# THE DESTRUCTION OF A CITY MYTH
# IN
# LATE MODERN TURKISH CINEMA

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Approval of the Graduate School of Social Sciences

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I certify that this thesis satisfies all the requirements as a thesis for the degree of Master of Science/Arts / Doctor of Philosophy.

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This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Science/Arts/Doctor of Philosophy.

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# ABSTRACT

THE DESTRUCTION OF A CITY MYTH
IN
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The thesis attempts at providing a critical evaluation of the city as the mythological site of modernity. For that purpose, highlighting such special nature of the urban context as it finds expression by the cinematic medium, what is aimed at is the analysis of, first, the mythical dimensions of modern urban life as the prime site of enthusiasm and spirit with its fleeting impressions and changing images, secondly, the (re)creation of the city myth through cinema as an elaborate perceptive vehicle for a specific way of picturing and enframing the cityscape and, lastly the representation of the destruction of such myth. In this way, it will also be possible to point out concretely that the city experience of the modern individual simultaneously embodies fascination and horror, hope and despair. In order to explain the situation of the modern

individual in the big city, Odysseus's encounter with mythological forces in ancient world are taken as a parable in the footsteps of Adorno and Horkheimer's allegoric interpretation of Homer's Odyssey. Specifically speaking, the cinematic representation of Istanbul-myth and the destruction of this myth in Turkish cinema of the nineties will be examined through three prominent examples in the light of the above theoretical considerations.

Keywords: Modernity, Myth, City, Cinema, Istanbul, Odysseus, Cunning, Flâneur, The city-myth of Istanbul, Turkish late-modern cinema, Allegory, Montage

# ÖZ

GEÇ MODERN TÜRK SİNEMASINDA
KENT MİTİNİN YIKILIŞI

Tuncer, Selda
Yüksek Lisans, Sosyoloji Bölümü
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Bu tez, modernliğin mitolojik alanı olarak düşünülen kentin eleştirel bir değerlendirmesini yapmayı amaçlamaktadır. Sinema aracılığıyla ifadesini bulan kent bağlamının kendine özgü doğasını öne çıkarmayı amaçlayan bu tezde öncelikle, değişen imajlar ve akışkan izlenimleriyle temel arzu ve canlılık alanı olarak modern kent yaşamının mitleştirilen boyutları; ikinci olarak, kent mekânını belirli bir biçimde çerçeveleyerek görsel olarak sunan sinema yoluyla kent mitinin yeniden-yaratılışı, son olarak da kent mitinin çöküşünün gene sinema yoluyla sunumu incelenecektir. Böylece, modern kentli bireyin büyülenme ve korkularını, umut ve kederini eşzamanlı içeren deneyimini irdelemek mümkün olacaktır. Modern bireyin büyük kentteki konumunu açıklamak için, Homer'in Odisseia destanının Adorno ve Horkheimer tarafından alegorik yorumlanması izlenerek, Odysseus'un antik dünyadaki

mitsel güçlerle karşılaşması açıklamaya yardımcı örneklerden biri olarak kullanılacaktır. Somut örnek olarak da, doksanların Türk sinemasında Istanbul mitinin ve bu mitin çöküşünün sinematik sunumu yukarıdaki teorik çerçeve ışığında tartışılacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Modernite, Mit, Kent, Sinema, İstanbul, Odysseus, Kurnazlık, Flâneur, İstanbul  Kent Miti, Geç Modern Türk Sineması, Alegori, Montaj.

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*"The inferno of the living is not something that will be; if there is one, it is what is already here, the inferno where we live every day, that we form by being together. There are two ways to escape suffering it. The first is easy for many: accept the inferno and become such a part of it that you can no longer see it. The second is risky and demands constant vigilance and apprehension: seek and learn to recognize who what, in the midst of the inferno, are not inferno, then make them endure, give them space."*

Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

The central theme of this thesis is the question of modernity which attracts vast intellectual interest today. In that vein, a wide variety of reading and interpretation can be developed for the concept of modernity. In this thesis, I will attempt to come up with an original idea by which the development of modern epoch will be examined in terms of three phenomena, namely, myth, city, and cinema. Regarding the interrelation of these three concepts with each other, I will try to understand the changing characters of this new era. In more specific terms, I will focus on the close reciprocal relation between city and cinema which arose at the beginning of 20$^{th}$ century. At this point, naturally, one might ask where the concept of myth takes place here. The answer to this question is closely connected with in what sense modernity is examined in this thesis. Since the overall project of modernity itself is considered as another mythical phenomenon, the concept of myth can be thought as a starting point of this thesis. In other words, I will attempt to clarify mythical aspects of modern age trough the consideration of the relation between city and cinema. In order to understand social and cultural transformations of our society, I have chosen specific films which were made in the time period of the nineties which, I believe, reflect the main characteristics of modern Turkish cinema in terms of city experience. Moreover, in these films, Istanbul is taken as prime example of the modern city whose myth is created again and again in different ways. Since Istanbul is the most prominent city that takes place on the screen in Turkey, it would be helpful

to find out the interaction between the city and cinema in Turkey.

Parallel to the above discussion, this thesis can be thought to be constituted of mainly three parts. Although, at first glance, each section, in particular the theoretical framework and the case study seem separate entities each having a different focus, they will complete each other in the general unity of the thesis. In point of fact, the methodology to be followed in this thesis is a sort of montage that assembles different elements, moments and experiences associated with modernity. Inspired by the works of the German thinker Walter Benjamin who preferred "a discontinuous, fragmented literary form and style" instead of "conventional narrative structures," the aim of the thesis will be to reveal the fragmented and discontinuous experience of the modernity by bringing together various elements of the past and the present.[1] However, this montage of modernity should not be understood as "a jumble of atomistic elements" without any coherence and cohesion, but rather it is "a totality of fragments" in which form and content coalesce.[2] For this purpose, the three concepts that I have chosen to be the guide for this thesis, myth, city and cinema will make connections between each section. Particularly, the concept of myth will be as the main axis of the thesis, and in every section it will be taken in different contexts. That is to say, in the thesis, the concept of myth will be used as a metaphorical device in order to make correspondences between the sections. While, in the first part in which the intertwining of myth and modernity is briefly examined, the term "myth" will be used for designating the reversal of Enlightenment project into mythology, the second part, on the other hand, will consider the city as the place for the creation of myths peculiar to the modern epoch. In the section

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[1] Grame Gilloch, *Myth and Metropolis: Walter Benjamin and the City* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2002): pp. 18-19

[2] Allan Richard Pred, *Recognizing of European Modernities: A Montage of the Present* (Routledge: London and New York, 1995): p. 27

whose focus of attention is on cinema, the (re)creation of a city myth through the cinematic medium will be discussed through the representation of Istanbul in Turkish late modern cinema.

At this point, it would be useful to make further comments on the concept of myth and how it will take place in this study. In point of fact, there is not a one certain definition of the term "myth", which is made consensus on it in literature. When we make even a quick search, it is possible to face a variety of conflicting explanations of a myth. On the whole, they are determined in accordance with specific aspects of a myth related to the concept in which it is taken rather than revealing its overall unity. In my opinion, this is almost exactly the case with this particular study. As it is pointed out in the general formulation above, the term "myth" will be put in different connotations and meanings throughout the thesis depending on the context it is used in sections and subsections. Yet, certainly this does not imply that the use of the term "myth" in different and even sometimes contrasting ways is arbitrary and independent of any underlying structure; rather, they all come together as a connected whole in a sense which can be understood considering the historical change of the term "myth."

Myth can be defined as a representation of relations between the individual and the world which is realized through different modes of communication.[3] During the primeval ages, people attempted to interpret the world they live in and engage with it through generating myths. The meaning of myth has considerably changed since its first usage in Ancient Greece. In this long process extended to today, myth has got gradually away its origins by leaving its function and social purpose and it started to be perceived as a false, illusory or fictitious thing. This transformation in the term "myth" is connected to the rise of modern thought of

[3] Roland Barthes, *A Barthes Reader* ed. with an introduction Susan Sontag (New York: The Noonday Press, 1991), pp. 93-94

which its roots lie in Enlightenment Era. The aim of enlightened thought was mainly to reach the knowledge and the control of the reality through the "reason." In order to provide logical explanations for external world, the Enlightenment developed rational cognition set against mythical thinking which was seen as an obstacle in front of true knowledge. The gradual move away from imagination to "knowledge" brought new manifestations of disclosure and realization of the world. In this way, the reality was supposed to be cleansed of demons, gods, and spirits of mythical realm in favor of the formulae of scientific thought. As a result of this historical process, the concept of myth started to be conceived as an unproven or false belief, a fictitious story in opposition to rational thought. Although *mythos*, the Ancient origin of the word, has a variety of meanings such as invention, exaggeration and falsification, modern view of myth is rather based on false explanation.[4] This historical shift in the concept of myth lies at the heart of the structure of this study. And my suggestion at this point is that one should keep the multifarious meanings of the term "myth", more specifically, its twofold meaning in her/his mind throughout the thesis.

After giving this general description of the thesis, there is need to formulate the thesis problem in detail in order to designate the interrelations between these three sections. First of all, this study can be conceived as a mythical reading of modernity which follows the relationship between modernity and allegory that Adorno and Horkheimer developed in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment.* In their book, the two thinkers have attempted to understand the modern process by a reading of the *Odyssey* in an allegorical way. Before reviewing the allegoric interpretation of this ancient epic at this point, it would be useful to have a look and introduce what is meant by the concept of allegory. From a general view,

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[4] Harry Levin, "Some Meanings of Myth" in *Myth and Mythmaking* ed. by Henry A. Murray (Boston: Beacon Press, 1960): p. 104

allegory is "a mode of representation in which each element of what is said or depicted stands for something else," so that each figure to be used might have different meanings which are elusive, multiple and even contradictory.[5] This possible usage requires "the removal of elements from their organic context" and, at the same time "to join new fragments to posit another meaning." For Benjamin, "the technical term that describes these activities" is nothing but "montage." [6] This is, in a sense, the main idea that lies at the root of Adorno and Horkheimer's understanding of modern epoch by using the *Odyssey* as a model. While they conceive Odysseus as a primordial model of the individual, the world in which Odysseus struggles with mythical forces of nature, on the other hand, reveals the work of ordering reason from which the modern world takes its roots. In order to survive "the mythological terrors of ancient world", Odysseus employs "instrumental reason to advance his self-interest."[7] For this reason, as Curtis Bowman argued, "just as much as Odysseus is an allegory of modern man, so the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is an allegory of philosophical work, and no less so is our modern development of the allegory of history."[8]

In the light of the allegoric interpretation of Homer's *Odyssey* by Adorno and Horkheimer, I will attempt to analyse the relationship between the individual and the city. More specifically, I will take Odysseus's adventures with mythological forces in the ancient world as a model in order to explain the situation of the

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[5] Grame Gilloch, op. cit. , p. 135

[6] Peter Burger, *Theory of the Avant Garde* (University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 1984): pp. 73-82

[7] Curtis Bowman, "Odysseus and the Siren Call of Reason: The Frankfurt School Critique of Enlightenment" in *Other Voices*, Vol. 1, Number 1, March 1997, URL: http://www.othervoices.org/cubowman/siren.html

[8] William van Reijen, "The Dialectic of Enlightenment Read as Allegory" in *New German Critique*, Number: 56, Spring-Summer, 1992, p. 426

modern individual in a big city. Since both Odysseus and the modern individual embody a quite similar kind of rationality and cunning, it would be possible to consider these two different experiences somewhat similarly. Such connection between ancient and modern epochs would be realized by following the historical change in the concept of myth in either form or content. It is a plain fact that ancient myths have already replaced by the myths created by modernity. Even more correctly, the mythical figures of ancient times have manifested themselves in new guises peculiar to the modern age. What this means is nothing more than the change of mythology itself. "Although the human adventure continued to unfold in the new poetry", as Octavio Paz mentioned, "its speakers had changed."[9] Certainly, the most appropriate place for the creation of new myths is the modern city, which has turned into a dream world as a result of the articulation of urban environment by new technologies. With its buildings, monuments and plazas, the cityscape has become a great symbol of the rise of new mythology, that is, a mythology of the modern.

In this sense, it would be not wrong to think of the modern individual as struggling to survive in a big city similar to Odysseus's struggle with natural forces. However, in this thesis, Adorno and Horkheimer's reading of the *Odyssey* as an allegory itself is not sufficient in order to understand the mythical characteristics of the city. For this reason, there is need to find another figure that would be helpful to examine the relation of the individual to the city. On this point, Walter Benjamin comes into story, whose interest in allegory was developed in his *The Origin of German Tragedy*.[10] In particular, here, I will consider Benjamin's works on Paris, which can be conceived as an allegorical

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[9] Octavio Paz, "Poetry and Modernity" trans. by Eliot Weinbergerin in *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values XII* ed. by Grethe B. Peterson (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1991): p. 66

[10] William van Reijen, op. cit. , p. 416

reading of the city. The figure of the *flâneur* that Benjamin used to describe the city person will be used in the examination of the city experience of the modern individual. However, this does not mean that the figure of the Odysseus in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and that of the *flâneur* in Benjamin's work are considered in a similar manner. Although in this thesis the experience of the individual in a big city is discussed in terms of the correspondences of these two figures; each belonging to a different time period, it is not attempted to equate the figures of Odysseus and the *flâneur*. Such attempt would not be very appropriate to the allegorical reading which involves the act of "emptying out the actual meaning." Rather, the concern of this thesis is to understand the experience and events occurring in the present by using the common elements of the past. So, in this sense, the modern city experience of the individual and her/his struggle within the urban environment will be examined in terms of the category of "the heroism of modern life" that Benjamin developed, inspired by the heroic dimensions of the ancient world.

As to the figure of the *flâneur*, it is actually used to pave the way to the critical reevaluation of the city as a mythological site of modernity. To say more clearly, this figure, which refers to a male city person who "strolled the urban streets and arcades in the nineteenth century," will serve to introduce the new way of living and acting which is peculiar to modern urban life rather than taking place at the center of the discussion.[11] At this point, my suggestion is that the remarks made here about urban living practice should not be reduced simply to flâneur-like behavior; more specifically, and perhaps more importantly, to the strict comparison between *flâneur* and the hero of Odysseus. Without the elaboration of other dynamic components of the subject studied and their inter-linkages, to

[11] Anne Friedberg, "Les Flaneurs du Mal(l): Cinema and the Postmodern Condition" in *PMLA*, Vol. 106, No. 3 (May, 1991), p. 420

interpret modern city experience merely in terms of the *flâneur* would have been incomplete and even erroneous in several instances.

To clarify this point further, there is need to elucidate the fundamental themes that will help us to depict and analyze the situation of the modern individual in urban environment. The linkage between modern epoch and antiquity has taken a significant part in the discussion of modern city and its experience. That is, I will attempt to interpret the city experience which is completely modern by means of certain elements and issues whose origins lie in primeval stages of humankind. This process has consisted of two main turning points quite close together; through which, firstly, the turn of the city into the arena of struggle and survival will be examined and secondly, "a heroic constitution" required by such place will be illuminated. What connects these two is the act of sacrifice which was made for the favors of the gods in pre-urban age and taken its latest form in the cities of modernity which force the individual to give up human nature to be alive. That is to say, the sacrifice of the city person against ruthless living conditions is the essence that lies at the heart of modern urban life and also the heroism appearing under modernity. In addition to bridging the ancient and modern experience the theme of sacrifice demonstrates in what context the figure of the *flâneur* will be used in this study. The *flâneur* engages in the enchantment and romance of the cityscape while he wants to avoid from the risks and hazards which city life entails; and, by the attempt to escape from the real experience, he represents the self-deceptive character of modern heroism in contrast to the heroic survivals within the city -the worker, the prostitute, and the rag picker- who suffer under the severe conditions of modern capitalism. The distinctive feature of these margin figures of the cityscape from "the illusionary heroic bourgeois citizen" is that they have grown to be modern heroes by suffering the consequences of modernity.

Lastly, in the third chapter, I will come to the interrelation between the city and cinema. As mentioned in the beginning, having considered cinema as a mythical apparatus of modernity, the focus of attention of this chapter will be on the cinematic representation of the city space and its experiences and, parallel to that, the (re)creation of myths and narratives rising within urban culture through the cinematic medium. The reason for the choice of cinema to understand the development of modern epoch and its mythical aspects, rather than other aesthetic forms, lies in the fact that cinema is one of the most appropriate cultural forms of this age that can capture and reveal transience and flowing characteristic of the city. Just as the city has presented a unique way of living along with new spatial and temporal relations cinema as an elaborative vehicle has generated rapid and radical shifts in human perception and experience of the visual world, particularly in terms of space and time. However, what is more important here is that the cinematic medium has played a significant task in the collective organization of perception and imagination of the city and its practice. It has transformed our sense of the real world by symbolizing and interpreting urban space in different forms, contexts and moods. Thus, by mediating real life and the world of imagination invested with dreams, affects and desires, cinema has provided a means for the creation of the collective imagination of the city. So, in this sense, I will try to understand how the particular urban images and representations are set up on the big screen and, in this way, the (re)production of the myths generated within urban culture through the cinematic medium.

I will attempt to explain this interrelation between the city and cinema, particularly with regard to the creation of urban imaginary in collective form has been attempted to be explained through the representation of the city of Istanbul in Turkish cinema of the nineties. For this purpose, I have chosen specific films which were made in the time period between 1990 and 2000. The reason for choosing this particular stage is that noticeable change appeared in the cinematic image of Istanbul during the years of the nineties. The fabulous city image of

Istanbul appearing in the films of the fifties and sixties was replaced by the dark and gloomy face of the city in the decade of the nineties. At this point, considering the negative city images of Istanbul in the films of the previous decades, one might ask why only this particular time period is chosen, rather than the eighties. It is possible to observe that the city of Istanbul came onto scene with its dirty, unhealthy and dangerous sides, too, in most films produced during the eighties. Yet, when it comes to the decade of the nineties, the negative and even destructive city image became increasingly prevalent and visible. For this reason, I have limited my consideration specific films which were made between 1990 and 2000 in order to understand and reveal the changes and shifts in the spatial and social representation of the city of Istanbul; and particularly how Istanbul turned from the city "made of gold" into the city with "a dark urban imaginary."

In this respect, a question comes to mind: "what is the relation of this negative representation of Istanbul with a city myth?" In order to answer this question, there is need to consider the historical change in the view of Istanbul from the beginnings of Turkish cinema, since Istanbul has found its place on the screen in different modes of representations and, it would gain new meanings depending on the current social and economic conditions. This cinematic journey of Istanbul in cinema can be explained in mainly four stages: 1. 1923-1950: The first period of Turkish cinema and the beginning of city myth 2. 1950-1970: The rise of city-myth: Istanbul as the city made out of gold 3. 1970-1990: The hidden face of city-myth: From a golden city to an arena of struggle 4. The Decade of 1990: The destruction of city-myth: Istanbul as the city with a dark urban imaginary and the disappearance of the city from the screen. The first period, which is between 1923 and 1950, can be considered as the beginning of both Turkish cinema and the city myth of Istanbul. In these years, Istanbul was mostly shown on the big screen like modern cities of Europe such as Paris and Rome. Certainly, this city figure had almost no relation with the living conditions of Istanbul in

that time period, but rather it was the city of Istanbul which was wanted to be seen. In the following stage, which extended until about 1970, Istanbul came onto the scene with the appealing atmosphere of the big city. The most representative characteristic of this period is that the city of Istanbul is represented from the point of view of "the insider" even though migration films started to appear in the sixties. With the films which were made throughout the seventies, however, both the subject to whom it is addressed and the meaning of space itself significantly changed. While the view of "the insider" was replaced that of "the outsider" who came to the city from a distance, Istanbul, on the other hand, turns from a golden city into an arena of struggle, particularly for the newcomer. In the films of the eighties, also, the city of Istanbul continued to be represented in the same manner; yet this time, the subject of the city struggle was not only the individual who came from a small town and struggles to have her/his place in the city. From now on, it is not a matter of being outsider or insider. Anyone who lives in Istanbul has to survive in a hostile urban environment. Moreover, in this decade, the marginal site of Istanbul was shown on the screen parallel to the new tendencies that emerged in Turkish cinema. Thus, the fabulous city image of Istanbul which had hitherto been used in the films was shaken by the dark urban imaginary in the time period between 1970 and 1990. Yet, the destruction of the 'city myth' in Turkish cinema would happen to be realized in a real sense during the decade of 1990. With its "dark and sorrowful" stories, its "vulnerable and powerless characters" that live mostly on the edge of the society, the negative appearance of the city of Istanbul came to the center of interest of Turkish cinema in these years.

In this regard, I have chosen three films which, I believe, reflect the general portrait of the city of Istanbul appearing in the films of the nineties in certain senses. Whistle If You Come Back (*Dönersen Islık Çal*): Orhan Oguz, 1992; Somersault in a Coffin (*Tabutta Rövaşata*): Derviş Zaim, 1996; The Third Page (*Üçüncü Sayfa*): Zeki Demirkubuz, 1998. In selecting the films, I considered

certain criteria such as the production year, director, and the city image of Istanbul. I have attempted to choose the films that were produced in different years during the decade of 1990 so that they represent this ten year period under study. The films were made by different directors and, more importantly, they all belong to a young generation of Turkish cinema directors who started making films towards the end of the eighties and into the nineties. While Orhan Oguz shot his first film in 1987, Zeki Demirkubuz and Dervis Zaim made their first attempts at filmmaking in the nineties. Finally, I have taken into consideration the "representation of Istanbul." At this point, it would be useful to remember the general portrayal of Turkish cinema of the nineties in terms of changing city space and its experience. This time period witnessed different modes of representations revealing the city of Istanbul. While some films brought onto the scene the marginals' Istanbul with its different spatial and social characteristics, others reflected the changing city atmosphere in terms of yearning and reproach for the days of yore. However, the most common feature of this period was that the cityscape of Istanbul gradually disappeared from the screen. In most films produced in the nineties, the main spatial characteristics of Istanbul which have hitherto been continuously used in Turkish cinema, natural beauty, historical places and the view of Bosphorus, were almost absent; rather, the city came into view with its ordinary cityscapes, unknown districts, and dark backstreets. Even if the traditional representative images and symbols appeared in some films of this time period, they were mostly used in a negative context, paralleling the turn of the film characters into rather marginal people or those who were excluded by the existing order in some ways.

Indeed, it is possible to observe the most common features of Turkish cinema of the nineties concerning the representation of the city of Istanbul and its experience in the three films to be examined in this thesis. Despite the fact that all the film narratives take place in Istanbul, the city they picture is highly diverse from each other; each film tells a different story about the city of Istanbul. The

film “Whistle If You Come Back” takes place in no-go areas of Istanbul revealing the gloomy and dangerous night experience of the city. “Somersault in a Coffin,” which tells the story of homeless people around Rumelihisari Rampart, presents the historical site of Istanbul and its natural beauty. The last film, “The Third Page,” provides a grim and dreary atmosphere since the narration mostly part occurs in inner spaces. In contrast to the other two films, the visual setting of “The Third Page” is limited to some particular places, and almost no city images are seen throughout the film. At first glance, such diversity among the three films may seem problematic in terms of in what context they would be considered and examined. Yet, this choice has been deliberately made based on the belief that different, and even irrelevant, films would reflect in a better way the changing city image in the cinema of the nineties since each film brings into the scene a different face of the city of Istanbul either conceptually or visually.

Another important point that should be considered is that all of the films under study were produced with low-budget resources and released throughout the country in a very limited extent. Although they brought in very little revenue, and even more importantly, received very less attention from national media or Turkish cinemagoers, these three films become very successful in international film festivals. So, in this sense, we could consider them as independent, or art cinema, which is one of the main trends rising in the decade of the nineties. In point of fact, this time period witnessed a considerable revival mainly in two separate areas: independent/art cinema and popular cinema. At this moment, however, one might think that to choose the films from only one of the above trends is quite problematic since this would be insufficient for understanding the general profile of the characteristics of the cinema in Turkey during the nineties and also for examining the interaction between the city of Istanbul and Turkish cinema in this period. Moreover, to think in terms of myths and narratives, which are strongly related to collective memory and their (re)construction in the forms of images could make the issue more problematic. All three films chosen in this

study were seen by only a small number of people in Turkey, and for that reason it is hard to expect the films to play a significant role in the creation of collective urban imaginary. However, it is useful to remember that the main attempt of this thesis is not to examine the process of the cinemagoers' (re)production and (re)interpretation of the city myths which were created within the films, but to explore here is how the city myth of Istanbul is created in the film narratives through repeatedly using particular meanings, symbols and images. Also, I don't believe that myth and narratives are shared and interpreted by all members of the society in the same way. Instead, my approach here is that myths come into being in various forms and contents being generated by different groups of people in society. In this sense, the city myth of Istanbul has been (re)produced by either independent/art cinema or popular cinema, certainly in different ways and modes of representations.

