accident scene of Servet, İsmail is by himself while looking outside on a train, Hacer is alone while leaning against the rails on the shore and Eyüp is on his own looking ahead on the terrace. The characters are not exposed through social relations; they are in relation with only the created situation and creators of this situation (Genç, 2009). Once released out of jail, Eyüp never sleeps with his wife again. Ceylan depicts the couple together only in the scene they first meet, and here too they face each other with a mixture of lust and hatred (Romney, 2009).

The theme of deceased child appears before us once again after *The Town* and *Distant*. This theme which basically accounts for the distance between family members and husband

and wife in particular constitutes one of the main standpoints in *Three Monkeys*. It is only the mother who cannot see the ghost of deceased child, only the mother does not remember her dead son and feels no guilt in his death. We sense that Hacer has no place either as a mother, a wife or woman (Küçüktepepınar, May 2008). As a mother Hacer is on the background, rootless and distant; that is why she betrays her family.

On the other hand the desperate condition forcing Eyüp to accept his boss' offer to provide a better future for his family discloses social reality. Emotions such as passion and anger that drive characters to misdeeds and crimes cannot be separated from the surrounding conditions. Therefore almost all the family members are portrayed as both victims and villains. The misdeeds of such characters who cannot be possibly judged within the familiar 'good' and 'evil' measurements are presented as the loss of innocence rather than a crime. As the only character chasing her dreams, regardless of the lack of communication in family and lack of equal capital distribution in society, all the evilness is burdened upon "fatale" character Hacer (Küçüktepepınar, October 2008.) Although labeled as femme fatale, rather than a dark film character who gains admiration with her wisdom and coolness, Hacer is turned into a melodramatic character in the end due to her presentation as a weak character even incapable of facing her own sorrow.

One Deceased, Many Tombstones: Once Upon a Time in Anatolia

Nuri Bilge Ceylan's 2011 epic movie *Once Upon a Time in Anatolia*, which is a murder and road movie, is a male centered movie. In the movie, which narrates the night wherein 12 men right in the center of the Anatolian prairies try to find a dead body and the day that follows, it is hard to find any female characters. As a classical characteristic of the country, although we cannot deny the clear separation of the male and female lives, it is quite crucial in terms of the story that a young, innocent and pretty woman, who figuratively holds a mirror to the men who each harbor a past filled with crimes, is the one who solves the case. From this point onwards, the movie takes the form of a ghost story (Dargis, Mayıs 2011).

The story takes such a turn because men are hunted down by the dead. The wife of the prosecutor committing suicide due to his infidelity, appears before us as a murder the prosecutor, who abides the rules of law throughout this murder story, can never be charged with. The woman in question is separated by the men by distance, but her story unravels with a parallelism with the murder case involving the men. The doctor tries to move on from having divorced his wife and for this reason has left the beautiful city by the seaside in Western Anatolia and has come to the very center of the Anatolian prairies. The police commissioner, tired of taking care of his long suffering wife and his sick son, deals with someone shouting at him over the phone. The murderer, who does not want to disclose the whereabouts of the body, admits to his crime sobbingly upon his encounter with the pretty girl who comes out of the darkness and appears as an oasis in the infertile Anatolian land, as some kind of a delusive, supernatural being. The girl, who appears to be from another world, unravels the distant history kept in the men's subconscious. Gülnaz, the wife of the deceased, kneeling down before her husband's dead body in the autopsy room, silently takes her son and leaves among the men in the room. Throughout the movie, the flesh and blood men are trapped in the endless prairies of Anatolia by the "women from another world" who are not seen but felt, who are not seen but heard and who are seen but not heard.

We Belong to Different Worlds

In classic Yeşilçam movies, the female character often tells the male character that they are "from different worlds." In movies of Nuri Bilge Ceylan, one of the most important directors of the Modern Turkish Cinema, we come across the same line. In Ceylan's movies, the male and female characters are "from different worlds."

Situations which do not lead to actions, growing away from purposes, the desire to tell but not being able to, the desire to do but not being able to and giving up all that is important leads to the distance between the related people. This contrast is most observable among male and female characters.

In Nuri Bilge Ceylan's "male centered" movies, the female characters are seen in roles such as the wife, the mistress, the sister and the mother, which are among the common roles females portray in Turkish Cinema and the female is positioned as being "the other." In many of his movies, the female characters do not even have names or their names are used so rarely that it is hard to spot them. In *Koza*, the man who waits for his wife to come back; in *The Town*, the grandfather, father and Saffet arguing about the creation of man; in *Mayıs Sıkıntısı*, Muzaffer, who attributes his whole reason of existence to the movie he will shoot with his family and the father who tries to protect his trees, which is his final purpose in life, and Saffet who wishes to find his meaning in life by leaving the small town he was born in; in *Uzak*, Mahmut, who tries to forget the world he has felt alienated from and Yusuf, who tries to prove his existence by going "afar"; in *İklimler*, İsa who tries to compensate for his lack of confidence by using women; in *Three Monkeys*, Eyüp and İsmail who try to exist "by pretending not to know", in *Once Upon a Time in Anatolia*, the story of 12 men chasing after a murder and ending up at their own tombstones is the center of the story and the main focus of the camera. Although there is no clear cut mention of sexual discrimination in Nuri Bilge's movies, the male characters are clear and at the forefront, while the female characters are in the background and vague.

Up until *Three Monkeys*, mainly amateur actors took part in Ceylan's movies (Suner; 2006). In *Three Monkeys*, shot with professional actors, from the standpoint of the fictional narrative, Ceylan asks of the actors to be themselves and simply react to situations like they regularly would (Aktuğ, 2008). In this way, all of the characters in Nuri Bilge's movies express nature of the roles and characters in society based on their performance, just as is the case of roles of males and females in society.

The female characters in *The Town* and *Claud of May* are "mothers." They represent the country against the city, "here" against afar and "today" against the past and the future, which are often mentioned. In *Uzak*, the females are not "mothers." They are followed by the country men within the city from a distance. In *İkilemler*, the female characters are "spring" in the summer and winter or are an oasis in the middle of Istanbul. In *Three Monkeys*, Hacer, ruining the opposite sex with her sense of not belonging and moodiness resembles Mahmut in *Uzak* and İsa in *İkilemler* and in a sense more of a "male" character. On the other hand, with her need for forgiveness in the end of the movie, she is a "female" character. Both as woman and a man, she is different; she is the "other. In *Once Upon a Time in Anatolia*, as the police commissioner openly admits, the females are the "nigger in the woodpile" and it is them that carry the three hour story and the crimes and sins that give fuel to the story.

Although Bilge Ceylan tries to place his camera in a neutral and distant spot to escape from ethical judgment and to maintain a distance with the characters, he appears to be judgmental towards the women, unlike his approach towards men. The fact that he uses more close-ups in *İklimler* and *Three Monkeys* seems to stand out. The female characters are portrayed as having come to terms with reality, silent, in the background, insecure and unable to stand on their own two feet. The male characters, who are able to make their own decisions and implement their decisions without compromise despite all their imperfections and who are able to ridicule, forgive, be alone and suddenly leave when needed, are portrayed in a manner the female characters cannot even come close to. In *Once Upon a Time in Anatolia*, the females who are portrayed as bring right on the edge of death rather than as objects of pleasure, turn into unforgettable angels of revenge by the end of the movie.

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