However, the above assumptions still may not be convincing for the selective reader and therefore require further consideration and clarification, at least with a few examples. So, in this sense, I think that it would be helpful to recall the issue of popular and art cinemas and to find out the interrelations between these two major trends. In point of fact, despite their apparent differences and dissimilarities in many aspects, as Suner argues, "there is a strong thematic continuity connecting popular and art cinemas characterized by an obsession with the tropes of 'home' and 'belonging'."[12] If we think this argument in the context of city experience appearing on the big screen, most films made in the decade of the nineties drew attention to the dislocation between the subject and the city. It is no matter whether it is popular or art/independent, in the films which took place in Istanbul, the city is generally presented with respect to terror, violence and

[12] Asuman Suner, "Horror of a Different Kind: Dissonant Voices of the New Turkish Cinema" in Screen, Number 45, Winter 2004, p. 307

hopelessness. And certainly, in such conditions, there would be almost no place for the sense of ownership of or belonging in urban space. In view of that, it is possible to see the traces of the destruction of city myth which has been discussed above in the example of the three art/independent films, too, in popular cinema. For instance, the film "The Bandit" (*Eşkiya*, 1996) which is one of the best known examples of this trend tells the story of a Kurdish bandit's encounter with the city of Istanbul after a thirty-five-year sentence. In the film, by concentrating the issues of belonging and identity, Istanbul is depicted "as a locus of brutal capitalist relations, relentless and cultural degeneration" in contrast to "the idealized site of an imaginary home."[13] Similarly, Mustafa Altıoklar's film "Heavy Novel" (*Ağır Roman*, 1997) puts into picture the city of Istanbul in a negative and destructive manner, yet in a quite different context. In brief, the film tells the story of ordinary people in Istanbul's back streets and their anguishing lives rife with drugs, poverty and violence. That is, the themes of unbelonging, powerlessness, and insecurity experienced in urban life occupy one of the central places in popular cinema as well as in art/independent cinema during the nineties. The distinction is that, however, popular films continued, on one level, (re)producing the myth of Istanbul presenting the city in the context of a longing for the past, its people, and living patterns. More precisely, even though they seem to have a critical approach, popular films invoked the city of Istanbul in a rather nostalgic atmosphere idealizing "traditional modes of belonging."[14] Yet on the other hand, art/independent films, though certainly not all, attempted to disclose what might be behind the mythical city image of Istanbul questioning the themes of instability, unbelonging, and insecurity which became the main characteristics of current city experience. And actually, this can be seen one of the

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[13] Asuman Suner, op. cit. , p. 308

[14] Ibid. , p. 309

reasons for choosing the films to be examined from only within art/independent films.

In the process of analyzing the films, the main concerns would be the general profile of the characters, the changing cityscape of Istanbul, both visually and conceptually, and the relation of the characters with the city of Istanbul. For that purpose, I will look at, firstly, the main attributes of the film characters and certain features they have in common considering their interrelations with each other in the film narrations. Secondly, I will try to depict and examine the cinematic representation of Istanbul in terms of both the physical environment of the city and its living practices. And, at last, I will come to the situation of the film characters in the city of Istanbul and their struggle against merciless conditions of urban life.

## CHAPTER II

## MODERNITY AS A MYTHICAL PHENOMENON

Just over two hundred years ago, the French thinker Jean-Jacques Rousseau used the word *modernity* to describe his age in which great changes and tensions arose. Since such usage of the term, innumerable interpretations and readings have been developed for the concept of modernity. There is still not a consensus on the meaning of modernity save for general principles which are conceived to be the bases of modernity. As a result, it is hard to talk about one certain definition of the word *modernity* since "its meanings are elusive and changing".[15] Rather, there are many modernities –most contradicting one another- depending in what sense modernity is examined. In this thesis, modernity will be examined in relation to another concept, namely the 'myth'. At first glance, myth and modernity seem opposite and contradictory concepts since myth is thought in a stable and closed sense while modernity is posited in terms of progress and newness.[16] Yet, on the contrary, these two terms are closely interrelated with each other, since a contradictory figure is the one "in which each thing is what is only by becoming what is not."[17] This assumption leads us to a dialectical relation between myth and modernity. The relation between the two concepts takes its roots from the

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[15] Octavio Paz, op. cit. , p. 57

[16] Peter Fitzpatrick, *The Mythology of Modern Law* (London & New York: Routledge, 1992): p. ix

[17] Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* by Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, trans. by Edmund Jephcott (California: Standford University Press, 2002 [1987]) : p. 11

eighteenth century thought, namely the 'Enlightenment' era. In order to understand the connection between modernity and myth, there is need to go back and examine the birth of enlightened thinking. Such inquiry that explains the entwinement of myth and enlightenment would demand the consideration of modernity as a mythical phenomenon.

### 2.1 Enlightenment Against Myth

*"Myth is already enlightenment and enlightenment reverts to mythology."* [18]

The concept of enlightenment understood either historically or philosophically, is one of the most debatable themes in the social sciences. In spite of various opinions concerning its characteristics and time period of enlightenment, there is general agreement on its undeniable influence in human history. The great scientific and philosophical revolutions that arose in the 'Age of Enlightenment' constituted the roots of modern thought. This rapid advancement in every domain of knowledge spread, in Hegelian words, like a perfume which was diffused in an almost unresisting atmosphere.[19] Doubtless, it is hard to give a certain date for the beginning of such movement which came out in a nearly imperceptible manner and continued to exercise an increasingly pronounced over the years. Yet, in an approximate sense, Enlightenment can be thought in the time period from the second half of the seventeenth century to the end of the eighteenth century. Throughout this long episode, humankind witnessed enormous changes and innovations which shattered all certainties, traditional values, and institutions. All

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[18] Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, op. cit. , p. xviii

[19] G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* trans. by A.V.Miller (Oxford: Clerandon Press, 1977): p.331

these revolutions and reforms were indicators of a new, upcoming era which was expected to bring emancipation and freedom for humanity.

The central aim of enlightenment was to liberate human beings through rational thought based on solely the 'Reason'. For Hegel, "the irresistibility of enlightenment" lies in the most fundamental of impulses, which is namely fear.[20] The source of this fear was the external world, nature in particular, since, as an immense and complicated realm, it is hard to comprehend in thoughts and to govern by actions.[21] For the purpose of self-preservation, wo/man wanted to know everything outside her/himself. Therefore, it was supposed that under Enlightenment any possibility of threat, which comes from the relation with external reality, would be undermined since nothing remained unknown and unexplained. "With the intoxication of Enlightenment," Fitzpatrick argues, "man stood alone daring now to know and, in boundless thought, bringing a unifying reason and knowledge to bear on the dark places. Nothing could remain ultimately intractable or mysterious."[22] These endless efforts of wo/man for the acquisition of knowledge, however, did not have any real purpose for learning or understanding that which is not known. Instead, the main concern of "enlightened self" was security which was closely connected to the faculty of control.[23] Since s/he experienced the world only as a threatening and dangerous place, the need for control became inevitable in order to feel in safe. By this aim, wo/man attempted to govern anything external –and also unfamiliar- to her/himself, the nature as well as

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[20] G. W. F. Hegel, quoted in James Schmidt, op. cit. , pp. 807-838

[21] Horkheimer and Adorno explain the source of this fear as "the mere idea of outsideness". Anything that remains outside would be danger for human being since it cannot be controlled easily. See Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, op. cit. , p. 11

[22] Peter Fitzpatrick, op. cit. , p.45

[23] Y. Sherratt, "Adorno and Horkheimer's Concept of Enlightenment" in *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 8(3) 2000: 521-544

the other wo/men and etc.[24] There was only one way to accomplish this, which was to explore anything unknown and hidden. Certainly, this attempt of wo/mankind would be realized by the guidance of the Reason as "a means of exploration".[25]

So, the Reason was the main core of the enlightened thought. The program of enlightenment was raised on great endeavors for the realization this Reason. In this sense, the eighteenth century can be conceived as the 'Age of Reason', which was, in Horkheimer's words, "the title of honor claimed by the enlightened world".[26] This world was a newly created one grounded on pure principles of rationalism sustained by attack on all mythical thoughts and prejudices. The Enlightenment employed reason against myth by an attempt to replace superstition with science. As Adorno and Horkheimer state, "the program of the Enlightenment was the disenchantment of the world; it wanted to dispel myths, to overthrow fantasy with knowledge".[27] In order to reach the knowledge and the control of reality, the Enlightenment developed rational cognition set against mythical thinking. The displacement of imagination with knowledge brought new manifestations of disclosure and realization of the world. From now on, the reality was cleansed of demons, gods and spirits of mythical realm in favor of the formulae of scientific thought. With every reasoned explanation of reality, wo/man felt her/himself one step closer to emancipation. In this way, "the liberated subject of enlightenment"

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[24] In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Horkheimer and Adorno examine the sovereignty of human being on nature in a great sense. This issue would be considered in following parts in detail.

[25] Octavio Paz, op. cit. , p. 58

[26] Max Horkheimer, "The End of Reason" in *Studies in Philosophical and Social Science* IX/3 (1941): p. 366

[27] Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, op. cit. , p.1

felt her/himself secure within a completely rationalized world in which any remnant of mythical thinking was to be banished.[28]

However, the battle of Enlightenment against mythology turned against itself. Its attempt to free the world from mythical forces through Reason collapsed back into mythology. While it escaped from the domination of mythical thoughts and prejudices enlightened thought, ironically, it became mythical thinking itself by the normative commitments that conceive everything as calculable and repeatable. Behind this failure of the Enlightenment, there was the big demand for rationality that reached its highest level in the eighteenth century. In order to provide logical explanations for external world, the enlightened self attempted to replace certain formulations with mythical concepts which were seen as an obstacle in front of true knowledge. Yet, "the fundamental normative concepts of enlightenment itself have themselves become mythical".[29] In this way, the philosophy of Enlightenment, grounded on rationalism, destroyed itself in following out its own principles; so to speak, "with every step enlightenment entangles itself more deeply in mythology".[30]

Therefore, as the basic tenet of the Enlightenment, the ordering of the Reason against mythology resulted in a big failure. Contrary to expectations, rational thought did not bring emancipation and security to the humankind. Rather, it created a sort of illusion which makes wo/man feel free from her/his fears. Although enlightenment achieved its aim of demolishing all hitherto mythological forces and prejudices, it could not prevent the rise of a new mythology in a new world which was based on rational order. It is true that, from now on, there was no longer any spirits and demons to fear for human being in the enlightened world; but,

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[28] Peter Fitzpatrick, op. cit. , p. 27

[29] James Schmidt, op. cit., pp. 807-838

[30] Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, op. cit., p. 8

this does not mean that mythology completely vanished from the earth. Conversely, as Habermas claims, "the curse of mythic violence still overtakes the one escaping in the guise of the desolate emptiness of emancipation".[31] Instead of mythological terrors of ancient times, the enlightened self has met with a new form of isolation and fear which come with the new social arrangements of the fully rationalized world. Following the arguments of Adorno and Horkheimer on the enlightenment, Schmidt argues:

> The noontime panic in the face of nature is replaced with a fear of social forces that can only be assuaged by that relentless effort at self-preservation that ultimately discards the ideals of enlightenment itself as just another bit of mythology.[32]

Horkheimer and Adorno, interpreted the unsuccessful attempt of the Enlightenment to free oneself from mythical forces in terms of mythology itself. In their book, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* they examined the enlightenment and its failure to accomplish the goal of human liberation first in the light of Homer's *Odyssey* (the 8th century B.C). For Adorno and Horkheimer, "the Odyssey is an allegory of the failure of the project of Enlightenment, one in which in the form of instrumental reason is at sea in the world of myth".[33] The point that connects such two separate concepts as the *Odyssey* and the Enlightenment is the Reason. Although they belong to different time periods, the former is related to the ancient world and the other is completely modern; yet, both are built on the same kind of rationality which is derived from cunning.

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[31] Jurgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: twelve lectures* trans. by Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, c1987): p. 114

[32] James Schmidt, op. cit. , pp. 807-838

[33] Curtis Bowman, op. cit. , p. 6

## 2.2 Rationalism: A Cunning of Reason:

*Reason governs the world and that world history is thus a rational process.* [34]

Enlightenment grew in the powers of the Reason. Although there are various arguments on the project of the Enlightenment, nobody would deny the intertwinement of enlightenment with reason. For the philosophy of the enlightenment is grounded on a fundamentally rationalistic view, Enlightenment can even be seen as the advancement of rationalization. Thus there is need to examine the meaning attached to the term 'reason', as well as the variety of the ways it has been employed in order to explore the relation between rationality and enlightenment.

For Hegel, and most thinkers who have followed in his footsteps, the reason is not only an abstract idea or concept. Rather it is designed with respect to the actual world. More correctly, reason is considered as an "existing concept" which is determined by particular societal arrangements in historical process.[35] The elements that give the power and superiority to the reason were "consciousness" and "insight". In his book *The Phenomenology of Mind*, Hegel described this state of consciousness that contains "sense-certainty, perception and understanding" with the term "spirit" (*geist*):[36]

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[34] G. W. Hegel, *Reason in History*: *a general introduction to the philosophy of history* translated, with an introd., by Robert S. Hartman (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co. , 1953): pp. 18-19

[35] The term "concept" (*begriff*) is at the center of Hegel's philosophy. Hegel uses this term in different manners depending on the type of objects that would be defined. For different usages of the term "concept" in Hegel, see *A Hegel Dictionary* by Michael Inwood (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992): pp. 58-61

[36] G.W.Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind* translated, with an introduction and notes by J.B. Baillie (New York & London: Harper Torchbooks, 1967): p. 459

> Reason is spirit, when its certainty of being all reality has been raised to the level of truth, and reason is consciously aware of itself as its own world, and of the world as itself.[37]

The rationality of the Enlightenment was built on this 'spirit' which was believed to resolve the humanity. At the beginning, the aim of the enlightened thought was to reach the true knowledge through rational order. The reason was born from the need for discovery of the indisputable forms of reality. Yet, in the progress, the concept of reason has lost its intellectual roots and, in this way, it has come to have little in common with its original meaning and purpose. As Horkheimer argued in his article, 'The End of Reason', reason itself has turned into "a ghost that has emerged from linguistic usage" since it has become "a meaningless symbol, an allegorical figure without a function".[38] From now on, the reason did not have any aim for understanding the actual world; rather it has become an instrument to guide human beings in accomplishing their ends. As a consequence of this substantial change in its usage, rationality was reduced merely to its instrumental aspects. In Habermas' words, it has laid "the form of a purposive-rational mastery of nature and instinct" by "the result of a drive to self-preservation".[39] What this means is that the reason which advanced the enlightenment has been undermined by the very enlightened thought itself. The objective reason of the enlightenment has turned into merely an instrumental one which emptied all extensive content of the reason. Hence a new kind of rationality has manifested itself in the guise of "instrumentalization, that is to say, the autonomization and over-valuation of means-ends rationality".[40] By this rationality, as the main faculties of reason, consciousness and insight have left their

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[37] G.W.Hegel , op. cit. , 1967, p. 457

[38] Max Horkheimer, op. cit. , p. 367

[39] Jurgen Habermas, op. cit. , pp. 110-111

[40] William van Reijen, op. cit. , p. 411

place to strategies and tactics of self-preservation. More correctly, for the sake of control and domination, consciousness has appeared in the negative attitude while insight has turned into cleverness and cunning. As a result, the rationality of the enlightenment has become "a kind of rationality that is actually the antithesis of reason".[41]

On this point, the topic of myth enters the story and, and in this sense, there is need to consider Horkheimer and Adorno's reading of the *Odyssey*. They have attempted to interpret this ancient epic as "an allegorication of the actual processes of the dialectic of enlightenment".[42] In Adorno and Horkheimer's view, Odysseus' figure is "a prototype of the bourgeois individual" while the world in which Odysseus struggles with mythical forces of nature reveals "the achievement of classifying reason" from which modern world takes its roots.[43] In order to survive the dangers of his external world, Odysseus employs instrumental reason which later taken to be the most significant aspect of the enlightened self. All adventures he experienced throughout his voyage to go back his home in Ithaca, reflect manipulative abilities of Odysseus to master natural forces, which are governed by his cunning and deception. During this long journey, Odysseus has one certain aim; that is, to return to his homeland. Thus, Odysseus sacrifices everything else he has in order to accomplish this aim. All these sacrificial acts of Odysseus to natural deities, in one sense, contain the element of deception, which constitutes "the prototype of Odysseus's cunning".[44] Odysseus deceives to overcome the gods and semi-gods that threaten him and, in this way, he finds a way to escape from the contract of

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[41] Peter Staudenmaier,"Redeeming Reason: Domination and Reconciliation in Dialectic of Enlightenment" in www.social-ecology.org/ article.php?story=20031202122233385

[42] William van Reijen, op. cit. , p. 422

[43] Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, op. cit. , p. 35

[44] Ibid. , p. 40

sacrifice. However, this escape of Odysseus is not a complete rejection; he breaks away from the laws of sacrifice while obeying them. As a result, Odysseus neither betrays sacrifice nor gives up his own purposes. This is the formula for the cunning of Odysseus which is, namely, "the detached, instrumental mind" that "renders to nature what is hers and thereby cheats her by submissively embracing nature".[45] The reason which Odysseus employs to dissolve mythological powers makes it clear how deception, cunning and rationality become interwoven implicitly in sacrifice. The important point here, which distinguishes Odysseus's behavior from archaic sacrifice, is that, claim Horkheimer and Adorno, "the moment of fraud in sacrifice (of Odysseus) is raised to self-consciousness."[46] In other words, Odysseus acts as sacrifice in conscious of his own purposes. Hence he subordinates gods of mythical world to the primacy of human ends by the subjectivization of sacrifice.[47]

Having considered the ability of Odysseus which is derived from cunning and deception, Odysseus cannot be regarded merely as an ancient epic hero who overcomes all difficulties to return to his home. It is true that he posits fundamental characteristics of the basic hero; yet, Odysseus differs from other heroes in the way he deals with the problems that he faces throughout his journey.[48] The faculty that makes Odysseus survive in a hostile environment is not his physical prowess. Instead, as Kohler argues, he is always presented "as the victorious champion of intelligence" against natural deities.[49] Odysseus deviates from the basic hero figure

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[45] Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, op. cit. , p. 45

[46] Ibid. , p. 40

[47] Ibid. , p. 43

[48] Although Horkeimer and Adorno conceive Odysseus as the prototype of the bourgeois individual in the epic, they do not consider him as enlightened and anti-mythological in a complete sense. For them, the view of Homer is still partial. See Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, op. cit. , p. 37

[49] Denis Kohler, "Odysseus" in *Companion to Literary Myths, Heroes and Archetypes* ed. by Pierre Brunel (London & New York: Routledge, 1992 [1988] ): p. 877

through his *metis* which is the essence that constitutes his character. Thinking in the ancient sense of the word, *metis* does not refer only to the intelligence. Rather it involves multifarious meanings depending on the use of the "reason":

> *Metis* implies a complex but very coherent body of mental attitudes and intellectual behaviour which combine flair, wisdom, forethought, subtlety of mind, deception, resourcefulness, vigilance, opportunism, various skills, and experience acquired over the years. [50]

In the epic, Homer used this word in both its positive and negative connotations. In this sense, one should remember the double face of Odysseus' *metis* which turns cleverness to deception. Indeed, Odysseus' actions and behavior throughout his adventure are governed by this dual character of the *metis*:

> Skill becomes cunning or scheming, flexibility baseness and obsequiousness; reserve turns to hypocricy, defiance to lies. The mocking smile becomes the hideous grin of the deceiver, satisfied that his plan has worked as he had planned. Politeness becomes pitiless, cruel cynicism. Odysseus' character turns from dual to duplicitous.[51]

This duplicated construction of Odysseus' character in terms of intelligence/deceitfulness distinguishes Odysseus from a mythological hero and places him close to the individual of the Enlightenment. His sacrificial acts and behavior that contain the element of deception establishes a kinship between Odysseus and the later enlightened self. Remembering Horkheimer and Adorno's reading of Odysseus as "a prototype of the modern individual", this mythological character of Homer gives the first signals of the idea of self-identity.

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[50] Marcel Detienne and Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Cunning Intelligence in Greek Culture and Society* trans. from the French by Janet Lloyd (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1991): p. 3

[51] Denis Kohler , op. cit. , p. 880

## 2.3 Individuality: The Constitution of Self-Identity:

*The individual is the great mythic figure of the modern age.*[52]

One great result of the Enlightenment is the development of personal thinking. The age of reason differs from the times that were based on myth, through the notion of the 'individual'. Against the gods and semi-gods of the mythical world, the Enlightenment created the individual as self-sufficient and self-contained being. The fully conscious individual took the work of the gods, so to speak, s/he alone had to produce his/her own world since it was no longer provided for her/him.[53] Hence, modernity as a new mythology grounded on all myths that have been created until this time[54] has been completed by the constitution of the individual who is finally enabled "to conceive of and determine his/her own being".[55]

In the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Horkheimer and Adorno conceive the hero of Odysseus as the primordial model of this individual. For them, the adventures of Odysseus are "the path of the subject's flight from the mythical powers".[56] Indeed, Homer's *Odyssey* tells the story of the individual who is yearning for going back to

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[52] Peter Fitzpatrick, op. cit. , p. 34

[53] Walter Jaeschke, "Early German Idealist Reinterpretation of the Quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns" in *CLIO Interdisciplinary Journal of Literature, History, Philosophy of History*, 12 (1983), p. 321

[54] The rise of modernity should not be understood in the sense of a new mythology that takes its place among a variety of myths. The distinctive feature of modernity (from other myths) is that it has developed as a grand mythological narrative involving all existent mythologies; that is to say, it is "the myth of all mythology". See Hauke Brunkhorst, "The Enlightenment of Rationality: Remarks on Horkheimer and Adorno's Dialectic of Enlightenment" in *An International Journal of Critical & Democratic Theory*; Mar 2000, Vol. 7 Issue 1, p. 133, 8p

[55] Peter Fitzpatrick, op. cit. , p. 35

[56] Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, op. cit, p. 37

home. Odysseus accomplishes this aim by the help of his intelligence and courage. His long journey from Troy to Ithaca, however, is not simply a tale of returning to homeland; it is also "the path of the self through myths in the process of formation as self-consciousness".[57] Throughout his voyage, Odysseus sacrifices everything he has, even himself, to go back to home. This is the price that Odysseus pays for his own ego by learning to control external forces. He abandons himself in order to gain his own identity. In this context, Homer's *Odyssey* is closer to the novel form and Odysseus to the hero of novel. That is to say, Odysseus gives the first signals of the novel character/person by conscious acts of behavior which are oriented to a certain goal. Like all chief characters in novels, "Odysseus throws himself away in order to win himself".[58] As a result, he constitutes his self-identity by way of self-annihilation. This self-destructive action of Odysseus is realized under the guise of self-preservation. In other words, Odysseus has to sacrifice his own being in order to preserve himself. Horkheimer and Adorno explain the construction of the identity in that way by the notion of 'non-identity': "At the Homeric stage, the identity of the self is so much a function of the non-identical, of dissociated, unarticulated myths, that it must be derived from them."[59]

The non-identical self that appears in the case of Odysseus originates from sacrifice. Yet, there is an antithetical relation between sacrificial act and the development of the self. As the germ cell of myth, sacrifice has to be overcome in order to construct self-identity. Odysseus shapes his own being in the denial of sacrifice by means of consciousness. However, "this enmity of the self to sacrifice" inevitably requires self-sacrifice.[60] The individual pays the price of this denial by sacrificing

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[57] Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, op. cit, p. 38

[58] Ibid.

[59] Ibid. , p. 39

[60] Ibid. , p. 42

her/himself. This introversion of the sacrifice results in the separation of the self from the inner nature. Thus, paradoxically, wo(man) has to abandon her/his inner self in the attempt to constitute self-identity for the sake of self-preservation. On this point, one should consider the instinct of preservation in terms of the Enlightenment. The essence that lies in the heart of enlightened thought, as mentioned in the very beginning, is a desperate need of the individual for self-preservation. As Horkheimer argues, any attribution that characterizes individuality takes its origins from the self-preservation.[61] Yet, here, 'self-preservation' should not be understood only in the sense of biological survival. Rather, "the omnipresent concern of the enlightened self", writes Sherrat, is "the preservation of a sense of self or identity".[62] For the individual who obsessively fears everything that is unfamiliar to her/himself, external reality is nothing but the potential threat for the unity of self-identity. In this sense, the self attempts to control her/his own nature – as well as external nature- in order to prevent the corruption of the unity of her/his own being. However, as Horkheimer and Adorno claim, the self exists "in its unity through the very multiplicity which myth in its oneness denies".[63]

By the denial of nature inherent in human beings, self-preservation has changed its meaning and it has turned into a merely purposive-rational act. As the essential core of the individual thinking, the aim of preservation has manifested itself in the guise of rational pragmatism, that is, self-preservation is reduced to mere "blinded pragmatized thinking".[64] Hence the individual has become a survival that is "always watchful and ready, always aiming at some immediate practical goal" in order to

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[61] Max Horkheimer, op. cit. , p. 371

[62] Y. Sherratt, op. cit. , pp. 521-544

[63] Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, op. cit. , p. 38

[64] Hauke Brunkhorst, op. cit. , p. 140

continue her/his life.[65] Shortly, a new kind of subjectivity comes onto the scene, which is instrumentalized by the goal-oriented behavior of the self. In parallel to this, the relation of the individual with external reality has changed in a great sense. From now on, for wo/men, life is something that is to be preserved by the domination over nature and other wo/men. Naturally, this subordination of self-preservation to purposive acts in reference to reason has brought in the 'decline' of the self. The construction of the being as an identical unit has become the destruction of the subject for the sake of domination. Self-preservation which is supposed to save the unity of identity, paradoxically, has prepared the death of the individual. In Horkheimer's words, "self-preservation has lost its "self","[66] because the domination of nature and other human beings has required the domination of the one's own self. In other words, the individual has to constrict his/her inner self in order to master his/her external world. S/he becomes "the substance which is mastered, suppressed, and disintegrated by self-preservation".[67] This is the price that individual has to pay for his/her own being: the sacrifice of the self that costs self-abandonment. Certainly, the essence that lies in the heart of this introversion of sacrifice is the rational thought; i.e., sacrifice becomes a rational institution by the renunciation of the subject by the subject. Yet, this is nothing more than "the core of all civilizing rationality" that turns into "the proliferating mythical irrationality".[68]

To conclude, thinking in the sense of sacrifice and self-preservation, Odysseus represents the typical individual of the Enlightenment. He constructs his identity by subjectivization of the sacrifice for the aim of protection and safety. Hence,

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[65] Max Horkheimer, op. cit. , p. 377

[66] Ibid. , p. 376

[67] Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, op. cit. , p. 43

[68] Ibid. , p. 42

Odysseus himself becomes a sacrificial self; in Horkheimer and Adorno's words, "the self which incessantly suppresses its impulses, and thus he lets slip his own life".[69] However, for them, this is only one facet of dual character of Odysseus' sacrifice:

> Nevertheless, he is sacrificed, also, for the abolition of sacrifice. His lordly renunciation, as a struggle with myth, is representative of a society which no longer needs renunciation and domination.[70]

Odysseus' adventure cannot be simply conceived as the struggle of a lonely survivor against natural deities. Rather, Homer's *Odyssey* traces the great endeavor of the helpless subject for the constitution of his own being. The powers that Odysseus attempts to overcome are external forces "which threaten to dissolve the still-fragile individuality that he has wrested away from nature".[71] The important point here is that there is an integral connection between the construction of the individual and the perception of external reality. Odysseus makes his identity with respect to nature. As a sufficient, self-knowable subject, he attempts to free himself "by opposing its consciousness to its natural context".[72] Therefore, the opposition of enlightenment to myth manifests itself in the opposition of the individual to nature.

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[69] Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, op. cit. , p. 43

[70] Ibid.

[71] James Schmidt, op. cit. , pp. 807-838

[72] Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, op. cit. , p. 42

## 2.4 Nature: The Lost Homeland:

*The mythic world is not the homeland, but the labyrinth from which one has to escape for the sake of one's own identity.*[73]

If the self-knowable subject is the great result of the Enlightenment, nature is then certainly the most affected element by this creation. The notion of the individual has been developed in parallel to a new understanding of reality which emerges with the enlightened thought. Wo(man) has build her/his self-identity not only by the knowledge of her/his own being, but also by the interpretation of her/his external world. The construction of nature as "unitary, exclusive and objectively knowable" has brought the construction of the individual as "the ultimate and sufficient site of knowing and acting on that reality".[74] Hence the self has to stand in a new connection with her/his external world. It is obvious that, this new mode of engagement with nature which derived from the philosophy of enlightenment is completely different from the one that took place in ancient times. Instead of a mimetical relationship with nature, the individual has now come to assume "a more distant, even self-distancing attitude".[75] As a result, the ancient world in which nature, human beings, gods and other creatures come into being in harmonical relations has left its place to the fully rationalized world of enlightenment. In this way, the traditional ancient thought of unity that each entity is part of the world it lives has lost its validity.[76] That is to say, the unity of wo/man with nature as inseparable components has been shaken by the movement of enlightenment.

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[73] Jurgen Habermas, op. cit. , p. 108

[74] Peter Fitzpatrick, op. cit. , p. 36

[75] William van Reijen, op. cit. , p. 412

[76] In ancient times, the nature and human being were inseparable components for the members of community did not differentiate themselves from ancestors or animals they hunted. Homeric world

This significant change in the relation between subject and his/her external world – henceforward the Object- lies at the heart of the enlightened thought. Following Hegel, most critical thinkers interpret the separation of the individual from nature in terms of 'culture'.[77] "As the potential of disenchantment and rationalization of social history", culture has prepared the detachment of the self from nature as well as from its inner nature.[78] In other words, this uncompromising split has manifested itself in the emergence of culture in opposition to nature. However, culture as such is not opposed to nature. Rather, here one should consider the conditions that arrange this conflict between the two concepts. Culture has become distinct to the cycle of natural forces for it has been organized in the sense of self-preservation and progress.[79] Indeed, culture has been promoted by utilitarian rational arrangements against brute nature. What this has brought is undoubtedly the estrangement from nature. As a consequence of cultivation of culture by instrumental powers for the sake of productivity and freedom, wo/man has become an entity in abstraction from

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of Ancient Greece is one of the most convenient examples to be given in this case. In Feyerabend's account, in these myths, "although things, persons, processes lacked the unity, they were neither isolated nor ruled by chance". They came into existence in different but cohesive forms so that they always affected each other reciprocally. See Paul Feyerabend, *Conquest of Abundance: A Tale of Abstraction Versus The Richness of Being* ed. by Bert Terpstra (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1999): p. 25

[77] In Hegel's account, 'nature' (*natur*) is often in contrast with 'culture' and 'the cultural', and with 'art' and 'the artificial'. In this context, the notion of 'second nature' in Hegel would be useful for understanding Hegel's conception of 'culture'. Hegel uses 'second nature' in the manner of cultural practices, institutions, language, and etc. into which human begins are born. For him, 'second nature' cannot be understood in the way we understand first nature since it is external to human nature. See *Hegel's Philosophy of Right* by G.W.Hegel translated with notes by T.M.Knox (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1942).

[78] Hauke Brunkhorst, "Culture and Bourgeois Society: The Unity of Reason in a Divided Society" in *Cultural-Political Interventions in the Unfinished Project of Enlightenment* ed. by Axel Honneth, Thomas McCarthy, Claus Offe, and Albrecht Wellmer (The MIT Pres: Cambridge and London, 1992): p. 145

[79] Ibid. , p.145

equally abstracted nature, viz., culture has eliminated "any possibility that people remain connected in meaningful ways to any aspect of natural environment".[80]

Behind this strict separation between human beings and nature, there is the rational purposive manner of enlightenment which has created new societal orders in order to control external nature. The employment of reason in the service of self-preservation has led the manipulative approach to nature, which is determined by domination.[81] As a result of the rise of instrumental reason, the attempt to produce a rational human order for the comfort and safety of the individuals has turned the subjugation of nature in accordance with human ends which in fact goes with societal exploitation. wo/man has founded her/his own laws over nature within the framework of a society by the course of social development. Thus, the basic relationship between human and nature has been reduced merely the struggle of humankind with severe nature by means of the order of reason. However, the source of this domineering attitude of wo/man towards nature is not "any intrinsic aspect of human existence" but "an oppressive social order".[82] Horkheimer and Adorno argue that society has expanded the threat of nature "as the permanent, organized compulsion which, reproducing itself in individuals as systematic self-preservation, rebounds against nature as society's control over it".[83] The subject has found her/himself in perpetual development of instrumental powers that reinforce the liberating productive activity for the sake of humanity. Yet, the result of this limitless progress is not the same as it has been expected for the new system

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[80] Frederick Martin, "On Nature and Natural Law: Hegel's Nature/Culture Dialectic", 3/3/99 in www.mayanastro.freeserves.com

[81] Horkheimer and Adorno distinguished three modes of domination: social domination, intra-subjective domination, and domination over other people. For them, social order is organized around the three-fold structure of domination. See Peter Staudenmaier, op.cit. , p. 4

[82] Ibid.

[83] Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, op. cit. , p. 149

grounded on reason has transcended its own purposes. What it has come by this formative process is rather new forms of alienation that appear in the guise of societal arrangements of enlightenment –mechanization, standardization, and the like. As a result, the inevitable domination of humankind over nature at the expense of a rational order has brought new restrictions to the individual instead of emancipation from the fetters of nature. In Habermas' words, "the process of enlightenment has lead to the desocialization of nature and the denaturalization of the human world" by the domination of external nature as well as internal domination.[84]

Horkheimer and Adorno find traces of wo/man's domination over nature in Homer's *Odyssey*. For them, Odysseus' struggle with mythical forces reveals the desire to dominate nature. Odysseus posits a manipulative attitude towards his surroundings which manifests itself in the adaptational behavior. Thus, Odysseus "is drawn back into the same compulsive circle of natural connections from which it sought through adaptation".[85] Hence, the character that comes into being by the intelligence rather than physical capacity, Odysseus has no choice except employing his ability of scheming to wrest himself from nature. Odysseus defeats gods, spirits and demons that he encounters on his way to Ithaca by the help of the *metis*. On this point, the meaning of the word *metis* is worth considering. In the ancient sense of the word, *metis* is "the ability rapidly to sum up a situation and the adaptation demanded by it".[86] This description gives the picture of Odysseus in a

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[84] Jurgen Habermas, op. cit. , p. 115

[85] Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, op. cit. , p. 53

[86] Denis Kohler, op. cit. , p. 877. The significance of *metis* lies in the adjustment of the individual in any situation that s/he encounters. In the view of Detienne and Vernant, "when the individual who is endowed with *metis*, be he god or man, is confronted with a multiple, changing reality whose limitless polymorphic powers render it almost impossible to seize, he can only dominate it if he proves himself to be even more multiple, more mobile, more polyvalent than his adversary." See Marcel Detienne and Jean-Pierre Vernant, op. cit. , pp. 5-6

complete sense. As to say, *metis* is the great capacity for the hero of Odysseus that he owes all his power; he is "the perfect embodiment of all human *metis*".[87] This distinctive feature of Odysseus makes him triumphant over nature. As Horkheimer and Adorno claim, "only the deliberate adaptation to nature" would bring victory "under the power of the physically weaker".[88] This is nothing but the model of Odysseus' cunning for the domination of nature in order to preserve his own being against external powers.

Thinking in terms of the relation of human being with nature, the myth of *Odyssey* can be seen as an attempt to understand external nature and to cope with it. People of the pre-enlightened age interpreted the world and posited themselves in it through such stories. As their own creations, these myths reflected actual experience of wo/man with nature in terms of imaginary figures and metaphors. In order to express "the inanimate forces of nature" they used gods, semi-gods, spirits, and demons which were open to interference.[89] The interpretation of external agency in the name of superhuman beings provided the feeling of control for wo/man. It is no wonder; this is not in real sense of the word. As Bowman mentions, "these myths did not really help people to control nature: they gave only the illusion of control".[90] This is definitely not sufficient for the subject of the enlightenment who is yearning for the power over the nature to free from her/himself from fears. For this purpose, the enlightened self has attempted to substitute scientific knowledge for mythical experience. S/he has obsessively given rational and causal explanations to command nature for the sake of her/his self-

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[87] Denis Kohler, op. cit., p. 236

[88] Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, op. cit. , p. 44

[89] Curtis Bowman, op. cit. , p. 4

[90] Ibid.

interest, and, in this way, "imaginary control is replaced by real control".[91] What this has brought is a self-contained individual of the modern age who disregards external nature and renounces everything even her/himself to bend it to his/her own ends.

However, this historical transformation that resulted in separation of human beings from nature should not be understood in the sense of a romanticism which yearns for a distant past. Rather, there is need to consider each time period in its own conditions in order to clarify the relationship of the past, the present and the future. Otherwise, such examination of the human-nature relation regarding the wanderings of Odysseus would undeniably relapse into "a nostalgic stylization of what can no longer be celebrated"[92] In this context, the mythic world that appears in Homer's *Odyssey* presents a realm of struggle rather than a homeland. As an uncalculable and unexpected place, nature is the great threat for the figure of Odysseus. All adventures Odysseus survives are full of dangers and risks to prevent him from his way to home. However, ironically, this great threat is the element that makes up Odysseus' identity. He becomes "knowing survivor" in "the experience of diversity, distraction, disintegration" by leaving his homeland and origins.[93] For Horkheimer and Adorno, this is "the innermost paradox of the epic".[94] In *Odyssey*, the concept of homeland referring to settledness and fixed property is developed depending on the concept of homesickness, "which is the origin of the adventures through which subject escapes prehistory". [95] Odysseus has strong desire to return to his hometown but, at the same, this longing makes his identity achievable though this individuality

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[91] Curtis Bowman, op. cit. , p. 4

[92] Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, op. cit. , p. 35

[93] Ibid. , p. 38

[94] Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, op. cit. , p. 60

[95] Ibid., p. 61

is still partial. That is to say, in Horkheimer and Adorno's words, "homesickness itself is homeland", which is "the state of having escaped" but this is only possible in as much as "this homesickness is not dissolved into the phantasm of a lost golden age".[96] This idea of unbelonging lies at the heart of modernity which takes its roots from the movement of enlightenment. The individual constantly attempts to make her/himself at home in this world throughout his/her life time. Yet, the fleeting and transitory nature of modernity does not allow her/him to feel at home. In this regard, the experience of modernity is nothing but an endless endeavor of the individual to find a place that s/he belongs to oneself and that s/he feels at home.[97] Although s/he knows that there is no such place neither in the past nor in the future, as a lonely subject, s/he never gives this up and, paradoxically, this relentless effort makes her/him the modern individual.

[96] Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, op. cit. , p. 61

[97] Marshall Berman, *All That is Solid Melts Into Air* (S,mon and Schuster: New York, 1982): p. 33

## CHAPTER III

## THE CITY AS A MYTHICAL SITE OF MODERNITY

*So I was walking tipsily among countless divine concretions. I set about forming the idea of a mythology in motion. It was more accurate to call it mythology of the modern.*[98]

One of the most significant marks for the beginning of modern era is the rise of enormous cities following the Industrial Revolution. In the mid-nineteenth century, the city appeared as a new social organization which comprised the characteristic features of modern social and economic foundation. In parallel to social and philosophical thought of the eighteenth century, the city was conceived as a rational order in which great projects and utopian desires of the Enlightenment came into existence. As a result of the realization of such ideals on this worldly realm, modernity, which starts as 'a cultural project', would achieve its maturity and continue as 'a socially accomplished form of life' in the city.[99] In this sense, the

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[98] Louis Aragon, *Paris Peasant* trans. with an introduction by Simon Watson Taylor (Boston : Exact Change, 1994) : p. 116

[99] Zygmunt Bauman examines 'modernity' dividing into two time periods. In the seventeenth century, 'modernity' starts as a 'cultural project' with the growth of Enlightenment. Then it takes its mature form with the growth of industrial society. See Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1991): p. 4

urbanization of the world, with its radically new way of life for humankind, has undeniably become one of the most striking incidents of modern age.

Since the city has been one of the key sites of modern development from the mid-nineteenth century, it would be very appropriate to study this new form of reality for a better understanding of modernity. However, there is first a need to examine the notion of the city in a mythical sense alongside the consideration of modernity as a mythical phenomenon, as discussed in the previous chapter. Doubtless, modernity in this context would attain new connotations apart from its general conception. Frisby is one of those who explain the modern process with its phantasmagoric and mythical facets. For him, "modernity is the world of masks and illusions" and "this illusory nature of the world" manifests itself in the city.[100] With its splendid monuments, high buildings and admired plazas, the city is the place that presents the experience of modernity in everlasting progress and constant expansion. As the great creation of humanity, the city has become the site of enthusiasm and spirit in an overwhelming newness of the modern world. Benjamin interprets this dramatic advancement, which arose in the world of modernity of the nineteenth century as the manifestation of mythology in the guise of the city. In his account the city, with its astonishing character of urban life, is the most suitable place for the creation of modern myths; that is to say, "it is the home to the myths of modern".[101]

### 3.1 The Emergence of Modern Cities:

In the mid-nineteenth century, the city has arisen as the quintessence of modernity with the growth of industrial society. In a short time period, it has become a natural

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[100] David Frisby, *Cityscapes of Modernity: Critical Explorations* (Cambridge; Malden, M.A.: Polity Press, 1998): p. 117

[101] Grame Gilloch, op. cit. , p. 12

space for the settlement and growth of modern culture. Although, at first glance, the city seems the product of modern development, it is hard to tell whether the former (city) brings forth the latter (modernity) or vice versa, since modernity and city have come into existence in a reciprocal relation. In as much as modernity has generated great cities, urban life as an aggregation of numerous dynamics has played a decisive role in the expansion of modern culture. This interrelation between the two phenomena lies in the fact that both spring from the same source, namely, the era of the Enlightenment. While modernity is based on the scientific and philosophical developments of the eighteenth century, the city is the place in which this revolutionary process has been reflected in a great sense. As Paetzold states, "the worldly realm of the various symbolic forms finds its final expression in the enlightened urban public space".[102] In short, the city is the materialized form of the Enlightenment project.

The Enlightenment did not merely consist of scientific formulations and philosophical doctrines. Beyond all these strict principles and abstract theories, the age of the Enlightenment brought a new way of life for wo/men. In other words, it introduced new practices of living by the embodiment of culture within social life. This change in the mode of living was reflection of a new ideal; "the ideal of urbanity", which developed from the comprehension of nature by the enlightened thinking.[103] For the philosophers of the eighteenth century, the universe was not an abstract entity to be merely observed and inquired, it was rather an empirical realm to be interfered with and permeated by the power of Reason. What this means is that the Enlightenment was based on the knowledge which was produced in relation

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[102] Heinz Paetzold, "The Philosophical Notion of the City" in *The City Cultures Reader* ed. by Malcolm Miles, Tim Hall, and Iain Borden (London and New York: Routledge, 2000): p. 207

[103] Ibid. For further information, see Ernst Cassirer *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* trans. by Fritz C.A. Koelln and James P. Pettegrove (Princeton: Princeton Unity Press, 1951)

to the objective world, in Kantian terms, "a cosmical conception of philosophy".[104] There is no doubt that the perception of the world in such manner would attain its actual form within the urban sphere. This is to say that the city became the practical sphere for the theoretical models of the eighteenth century. For the purpose of realization of the scientific worldview of the Enlightenment, the faculty of Reason had to be exercised in every domain of this worldly realm. In one sense, this practice is nothing other than the actualization of Reason. As a practical goal of the Enlightenment, urbanity is founded on the idea of rationality just as much as the enlightened thinking owed its origins to scientific reasoning.[105]

Having considered the interpretation of the universe in the era of the Enlightenment with mathematical forms [*mathesis universalis*], it is not surprising that the city has appeared as the rationally planned space of the Enlightenment ideal. The project of the Enlightenment fulfilled its task of shaping life by creating grand cities. However, as Bauman points out, "living according to nature requires a lot of designing, organized effort and vigilant monitoring."[106] For the aim of (re)connection of modern individual with nature, the "enlightened city" in its totality was essentially accomplished by the arrangement of nature according to geometrical principles. [107] In this sense, urban sphere has come into existence as the

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[104] According to Kant, there are two different kinds of conception of philosophy one of which is the scholastic conception and the other the cosmical conception [*conceptus cosmicus*). While the former one refers to "a system of cognition which we are trying to elaborate into a science", the latter is "the philosophy in which all men necessarily take an interest." For Kant, the ideal of "systematic unity philosophy demands in view of the ultimate aims of reason" is the cosmical conception. See Immanuel Kant, *A Critique of Pure Reason* trans. and ed. by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge, United Kingdom; New York, USA: Cambridge, 1998): pp. 333-339

[105] Heinz Paetzold, op. cit. , p. 208

[106] Zygmunt Bauman, op. cit. , p. 7

[107] In *Discourse on Method*, Descartes illustrates his epistemology by the example of rationally planned urban areas. He finds ancient cities which have gradually grown from mere villages into large towns that are ill-proportioned. They are out of order in comparison to the regularly constructed towns. For him, "the ideal city" is a regular construction that is "freely planned on an

center of "order and symmetry", which gave the first signals for the rise of a new system of life.[108] The city has now become a rational order that has been realized against the chaos of the pre-enlightened age. This move from "barbarity/chaos" to "civilization/order" is the chief development that lies in the origin of modern cities; that is to say, as a concrete hallmark of modernity, "the city proclaims itself as the triumph of culture and civilization over the natural", speaking in terms of mythology, "as a fortress built against mythic forces."[109]

The construction of the city by rational means is not merely a reflection of the enlightened thought itself. Beyond this, such arrangement of nature for the sake of "ideal order" also meant a great attack by the Enlightenment on mythology. More correctly, the city has mainly served as the arena of the struggle for the employment of Reason against demons, gods, and spirits of the mythical world. Thus, human beings have started to think of themselves free from the "primeval frost", "the blind forces of nature" in a fully rationalized world of the enlightened city.[110] However, this did not prevent the rise of a new mythology within the urban sphere. Paralleling the failure of the Enlightenment, the city has collapsed into mythology while it proclaimed itself "as the end of myth".[111] The city has created its own myths in the spirit of modern urban life just as the Enlightenment reverted to mythology in its constant attempt to escape from the domination of mythical thoughts. Doubtless, these new myths which have been produced on the landscapes of great cities are not

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open plain" by "human will guided by reason". See Rene Descartes, *Discourse on Method* trans. with an introduction by Laurence J. Lafleur (New York: Liberal Art Press,1956 [1950] ): p. 8

[108] Matt Erlin, *Berlin's Forgotten Future: City, History, and Enlightenment in Eighteenth Century Germany* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Pres, 2004): pp. 1-35

[109] Grame Gilloch, op. cit. , p.11

[110] Ibid. , pp. 108-109

[111] Ibid. , p. 105

the same as those of the ancient world. With their own temples, icons, and ceremonies, the modern myths of city life have presaged the birth of a new world, which is, in Benjamin's words, "the dream-world of modernity".[112] In this world, there has been no place for either the gods of ancient times or its demons and spirits. Yet, it has still sufficient reason (magic) to be considered mythical. As Mumford claimed, "though the symbols have changed, the realities behind them remain."[113] The myths of the modern are distinguished from the myths of pre-enlightened age by the source from which they have drawn their strength and magic. The new myths have not arisen from the realm of nature. "In this mythical conception of the modern world", Aragon states, "nature could play no part." [114] Instead, modern myths have derived from "the human progress and the wonders and marvels of technological innovations."[115] Hence, ironically, human beings now were in the service of their own creations while they have escaped from the gods of the ancient world.

However, the element that makes the city magical and mysterious is not perpetual development itself, but the products of this progress that have come into existence as the physical components of the city. The phantasmagoric site of the city lay in the imaginary objects that constitute the cityscape; buildings, monuments, plazas, houses, and the like. These architectural forms are the "dream elements of urban complex, dream spaces" which have given its illusory face to the city.[116] As a result

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[112] Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism,* trans. by Harry Zohn (London; New York: Verso, 1997): p. 60

[113] Levis Mumford, *The City in History: its origins, its transformations and its prospects* (New York: A Harvest Book; 1961) : p. 575

[114] Louis Aragon, op. cit. , p. 122

[115] Grame Gilloch, op. cit. , p. 11

[116] Ibid. , p. 123

of the articulation of urban environment with the help of new technologies e.g., engineering and design, the city has turned into a dream-world of modernity. "With new constellations that arose in the sky, aerial space and ocean depths thundered with propellers", this human-made world has made believe wo/men to its own reality, which is that the city is the source of the possible.[117] This is nothing but the rise of a new mythology in the spirit of technology; that is, a mythology of the modern. Octavio Paz describes this transformation as "a change of mythology":

> The ancient natural world had disappeared with its forests, valleys, oceans, and mountains populated by monsters, gods, demons, and other marvels, in its place appeared the abstract city and, among the old monuments and venerable plazas, the terrible newness of the machines. A change of reality: a change of mythology.[118]

Although the mythology of modernity seems to be different on the surface, many of its characteristics entail the traces of ancient myths. "Among all relations that have involved modernity", writes Benjamin, "its relation to classical antiquity stands out."[119] Certainly, the city is the most appropriate place in which one is able to see the connection of modern epoch with antiquity. With splendid buildings, historical figures and sculptural symbols, it has given the sense of divinity and celestial to those who stroll the city streets. As a result, the earthly city of modernity created by humankind itself has become a heavenly place while it has attempted to free itself from the spirituality of the past. However, the dimension and dynamics of this holiness have taken new forms in terms of modern culture and ideology. In Mumford's view, "the mixture of divinity, power, and personality that brought the

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[117] Walter Benjamin, "One Way Street" in *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings,* ed. and with an introduction by Peter Demetz, trans. by Edmund Jephcott (New York: Schocken Books, 1986): p. 93

[118] Octavio Paz, op. cit. , p. 66

[119] Walter Benjamin, "The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire" in *Selected Writings Vol.4 (1938-1940)* trans. by Edmund Jephcott and Others, ed. by Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, 2003): p. 49

ancient city into existence" has been poured into "fresh civic, regional, and planetary molds."[120] The sacred powers of antiquity have been replaced by the free self-sufficient and self-contained individual. From now on, the environment would be arranged, not to reflect the majesty of gods but to celebrate the liberty of the individual.[121] In this sense, the purpose of magnificent buildings in modern cities is not to make contact with gods or other sacred powers; rather, the building itself is the sublime for the individual. What this means is that the building is not a medium between human beings and the celestial anymore; it creates the effect of the sublime by its own form. For Sennett, this is a magical experience of the modern individual which comes from her/his relation with the objects: "The idea of integrity of the object derived from the experience of magic which the enlightened man of reason permitted himself, the magic power of things, if they are made in a certain way, to transport him out of the ordinary."[122] This is the magic which the individual is able to practice in modern epoch, that is, the magic of modernity. Naturally, the home of this magical experience is the immense landscape of the city as the entity filled with fantastic and dreamy objects. In this sense, to experience the city itself is magic for the individual by which s/he could get the sense of fascination and horror, hope and despair simultaneously.

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[120] Levis Mumford, op. cit. , p. 575

[121] At this point, one should remember the secularization of visuality in the modern history. In the Renaissance period, the Cartesian city was constructed not for human eyes but for God's eye. This situation has changed in the mid-eighteenth century with the philosophy of the Enlightenment. Although the project of the Enlightenment took its roots from the revolutionary ideas of the Renaissance on space and time, the arrangement of nature addressing human eyes is the most important distinction between two periods. On this point, see David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford [England]: Blackwell, 1989).

[122] Richard Sennett, *The Conscience of the Eye* (New York, London: W.W. Norton & Company: 1990): p. 102

### 3.2 The City as the Experience of Modernity:

The notion of the "individual" is closely bound up with modern metropolitan life. If the origin of the individual lies in the thought of the Enlightenment, then s/he owes her/his development to the large cities of the nineteenth century. As a practical sphere of the Enlightenment project, the city is the place in which the individual has come into existence. In this new realm created by humankind, the individual has met a unique experience, which can only be lived in the city. This new situation of the individual peculiar to living in city is certainly an outcome of modern progress, which has put an end to the relation between human beings and nature. Indeed, the city is a great reflection of the separation of the individual from her/his environment. Although the process of urbanization has aimed at creating "modes of ordering society in structures", in the long run, it has not realized.[123] Contrary to expectations, the rational orders and structures of modernization has caused the disintegration of human practice.[124] In this sense, the city experience of the modern individual has been shaped by the disjuncture and fragmented nature of modern urban life. Berman describes this new mode of living, which is completely modern, as "a unity of disunity" that "pours us all into a maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal, of struggle and contradiction, of ambiguity and anguish."[125]

The discontinuous movements of city life have required a new way of practice with regard to the perception of urban environment. This boundless landscape of modernity has presented a new kind of reality to the individual through all of its signs and stimuli. In its ceaseless flow of life, the city person is bombarded with

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[123] David Frisby, op. cit. , p. 2

[124] Ibid. , p. 2

[125] Marshall Berman, op. cit. , p. 15

fleeting impressions and changing images. Such human experience is a result of the city's modernity that Baudelaire one described as "the ephemeral, the fugitive, and the contingent."[126] In the face of this new law of spacing of modernity, the individual does not know how to accommodate her/himself in this new mode of social living. S/he is both fascinated and terrified with the mass of urban crowd, its endless traffic and monumental built structures. This ambivalence is the most substantial character that lies at the heart of metropolitan conditions of life. While the city exerts a great attraction with its energy, technological facilities, diversity and freedom, it also imposes alienation, injustice, and violence. In Simmel's account, this unresolved tension is the "tragedy" of modern culture and, without a doubt, the metropolis is a genuine area for the rise of this "culture's tragedy".[127]

The individual, therefore, has become a part of an enormous complexity of things and powers by living in the realm of the city. S/he has experienced modernity in this urban space not only "as the dream-world" but also "as the catastrophe".[128] Beyond the promises of constant progress and newness, the city has embodied anguish, frustration, and terror for its inhabitants. This is "a distinctive and authentic beauty of modern life, which, however, is inseparable from its innate misery and anxiety, from the bills that modern man has to pay."[129] Hence, the phantasmagoria of the city has come onto the scene with its hidden face, mysterious and dark, and, turning the dreamscape into an arena of the struggle for modern individual.

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[126] Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays* trans. and ed. by Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon Press, 1964): pp. 13-14

[127] George Simmel, 'The Metropolis and Mental Life' in *The Sociology of George Simmel* trans., ed., intro by Kurt H. Wolff (Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press, 1950): p. 422

[128] Heinz Paetzold, op. cit. , p. 214

[129] Marshall Berman, op. cit. , p. 141

### 3.2.1 The City as the Arena of Struggle and Survival:

As a cradle of civilization, the city has witnessed an intensive struggle from the beginning of its history. In spite of its shielding and secure status on the surface, the city has also meant thousands of battles, large or small, in every domain of life. With numerous potentialities, it has become the "container" that has brought about the exertion of power in every form.[130] In the course of history, the great effort of human beings for survival has taken on new forms depending on the change in the conditions of the external world. The age of modernity is the latest transformation in this struggle "which primitive man has to wage for his bodily existence."[131] In this sense, the urban environment has appeared as a new arena for human struggle with its gloomy streets, unpredictable dangers and frantic rhythm of life. The important thing here is that the dynamics of this endless fighting have changed as a part of new mythology, viz., human antagonism and enmity have superseded the aggression of natural forces. In his article "The Metropolis and Mental Life", Simmel explicates this change in a grand manner: "City life has transformed the struggle with nature for livelihood into an inter-human struggle for gain, which here is not granted by nature but by other men."[132] Therefore, the individual has found her/himself in the midst of the merciless world of the cityscape.

This human-made universe of modernity has brought a completely new ground to the individual for survival. With its all-human works that arrange the system and order, the modern city has created a new world of nature, which is "more primordial and wilder than what is truly natural."[133] As a result, the individual has been

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[130] Levis Mumford, op. cit. , p. 34

[131] George Simmel, op. cit. p. 409

[132] Ibid. , p. 420

[133] Jordi Llovet, 'Benjamin Flaneur: The Arcades Project' in *For Walter Benjamin* ed. by Ingrid and Konrad Scheurmann trans. by Timothy Nevill (Bonn: AsKI, 1993): p. 216

transposed into the 'nature' of the big city in which s/he has become apart from her/his inner nature as well as from nature itself through mechanical forms of modern urban life. This is nothing but the emergence of human culture in the form of the city in opposition to the nexus of nature. Certainly, "such an alien culture" which is characterized by the "objective spirit" has developed its own laws and commands.[134] In order to stay alive in this new environment, there is only one way for the individual, which is to master the series of rules enforced by the system of the city based on organizational forms and the cash nexus of capitalism.[135] Otherwise s/he would be devoured and absorbed by the ruthlessness the city embodies. This is the "ultimate test" of the individual which s/he has met in the city as the "labyrinth" of modern mythology.[136] In the face of the dangers and risks of urban life, the city person has been compelled to use her/his own skills and capacity in order to survive. As Berman states, s/he "desperately needs a set of laws of his own for self-preservation, self-heightening, self-awakening, self-liberation."[137]

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[134] Following Simmel, Frisby describes the culture of modernity as "objective culture, which takes the principle of objectification to its logical conclusion." For him, it is "a dead culture, a culture of things and no longer that of human beings." David Frisby, *Cityscapes of Modernity: Critical Explorations* (Cambridge; Malden, M.A: Polity Press, 1998): p. 149. See also George Simmel, op.cit., pp. 420-421

[135] On this point, it would be appropriate to remember Goethe's novel *Faust*, which is one of the most well-known examples of modern mythology. In the novel, Faust orders Mephisto and his 'mighty men' to get rid of old couple (Philemon and Baucis) since they are only obstacles before him to reach his aims. Yet, Faust does not want to know how it would be done; he is is just interested with the result. For Berman, "this is a characteristically modern style of evil: indirect, impersonal, mediated by complex organizations and institutional roles." Marshall Berman, op. cit. , p. 67. See also Pierre Brunel (ed.), *Companion to Literary Myths, Heroes and Archetypes* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992 [1988])

[136] Victor Hugo uses the term "labyrinth" for describing modern city "urban web" in resemblance of spider's web. Like Hugo, Benjamin uses the term in his works on city. He conceives "the crowd on the street" as "the labyrinth." For him, "the city-as-labyrinth was the dreamscape of antiquity," while "the crowd-as-labyrinth that of the modern epoch." Ariane Smart, 'The Darkness and Claustrophobia of the City: Victor Hugo and the Myth of Paris' in *Modern Contemporary France*, August 2000, Vol. 8, Issue 3, pp. 315-325. For the use of the term "labyrinth" in Benjamin, see Grame Gilloch, op.cit., p. 142

[137] Marshall Berman, op. cit. , p. 22

However, the complexity of modern culture has demanded from the individual a special knowledge of human nature, a sort of knowledge, which is based on the faculty of Reason. The person in the city has to use her/his "intelligence" in order to overcome oppressive conditions of urban life. So to speak, metropolitan individual owed her/his strength to the "intellect" which is the "most adaptable of our inner forces."[138] Even in most critical situations of conflict and danger in everyday life of the big city, s/he has found a way to escape through her/his "intellect." For Vidler, such ability is particular to the city dweller:

> The metropolitan inhabitant will be visual and intellectual as opposed to the oral and emotional country-dweller; reason will take the place of emotion; the conscious will dominate the unconscious; habits will be adaptable and shifting, rather than rooted and apparently eternal; the impersonal will overtake the personal; …[139]

This "intellectuality" has served as a protective organ for the fragile individual against the material and psychological life of the large city, so that the city person is able to preserve her/his subjectivity in the metropolitan labyrinth. As a result, city experience has become "a purely defensive strategy" by the employment of the intellect for the sake of self-preservation.[140]

There is no doubt that the self-preservation of the individual in the face of the city has appeared in the form of an instrumental behavior. In order to continue her/his life, the city person has used "intellect" in the manner of 'purposive-rationality'. Such an approach has demanded from her/him "a negative behavior of a social nature" since the existence of the individual in this form has come into being

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[138] George Simmel, op. cit. , p. 410

[139] Anthony Vidler, 'Agoraphobia: Spatial Estrangement in George Simmel and Siegfried Kracauer' in *New German Critique*, Fall 91, Issue 54, p.31, 15p.

[140] Grame Gilloch, op. cit. , p. 144

entirely for her/himself.[141] In this sense, everything that surrounds her/him in the city has lost their essence; they have become meaningful only in the sense of pragmatism. Yet, the devaluation of the whole objective world in reference to self-preservation has consequences for the inner self of the individual. The decline of the external world in such a way has required the loss of one's own self, that is to say, the denial of nature hitherto existing of human beings. This is the price that the individual has to pay for living in a big city. As Engels aptly writes, the city-dweller has been forced to "sacrifice the best qualities of their human nature in order to bring to pass all the marvels of civilization which crowd their city."[142]

The sacrifice of the city-dweller is the essence that lies at the heart of modern urban culture. However, this cannot be merely conceived as a creation of metropolitan life. On the contrary, its roots date back to a long time back, even to the earliest emergence of city life. The individual's sacrifice in order to survive in a big city has originated from the ritual sacrifice of the pre-urban age, which was made for the favors of the gods. While, in earlier periods, "humans sacrificed their own flesh and blood" in order to manage their fears, the modern individual has to give up her/his own human nature to be alive in the ruthless city.[143] Although living conditions have changed in the course of history, there is still a "victim" just as there is still "fear". In the view of Erickson, "the urban center" has never lost "the traces of this history", "the city is built on the blood of sacrificial rituals and their victims" and it

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[141] George Simmel, op. cit. , p. 415

[142] Fredrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England* ed. with a foreword by Victor Kieman (Harmondsmorth, Middlesex, England; New York, USA: Penguin, 1987): p. 68

[143] Victoria Lee Erickson, 'On the Town with George Simmel: A Socio-Religious Understanding of Urban Interaction' in *Cross Currents*, Spring 2001, Vol.51, Issue 1, pp. 21-45

has been maintained by the creation of new victims and survivals.[144] This is nothing but the (re)appearance of human sacrifice in the content of the modern city.

### 3.2.2 The Engendering Heroism in Modern City:

If the city is the arena of struggle in the world of modern mythology, the individual then is certainly the greatest figure for the heroism of modern life. In common with all kinds of myths, one of the most central elements that give modernity its mythical nature is the notion of a new hero. As every epoch has possessed gods, heroes, and idols peculiar to itself, , modernity also has arisen with its own heroic characters peculiar to the mythology that it has produced. With its conflicts and tensions of daily urban life, the city has appeared as the most convenient place for the rise of modern heroes. For Benjamin, such experience in its fragmented and fleeting nature of the city has required "a heroic constitution."[145] In this sense, the true subject of modern heroism is undeniably the city-person who has struggled against the brutal tendencies of modern urban life. In Gilloch's words, "the sober bourgeois citizen has become a heroic figure," "the urban hero" who defies the modern fates retains "a sense of personal identity and integrity even in the midst of the anonymous, bustling crowd, and refuses to bow down before the modern gods of punctuality and rational calculation."[146]

However, this heroic dimension of modernity in terms of city experience is fairly problematic. In parallel to the phantasmagorical character of the modern city, the heroes of urban life have come into existence in the guise of delusion. Although the modern individual has appeared as a new hero of modernity challenging the ruthless

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[144] Victoria Lee Erickson, op. cit. , pp. 21-45

[145] Walter Benjamin, op. cit., 2003, p. 44

[146] Grame Gilloch, op. cit. , pp. 148-149

metropolitan life, s/he is nothing other than the figure of self-deception. For Benjamin, like Baudelaire, this is the construction of modern heroism depending on "the melodramatic notion of the city-as-wilderness."[147] In this sense, "the steadfast heroic bourgeois citizen unflinchingly defying metropolitan monstrosities" is an illusionary figure that comes out by "the pompous self-aggrandizement of the narrow tedium and petty trivialities" of daily experience of modern urban life.[148] What this means is that the heroism of the modern individual has sprung from the phantasm and mystery of the everyday world of the modern metropolis. With its fashionable objects and fleeting impressions, the city has presented an illusory world for the modern wo/man to become a hero and to believe her/his own heroism. As a result, the inhabitant of the city has become a hero as the subject of modernity; but, undoubtedly, this heroic quality that surrounds her/him has only existed in appearance. The city-dweller is nothing other than a counterfeit hero who lacks certain features of heroism. Hence, as Gilloch states, "it is self-deception rather than rage or mere folly that is the hallmark of modern heroism."[149]

The self-deceptive character of modern heroism lay in the way that the modern individual has experienced the city. Similar to the ambivalent character of the city, the modern wo/man is uncertain and hesitant in her/his attitude toward urban life. While s/he has engaged in the enchantment and romance of the cityscape, s/he has wanted to be away from the risks and hazards city life entails. In this paradoxical situation, the heroism of the modern individual is located in "the quest for novelty and excitement in a metropolitan environment", but without meeting any experience of danger and insecurity.[150] In other words, the city person now wants to live in the

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[147] Grame Gilloch, op. cit. , p. 149

[148] Ibid.

[149] Ibid. , p. 150

[150] Grame Gilloch, op. cit, p. 15

phantasmagoric world of modern metropolis without paying its charge. In this way, s/he has cheated by the attempt of escape from the real experience that the modern city has required. This is the law that modern wo/man has produced in order to survive against ruthless city life. Baudelaire expresses this cunning behavior particular to the modern individual in his poem "The Clock": "Who wins without cheating—every time! It is the law!"[151] In this context, "the bourgeois gambler, *flanéur*, and dandy" that appear as the clearest articulation of modern heroism in the city of the nineteenth century are only rather "ridiculous mock-heroes" serving "to suggest the phantasmagorical character of the modern metropolis."[152]

There is no doubt that the cunning modern individual has employed in the city reminds one of the hero, Odysseus, who owes his strength to his ability for deception ('resourceful' Odysseus). Thinking in the sense of the attitude they hold in common towards their surroundings, it would not be difficult to find traces of Odysseus on the streets of the modern city. As Bolz and van Reijen claim, "the *flanéur* appears as the reincarnation of Odysseus" in metropolitan area.[153] However, such comparison between these two characters does not imply the equation of the modern city-person with the heroes of the ancient world. From now on, the heroes of ancient myths cannot hold a candle to modern wo/man.[154] On this point, the heroism of modern life has become mythical in double sense: "it draws on ancient

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[151] In this poem, Baudelaire describes time as a "greedy player." For him, the gambler is one of the most apparent figures that reveal the deceptive heroism of the nineteenth century. This is not unexpected in the sense of the fact that gambling which is played only by aristocracy in the eighteenth century became common among the bourgeoisie in the nineteenth century. Charles Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil and Paris spleen* (New York: Boa Editions, 1991): pp. 151-153

[152] Grame Gilloch, op. cit., p. 164

[153] Bolz and van Reijen (1991), quoted in Grame Gilloch, op. cit. , p. 151

[154] Charles Baudelaire (1846), quoted in Walter Benjamin "The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire" in *Selected Writings Vol.4, 1938-1940* trans. by Edmund Jephcott et. al., ed. by Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, 2003): p. 46

myth, and it does not actually exist."[155] In other words, the antiquity that lies in the essence of modern heroism has been able to live only in appearance. The city-person has become the hero of modernity by imitating ancient heroes; s/he is the hero who exists in the shadow of the heroes of the ancient world.

Nevertheless, the illusory hero figure that appears in the form of self-deception is only one side of the heroism under modernity. There are still certain others in the city who deserve to be considered as modern hero. These are actually "victims of horror of urban existence" who suffer under the severe conditions of modern capitalism: the worker, the prostitute, the rag picker, that is, the marginalia of the urban setting.[156] As the invisible face of the modern city, they have become heroic in quite another way. In opposition to the self-deceptive character of bourgeois citizen, the margin figures of the cityscape, who are more than just figures, have grown to be modern heroes by suffering the consequences of modernity "while at the same time engaged somehow in subverting it;"[157] which is to say, they have paid the cost of experiencing modern urban life by living on the edge. These heroic victims who are conceived as outsiders and deviant people of urban population have survived, "even if it be without hope, in opposition to the existing order," something which renders them unspoken and invisible.[158] Hence, the hero of modernity has turned into a survivor as much as the urban environment has turned into the arena of the great struggle. In the merciless world of the city, argues Adorno, there is only one chance in order to survive: "to give up your life, in order to save it."[159] This is

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[155] Grame Gilloch, op.cit. , p. 151

[156] Ibid. , p. 164

[157] Ibid. , p. 150

[158] Theodor W. Adorno, *Notes to Literature*, *Volume Two* ed. by Rolf Tiedemann, trans. from the German by Shierry Weber Nicholsen (New York: Columbia University Press: 1992): p. 326

[159] Ibid.

nothing but the rise of the urban hero in the form of "self-negation". In this sense, undeniably, the worker, the rag-picker, and the prostitute have become "self-sacrificial figures that are doomed to endure modernity silently."[160] While the prostitute has sold herself in order to live, the rag-picker on the other hand, as a great reflection of human poverty owes her/his subsistence to the waste of modernity. For Benjamin, the state of decrepitude and despair in modern metropolis constitutes "the closest link between modernity and antiquity."[161] Following Baudelaire, he does not see a marked difference between the worker and an ancient gladiator: "What the wage-earner achieves through his daily labors is no less impressive than what helped a gladiator win applause and fame in ancient times."[162] As a result, the heroism, the roots of which lie in antiquity (re)appeared in the city of modern age, but not explicitly. It has come out in the dark and mysterious places, that is, the underworlds of a great city, infested by crime and poverty. In the face of such reality, as Baudelaire aptly puts, "we need only open our eyes to see to recognize our heroism."[163]

In the final analysis, modern city is the site of both illusion and disaster. It has presented a phantasmagorical world with an astonishing urban life while at the same time embodied great sorrow and despair. This conflict is the essence of the overwhelming charm of the metropolitan life. In spite of the burden of the city experience, the inhabitants of the city cannot leave this immense place because of the freedom it offered. In other words, the irresistibility of big cities lay in the fact

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[160] Grame Gilloch, op.cit. , p. 164

[161] Walter Benjamin, op. cit., 2003, p. 50

[162] Ibid. , p. 44

[163] Charles Baudelaire (1846) quoted in Walter Benjamin, op. cit. , 2003, p. 47. See also Marshall Berman, op. cit., pp.143-147

that "they allow possibilities for deviant people and outsiders."[164] As opposed to the small towns and villages, the tolerance for differences is probably more intense in urban life. The capacity of this freedom that the city empowers these people with is certainly not limitless. It is true that the prostitute, the transsexual, and the rag-picker have found their respective places to live in big cities of modernity, but not within the sight of those respected 'urbanities'. Rather, their living quarters are dark and gloomy places of the cityscape beyond which no one can see them and hear their voices. They have continued their lives in the poorest neighborhoods that are behind great boulevards, big luminous streets of the big city. This is the space, which is given by modern urban life for the outcasts of the city. Nevertheless, they cannot depart from the city since there is no place to exist apart from this small urban world in the city. So, they tirelessly try to make it their own in order to feel somehow at home in the maelstrom of modern metropolis. [165] For Berman these people are "the discarded stepchildren of all urban humanity", and their presence casts "an inexorable shadow over the city's luminosity."[166]

### 3.3 Istanbul: The Mythical City of Turkey:

Modern cities contain specific characteristics according to the specific ways they each experience modernity. Each modern city creates its own myths peculiar to itself, depending on the conditions of the society of which it is a part. In this sense, there are various city myths as long as there are different modernities. Taking the case of Turkey, the most appropriate example to examine the mythology of modern

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[164] Heinz Paetzold, op. cit. , p. 214

[165] Marshall Berman, 'The Signs in the Street: a response to Perry Anderson' in *NLR*, # 144 (March/April 1984): pp. 123

[166] Marshall Berman, op. cit. , 1982, pp. 153-154

city is Istanbul, "the largest city with respect to population size, the scale of economic activity and the extent of the hinterland."[167]

In spite of its modest beginnings, through the later centuries, Istanbul has always been an economic, political and cultural centre, and even though the authorities, nations and people have changed, Istanbul has never lost its importance and validity in its long history, and has maintained its substantial character as the most dynamic settlement of its time. The origins of Istanbul date back to very early times. About 3000 years ago, the city was founded as a small colony city by the coming of Greek settlers on its present peninsula. However, the first seed of today's Istanbul can be conceived as the later city of Byzantium.[168] In the historical process, the small colony left its place to the well-organized state centre, that is, Constantinople, and later to the city of Istanbul. These three cities, so to speak, have lived not being added to each other, but rather by the replacement of the previous one by the other; at every time period, the city has been rebuilt from the beginning by the change of all spatial structures.[169] Since the development of the city has not been realized in a planned way, each time Istanbul has come into existence with a different face, different from the previous one.[170] Certainly, this developmental process of the city is not the concern of this thesis. Rather, the attempt here would be to examine the city of Istanbul with reference to the experience of modernity. In this context, the starting point for the discussion of Istanbul in the modern epoch would be the nineteenth century since the first shoots of modernization process were put forth in

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[167] Cemile Nil Uzun, *Gentrification in Istanbul: A Diagnostic City* (Netherlands: Utrecht, 2001): p. 73

[168] Istanbul's long city adventure starts by the foundation of Byzantion. However, the city's acquisition of its importance occurred in the age of Roman Empire, particularly, in the period of Constantinople. For the account of Istanbul's history, see Mine Soysal, *Kentler Kenti Istanbul* (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yayınları)

[169] Doğan Kuban, *Türkiye'de Kentsel Koruma* (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2001): p. 3

[170] Ibid.

that century.[171] This time period has an undeniable significance for the course of urbanization all over the world. The second half of the nineteenth century is the period of advancement for the European capitals in particular. During this period, the big cities such as Paris, Rome and Vienna had already been on the path to being modern metropolises. They were all rebuilt in accordance with the principles of well-organized modern city plans. Naturally, such urbanization movement manifested its influence on the city of Istanbul as well, yet more slowly and in a disorderly manner. Having taken the Paris of Haussman as a model, the spatial structure of the city was reorganized by the attempts of bureaucratic elites as a part of Tanzimat reforms.[172] However, this transformation of the cityscape did not go beyond the copy of western forms. The first attempts for urban-planning scheme only brought in a fragmented and inconsistent arrangement of the city. Hence, Istanbul became a patched and eclectic urban center at the beginning of the modern age.

At this point, there is need to consider the modernization process of Turkey in order to understand the urban development of Istanbul better. As every country experienced modernity in a different way depending on its own economic and social conditions, the modern experience of Turkish society showed certain characteristics peculiar to itself. In a broad sense, claims Göle, Turkish modernization is "a civilizational conversion, from the Ottoman-Islamic one to the Turkish-Western

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[171] Mete Tunçay, "Cumhuriyet İstanbul'u" in *Istanbul'un Dört Çağı* ed. by Fatma Türe (Istanbul: YKY, 1999 [1996]): p.87. The project for the organization of the city in modern forms was first initiated by the Tanzimat reformer Mustafa Reşit Paşa in the 1830s. On this point, see Zeynep Çelik, *19. yüzyılda Osmanlı Başkenti, Değişen İstanbul*, trans. by Selim Deringil (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1998 [1996]): p. 2

[172] During this process, the most apparent indicator of the Parisian influence on the city of Istanbul is that the municipality of Beyoğlu and Galata was given the name of the municipal department of the most outstanding and modern district in Paris. Besides, the executive management was constituted by the consideration of the example of Paris. See Ismet Kılıçarslan, *Istanbul: Kentleşme Sürecinde Ekonomik ve Mekansal İlişkiler* (Istanbul: ITU Mimarlık Fakültesi Baskı Atölyesi, 1981): p. 187

one."[173] Indeed, the modernity project of Turkey is based on the complete rupture from the Ottoman past in applying modern norms and behaviour patterns to "the customary practice of daily life as well as to consciousness."[174] Since all transformations and reforms that arose in the country found their sources in the Western world, Turkey experienced modernity as something external and alien to itself. As it is seen in other similar societies, modernization attempts in Turkish society did not have "a transformative effect" on traditional way of living in a complete sense since traditions were not "reinterpreted but frozen and rigidified."[175] Instead, this process brought forth the coexistence of mainly two opposite traditions in society. On the one hand, Ottoman-Islamic tradition, and on the other hand new Western experience. Hence, Turkish modernization was shaped by the dissonant relation of the old and the new. This is the particular experience of modernity that Turkey lived starting from the nineteenth century.

There is no doubt that the dualities that appeared in socio-economic life during the mentioned process were clearly reflected on the arrangement of the spatial structure of Istanbul. In this sense, the city of Istanbul during the nineteenth century started showing a twofold characteristic both physically and practically. While Galata and Beyoğlu became westernized due to the planning of urban environment according to borrowed modern forms, the historical peninsula maintained its traditional character.[176] Such partial employment of reforms and changes in Istanbul resulted in the emergence of varied regions in the cityscape which were completely different

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[173] Nilüfer Göle, "Istanbul to Hong Kong: Notes on Non-Western Modernities" in *New Perspective Quarterly*, Vol.15 Issue 2, Spring 98, pp. 40-44

[174] Ibid. , p. 40

[175] Ibid.

[176] The duality between Galata and the historical peninsula dates back to the beginning of the Otoman age. Yet, the nineteenth century made it more evident through modern attempts of Tanzimat reformers. See Doğan Kuban, op. cit. , p. 10

from each other. Therefore, the classic Ottoman-Islamic city image of Istanbul turned into a more cosmopolitan one with the adopted Western forms and elements.[177] This exact move is the essence of the modernization process of Istanbul. It never vanished, and, even today, its effects are still strongly felt in all domains of life in that city.

As the most dynamic city of Turkey, Istanbul has always been subject to substantial changes starting from the first modern attempts of the nineteenth century up until recent years. In every time period, the city has come onto the scene with different faces through the addition of new qualities to the urban structure. In this way, the twofold appearance of Istanbul at the beginning has gradually left its place to multiplied facets of the cityscape including varied dualities inside. Yet, the change has not taken place solely on the surface. More importantly, the perception of the city and its experience has taken new forms throughout the interim years. In this sense, Istanbul has gained new meanings for its inhabitants depending on the economic and social conditions of its time. This transformation of the city in terms of either the physical appearance or living experience might be examined dividing this process into four episodes: 1. 1923-1950: The decline of city-myth: a shadow on the glory of Istanbul 2. 1950-1970: The rise of city-myth: Istanbul as the city made of gold 3. 1970-1990: The hidden face of city-myth: From a golden city to an arena of struggle 4. 1990 to the present: The destruction of city-myth: Istanbul as the city with a dark urban imaginary.

### 3.3.2 1923-1950:

In the second decade of the 20th century, the city of Istanbul entered into a new period with Kemalist modernization. As a result of the change in the regime of the country which brought the secular nation state, there has also been an important

[177] Zeynep Çelik, op. cit., p. 41

rupture in the historical development of city. The foundation of the Republic put a shadow on the glory of Istanbul. "The spatial expression of this disdain" for that city was the new capital city of Ankara.[178] For the first time in its history, Istanbul was to be administered from the outside by the transfer of the functions of a capital to Ankara. In this way, Istanbul, which had been the capital of three big empires for almost two thousand years, lost its political power. However, this decline in the political arena did not first influence the economic power of the city. Owing to the foreign trade relations in pre-Republican years, Istanbul continued to be an economic center until the end of the 1920s.[179] The main fall in the supremacy of the city occurred in the 1930s and 1940s by the weakening of its relations in the world economy and the move of developmental activities towards the hinterland of the country by the government.[180] Hence the city, which lost its central role in both political and economic realms, entered a period of relative stagnation which would last until 1950. In one sense, this stage was the reflection of the decline of the city-myth of Istanbul, "albeit a brief moment in the three thousand year span of its history."[181]

Since Istanbul had been the most representative city of the Ottoman-Muslim tradition, the new Republican government perceived the city as embodying the continuity of the past and neglected it until the forties. While Ankara became a symbol of national identity and unity, the city of Istanbul as the imperial capital of

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[178] G. Seufertland, P.Weyland (1994) quoted in Kevin Robins and Asu Aksoy "Istanbul between Civilization and Discontent" in *City* 5-6, November 1996, p. 6

[179] Mustafa Sönmez, *İstanbul'un İki Yüzü* (Ankara: Arkadaş Yayınları, 1996): p. 12

[180] Ibid. , p. 15

[181] Kevin Robins and Asu Aksoy, op. cit. , p. 7

the old Ottoman Sultanate and Califate remained disfavoured.[182] All industrialization efforts concentrated on Ankara with the aim of creating a new urban class in Central Anatolia.[183] Moreover, despite the continuing role of the city as a commercial centre, the resources allocated to the city by government were far less than the production in city. This grand downfall in the conditions of Istanbul, especially in its economy, reflected upon the demographic development of the city, too. In this period, the population of the city decayed to a considerable extent.[184] Thus, "instead of having to deal with a growing city, Istanbul was faced with the problem of shrinkage until the Second World War."[185]

During the War of Liberation, in the first years of the Republic, nothing was really done in Istanbul on behalf of urbanization except for certain changes that reflected the ideology of the new government. Whereas, in other cities –especially those in the western part of Turkey-, "a spatial restructuring process" was immediately started after 1923, complementing efforts in economic, social, and cultural restructuring.[186] The city of Istanbul had to wait for the same process almost until the 1950s. In continuation of the Westernization movement that started a century ago, the spatial arrangement of Istanbul was planned with the help of foreign specialists. Finally, after the Second World War, famous architects and city planners were brought from France in order to liken Istanbul to a European city, and

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[182] Stefanos Yerasimos, *Istanbul 1914-1923: Kaybolup Giden Bir Dünyanın Başkenti ya da Yaşlı İmparatorlukların Can Çekişmesi*, trans. by Cüneyt Akalın (İstanbul: İletişim yayınları, 1996): pp. 124-125

[183] İsmet Kılıçarslan, op. cit. , p. 209

[184] The population of the city declined from about 1.1 million to around six-hundred thousand by 1922. Mustafa Sönmez, op. cit., p. 12. For a vivid account of population changes during the years of World War I, see Justin McCarthy, *Müslümanlar ve Azınlıklar: Osmanlı Anadolusu'nda Nüfus ve İmparatorluğun Sonu*, trans. by Bilge Umar (İstanbul: İnkılap Kitabevi, 1998).

[185] Cemile Nil Uzun, op. cit. , p. 77

[186] Ibid. , p. 42

in particular, to Paris. Therefore, the city entered a new period of growth in almost every domain of modern life.

### 3.3.2 1950-1970:

The fifties represent a crucial break in the historical progress of Turkish society. Under the impact of the great changes in economic and political realms, the country moved into a thoroughly new stage on its path to modernization.[187] The new government which came to the power by the overwhelming weight of the peasantry "promised to curtail state intervention in the economy, transfer state-owned enterprises to the private sector, ensure full recompense for the peasant's toil, and guarantee religious freedom." [188] Thus, the opportunities of economic liberalism replaced the restrictions of closed economy under the Kemalist regime. This turn in the economic policy generated rapid development in both agricultural commercialization and, though relatively less so, in industrial production.[189] In this way, the process of advancement which had been interrupted by the Second World War started again through new economic processes.

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[187] For Keyder, "the end of the monoparty regime in 1950" signifies "a shift from one pattern of capitalist modernization to another." He decribes this stage, as "bourgeois modernization", which stands for "the political forms of liberal democracy, and for the rule of more commercially minded, less autonomous governing class". See Çağlar Keyder, 'The Political Economy of Turkish Democracy' in *Turkey in Transition: New Perspectives* ed. by Irvin C. Schick and Ertuğrul Ahmet Tonak with translations by Rezan Benatar, Irvin C. Schick and Ronnie Margulies (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Pres, 1987): p. 42

[188] Ibid. , p. 39 See also Korkut Boratav, *Türkiye'de Iktisat Tarihi* (Ankara: Imge Yayınları, 2003)

[189] After World War II, economic development first relied on foreign trade through new liberal policies. In this sense, this swift progress in the fifties owed to largely commercial activities rather than manufacturing. Yet, this liberal foreign trade policy which had been employed since 1947 was abandoned in 1952 because that the accumulation of exchange was going to run out through overwhelming import. In the face of this economic threat, the government did tend towards the economic model based on import substituting industrialization under the leadership of private sector. Hence, a significant expansion period based on industrialization started all over the country. See Mustafa Sönmez, op. cit., p. 20

This rapid growth in Turkish economy inevitably brought forth social transformation in the society. In this sense, urbanization that started relatively slow in the first years of the Republic gained speed in the 1950s and continued gradually until the 1970s.[190] As the largest city of the country, Istanbul was the most effected city in this process. In short time, the multiple structural change of this time period made Istanbul a propulsive city of national economy.[191] As a result of an economic policy based upon "a model of national development implemented through state protected import-substituting industrialization," the city witnessed a perpetual growth of the "internal consumer market."[192] With the establishment of large scale private manufacturing and commercial enterprises, Istanbul became the major place for rapid progress in the country. Thus, the earlier period of stagnation was gradually replaced by a greater expansion process that continued until the early 1970s.

Along with increased economic activity after the 1950s, Istanbul had a higher rate of internal migration during this decade.[193] In the face of the increasing unemployment rate, the rural population started to move big cities which offered the wide range of work chances. With possible employment prospects and relatively more available social services and medical facilities, Istanbul became the most attractive place to which people flowed from all parts of the country in increased numbers. As Oktay aptly points out, the city in this period became the source of "desire and impulsion", particularly for people who live in insufficient living

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[190] Mübeccel Kıray, *Kentleşme Yazıları* (Istanbul: Bağlam Yayincilik, 1998): p. 178

[191] Ismet Kılıçarslan, op. cit. , p. 235

[192] Çağlar Keyder and Ayşe Öncü, *Istanbul and the Concept of the World Cities* (Istanbul: FES, 1993): p. 16

[193] In these years, technological change in cultivation produced a surplus and unemployed labour force at a big rate. In parallel to this, the building of highway network within the contex of Marshall Plan enabled people from rural areas move to the cities. See Ismet Kılıçarslan, op. cit. , p. 211

conditions in the rural areas.[194] This is nothing less than the rise of the city-myth of Istanbul again by the re-acquisition of its former dominance that was lost in the years of the Republic.

As a consequence of large-scale migration, Istanbul started to expand rapidly in both spatial and demographic structure. However, this expansion was quite problematical since Istanbul still lacked inner spatial planning and sufficient infrastructure networks. In particular, the overwhelming increase in urban population generated big settlement problems in the city. While *gecekondu* settlements of migrants sprung up close to industrial areas, there was also a great explosion in housing construction. What this brought forth was the rise of shantytowns alongside the apartment blocks which were built for the well-off middle class. Hence, this period witnessed the spread of Istanbul through many zones based on different standards of living simultaneously. Under the influence of such unexpected and unplanned urban settlement, however, most of the spatial and structural patterns that used to define the old city were lost and many historical elements of Istanbul were destroyed.[195]

Certainly, behind these changes on the landscape of Istanbul, there was also a significant transformation in life patterns. With extensive immigration, new patterns of social life started to appear in the city. Being foreign to the city and its existing living patterns, the new inhabitants generated new hybrid lifestyles by maintaining their old customs and habits in the new urban context. They stayed apart, "on more hospitable ground, and began to construct townships that lacked most civic amenities, but were apparently preferable to the bleakness of the village" instead of adopting "a completely alien lifestyle" peculiar to the big city.[196] Hence, the

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[194] Ahmet Oktay, *Metropol ve İmgelem* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Yayınları, 2002): p. 10

[195] Doğan Kuban, op. cit. , p. 10

neighbourhoods of migrants were mostly set up on the edge of the established city. Peculiarly, in the period between 1960 and 1970, the circles of *gecekondu* settlements spread along outer peripheries rapidly, paralleling the move of large-scale industries to the periphery.[197] In these zones outside the city centre, the migrant people started to live under difficult conditions, lacking essential facilities of a modern urban life. As a result, the city turned into an arena of struggle for the person who came from rural areas with high hopes. More correctly, as Oktay argues, after 1950s, the city has become "the place for the material struggle" as well as "the area of illusion" that provides to be forgotten its unmerciful conditions of urban life.[198] In his account Istanbul, "with its historical and societal spheres, buildings and items", served as a "labyrinth" for the person who just came to the city.[199] The migrant had to make great effort for long years to find an "exit" in this great network which is based on the circulation of goods, services, and people in large numbers. Nevertheless, for the newcomer, Istanbul continued to be a city of big dreams and hopes until the years of the 1970s.

### 3.3.3 1970-1990:

In the first years of the seventies, swift progress was replaced by a relative stagnation in the national economy. After 1972, the growth rate in production and investment of manufacturing industry stopped increasing and it stayed at the same level until 1978.[200] This standstill in the rate of the expansion was the first signal of the economic crisis which was coming out at the end of the decade. Doubtless, this

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[196] Çağlar Keyder, op. cit. , p. 44

[197] Cemile Nil Uzun, op. cit. , p.81

[198] Ahmet Oktay, op. cit. , p. 68

[199] Ibid. , p. 210

[200] Mustafa Sönmez, op. cit. , p. 36

period of downfall and depression was most intensively felt in Istanbul as the major locus of national industry. While investment activities decreased, the big holdings and enterprises in the city moved to regions on the periphery.[201] As a consequence of the economic downturn in the industrial section of the city which offered the most employment opportunities, particularly to migrants, the economy of Istanbul was shaken in a considerable sense.[202] The inevitable outcome of this process was the increasingly unemployed population that was going to reach a great level in the nineties. Thus, living conditions in the city became gradually more difficult and problematic by the end of the 1970s.

However, the crisis appearing during the seventies did manifest itself not only with "rising inflation and aggravating foreign exchange difficulties, but also with the growing social unrest and political violence, the paralysis of the bureaucracy and other institutions of the state due to the political infighting between the fragmented parties of the right and thecentre-left."[203] The difficulties and inequalities in economic realm directly reflected social and political atmosphere of the time period and, therefore, the seventies witnessed the upsurges of street action and protest either by labours or university students. Meanwhile, there appeared opposing political factions in the second half of the seventies. The emergence of the nationalists as a strong group against the radical leftists led to violent attacks and

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[201] Mustafa Sönmez, op. cit. , p. 29

[202] The decrease in the industrial sector of Istanbul had two important results. In the first place, the field of economic activity started to change, and, in this sense, there existed new employment areas such as finance, service, and building. Secondly, an informal economy appeared on account of the difficult economic conditions of the city. These were new kinds of employment for the struggle to make a living in Istanbul in the face of the economic difficulties of the 1970s and the 1980s. For further information, see Mustafa Sönmez, op. cit. , pp. 55-58.

[203] Galip Yalman and Aylin Topal, "Globalisation and Labour Movement: The Case of Turkey from Structural Adjustment to Accession Partnership Agreement with the EU" in www.shef.ac.uk/~perc/dev/papers/topal.pdf

brought society to political crisis.[204] Under such tense circumstances, the military coup of 1980 suspended the civilian regime. Thus, Turkey entered the eighties with the new regime of the military administration whose aim was the reorganization of the economy toward "greater openness and liberalization."[205] In this period, there was a still similar kind of transformation all over the world. Under the impact of the globalization process, extensive changes came out in the economic and social structure of the world. In this decade, all countries were more or less affected by the doctrine of a pure monetarist economy.[206] The response of Turkish administrations to this rising process of globalization was the adoption of a liberal model in all connotations of financial and commercial freedom. As a result of a move away from "an inflationary, import substitution economy" to "a recessionary, export-oriented regime", Turkish economy entered a new period which brought increasing interaction with world markets.[207] Thus, starting from 1980, all societal dynamics in the country were determined under free-market conditions of the international economy.

It is a plain fact that the urban areas are the most affected places during such period of rapid transformation. The integration of Turkey into a new international economic (dis)order has led to great changes in the socio-economic and spatial structures of big cities in Turkey. From now on, "people's expectations and perceptions of market trends" have been the major forces to form "the pattern of

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[204] Tahire Erman, "The Politics of Squatter (Gecekondu) Studies in Turkey: The Changing Representations of Rural Migrants in the Academic Discourse" in *Urban Studies*, Vol. 38, No: 7, 2001, pp. 983-1002

[205] Çağlar Keyder and Ayşe Öncü, op. cit. , p. 19

[206] Mübeccel Kıray, op. cit. , p. 181

[207] Andrew Finkel, 'Municipal Politics and the State in Contemporary Turkey' in *Turkish State, Turkish Society* ed. by Andrew Finkel and Nükhet Sirman (London and New York: Routledge, 1990): pp. 194-195

urban settlement."[208] As a result, a new system arises which supports opportunism and individualist pragmatism while neglecting reliability and efficiency required by collective life.[209] In this sense, the decade of 1980 was a turning point for the urban dynamics of Istanbul. As the largest city in Turkey, Istanbul was the only place that the effects of the globalization process were strongly felt in all its dimensions. Following radical alterations in economic and social conditions of the society, Istanbul started to occupy a significant position not only within the national borders, but also witin the network of global cities.

Without doubt, in this overwhelming process of change, the population of Istanbul continued to increase. Particularly in the eighties, it reached its highest level through new waves of migrants from rural areas. This resulted in "higher densities in central parts of the cities, but also in the creation of urban extensions on the periphery."[210] However, in this period, the cultural-social characteristic of the urban population was considerably altered. Different from the decade of the fifties, the inhabitants of the city after 1980 did not merely consist of native people and migrants who had just come to Istanbul. There was now a third group which constituted of people who had come to the city in the fifties and had now been living there for three generations. Naturally, such change that appeared in the population of Istanbul has brought forth new urban experiences. In the first place, from the late seventies, there existed no longer a problem of the transformation of rural culture into urban culture through the integration of migrants in the first years of urbanization.[211] Since they have been living in Istanbul for the last three decades,

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[208] Cemile Nil Uzun, op. cit. , p. 70

[209] Emre Kongar, *21. Yüzyılda Türkiye: 2000'li Yıllarda Türkiye'nin Toplumsal Yapısı* (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1998): p. 332

[210] Cemile Nil Uzun, op. cit. , p. 70

[211] İlhan Tekeli, "Yarının İstanbul'u" in *İstanbul'un Dört Çağı: İstanbul Panelleri* ed. by Fatma Türe (İstanbul: YKY, 1999 [1996]): p. 118

they were no longer foreign to the big city and its rules. They now certainly knew how to survive in the city and how to utilize its opportunities in the best way. In this sense, the city of Istanbul is not a labyrinth anymore for either people that came to the city long time ago or the new waves of migrants; because, from now on, they had their own culture in the city. This means that the city has witnessed the rise of a new type of culture which produces itself and makes its norms and values prevalent under the market forces.[212]

The important point that one should consider here is that the nature of a migrant person and her/his position within the urban sphere has considerably changed after 1970. As living conditions in the city got gradually difficult depending on the problems of unemployment and settlement, the bases of struggle in the city have taken new forms. Peculiarly, to settle down in the city has become a big question of surviving for the person who just arrives in Istanbul. It is no more available for the newcomers to build *gecekondu* in whatever spaces they can find within the city; because the conditions of land purchase, which is the main element of *gecekondu* building, have shown a dramatic change in this period.[213] Starting from the 1970s, migrant people in Istanbul have faced with a new mode of settlement which is governed by the network of market relations based on certain rules and principles peculiar to its own course.[214] This illegal organizing process of house building

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[212] Ilhan Tekeli, op. cit. p. 118. The culture to which the *gecekondu* communities have given can generally be defined as "arabesk." For Robins and Aksoy, the culture of arabesk is "a disillusioned and deprecatory response to the increasingly alienating conditions of urban life." See Kevin Robins and Asu Aksoy, op. cit. , p. 16. For a detailed analysis of the rise of "arabesk" in Turkey, see Martin Stokes, *Türkiye'de Arabesk Olayı*, trans. By Hale Eryılmaz (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1998)

[213] Oğuz Işık, "Türkiye Kentlerinin Geleceği Üzerine Söylemler: Denizli ve İstanbul Dersleri" in *Birikim*, Number 86-87, June-July, p. 44

[214] Owing to the expansion of Istanbul, the value of *gecekondu* areas on the periphery considerably increased which lead to a struggle of land sharing. As a result, a great conflict of interests came out among different urban groups. Every societal group struggled to get its own share in a different way depending on its own conditions. In this sense, upper class groups used their economic power while middle class groups tried legal actions. As for the population of *gecekondu*, they took place in this struggle using brute force like mafia. On this point, see Tansı Şenyapılı, "Cumhuriyet'in 75. Yılı,

brought forth increasing speculative rent gains, and, in this way, for the person who has just come to the city to be owner of a *gecekondu* has become extremely difficult.[215] In this sense, the *gecekondu* settlements of the 1950s which offered "a flexible solution" to the new rural migrants have turned into "an area where only those who have a certain amount of money can take place."[216] Therefore, the person who comes with big hopes for a new life encounters great obstacles in the first step of her/his arrival to Istanbul. Different from the fifties, the severe struggle in the city this time has manifested itself for the newcomers from the beginning. Yet, this does not mean that the city lost its magic in the eyes of rural people. Istanbul was still a place to where a great many people flow from all parts of the country to find a job and make a new life.[217] The distinction this time is that there is not any illusion and spirit that make forget the negative and dark side of the city. Anyone who attempts to live in Istanbul now is aware of the fact that there is a need to make great effort to survive in the city. That is to say, Istanbul has shown its hidden face, and, in this way, the golden city of the fifties has been replaced by an arena of struggle in the period between 1970 and 1990.

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Gecekondunun 50. Yılı" in *75 Yılda Değişen Kent ve Mimarlık* ed. by Yıldız Sey (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yayınları, 1998): p. 311

[215] The most apparent evidence of this process is the significant change that emerges in the usage of *gecekondu* buildings. From the beginning of the seventies, the fact of tenancy has noticeably spread in *gecekondu* areas. Since to build a *gecekondu* has got so expensive in these years, the newcomers can only become owner of the *gecekondu* after living in a rent for about seven years. However, the migrants of the fifties were able to make their own *gecekondu* buildings in any space they occupied within the city. Anyhow, *gecekondu* buildings to be rented in the 1970s and the 1980s belong to the second generation migrants who come to the city after 1950. For account of changes in *gecekondu* areas, see Mustafa Sönmez, op. cit. , pp. 95-96

[216] Oğuz Işık, op. cit , p. 44

[217] At this point, there is need to consider the significant change in the expectations and hopes of the newcomers in historical process. While the rural person comes to the city with the aim of being a millioner in the 1950s and the 1960s, the reason for coming to the city in the 1970s and 1980s is mostly to find a job and to live in relatively better conditions to that of rural life.

### 3.3.4 The Decade of the Nineties:

In the nineties, Turkey witnessed turbulent growth under the influence of globalization from the previous decade. Following the eighties, the economic liberalization continued in this decade through economic policies based on "self-regulating market system" and "open oriented market."[218] As a result of full integration with the world financial system, Turkey became open to the fluctuations in capital movements as well as in foreign economic relations. What this brought forth was constant instability in the national economy, resulting in financial crises and upheavals in society.[219]

Parallel to the process of economic liberalization, from the mid eighties onwards, Turkey started to experience a growing identity awareness and identity politics which manifested itself mainly in political and violent unrest in the south east of the country. As a result of state repression and an armed conflict, a great number of the population had to leave their villages and move to the big cities of Western Anatolia. As the country's largest economic pool, Istanbul was unquestionably the city receiving the largest immigration. "With more than one million Kurdish inhabitants," it became "by far the largest Kurdish city."[220] What is at issue here is a noticeable change in the general character of migrants' population in Istanbul. It is a plain fact that the influx of immigrants has been one of the dominant elements in the city of Istanbul since the years of the fifties. Yet, the migrants who came to the city from south-eastern Turkey differ from the earlier generations by the fact that they were forced to leave their homes. In Keyder's

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[218] Korkut Boratav, op. cit. , p. 209

[219] In the nineties, Turkish economy was shaken by four crises. While one of these was large scale crisis, the other three, on the other hand, were small scale crises. Ibid. , p. 180

[220] Çağlar Keyder, "The Turkish Bell Jar" in *New Left Review*, Number 28, July-August 2004 in http://www.newleftreview.net/NLR26204.shtml

words, “recent immigrants to Istanbul have been poor peasants, driven out of their villages, but with little desire to go back.”[221]

Certainly, owing to economic crises and massive forced migration, urban dynamics changed in a significant level and the city faced serious problems. While a huge growth emerged in the unemployment rate, settlement, on the other hand, became a serious question in response to the rising population. Moreover, the growing inequality in income distribution produced great poverty within the city and led to a widening of the gulf between the rich and the poor. At this point, there is need to make some remarks on the poverty Istanbul experienced in this stage. Different from earlier periods, in the nineties, poverty was closely correlated with crime, violence and conflict due to the desperate conditions of the poor, particularly of the new arrivals coming to the city. Before the mid-eighties, poverty was not yet perceived as “a massive threat,” whereas now, “to be in need turned into resentment, and pain into crime.”[222] Hence, urban environment turned into a place of chaos and disorder filled up great dangers and risks; and therefore, “for a great many people, living in Istanbul has become a question of surviving in it.”[223]

As a result of dramatic changes in the conditions of urban life, the nineties witnessed the rise of a thoroughly new game in the city of Istanbul. Particularly, the decrease in the role of the government in the eighties by the privatization model, the living order of the city which was based on certain rules left its place a more ambiguous one of which its rules and results can change depending on the power of the actors.[224] For Işık and Pınarcıoğlu, this was the new game in the city

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[221] Çaglar Keyder, op. cit. , July-August 2004.

[222] Nurdan Gürbilek, *Kötü Çocuk Türk* (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2001): p. 47

[223] Kevin Robin and Asu Aksoy, op. cit. , p. 17

which was more ruthless though it was able to offer higher opportunities to its actors.[225] Doubtless, the transformation of urban life into a cruel game required great strategies and tactics from the inhabitants of the city. Parallel to the new rules of the city, the ways of struggle for being able to live in Istanbul became more aggressive and heartless.[226] So to speak, the person living in Istanbul became ready to do everything for either surviving in the city or getting the maximum benefit from the opportunities of urban life.

Speaking in general terms, it seems that there are two main strategies for surviving in the city of Istanbul depending on the socio-economic class position. In the first place, the most apparent feature of the nineties in terms of newly emerging middle and upper-middle class is the tendency of moving away from the city center. In order to handle dirty, noisy and increasingly dangerous urban life, middle class groups started to live in more isolated and secure locations among those like themselves decreasing the possibility of encountering those unlike themselves to a minimum. Hence, the years of the nineties witnessed the rise of good standard housing developments consisting of mostly high rise apartment blocks in the surrounding vicinity of Istanbul. Moreover, concomitantly with these settlements most of which were organized as cooperatives, there appeared villas and luxury apartments out of the city for a very small number of the urban population that could afford them. With its private security and surveillance system, shopping facilities, entertainment, parks, sport facilities and the like, these new peripheral areas provided not only accommodation but beyond this they promoted "a new way of life."[227] Thus, by

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[224] Oğuz Işık, M. Melih Pınarcıoğlu, *Nöbetleşe Yoksulluk: Sultanbeyli Örneği* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2001): p.126

[225] Ibid. , pp. 126-127

[226] Ibid.

the creation of "socially homogenous areas", the decade of the nineties experienced "the spatial segregation which was unprecedented in Istanbul."[228]

The second surviving strategy in the city of Istanbul is for the poor, even perhaps more specifically for the migrants. Certainly, the urban poor are not a homogenous group; disparities between levels of poverty regarding ethnic origin, religious belief, gender and the like produce very different survival patterns. Particularly, from the mid-eighties onwards, there has been a significant differentiation among the urban poor in Turkey. However, the attempt here is not to examine and understand the diversity dynamics of the urban poor. Rather, I will try to give a general profile of the urban poor in the city of Istanbul and their surviving strategies which became visible in the decade of the nineties.

Similar to the attempt of the middle class to move away from the city-center and create "self-sufficient and fortified territories," the poor developed their own residential areas on the edges of the city of Istanbul which can be characterized by "a communitarian and self-enclosed ethos."[229] Therefore, parallel to the rise of apartment blocks and villas, there appeared enormous *gecekondu* districts on the periphery most of which were made up of illegal housing. "With increasing speculative rent gains as well as migrationary pressures," say Robins and Aksoy, "what started as illegal house-building in the 1970s turned into illegal districts and, finally, by the late 1980s, into illegal cities."[230] For a big majority of the urban poor, these *gecekondu* settlements served as essential bases for surviving in the city of Istanbul. Particularly, they took a great part in the adapting process of

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[227] Kevin Robins and Asu Aksoy, op. cit. , p. 17

[228] Çağlar Keyder and Ayşe Öncü, op. cit. , p. 30

[229] Kevin Robins and Asu Aksoy, op. cit. , p. 21

[230] Ibid. , p. 19

newcomers to the new unfamiliar life of the big city. A person who just arrived in the city, naturally, preferred living in these areas where they could continue her/his old living practices and also take the advantage of the established network of earlier generations of migrants. The important point here is that the *gecekondu* districts provide migrants the chance to take place in the city of Istanbul and gradually make better their living conditions. Even though there are losers and desperate ones to a considerable degree in these areas, a large number of people living here have the capacity of changing their situation in the city.[231] Thanks to townsmenship and the existence of a mutual system of informal relations the incoming migrants found a way to settle in Istanbul. Through chain-migration they reached the city and with the help of family, kin and village mates they found shelter and a job engaging mainly in the informal economy.

However, the forced migrants arriving at Istanbul in the nineties had an only limited chance to use such established networks. For the most part, they could not benefit from the supportive social relations among migrants so that they took place neither in the formal nor in the informal sector. Therefore, during the years of the nineties, there appeared another group in the city of Istanbul consisting of people who were left outside the existing order being deprived of the ability and chance to struggle in the city. Opposed to the poor of the shanty towns on the periphery of the city, this group, which mostly live in the city-center and its surroundings, is so desperate and lacking "the capacity of transformation."[232] In other words, being disconnected from the rest of the city, they lost the hope to change their lives and make their situation better in the city. So for that reason, this group, that is, the poor of the inner city Istanbul became more likely to be involved in crime and violence. This is one of the most prevalent aspects of the

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[231] Oğuz Işık, Melih Pınarcıoğlu, op. cit. , p. 53

[232] Ibid.

current urban experience appearing in Istanbul concerning “the poor.” And in this sense those who have opportunity and resources, sought safety in flight from the city-center and creating their own territories. Thus, the city of Istanbul in the nineties turned into a place of poverty, danger and fear.

## CHAPTER IV

## CINEMA AS A MYTHICAL APPARATUS OF MODERNITY

*Where is the cinema? It is all around you outside, all over the city, that marvelous, continuous performance of films and scenarios.*[233]

If the city is organized as a new social form of modern epoch, cinema is the most appropriate cultural form of this age that can capture and reveal transience and flows characteristic of the city. Since the development of cities and the rise of cinema occurred approximately at the same time, there exists a strong interrelation between the city and cinema. From the end of the nineteenth century to the present, "the fortunes of cinema and the city have been inextricably linked at a number of levels."[234] In parallel to the spatial diversity of the city and its changing social dynamics, cinema appeared as an elaborative perceptive vehicle that enables to conceptualize the complicated organization of the city scope. It provided a specific way of seeing for the spatial practice of specific sites reflecting the gaze of the wanderer through the city. Following Benjamin, Steve Pile explains this concurrent

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[233] Jean Baudrillard, *America* (London: Verso, 1988): p. 56

[234] Mark Shiel, "Cinema and the City History and Theory" in *Cinema and the City: Film and Urban Societies in a Global Context* ed. By Mark Shiel and Tony Fitzmaurice (Oxford, UK; Malden, Mass: Blackwell Publishers, 2001): p. 1

rise of the city and film technology as "the experience of modernity" which "has something to do with vast number of things that are going on in cities –the perpetual, and ever-faster, circulation of things: 'things' such as people, goods, money, ideas. With all this movement, the city becomes dreamlike."[235] That is to say, cinema came out as a response to the requirement for interpretation and representation of radical changes in spatial and temporal relations experienced in society.

Certainly, the cinematic space is not simply a perspectival expression or representation of real lived space; but, beyond this, cinema has produced a new and completely different way of seeing and being. It has (re)constructed and (re)framed the spatial dynamics and architectural forms of the city with its own narrative form through lighting, cinematography and editing. So, there has emerged a new way of encountering reality for the individual. In her book *The Crowded Dance of Modern Life*, Virginia Woolf described this unique experience as it is almost impossible to express in words:

> …, but shall we call it (our vocabulary is miserably insufficient) more real, or real with a different reality from which we perceive in daily life? We behold them as they are when we are not there. We see life as it is when we have no part in it. As we gaze we seem to be removed from the pettiness of actual existence.[236]

The significance of the constructed reality of film lies in its potential to permit the dangers, fears, desires and appeals, so to speak, the sensations and stimulus of modern city experience. In other words, by (re)producing the virtual space in its several modes, cinema has created an illusionary world for the cinemagoer which is

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[235] Steve Pile, "The Problem of London, or how to explore the moods of the city" in *Cinema and the City: Film and Urban Societies in a Global Context* ed. by Mark Shiel and Tony Fitzmurice (Oxford, UK; Malden, Mass: Blackwell Publishers, 2001): p. 204

[236] Virginia Woolf, *The Crowded Dance of Modern Life, Selected Essays: Volume Two* ed. with an introduction and notes by Rachel Bowlby (London: Penguin Books, 1993): p. 55

fascinating and terrifying at the same time. Hence, the urban landscape appearing on the screen has conveyed to the viewer the impression of journeying into a bizarre world of fantasies, hallucinations, and dreams; and, in such an oneiric field, as French director Abel Gance aptly says, "all legends, all mythologies, and all myths, all the founders of religions, indeed, all religions, … await their celluloid resurrection, and the heroes are pressing at the gates."[237]

### 4.1 The Mythical Construction of the City in Cinema:

Just as the city presented a unique way of living along with new spatial and temporal relations cinema produced cumulative and radical shifts in human perception and experience of the visual world in terms of both space and time. Since the city space does not merely consist of physical components and architectural forms, but beyond this, also exists as a sort of idea, experience and illustration, it has been represented in different cultural forms and aesthetic models of which most prominent are certainly the novel and, after that, the cinema. Despite the growth of the novel through nineteenth century, between the two world wars, "the cinema took over from the novel as the principal artistic mirror of the big city and its life."[238] With its exclusive techniques and capabilities, cinema offered a thoroughly new stage of expression different from all existing representational forms which had been created until that time. Probably, when Woolf says that the city is "a scene waiting a new art to be transfixed" she meant (and also expected) such means of expression.[239] So

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[237] Abel Gance, "Le Temps de I'image est venu" in L'art Cinematographique , Vol: 2 (Paris: 1927) : pp. 94-96 quoted in Walter Benjamin "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility" in *Selected Writings Vol: 4 (1938-1940)* trans. by Edmund Jephcott and Others, ed. by Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England: 2003): p. 255

[238] Anthony Sutcliffe, "The Metropolis in Cinema" in *Metropolis 1890-1940* ed. by Anthony Sutcliffe (Mansell, London: An Alexandrine Press Book, 1984): p. 147

accordingly, the movie camera has become the perfect medium and the most appropriate art form that can embody the living space of the city in its all multifarious aspects and also simultaneously display the sensory and shock effects of modern urban experience. At this point, what comes to mind is naturally the figure of the *flâneur* that Baudelaire, and then Benjamin used in order to describe the complex experience of the city dweller. Indeed, it would not be exaggerated to say the movie camera, on one level, takes the point of view of the person strolling on the streets, boulevards, and margins of the city space. In Benjamin's unfinished work *Passagen-Werk*, this association between the *flânerie* and camera as the spatial apparatus is strongly observed:

> Could one not shoot a passionate film of the city plan of Paris? Of the development of its different forms [*Gestalten*] in temporal succession? Of the condensation of a century-long movement of streets, boulevards, passages, squares, in the space of half an hour? And what else does the flâneur do?[240]

In this sense, for Benjamin (and also most of his coevals), cinema is the potential medium for apprehending and evoking the visible environment of the city person. By picturing the way we live, and even perhaps more importantly, the way we imagine the city, cinema serves as technical and aesthetic mediation of modern urban experience.

However, if cinema is a perfect tool for the city's modernity, what characteristic makes it distinctive and unique? What is the new order and logic that makes it possible to represent the experience of fragmentation, temporality, and mobility that characterize the contemporary urban life? Certainly, cinema as a complex medium

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[239] Virginia Woolf, op. cit. , p. 58

[240] Walter Benjamin, *Passagen-Werk* trans. by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin; prepared on the basis of the German volume ed. by Rolf Tiedemann (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999)

has consisted of multiple techniques and modifications. With close up, time lapse, slow motion, panning, zooming and the like, cinema has achieved expressing the visual and aural atmosphere of the city. However, above all, the element that gives cinema such power and potential is "montage." Specifically, the uniqueness of cinema lies in its ability for reorganizing the spatio-temporal experience and reality. By moving between places and also simultaneously within different time intervals, cinema has "freed its spectators from the bindings of material space but it could also its viewers free the binds of time." [241] In that sense, it is no accident that Benjamin saw the urban living space of the nineteenth century as "a prison world" before the invention of cinema:

> Our bars and city streets, our offices and furnished rooms, our railroad stations and our factories seemed to close relentlessly around us. Then came film and exploded this prison-world with the dynamite of the split second, so that now we can set off calmly on journeys of adventure among its far-flung debris.[242]

Accordingly, through an imaginary construction of the city environment, cinema has assured the audience an immense field of action. It has taken the audience into "the labyrinth, exposed them to the dangers, the fears, the eroticism of the streets."[243] What is really at issue here is the fact that cinema is not only something visual to look at, but beyond that it is a process of encounter and engagement with city scene. With moving images, colors, sounds of the cinematic space, the audience has been able to confront for the first time with visible environment in its mobility and temporality. While painting and then photograph remained incompetent, only the film camera has managed the (re)construction of the virtual atmosphere of the

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[241] Anne Friedberg, "Urban Mobility and Cinematic Visuality: the screens of Los Angeles –Endless Cinema or Private Telematics" in *Journal of Visual Culture*, August 2002; Vol 1(2), p. 188

[242] Walter Benjamin, op. cit. , 2003, p. 265

[243] Kevin Robins, *Into the Image: Culture and Politics in the Field of Vision* (London: Routledge, 1996): p. 131

city going beyond the perspectival representation of space. It is a plain fact that this virtual presence provided by cinema on a flat surface is "presence" without presence; because, as Fleisch argues, "film (re)produces a virtual space marked by proximity without presence."[244] And, unquestionably, such space presents a different mode of perception and experience, apart from the optical quality of camera. The viewer looking at screen faces with a reality that is totally outside of her/himself; yet, nevertheless, what s/he sees, though from a distance, gives the impression of being part of it, being there. In other words, through the narrative form of cinema, the viewer is able to live the dynamisms and complexities of the constructed space on the screen, even without touching it. This "sensorial immediacy", lived through cinematic space has detached cinema from the order of the perspectival representation; and, in this way, has created the experience of fascination and excitement.[245] It is that which makes cinema a unique and even magical instrument of modernity.

At this point, however, there is need to consider the construction of the cinematic space and its overwhelming experience in terms of collectivity. As it is well known, cinema is a simultaneous collective experience of seeing shared by the viewers assembled in the film theater. In his article "Benjamin, Cinema, and Experience," Miriam Hansen describes the cinema activity as "a process which involves translating individual experience into a collective form."[246] Such practice, yet, consists in a double process which moves back and forth between physical space of

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[244] W. Fleisch (1987), quoted in *The Cinematic City* ed. by David B. Clarke (London & New York, 1997): p. 9

[245] David B. Clarke, op. cit., p. 8. For further information, see Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema* trans. by Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Haberjam (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota: c 1986 - c 1989).

[246] Miriam Hansen, "Benjamin, Cinema and Experience: The Blue Flower in the Land of Technology" in *New German Critique*, No.40, Special Issue on Weimar Film Theory (Winter 1987), p. 221

the lived experience and perpetual space. While in the former case "collective innervation" occurs at the level of reception of the audiences spectating collective in front of the screen and sharing their reactions and emotions, the latter, on the other hand, serves as a field for the collective organization of apperception and imagination through symbols and images.[247] Despite the fact that both are essential for the cinematic experience and play a great part in the creation of its sensory and shock effect, here in this section, mainly the second issue, i.e., the collective organization of imagination would be taken into account, for that is directly related to the main interest of the thesis, so to say, myths and narratives created within urban culture.

As it has been mentioned earlier, the city is not merely a physical object made up of various architectural forms, but beyond this it occupies an immense conceptual space, that is, a space of symbols, images, codes, and meanings. It exists in different representational forms and distinctive ways of producing meaning; and, therefore ingrains in the collective memory of society. Hence cinema could fulfill a cognitive task at this point since "the filmic city has figured prominently in the dream work of urban collective life." [248] In fact, cinema has functioned as a mediating structure between real life and the world of imaginary invested with dreams, affects, desires and the like. It has transformed our sense of the real world (of urban environment) by symbolizing and interpreting urban space in different forms, contexts and moods. Certainly, such process cannot be thought merely at the level of individual experience; rather, what the cinematic medium has done is precisely to provide a means for the creation of the collective imagination of the city. By permitting "the *mise-en-scéne* of the fears and anxieties, the fantasies and desires, of the group," it

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[247] Miriam Hansen, "Room-for-Play: Benjamin's Gamble with Cinema" in *October*, Summer 2004, Issue 109, pp. 3-46

[248] Kevin Robins, op. cit. , p. 136

has set up particular urban images and representations which become endowed with "collective meaning."[249] That is, in a sense, how cinema (re)produces "the myths and narratives that accumulate within urban culture, giving scope to our collective emotions."[250]

### 4.2 The Mythical Journey of Istanbul in Turkish Cinema:

The history of Turkish cinema is in a sense the history of Istanbul. Turkish cinema opened its eyes to the world in Istanbul; it lived its early stages and even its whole life in this city.[251] Since the modernization of Istanbul and the rise of cinema occurred approximately at the same time, there existed strong interrelation between the city and this new medium.[252] The changes in Istanbul were directly reflected on films just as the economic and social changes in the country have first taken place Istanbul. In this way, cinema has served as a mirror for the city from very early years up to the present.

Istanbul has always been the predominant city figure in Turkish cinema. It does not matter what type of film, Istanbul has mostly served as the main paradigm for the city space. Hence, Istanbul has come onto the scene in various forms and contents throughout the history of Turkish cinema, depending on economic and social dynamics of society. The first appearing on the screen occurred in 1914 in the

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[249] Kevin Robins, op. cit. , p. 136

[250] Ibid.

[251] Şükran Esen, "Türk Sinemasında Üç Dönem, Üç Yönetmen ve Istanbul" in *Yeni İnsan Yeni Sinema*, Number 15, Spring-Summer, 2004, p. 65

[252] Similar to other big cities in the world, the first cinematic experience of Istanbul happened in 1896 just one year after the first film screening in Paris. In this way, Istanbul met with cinema at the threshold of the nineteenth century when the first shoots of modernization were put forth in the city. For this reason, this time period is important for cinema as well as for the city itself. For the relation between Istanbul and cinema, see Zeynep Tül Akbal Süalp, *Zaman Mekan: Kuram ve Sinema* (Istanbul: Bağlam Yayıncılık, 2004): pp. 184-187

documentary film "The Demolition of the Russian Monument at St. Stephen" (*Ayastefanos'taki Rus Abidesinin Yıkılışı*) by Fuat Uzkınay.[253] During the years of First World War, the city rather took place in a series of short films. At the end of the decade, Istanbul started to be seen in featured films by Ahmet Fehim's films of "Governess" (*Mürebbiye*, 1919) and "Binnaz" (1919). These were the first steps of Istanbul's journey in Turkish cinema. However, in the films of the beginning period, there was nothing really much about the cityscape of Istanbul except a few scenes which were shot at the Topkapı Palace and Rumelihisarı Rampart.[254] They were even shown as "mysterious, uncertain, and yet glorious buildings" rather than representative places of Istanbul.[255] Hence, Istanbul did not exist as cityspace on the screen until almost Republican years. The only film that showed Istanbul in a different manner before the foundation of Republic was "A Love Tragedy in Istanbul" (*Istanbul'da Bir Facia-i Aşk*) shot by Muhsin Ertuğrul in 1922. In this film, the city of Istanbul appeared on the screen with its everyday life; and, in this way, Istanbul manifested its face to cinemagoers for the first time.[256] This is, in a sense, the beginning point of Istanbul's cinematic adventure. Henceforth, in every historical period, the city of Istanbul would come onto the scene in different faces; and, in this way, it would gain new meanings depending on the changes in both Turkish cinema and the city itself. This journey of Istanbul on the screen might be examined in four episodes considering the transformation of the city historically: 1. 1923-1950: The first period of Turkish cinema and the beginning of city myth 2.

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[253] This documentary work of Uzkınay is the first film in Turkish cinema. In this sense, it would be appropriate to be conceived as the first film in which Istanbul came onto the scene. See Nijat Özön, *Karagözden Sinemaya: Türk Sineması ve Sorunları* (Ankara: Kitle Yayıncılık, 1995): p. 19

[254] Zarife Öztürk, "1923-1950 Yılları Arasında Türk Sineması ve İstanbul" in *Türk Film Araştırmalarında Yeni Yönelimler-3* ed. by Deniz Bayrakdar (İstanbul: Bağlam Yayınları, 2003): p.50

[255] Ibid. , p. 50

[256] Elif Genç, "Değişen Hayalinde Değişen İstanbul: Aynaya Yansıyanlar" in *İstanbul*, Number 98, July 96, p. 94

1950-1970: The rise of city-myth: Istanbul as the city made out of gold 3. 1970-1990: The hidden face of city-myth: From a golden city to an arena of struggle 4. The Decade of 1990: The destruction of city-myth: Istanbul as the city with a dark urban imaginary and the disappearance of the city from the screen.

### 4.1.1 1923-1950:

When the Republic of Turkey was founded, Turkish cinema had already an eight-year history with a solid base of documentaries, several short films, and a certain number of featured films. Under those conditions, Turkish cinema entered a new era which was going to last until the early years of 1950.[257] In most part of this period, Turkish cinema was under the strong influence of theater artists, particularly of Muhsin Ertuğrul. As the leading figure of Turkish cinema until 1939, he should many films revealing historical sites and natural beauties of Istanbul. With the shots of the shores of Boshporus and the view of Rumelihisari Castle in this period, Istanbul served a beautiful scenery for Turkish films. Nevertheless, there existed some films that showed different regions of Istanbul such as Moda, Şişli, and Bebek, these being mostly rich and elite parts of the city.

At the beginning of the thirties, Muhsin Ertuğrul made the first sound film, "The Streets of Istanbul" (*İstanbul Sokakları*, 1931), followed by "The Smugglers" (*Kaçakçılar*, 1932). These two films showed Istanbul in a slightly different way by the attempt of using city spaces thematically. Peculiarly, the film "The Smugglers" was worth considering by the scenes of car pursuit on the streets of Istanbul. However, in none of these films, Istanbul did take place as three part of the theme;

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[257] In fact, the sources on Turkish cinema consider this long period in two parts; one is the period of theater artists (1923-1939) and the other is the transition period (1939-1950). The main criterion for this historical periodization is that the dominance of theater artists was shaken by the rise of new filmmakers who rather studied in cinema. However, in this thesis, the two parts are considered as one section since there was not any difference between two time periods in terms of Istanbul's appearance on white screen.

rather, the city remained as the background of complicated events and needless details.[258] Moreover, during these years, he directed an epic of the wave of Independence on the screen, "A Nation Awakens" (*Bir Millet Uyanıyor*), which is considered to be the most successful work of Ertuğrul and also of the Turkish cinema in that period.[259] With the scenes of sailboats and big ships passing from Bosphorus, Istanbul in this film came into view as the city which was worthy of fighting a war.[260] Nevertheless, in the film, the city of Istanbul and its life patterns during war years were not in sight for the armistice and war took place in background of a strong love affair.[261]

Following the domination of theater artists in Turkish cinema which lasted until 1939, there arose new filmmakers who studied in the medium of cinema and related disciplines abroad though Ertuğrul continued making film until the fifties. In this period, rather conceived as a transition, there was not a big change in the image of Istanbul on the screen. Following the works of Ertuğrul, the films produced in these years showed Istanbul in the same manner using particular city scenes such as Bosphorus surrounded with trees and wealthy residences on the shore. As for the general character of the city life, Istanbul came into view in these films as a modern, livable and orderly city where everything appeared working properly.[262] With its running tramways, boats and automobiles, as well as with its inhabitants in Western fashion clothes and listening Western music, Istanbul was giving the impression of a European city.[263] In short, in the films of this period, shown like any

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[258] Tahir Abacı, "Siyah-Beyaz İstanbul" in *Kentte Sinema, Sinemada Kent* ed. by Nurçay Türkoğlu, Mehmet Öztürk, and Göksel Aymaz (İstanbul: Yenihayat Yayınları, 2004): p. 216

[259] Alim Şerif Onaran, *Türk Sineması-I* (Ankara: Kitle Yayınları, 1999[1994]): pp. 27-28

[260] Zarife Öztürk, op. cit. , p. 56

[261] Alim Şerif Onaran, op. cit. , p. 28

[262] Zarife Öztürk, op. cit. , p. 56

other big modern city of Europe such as Paris and Rome and as the reflection of Westernization movement taking movement in Turkish society. Certainly, this was not the real Istanbul, but rather the city of Istanbul which was wanted to be seen. It was giving the first signals of the mythical city image that was going to get widespread in the fifties.

### 4.1.2 1950-1970:

This decade signified a turning point for the development of Turkish cinema, following great changes in economic and political realms. In this period, Turkish cinema made a great leap forward breaking free from the influence of theater artists, and there arose a new generation of directors who attempted to make films employing cinematic language. Without doubt, the transformation of cinema in such way gave rise to different image of how Istanbul should appear on the screen. In this sense, Lütfi Akad's film "In the Name of Law" (*Kanun Namına*, 1952) was a new milestone for the cinematic presentation of Istanbul as well as for Turkish cinema.[264] The plot of the film was based on a true crime incident that took place in Istanbul. The film told the story of the small people living in difficult conditions of the city and successfully displayed the natural and lively character of Istanbul, especially in the sequence of a long and relentless pursuit of the chief character by the police.[265] Therefore, for the first time, Istanbul was presented on cinema as the part of the theme. Despite this effective use of city image at the beginning of the

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[263] Zarife Öztürk, op. cit. , p. 56

[264] Kurtuluş Kayalı, *Yönetmenler Çerçevesinde Türk Sineması Üzerine Bir Yorum Denemesi* (Ankara: Ayyıldız yayınları, 1994): p. 15

[265] Agah Özgüç, "Film Karelerinde Yaşayan Eski İstanbul" in *Cumhuriyet Dergi*, Number 414, 27 February 1994, p. 17

fifties, the representation of Istanbul as a pulsating urban space rather than as a beautiful showcase of landscape had to await the sixties.[266]

The decade of the 1950s was the most sparkling period for the city of Istanbul in its journey in Turkish cinematic medium. With melodramas and romantic comedies telling the story of people living in the city of Istanbul, "this period was not Turkish cinema, but it was entirely Istanbul's cinema."[267] As the only city image dominating on the screen, Istanbul played a determining role in the films of the period both conceptually and visually. The important thing here is that, in these films Istanbul came into view through a Western eye which looks at the city from the inside.[268] In this sense, the audience saw the story of people living in the city according to modern life patterns characterized by very high life standards. With its good-looking men and light skinned women with blonde hair, as well as, its glorious houses always with the view of Bosphorus, and, additionally lively night clubs, the melodramatic films of the fifties presented Istanbul in an appealing atmosphere. Certainly, the beautiful city sceneries of Istanbul in black and white had a great role in the making of the fabulous city image on the screen. As a result of these black and white films which "combine film aesthetic with city aesthetic", Istanbul became a magical city in which dreams were supposed to become true, particularly for those who live in rural areas of the country.[269] This is nothing but the (re)creation of the city myth of Istanbul in Turkish cinema. As Mehmet Ozturk aptly puts, the films of the fifties recreated "the mythos of Istanbul" by describing "a heavenly Istanbul."[270]

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[266] Zeynep Tül Akbal, "İstanbul'un Sinema Macerası" in *İstanbul*, Number 10, July 94, p. 52

[267] İbrahim Altınsay, "Sinemanın Orta Yeri İstanbul'du" in *İstanbul*, Number 18, July 96, p. 73

[268] Ibid. , pp. 73-74. See also Günay Akbulut, "İstanbul'un Modernleşmesi ve Sinema" in *Varlık*, Number 1153, October 2003, p. 16

[269] İbrahim Altınsay, op. cit. , p. 74

Although the mythical city image of Istanbul continued throughout this period, sixties rather witnessed the new city views on the screen pointing to substantial changes in Turkish cinema. In these years, for the first time, there existed films which attempted to reflect social issues under the influence of the favoruble atmosphere in society since the 1961 Constitution.[271] While the problems of rural areas started to take place on the screen in such films as "The Revenge of the Snakes" (*Yılanların Öcü*, 1962) and "Dry Summer" (*Susuz Yaz*, 1963), the city, on the other hand, came into view with different faces revealing the dynamics of modern urban living. In this sense, the films "Beyond the Nights" (*Gecelerin Ötesi*, 1960), "Those Awakening in Darkness" (*Karanlıkta Uyananlar*, 1964), and "Unending Road" (*Bitmeyen Yol*, 1965) reflected the changing conditions of urban life in Istanbul and its difficulties in different scenes, story lines and character portrayals.[272] As a result of the appearance of such new spatial and social characteristics on cinema, the fabulous Istanbul stories of the fifties had lost their privileged position even though they continued to be produced in the form of salon comedies. The important thing here is that Istanbul was how presented not only through a Western eye looking at the city from the inside but also from the view of outsider. As a reflection of the massive migration from rural areas to big cities in the fifties, Istanbul in this period came onto scene through the eye of the newcomer for the first time. Hence, the films starting with the view of the Galata Bridge gradually left their place to the films opening scenes of which was Haydarpasa Station as the symbol of the first arrival in the big city.[273] The first example of the

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[270] Mehmet Öztürk, "Türk Sinemasında Gecekondular"in *European Journal of Turkish Studies*, Thematic Issue No 1, Gecekondu, URL: http:// www.ejts.org/document94.html, p. 5

[271] Nijat Özön, op. cit. , p. 32

[272] For the general view of the films, see Agah Özgüç, *100 Filmde Başlangıcından Günümüze Türk Sineması* (Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1993).

[273] The first appearance of Haydarpaşa Station on the screen occurred in the film *Victim of Lust* which was produced by Muhsin Ertuğrul in 1940. However, this place became a symbol of internal migration in the sixties. See Agah Özgüç, op.cit, 1994, p. 16

films revealing the issue of migration in the history of Turkish cinema was Halit Refiğ's "Migrating Birds" (*Gurbet Kuşları*, 1964) which told the story of a family coming from Maraş to Istanbul with dreams getting rich.[274] In the film which reflected the tensions of the modern and the traditional, Istanbul was shown in a twofold character as the city in the process of modernization. In this sense, the traditional wooden houses of Istanbul appeared alongside new concrete high buildings. As for the *gecekondu* settlements, they did not yet form the central theme of the city; instead, in the film, these areas were seen once from a distant view.[275] Moreover, the film "Migrating Birds" was worth considering in the sense that it brought onto the scene the transformation of the city experience with the participation of new actors in city life. At this point, the scenes at the beginning of the film which showed the first meeting of the newcomers with Istanbul were very meaningful. After the scene at Haydarpasa Station, they were seen in a boat looking at the city with admiring glances, in particular the European side, and, then, they say: "We will be like a shah in this city! Ahh, Istanbul, the golden city!" What this means is that, in the film, Istanbul was the place to be conquered by these people who just came to the city. However, in a short time, they were about to see in the face of the same city. As they are unfamiliar to new environment and its living patterns, the characters in the film encountered great difficulties and obstacles. Therefore, Istanbul appeared on the screen as an arena of struggle as well as an

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[274] Although *Migrating Birds* was the first film which took the issue of migration as its main theme, the *gecekondu* settlements in Istanbul first appeared in Atıf Yılmaz's film *Guilty One* (1959). See Faruk Kalkan, *Sinema Toplumbilimi: Türk Sineması Üzerine Bir Deneme* (İzmir: Ajans Tümer, 1993[1988]): p. 49

[275] In point of fact, the *gecekondu* settlements in Istanbul started to appear in the late forties, and they overspread all over the city in the sixties. Yet, the reflection of this transformation did not take place in a real sense almost until the end of sixties. This is rather connected with the developmental progress of cinema in Turkey. For a detailed analysis of the interrelation between Turkish cinema and social change, see Gülseren Güçhan, *Toplumsal Değişme ve Türk Sineması* (Ankara: İmge Yayınları, 1992).

attractive place with its employment opportunities and facilities of entertainment and consumption.[276]

This appealing atmosphere of Istanbul took place in most films of the sixties. Although the film characters faced with great dangers and risks in the city and even they forced to go back to their home at the end of the film; Istanbul was presented as a dreamscape where the people went, with high hopes and expectations. The most apparent example of this tendency was Atıf Yılmaz's film "Oh Beautiful Istanbul" (*Ahh Güzel İstanbul*, 1967) which was based on the story of a poor young girl coming from a shantytown of Izmir to the city of Istanbul to be an artist. After experiencing different facets of city life, she came together with the man she was in love at the end of the film. In the final scene, they were shown together hand in hand looking at Istanbul from a boat; and, then, the man told: "Look at this beauty. There is not such beauty in any other country in this world." This sentence does imply not only the feeling of astonishment and wonder, but also the expectancy and belief for life. Anyhow, this hopeful view was clearly seen in the ending dialogue of the film. When the young girl asked: "What are we going to do, now?" the man's answer was very meaningful: "I don't know. Yet, we are living; we are two people and love each other. Don't be afraid, there are always good things to be believed in this world." What this means is that Istanbul was still the source of possible for the characters in the film despite all the difficulties and frustrations it embodied however while constructing the city as a mythical space remains intact, both the subject for whom it is addressed and the meaning of the space itself was being reorganized. From now on, the city myth of Istanbul was created not only through the subject of those already living in the city but also through the eyes of the

[276] Gülseren Güçhan, op. cit. , p. 105

newcomer, as one of the main figures of the seventies.[277] Hence, the creation of the city-myth continued in Turkish cinema, taking new forms parallelling the changes in social and spatial characters of Istanbul.

### 4.1.3 1970-1990:

Turkish cinema in this period witnessed the rise of new and different intellectual tendencies, while it came under the full influence of commercial cinema. To start with, in these years and particularly after the 1975, Turkish cinema faced great crises owing to first to the expansion of television, and then of video. Moreover, the promising atmosphere of the 1961 Constitution had come to a close. Instead, there arose the political clashes and tensions in society which originated from the economic ruptures. What this brought forth was, certainly the great decrease in the number of cinemagoers and, consequently of film production.[278] The solution of Turkish cinema in order to overcome this depression was to produce sex films and, so called, 'arabesque' films in following decade, which would generate bigger problems in the course of time.[279] While the commercial cinema continued throughout the period, those films which attempted to have social content and artistic value were face to face with the usual obstacle of censorship and control. Despite this period of crisis, there appeared new young filmmakers such as Yılmaz

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[277] At this point, there is need to remember that salon comedies continued to be produced until the end of the sixties though migration films already appeared in Turkish cinema. So, in the same period, there existed two main subjects on the screen; the person already living in the city and the newcomer.

[278] For the rate of decrease in the number of cinemagoer and film production, see Giovanni Scognamillo *Türk Sinema Tarihi 1896-1997* (İstanbul: Kabalcı Yayınevi, 1998): pp. 423-427

[279] Although arabesque films began to be produced in the early seventies, its expansion occurred in the eighties. When the production of sex films was strictly forbidden under the 1982 Constitution, the commercial cinema continued through arabesque films which continued to stimulate the interest of cinemagoers. Burçak Evren, "Cumhuriyet Döneminde Türk Sineması" in *Liderler*, Number 9, 1998, p. 200. For the account of arabesque films, see Nurdan Gürbilek, *Vitrinde Yaşamak* (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2001): pp. 92-102. Besides, for the representation of İstanbul in arabesk films, see Mehmet Öztürk, op. cit. , pp. 16-20.

Güney, Erden Kıral and Zeki Ökten, and the greatest examples of Turkish cinema were produced in these years.[280] These new directors mostly concentrated attention on rural areas of the country, the Eastern and South Eastern Anatolia, in particular considering the problems derived from the semi-feudal system and strict traditions.[281] Sometimes, even the environment changed and urban areas took place on the screen, the primary subject was still a rural person; but, this time, the theme was her/his struggle in the big city, namely, Istanbul.

Certainly, this shift of interest from Turkish cinema from urban areas to rural parts of the country shook the central position of Istanbul on the screen. Anyhow, the black and white mythical city image of Istanbul which was shown from the eye of "insider" in an earlier period had already disappeared. Instead, the city came into view as the struggle area of the newcomer. However, the important thing here is that Istanbul lost its appealing atmosphere that appeared in the first examples of the migration films[282] ; that is to say, it was no longer a mythical city for the person who just came to the city. Akad successfully revealed this change in the meaning of the city for the newcomer in his trilogy consisting of "The Bride" (*Gelin*, 1973), "The Wedding" (*Düğün*, 1974) and "Blood Money" (*Diyet*, 1975) which left their mark upon this period. In these three films, the characters being mostly the migrants, were certainly aware that Istanbul was not the city made out of golden anymore, and it was not easy to settle there in the face of the difficulties and obstacles of urban life.[283] Particularly, at the beginning of the film "The Wedding", the conversation of the new migrants with their uncle who came to the city before, was the most apparent evidence of the changing city conditions. As the person

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[280] Nijat Özön, op. cit. , p. 37

[281] Nijat Özön, op. cit. , p. 37

[282] Gülseren Güçhan, op. cit., p. 129

[283] Ibid. , p. 109

living in big city for a while, uncle Bekir described Istanbul in this way: “Istanbul is a forest. It is not a sea of trees, but a sea of human beings. You thought easy to overcome this sea? This is where the strong is perishes.” The oldest one of the family, Halil replied: “It is obviously not easy, yet there must be a place for us, too, here.” What this means is that Halil still had a hope for living in Istanbul despite all the difficulties. This time, however, the expectations were more realistic in comparison with the characters in migration films of the sixties. So to speak, the dream of being king of the city in the film, “Migrating Birds”, gradually left its place the attempt of taking place somehow in the city of Istanbul. This is nothing but the transformation of the city image as an attractive place into an arena of struggle in a complete sense.[284]

However, this change in the city image of Istanbul should not be understood in the sense that Istanbul lost all its appealing features in the eyes of the newcomers. In the films of the seventies, the city was still seen as a place to which people came from all parts of the country. Yet, this time, the factors which attracted people in rural areas were not the facilities of entertainment or consumption was the case in the previous period. Instead, the city of Istanbul came into sight with its employment prospects which the marginal sectors of economy offered.285 Besides, the push factors of rural areas were shown in the films as another reason for coming to the city though not frequently. In this sense, the second film of Akad’s trilogy, “The Wedding”, was the perfect illustration of the contrast between the economic conditions of big city and those of rural areas. The film starts with idle men sitting in front of shops and under the trees, the tradesmen waiting for customers, and hand sellers walking on the streets without selling anything; meaning that the audience

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[284] There is need to remember that Istanbul in the sixties was still an attractive place though it started to become an arena of struggle towards the end of the decade. The loss of its fabulous character in a real sense occurred in the 70s and 80s.

[285] Gülseren Güçhan, op. cit. , pp. 107-108

first saw the dullness in economic conditions of Urfa. Afterwards, the camera draws attention to busy shops, active business centers, and, in particular, crowded city streets where all kinds of items are sold. In this way, the city of Istanbul appeared on the screen as a place providing various job opportunities, even for those who lack any particular skill. Anyhow, the film characters were mostly unqualified workforce and they attempted to become successful in the city through their individual efforts and, particularly in commercial affairs which required device and cunning. At this point, there is need to consider the change in both the profile of the newcomers and their relation with the city. From now on, the rural people coming to Istanbul, as reflected in the films of this period, were not unfamiliar with the big city life. They quickly accustomed to the rules of urban living, chiefly thanks to their relatives who came to the city. In both "The Wedding" and "The Bride", the chief characters coming to Istanbul learned how to survive in the city from earlier migrants. Hence, the adaptation of the newcomer into urban culture that appeared as a problem in the films of "Migrating Birds" and "Unending Road" was no longer seen in the seventies and the eighties. In point of fact, as Güçhan argues, urban culture and even the city itself with its modern environment and inhabitants were absent in these films.[286] Rather, Istanbul came onto the scene with its *gecekondu* settlements and poor neighborhoods where population was mostly consisted of migrants coming from different parts of the country. Peculiarly, in the film "The Bride", there appeared a completely different place which had almost no relation with the city of Istanbul. This is clearly seen in the conversation between Ilyas Hadji and his son who just came to city: "This district is no different then our hometown. This is not Istanbul; it is outright an Anatolian village. Yet, it is a bit complicated. People from southern, Aegean, and, Black sea, they are all together. Istanbul is over there, behind those buildings." In this way, Ilyas Hadji made a general portrayal of Istanbul in the seventies, which was that the city now

[286] Gülseren Güçhan, op. cit. , p. 129

encompassed various towns and villages within itself. This is, in a sense, the replacement of dualistic urban structure of the sixties' Istanbul with a more complex one.

Starting with the late seventies, the multifarious face of Istanbul did strongly manifest its influence in Turkish cinema. In particular, Ömer Kavur's film "Yusuf and Kenan" (*Yusuf ile Kenan*, 1979) was the greatest example revealing the diversity of the city of Istanbul from the eyes of two young boys who came to Istanbul to find their uncle. With its ramshackle buildings, crummy inns, and old hotels where clients were mostly men looking for a job, and its streets crowded by porters, shoe shiners, children vendors, and indigent old people. Additionally, its *gecekondu* areas, poor people living among the ruins, homeless children who sold smuggled cigarettes; in the film, the socio-economic and cultural structure of Istanbul came onto scene in its all dimensions.[287] As Edip Cansever stated in his poem, "Two Cities" (1980), "the city became thinner and, all of a sudden, there appeared almost one more city" including various living quarters with different modes of existence.[288]

This transformation of the city of Istanbul continued to be reflected in the films produced in the first part of the eighties. Particularly, the films, "The Horse" (*At*, 1983) and "A Taste of Paradise" (*Bir Avuç Cennet*, 1985) successfully portray living conditions in the city which have become increasingly much more difficult and almost unbearable. In both films, Istanbul came into view as an arena of ruthless struggle oppressing the poor and powerless people living in the city. Certainly, the severe conditions of urban life now did not allow the characters of the films to have any hopes or expectations, even realistic ones. While Hüseyin's wish

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[287] Şükran Esen, op. cit. , p. 67

[288] "Görüyorsun değil mi?/ Ne kadar inceldi kent?/ Neredeyse şuracıktan/ Ansızın bir kent daha görünecek." Edip Cansever, *Şairin Seyir Defteri* (İstanbul: Adam Yayınları, 2004 [1982]): p. 154

to get his son educated turned into an impossible dream in the film "The Horse", to find a house to live, even a poor '*gecekondu*', did not seem achievable for the family in the film "A Taste of Paradise". As a result, the main concern of the characters in the films became only alive in the city of Istanbul. Another important point here is that the spatial characteristics of the city that appeared on the screen, considerably altered alongside the economic and social settings. In this sense, *gecekondu* settlements, seen as living places for migrants in the films of previous years, left their place to crummy inns, old coffee houses and even a worn-out bus. Thus, the city of Istanbul which had taken place in collective memory as a dreamscape started to turn into a nightmare in the films of the eighties.[289]

Nevertheless, the characters in the films, the characters migrating from rural areas, did not think of going back to their origins; "because that which was left behind was not better than the state of impecuniosity they encountered in Istanbul."[290] In the film, "A Taste of Paradise", Kamil from a small village of Bilecik answers the question "Why did you come?" as follows: "There was nothing left pleasurable in there." When asked "Is the situation here better?" he says, "What can you do? It is a world of hope." This helpless hope made them to stay in the city even the bus they lived in was taken by a crane and, so they now had to live in a tent. Anyhow, a supremely luminous camp in the night which disturbed by the lights of the city in the final scene of the film, was the great symbol of this hope and resistance.[291] This view at the end of the film reminds one of Baudelaire's poem "The Eyes of the Poor". As the family in rags looking at the coffee glittered with admiration in the poem, the family in the film "A Taste of Paradise" watches the city lights from

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[289] Mehmet Öztürk, op. cit. , p. 6

[290] Gülseren Güçhan, op .cit , p. 166

[291] Atilla Dorsay, "Kente Göç, Otobüs, İyimserlik" in *Cumhuriye*t, 15 October 1985, p. 6

distance; and, as Berman argues, "they are not angry or demanding"; they too only want a place in the light.[292]

However, it would be very misleading to consider the cinematic representation of Istanbul during the eighties in the sense of merely migration films. Although these types of films continued to be produced throughout the decade, they gradually lost their prevalent influences in Turkish cinema and instead there emerged a new tendency towards stressing individuality, women's search for identity and human emotions. The distinctive mark of Turkish cinema in the eighties was the strong inclination for the change.[293] As a result of innovative movements, the themes which had been conceived as taboo in cinema were now taken into account, for the first time, in this period. Doubtless, the change appearing in themes or subjects went hand in hand with the attempts of seeking new modes of expression. In this sense, the eighties also witnessed the rise of new images and representations in Turkish cinema. As one of the main elements of Turkish cinema, the city image of Istanbul would be impossible to remain unaffected by the process of profound change. Thus, the city of Istanbul appeared on the screen with different faces either conceptually or visually.

In order to understand this change in Turkish cinema, there is need to consider the economic and political conditions appearing in society owing to the 1980 military coup rather than conceiving the process as merely alteration in the intellectual world of the filmmakers in that period of time.[294] Besides, such attention to issues would shed light on the changing meaning of Istanbul and its presentation on the screen. The political atmosphere of the eighties was the main force that gave a shape to

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[292] Marshall Berman, op. cit. , p. 153. For the poem "The Eyes of The Poor", see Charles Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil and Paris Spleen* (New York, Boa Editions, 1991): pp. 393-395.

[293] Burçak Evren, *Türk Sinemasında Yeni Konumlar* (İstanbul: Broy Yayınları, 1990): p. 7

[294] Kurtuluş Kayalı, op. cit. , p. 20

cinema in this process. The constraints of the 1982 Constitution had put a great pressure on cinema industry as well as on the people working in this sector. Particularly the directors on account of the strict censorship laws, and, in this sense, attempted to reflect their introspections rather than openly addressing audiences.[295] Hence, Turkish cinema was crystallized on mostly ambiguous films the themes which emphasized the internal contradictions of the individuals sinking into their own problems. The important thing here is that the films of the eighties brought onto the scene the stories of people who might change in the course of time considering their distinctions and personalities. This is in a sense the meeting of Turkish cinema with "the individual" sociologically and with "the character" aesthetically.[296] Certainly, such change in the characters appearing on the screen and also in their concerns brought forth new modes of spatial representations as well. In this sense, the stereotyped spaces of Turkish films which had hitherto been used as the symbols of main incidents gradually left their places to more dynamic ones which took part in the construction of the plot and made the characters all the more alive and persuasive.[297]

However, it would be hard to claim that the transformation of the space on the screen was strongly felt in the case of the city space of Istanbul. This was rather connected with the increase in the use of the interior spaces in the films of the eighties. Besides, in these years, small towns and cities took place on the screen more often though Istanbul was still the most prevalent city context in Turkish cinema. As a matter of fact, the context of film being town or city was not essential

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[295] Zeynep Tül Akbal Süalp, op. cit. , 2004, p. 219

[296] Burçak Evren, op.cit. , 1990, p. 21

[297] Ibid. , p. 17. For the analysis of the use of specific places in stereotyped forms in Turkish films, see Fatoş Adiloğlu, "Mekanın / Uzayın Dönüşümü: İç / Dış, Aşağı / Yukarı, Alanlar, Sınırlar, Cepheler, Mekanlar" in *Türk Film Araştırmalarında Yeni Yönelimler-3* (İstanbul: Bağlam Yayınları, 2003)

as it had been in earlier periods; rather now, the milieu in which the story was constructed became much more important. Nevertheless, the city of Istanbul continued to be seen taking new forms parallelling the change in film characters as well as in their relation with physical and social environment. Since the filmmakers in this period tended mostly to their personal world and revealed their own living practices in the films, the urban spaces that appeared on the screen naturally became their own living quarters in the city. Hence, Beyoğlu and its back streets, bars, painter studios, and writers' houses gradually came into view in the films being produced during this decade.[298] In this sense, Tunç Başaran's film "One and the Others" (Biri ve Diğerleri, 1987) which revealed a partially imaginary meeting was the perfect example; the whole plot took place in only one bar in which artists, writers, and intellectuals came together. Apart from these kinds of films, undoubtedly there existed films which displayed the spatial characteristics of the city of Istanbul. For instance, the film, "A Handful of Sky" (Bir Avuç Gökyüzü) produced by Ümit Elçi in 1987 was one of the most successful ones presenting, the cityscape of Istanbul with different scenes. With the shots of a luxury boat-restaurant on the Bosphorus, the house (of the chief character) with a nice view in the upper part of Ortaköy, Salipazari quay in the morning twilight, and of the cemetery appearing at midnight; in the film, the city of Istanbul was shown in its various dimensions.[299] Moreover, the films like "Bigsister Fahriye" (*Fahriye Abla*, 1984), "Secret Emotions" (*Gizli Duygular*, 1984), and "Ahh Belinda" (1986) attempted to reflect different parts of urban living in Istanbul. The distinctive element to be considered in the eighties, however, was the representation of the city of Istanbul in a rather nostalgic atmosphere. In most films, the city was presented in the context of a longing for the past and its people and living patterns; for instance, the films of "Mr. Muhsin" (*Muhsin Bey*, 1987), "My Dreams, My Love, and You"

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[298] Elif Genç, op. cit. , p. 96

[299] Ibid.

(*Hayallerim, Aşkım, ve Sen*, 1987), and "The Lady" (*Hanım*, 1988). Particularly, Halit Refig's film "The Lady" can be conceived as a thoroughly nostalgic film; the yearning for the city of Istanbul in old times was expressed in every part of the film. At first glance, the film was based on the story of a lonely old woman looking for a place for her cat before dying; yet, beyond this, within the structure of the film there existed a changing, disappearing, and even collapsing Istanbul and in parallel relation to the degenerating social connections in the city. In other words, the film reflected the degrading of the spatial characteristics of Istanbul and, human relations thereof. While Mrs. Olcay with an old residence on the shore house full of old furniture was the symbol of the old Istanbul, her helpless search for a safe place for her cat, on the other hand, revealed the new face of Istanbul with dehumanizing conditions of city life. As a result of such contrasts using to describe the transformation of the city in the film, Istanbul was represented as the city which was increasingly losing its charm and liveliness. This is nothing but the nostalgia for a disappearing old Istanbul. This view now starting to be observed in the films of the eighties would manifest itself even more strangely in following decade; and, in this way, the city of Istanbul would continue to be presented with reference to now rapidly disappearing values and beauties.

### 4.1.4 The Decade of the Nineties:

The decade of the 1990s was a difficult time period for the Turkish cinema as much the as for Turkish society. As it was seen in all dimensions of society, the liberalization program of Özal administration manifested its effects in cinema sector, as well. With the elimination of obstructive articles in the legislation of foreign trade towards the end of the eighties, the whole distribution sector in Turkey came under the strong influence of American oligopolies.[300] This means the

[300] Hilmi Maktav, "Türk Sinemasında Yeni Bir Dönem" in *Birikim*, Number 152/153, December 2001-January 2002, p. 227

invasion of movie theaters by Hollywood films which brought Turkish film industry on the brink of bankruptcy. As a result, Turkish cinema faced a big decline in the sense of both film production and screening. The number of the films produced in 1991 was thirty three, and only fifteen of these films could be released.[301] Despite the crisis in the film industry, the nineties still witnessed a relative revival in Turkish cinema. While certain films gained an impressive success at the box-office, there appeared considerable increase in the quality of films through the attempts of new young directors developing their own cinematic language. Accordingly, Turkish cinema of the nineties can be examined in the frame of two main trends: popular cinema and independent cinema. In the first, there were films produced by high finances and being effectively released. The main concern of these films was undoubtedly commercial success, and they excited the interest of cinemagoers through either famous film people or big publicity campaigns. The best known examples of this trend were "The American" (*Amerikalı*, 1993), "The Bandit" (Eşkiya, 1996), "Istanbul under My Wings" (*İstanbul Kanatlarımın Altında*, 1996), and "Heavy Novel" (Ağır Roman, 1997). On the opposite side, there existed independent films produced with law-budget resources and were released throughout the country only to very limited extend. Although these films brought in very little revenue, they become very successful in international film festivals. The films like "Block C" (C Blok, 1993), "Innocence" (*Masumiyet*, 1997), "Somersault in the Coffin" (*Tabutta Rövaşata*, 1996), "The Town" (*Kasaba*, 1997), and "On-board" (*Gemide*, 1998) were the greatest examples of this tendency.

Despite these two major trends of the decade of 1990, it would be hard to make a portrayal of Turkish cinema of the period in regard to certain types of films since there no longer remained genre discrimination during the process of big depression

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[301] This was the lowest production figure to be seen in Turkish cinema since the late forties. Therefore, cinema industry fall back on the starting point after forty years. Kaya Özkaracalar, "Geçmişten Günümüze Türk Sineması" in *4 Mevsim*, Number 11, May 2000, p. 28

in cinema industry.[302] Instead of specific film genres such as melodrama, comedy, and detective films, Turkish cinema in this period was based on mostly psychological films focusing on individuals and their problems with outside world in continuity of the eighties. However, this time the stories were more depressive and full sorrow; and the characters were more powerless and vulnerable. In this sense, the films of the nineties brought onto the scene the lives of those people who were excluded by the existing order and living on the edges of the society, namely destitute people, homeless children, drug addicts, prostitutes, travesties, and the like. Opposed to the nature of the leading player, these characters mostly lacked of courage and will to struggle and they did not have any hopes or dreams for future. That means, in a sense, the end of hero in Turkish cinema the first signals of which were given in the films of the eighties, such as "Motherland Hotel" (*Anayurt Oteli*, 1986) and "Despite Everything" (*Herşeye Rağmen*, 1987).[303] Yet in most films of this period, people who could be conceived as marginals of society had been used as an ornamentation rather than being presented in the main axis of the narration.[304] The appearance of marginal people, prostitutes, transvestites and drug addicts, as main characters, occurred only during the nineties. Thus, Turkish cinema of the nineties became a cinema of the weak, defenseless and lonely people who were left outside the mainstream society.

This change in film stories and its characters brought certainly forth the transformation of the space on the screen as well. In this sense, the city of Istanbul came into view in new forms alongside the changing perception and experience of

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[302] Giovanni Scognamillo, "Türk Sinemasının Son On Yılı" in *Varlık*, Number 1091, September 1998, p. 31

[303] Rıza Kıraç, "Doksanlı Yıllarda Sinemamıza Genel Bir Bakış" in www.dergi.org/012000/0904.htm

[304] Nejat Ulusay, "Son Dönem Sineması ve Lola+Bilidi Kid Üzerine" in *4 Mevsim*, Number 11, May 2000, p. 53

film characters. The nineties witnessed different modes of presentations revealing the city of Istanbul. While some films brought onto the scene the marginals' Istanbul with its different spatial and social characteristics, some on the other hand, reflected the changing city atmosphere in terms of yearning and reproach for the days of yore. However, the most distinctive feature of this period was that the cityscape of Istanbul gradually disappeared from the screen.[305] In the first place, this was connected with a considerable shift of orientation in the interest of Turkish cinema towards small cities and provinces. With films like "The Town" (*Kasaba*, 1997), "Innocence", (*Masumiyet*, 1997), and "Clouds of May" (*Mayıs Sıkıntısı*, 1999), there appeared different parts of the country on the screen and, in this way, the privileged position of Istanbul in Turkish cinema at the beginning was now shaken.[306] Yet, this was only one aspect of the disappearing city image of Istanbul in this period. More importantly, the cityscape could hardly be seen even though the story line took place in Istanbul. In most films produced in those years, the main spatial characteristics representing Istanbul were almost absent; rather, the city came into view with its ordinary cityscapes, unknown districts, and backstreets. Asuman Suner describes this transformation of cinematic appearance of Istanbul with the notion of "provinces". According to her account, the city of Istanbul itself turned into "provinces" in the films of the nineties.[307] For instance, the films "Trace" (*İz*, 1993) and "Third Page" (*Üçüncü Sayfa*, 1998) presented Istanbul in the sense that it could be any other city whatsoever. In both films, there was not seen any shot peculiar to Istanbul with its general view, natural beauties, historical sites, well-known public places, and the like. Therefore, the fabulous city image of

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[305] Asuman Suner, "1990'lar Türk Sinemasından Taşra Görüntüleri: *Tabutta Rövaşata*'da Agorafobik Kent, Açık Alana Kapatılmışlık ve Dehşet" in *Toplum ve Bilim,* Number 94, Autumn 2002, p. 86

[306] Ibid. , p. 88

[307] Ibid.

Istanbul which had been used until the end of the eighties as the main figure in Turkish cinema left its place to an unexceptional city scene.

After having examined the transformation of the visual appearance of Istanbul in the nineties, there is now need to consider the conceptual presentation of the city with respect to the city experience of film characters. In the first place, the films of the nineties generally took place within limited city spaces as a reflection of the disappearance of Istanbul's cityscape from the screen. Paralleling the turn of the film characters into rather marginal people or losers, the city spaces appearing on the screen undoubtedly became dark and suffocating places, that is, the underworld of Istanbul. In this sense, Beyoglu, Sıraselviler, Tarlabaşı, and Cihangir became the most prevalent city areas in the films of the nineties. Having considered the general picture of these regions of the city, their population, as it is commonly known, shows a great diversity: new migrants, waiters, workers, inveterate losers, tramps, bohemians, prostitutes, and the like.[308] Their common feature of living in such areas was mainly being excluded somehow from the mainstream society. This is the element that attracts the eye of the Turkish cinema of the nineties with these parts of Istanbul. What this also implies is that there appearance of Beyoglu in the eighties with increasingly marginalized bohemian places. Hence, in most films, Istanbul came onto the scene with gloomy bars, cheap night clubs, unhealthy buildings, damp and dingy places, and dark, narrow streets of these no-go areas for many inhabitants of the city. As examples, the films "Whistle If You Come Back" (*Dönersen Islık Çal* 1992), "The Night, The Angel, and Our Boys" (*Gece*, *Melek ve Bizim Çocuklar*, 1993), "Love is Colder than Death" (*Aşk Ölümden Soğuktur*, 1994), "Heavy Novel" (*Agır Roman*, 1997), were the most remarkable ones in this sense. The important thing, here, was that all these films brought into view the negative urban imaginary of Istanbul in an attempt of revealing different realities

[308] Mübeccel Kıray, *Kentleşme Yazıları* (İstanbul: Bağlam Yayınları, 1998): p. 14

and experiences the city embodied. With homeless people, rag-pickers, prostitutes, and their helpless struggle in the city, Istanbul turned into a source of sorrow and despair in such films as opposed to its mythical city image of previous years with reference to city of lights, magnificence and power. Hence, as Öztürk states, Istanbul of the nineties looked like the cities of Georg Grozs which were being metamorphosised rather than that of Sait Faik Abasıyanık.[309] What this implies was certainly the destruction of the city myth of Istanbul; so to speak, ironically, the mythical Istanbul appearing in the films of the fifties and sixties became myth itself.[310]

## 4.2 The Destruction of City Myth of Istanbul in Nineties Turkish Cinema:

### 4.2.1 The Film Identities:

**4.2.1. i The Name of the Film:** Whistle If You Come Back (*Donersen Islık Cal*)

**Production Year:** 1993

**Director:** Orhan Oguz

**Scenario:** Nuray Oguz and Cemal San

**Producer:** Ugur Film

**Cast:** Fikret Kuskan, Mevlut Demiray, Derya Alabora, Menderes Samancılar

**Film Features:** Color, 85'

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[309] Mehmet Öztürk, "İstanbul'da Kentsel Kriz ve Sinema" in *Varlık*, Number 1153, October 2003, p. 11

[310] Mehmet Öztürk, "Türk Sinemasında Gecekondular"in *European Journal of Turkish Studies*, Thematic Issue No 1, Gecekondu, URL: http:// www.ejts.org/document94.html , p.10

**General Plot**: The film is based on the story of an extraordinary twosome, a dwarf and a transvestite. They meet in the night life of Beyoglu surrounded by crime and violence. The dwarf works in one of the bars in this region, and, one night, while going back home from his work he saves the transvestite from the attack of two men by using his whistle. Although, they first think of each other strange, they become good friends after a while. One day, the transvestite meets one of his old childhood friends (Adiguzel) and takes him to the dwarf's flat. The man actually lives downstairs in the same apartment. He makes his income by pimping for his wife. Yet, his wife is not pleased with this friendship and she drives the transvestite away at the door when they come for a night drink. In the morning, the dwarf back from his job encounters the police cars and an ambulance in front of the apartment. Climbing upstairs, he sees Adiguzel taken by policemen. Then, he learns from the transvestite that Adiguzel losing his mind stabbed his own wife twenty times. As the transvestite witnesses all happenings, he is afraid of Adiguzel to tell the police that he was there. So, he asks for money from the dwarf to disappear for a while. Even the dwarf does not understand this demand for hiding from the police. Yet he gives money to the transvestite; still, he is exposed to rough treatment since the transvestite does not believe that he gave all his money. Thus, the dwarf wants him to go away and to leave the key to his flat. Yet, after a while, he worries about the transvestite and goes to see him. The transvestite does not want to talk to him, only telling what happened to Adiguzel, that is, the hanging of himself in prison without saying anything. He drives the dwarf away from his house. While going back to his home, the dwarf is brutally attacked by two men who want to take his money. He hardly reaches his home, yet he cannot escape death. After a day, the transvestite finds him being in the agony of death. The film ends with the death of the dwarf in the arms of the transvestite at the terrace.

**4.2.1. ii The Name of the Film:** Somersault in a Coffin (*Tabutta Rovasata*)

**Production Year:** 1996

**Director:** Dervis Zaim

**Scenario:** Dervis Zaim

**Producer:** Istisnai Filmler & Reklamcilik Ltd. Sti.

**Film Features:** Color, 74'

**Cast:** Ahmet Ugurlu, Tuncel Kurtiz, Aysen Aydenir, Serif Erol

**General Plot:** The film portrays the lives of homeless people around Rumelihisari, one of Istanbul's oldest neighborhoods. The main character, Mahsun Supertitiz, has no home, no job and no family, and he lives on the street, staying alive with the help of local fisherman, Reis. He steals cars either to keep himself warm in the cold winter nights or to satisfy his desires. After having used, in the morning, he cleans the car and leaves it where he takes. Yet, the police does not arrest Mahsun since none of the prisons wants to take him. Instead, Mahsun is cruelly beaten by policemen every time he is caught. One day, he steals the car which belongs to one of the politicians in a senior executive position. So, the police commissioner warns the fisherman (Reis) to take care of Mahsun which means that he wants Reis to co-operate with the police. Reis pays the debts of Mahsun to the coffee house for 500 teas and helpes him to get a job there, cleaning the toilets and a bed to sleep in. In this way, the settlement problem of Mahsun is temporarily solved. Besides, this job makes him closer to a young heroin addict to whom he is attracted. Mahsun gives the key of the room on top of the coffee house when the woman says that she has no place to stay. However, he soon realizes that the room to be used by the woman is actually used for prostitution. In a great disappointment and losing his control Mahsun smashes everything in his surroundings. Then, at night, he takes one of the peacocks from the

Rumelihisari Fortress and races through the city with a stolen car. On the following day, the woman comes to the toilet in a fit of heroin and wants Mahsun to take her to Taksim. Although at first Mahsun resists the woman, softening because of her begging takes her to the place where she gets her dose of heroin. Afterwards, Mahsun sets out to sea with the boat of Reis taking the woman who is completely relaxed by heroin. However, the boat would be destroyed by crashing into the buoy while he caresses the face of the woman who is laid motionless. As a result, Mahsun is abandoned to his own fate by Reis and others so, he loses even the little security he had through this misadventure with the woman. At the end of the film, he is arrested for supposed attempt at eating one of the peacocks in the Rumelihisari Fortress thereby attracting the attention of the media. The film finishes with the scene of Reis and other people in coffee house watching the news of Mahsun with astonishment.

**4.2.1. iii The Name of the Film:** The Third Page (*Ücüncü Sayfa*)

**Production Year:** 1998

**Director:** Zeki Demirkubuz

**Scenario:** Zeki Demirkubuz

**Producer:** Mavi Film

**Film Features:** Color, 92'

**Cast:** Ruhi Sari, Basak Koklukaya, Cengiz Sezici, Serdar Orcin, Emrah Elciboga, Naci Tasdogen.

**General Plot:** The film tells the story of a hapless young man, Isa, who tries to survive in ruthless conditions of city life. Isa lives in a rundown apartment building in Cihangir and he earns his living by working for soap opera series as an auxiliary while also doing casual and part-time work at the same time. He is accused of having stolen fifty dollars in the office he temporarily

works. He is beaten and threatened to be killed by a mafia type leader unless he brings the money in twenty-four hours. Since he is refused by the player agency which is his only hope for finding the money, Isa decides to commit suicide. As he is about to pull on the trigger, the landlord knocks on the door he asking for four months unpaid rent and threatening Isa with expulsion. Alone with his gun after the landlord left, Isa suddenly, goes upstairs and kills him. While watching the man being in throes of death, he suddenly falls on the floor and faints just over there. In the morning, he wakes up in his own flat by the knocking of policemen at the door. With other apartment residents, he is taken away to the police station. Yet, Isa is allowed to go home as he does not admit to anything. When the henchmen of the mafia type leader returns to collect the stolen money, he is mysteriously saved by his next door neighbor, Meryem. This incident would bring an uncanny involvement of Isa with Meryem. Also, the landlord's son moves upstairs to his father's place and Isa tells him that there is not any rent owed from previous months. Hence, all of Isa's problems appear to be solved smoothly. Yet, after a while, the relation between Meryem and Isa is interrupted by the return of Meryem's husband from Bursa, where he works in construction. Meryem is exposed to intensive violence and aggression from her husband every night. While thinking of what to do in the face of this situation, Isa encounters an unexpected demand of Meryem. The woman, unable to stand the harassment of her husband asks Isa to kill him. Despite İsa's repeated attempts to kill him, however, the man is killed in a gambling fight. After this unexpected assassination of the husband, Isa is chosen to act in an international advertising film and goes abroad for a month. When he returns, Isa encounters an empty flat of Meryem being under construction. The landlord's son tells him Meryem left a while ago without saying anything. However, one day, Isa sees Meryem and the landlord's son together from the window of a minibus. He goes to kill Meryem; yet he cannot. Instead he kills himself when he learns the truth, which is that they

were lovers from the very beginning.

### 4.2.2 Living on the Edge: The Outcasts of Urban Family:

Having considered the main characteristics of nineties Turkish cinema, as mentioned in previous section, the element that connects the three films, “Whistle If You Come Back”, “Somersault in a Coffin”, and “The Third Page”, is the story of which they tell, and even more importantly, whose story they put into picture. In these films, one can observe that the chief characters essentially consist of the people who live in minorities, on the margins, that is to say, who are rejected or estranged somehow by the societal order. They all are inveterate losers in conflict with the existing urban reality for different reasons. In this sense, the films reveal their poor and deprived lives in the face of social exclusion, limited interpersonal relations, and poverty. While the film “Somersault in a Coffin” brings onto scene the living conditions of homeless people in the cold winter of Istanbul, the film “The Third Page”, on the other hand, shows the lives of ordinary people of the city, a figure artist and a cleaner, who do not have any protection against the physical and emotional blows of urban life. As for the film “Whistle If You Come Back”, this time, the characters become more marginalized, and the dark and fearful city experience of the dwarf and the transvestite comes into view in this sense.

Although at first glance the characters in the three films may seem completely different from one another, a close look would reveal that there existed certain features they have in common, particularly with respect to their perception of the city and its experience. In this sense, it would be appropriate to examine each character one by one in order to explore the points they come together. To start with the film “Somersault in a Coffin”, the central character of the story, Mahsun, is an unemployed person living on the street. He belongs to the lowest stratum of society, being deprived of even the most essential necessities to sustain his life. As a person who has nothing, Mahsun lives day to day without any expectation or hope. His

only concern throughout the film, so to speak, is finding shelter and food to eat. Despite this socioeconomic class position, the character of Mahsun does not appear as a representative of a particular societal group in the film; rather, he comes into view with personal attributes that make him unique.[311] In other words, Mahsun is not merely one of the numerous homeless people in the city of Istanbul, and for this reason it would not be an appropriate way to examine him concerning with merely class position or social status. Yet, what is the constituent that makes Mahsun distinct from others? In point of fact, it cannot be easily told something certain about the character of Mahsun because, in the film, his whole story is not given; instead, the audience tries to understand him through various incidents he encounters and his reaction to them. To begin with, Mahsun is a devotee of motor vehicles, particularly of automobiles; throughout the film, he constantly steals cars and even once a city bus. The first and foremost reason for these acts of stealing is undoubtedly the very cold winter conditions. In order to protect himself from the cold outside, he steals cars at nights. The most apparent evidence of this is that Mahsun immediately puts the heating system on and warms his hands when he comes into a car. Moreover, at the beginning of the film, we see that his friend Sari freezes to death while sleeping in a boat outside. So to speak, this is a way of surviving for Mahsun in the city of Istanbul. However, to consider his stealing act only with respect to the need for warmth would be misleading, because beyond this Mahsun has a strong attraction to for any kind of motor vehicles. This can be easily seen in the scenes where he drives a car. While racing into the city at night, Mahsun's smiling face is reflected on a car's window glass. Suner interprets the relation of Mahsun with the car in terms of "movement" and "change." In her account, the act of stealing car provides Mahsun with an active position as a subject in opposition to his passive and dependent location in everyday life.[312] Yet certainly

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[311] Asuman Suner, op. cit. , Autumn 2002, p. 102

[312] Ibid. , p. 98

this is a temporary situation; the state of movement, even at one point, the state of freedom comes to an end by the first light of day. After polishing it, Mahsun leaves the car where he had gotten and turns back to his usual life, as to say, the place he belongs in the city of Istanbul.[313]

Furthermore, Mahsun does not have any resemblance with other male characters though the problems and obstacles they live are very similar. He does not participate in their conversation on football, politics, and other daily issues. While all those people in the coffee house watch the national match, Mahsun drinks his soup turning his back to the television without any reaction. Even the winning of the national team does not mean anything to Mahsun. Unlike other people who celebrate the match by drinking, screaming, and sounding car horns into the night, Mahsun stays in his bed dreaming of the woman he is attracted to and also of peacocks in the fortress.[314] Thus, Mahsun comes into view as a sensitive character that lives in his own small world ignoring the happenings in his surroundings. This can be clearly seen in the relationship of Mahsun with either the young heroin addict coming to the coffee house everyday or with the peacocks. In the first place, Mahsun's attraction to the woman does not stem from the attempt to satisfy his sexual demands; on the contrary, he gets close to the woman because of the loneliness, the emotional hunger. When they set out to sea, the woman, relaxed by heroin, lies motionless in the boat; and the only thing that Mahsun does is caress her face and gently kiss her cheek. It is possible to see this gentle attitude, too, in his relationships with animals. In particular, there exists a special connection between

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[313] Suner considers the stealing act of Mahsun as "a cyclic movement", which always turns back to the beginning point. Yet, I think, it would be more appropriate to describe as a vicious circle since Mahsun's short trip in the city is mostly finished by violence and oppression. See Asuman Suner, op. cit. , Autumn 2002, p. 98

[314] There is need to remember that, in this part of the film, Mahsun stays in the room upstairs the coffee house thanks to Reis who convinces café owner (Zeki) to give Mahsun a job and a place to sleep.

Mahsun and the peacocks that he sees in the fortress. Mahsun first knows about these birds through an encounter with a television crew making news of the incident that fifty peacocks are given to the Rumeli Fortress as a gift from the Iranian president. After that, Mahsun becomes strongly interested in peacocks. Even though the guard does not allow him to come in, Mahsun secretly enters the fortress to see the birds. As he expresses his feelings to the woman in the boat by touching her face, he holds the peacock in his arms and gently caresses its feathers. That is to say, the sensitivity and tender of Mahsun, which cannot be generally expected from a big city person, is represented in the film through his connection with peacocks as well as with the woman.

The dark and oppressive atmosphere that pervades the film "Somersault in a Coffin" is also strongly felt in Zeki Demirkubuz's "The Third Page." Yet, both the characters and their living experiences within the city change in certain senses. Instead of homeless people whose only aim is to stay alive during the cold winter, this time, there appear poor city persons who live in a miserable building of Istanbul and try to survive against severe conditions. The film "The Third Page" is based on the strange relationship of two young people from a very low stratum of society. However, as it is the same in the film "Somersault in a Coffin", they are presented not directly with reference to their socio-economic position, but at the same time concerning their personal attributions. In one interview, the director of the film clearly explains this issue: "While making my films, the least important components of the characters for me is their social, cultural, religious, national and class aspects. These are the concepts pertaining to shape, that is, identity facts. I am interested in the personality and its essence which comes from the very beginning of social life to its today."[315] In this sense, the film "The Third Page" attempts to explore the

[315] Nihal Bengisu Karaca, "Yönetmen Zeki Demirkubuz: İdeal İyiliğin Yolu Kötülüğü Anlamaktan Geçiyor", *Aksiyon*, 17 November 2003, Number 303, URL: http://212.154.21.41/2001/363/kultur/1.htm

inner psychological worlds of the characters, Isa and Meryem; their frustrations, conflicts, anxieties, and depressions they live in the face of uncertain urban life.

After this general outlook, it would be appropriate to examine in detail these two characters in the film. Though Meryem plays a great part in the whole part of the narration, in essence, "The Third Page" is the story of Isa; the audiences see all incidents throughout the film from his point of view. Isa works in a production company as a figure artist in the soap opera series of arabesk singers. In the film, the general portrayal of Isa is presented through the scene of player selection for a foreign advertising film:

**Isa**: My name is Isa Demirci. I am from Çankırı. I am the oldest of four brothers. I came to Istanbul after my military service. An army friend was the reason I came. Like most people, I have done lots of different jobs. But I have never had a permanent job.

--What are your expectations?

**Isa**: I have not really got big expectations. Maybe in time have a family, and be useful for my country.

--Your biggest dream?

**Isa**: At least once play the lead role in a film or soap.

--Why do you want?

**Isa**: I don't know. Yet, if I did, I think it would be good. I would like to know what it feels like.

--What role would you like?

**Isa**: It does not matter. But, I would like to play someone who succeeds despite all the pain. Someone honest and good. Maybe, like Ibrahim abi.

--Do you believe you could act a role like that well?

**Isa**: SILENCE…

This interview of Isa by the production company reflects his position in life in a considerable sense. In the first place, it is clearly seen that Isa has no security in life. Even though he is working in the production company, he does not have a regular job. Since it is not sufficient to support his livelihood, he also works in casual jobs. Nevertheless, Isa cannot escape financial troubles in the ruthless money economy of a big city. In the film, the hapless story of Isa begins in this way. On account of the unpaid rent for four months (400 dollars) and the stolen 50 dollars from the

gangster-type man, he reaches to the point of committing suicide. Another important feature of the character, Isa survives in the city of Istanbul on his own by leaving all his relatives behind. So, the source of Isa's deprivation in the film is not only economical problems, but also, even more, psychological affairs. His need for care and emotional support immediately manifests itself even in a very small involvement with his next door neighbor, Meryem. In a short time, Isa becomes ready to do everything for her. In the face of such living conditions, it would be not surprising that Isa does not have big expectations and hopes. Nevertheless, he still dreams of playing a lead role in the film even though he cannot certainly know that he could manage it well. In point of fact, the answer of Isa to the question of "what is your biggest dream?" is very determining for that it gives certain clues about his hapless situation in the life. Isa wants to take a lead role, not only in the film, but also in life itself, because he is nothing more than just a figurant in his own life. The incidents throughout the film occur out of his control; so to speak Isa appears as an inactive character that lacks the will and strength to change what happens in his surroundings. Anyhow, at the beginnings of the film, Isa clearly expresses this state of helplessness in his letter before the attempt of committing suicide. The last words of Isa to tell the world is that "Life didn't give me the lead role", which is consistent with his biggest dream. Moreover, Isa would like to perform a character that is honest and good, succeeding despite all difficulties that he encounters. What this implies is that Isa wants to be a person, at least in the film, that he cannot become in real life.

As mentioned earlier, the film "The Third Page" tells the story of the uncanny involvement of two people living in the same apartment, Isa and Meryem. The meeting of Isa with Meryem would determine his end which is diabolic and fatal. Meryem makes her living by working in a cleaning job. She has two children, ages of three and four, and her husband mostly works outside the city of Istanbul. Similar to Isa, Meryem lives in very difficult conditions. Apart from financial problems, Meryem is also continuously exposed to violence and aggression from her

husband. On the nights that the man is at home, Meryem's unbearable screams and sounds are heard in Isa's flat. Moreover, as it is understood by her conversation with Isa in following scenes of the film, Meryem is sexually abused by the landlord, who is also her husband's boss. In the face of this double harassment, unsurprisingly, Meryem comes to the point of doing everything to escape; to betray, to exploit anyone in her surroundings, and even to murder. Yet, the point to be considered here is that, unlike Isa, Meryem is very determined to get rid of the repressed world she lives in. In this sense, she does not hesitate to use Isa, who is ready to do anything she wants, for killing her husband. Even she makes a detailed plan to kill him together when Isa could not manage to do. However, this is only the apparent face of Meryem's story. In the closing sequence of the film in which Isa goes to Meryem's new flat to kill her, simultaneously with Isa, the audiences learn the previous part of the narrative, which is that the night Isa kills the landlord at the door, Meryem and the landlord's son are inside and they would have killed him if Isa had not. That means that Isa involves in all these happenings by accident and, in this sense, he is indeed a figurant until the end of the film, being unaware of the relationship between Meryem and the landlord's son and also of their plans.

In the last film to be examined in this thesis, "Whistle If You Come Back", the harsh and destitute lives of two marginal characters, the transvestite and the dwarf, comes into view. Both these characters are extremely engaged in a life of excess and abandon. While the transvestite is excluded because of his sexual identity, the dwarf, on the other hand, is left outside society due to his physical attributes. It is a plain fact that the source of otherness to which the film "Whistle If You Come Back" draws attention is significantly different from that of the previous two films. The primary reason for the rejection of the characters, this time, is not economic or social deprivations, but rather the perpetual congenital characteristics and defects. For that reason, undoubtedly, their situation in life is relatively more stable and also the discrimination they suffer is more blatant; actually they have almost no place in the existing order. That is to say, the film brings into scene those who are not

wanted to be seen or to be heard by society. The state of being excluded most strongly manifests itself in the establishment of the characters in the film. Both the dwarf and the transvestite are defined in terms of merely their distinguishing attributes; and more importantly, none of the characters have a name in the film. Instead, they are mentioned with the roles they represent throughout the film such as dwarf, transvestite, prostitute, pimp and the like.[316] This nameless presentation of the characters in the film is nothing but a great symbol of their outsiderness.

The film "Whistle If You Come Back" attempts to reveal the experience of exclusion in urban life through an unexpected intersection of a dwarf and a transvestite on the back streets of the city. The dwarf works nights as a barman in one of the good pubs in Beyoglu. He lives with his two dogs in a small nice terrace flat from which can be seen Istiklal Street and its surrounding area. The living conditions of the dwarf are fairly good, especially in comparison with that of the transvestite. The important thing to be considered here is that the dwarf does not seem to have any problems in the film except the loneliness which originates from his physical defects. With his socio-economic status, moral values and personality, probably, the dwarf would be able to be a good member of society. In the film, he considers other ways of living in his surrounding as immoral and unacceptable. For instance, he does not approve of the transvestite's pimp friend, Adigüzel. When the transvestite defends his friend who makes trouble after being drunk, the response of the dwarf is very clear: "How can a pimp be good?" In the same way, when he first learns the truth of the transvestite's real sexual identity, the dwarf finds the transvestite disgusting, and unreservedly expresses his feelings: "When I think, it turns my stomach upside down. You are so ugly." Certainly, such reaction is not

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[316] Fatma Okumuş Ergül, "Cinselliğin Farklı Yönlerinin 90'lı Yılların Türk Sineması'ndaki Yansımaları Üzerine Bir Giriş Denemesi: Düş Gezginleri, Dönersen Islık Çal ve Gemide" in *Türk Film Araştırmalarında Yeni Yönelimler-3* ed. by Deniz Derman and Övgü Gökçe ( İstanbul: Bağlam Yayınları, 2001): p. 152.

peculiar to the dwarf. At first time, both characters in the film similarly find each other strange. In the face of the dwarf's insults, the transvestite would not remain silent; even his words are more offensive: "Look, who's calling me ugly. Don't you ever look at the mirror? Who's that ugly, with that shapeless body of yours? Poor humanoid." This harsh treatment of the characters towards each other can be interpreted as a result of the discrimination and exclusion they face in social order. Both the dwarf and the transvestite develop a sort of language of violence in order to protect themselves against the physical and emotional blows of city life.

"Whistle If You Come Back", does not give as much information about the way of living of the transvestite, at least compared to the dwarf. Throughout the film, audiences do not even see where he lives (except one scene in which the dwarf goes to see him towards the end of the film). Without a doubt, this is closely connected with the unstable living circumstances of the transvestite which require different ways of surviving. As opposed to the dwarf, he does not have a regular job or, parallel to that, an established living order. Rather, the transvestite lives on the back streets of Beyoglu during the nights; so that naturally, his probability of facing dangers and risks of city life is relatively high. This intensive interaction with the outside world is the most apparent element that determines the character of the transvestite in the film, and this is strongly observed in his relation with the dwarf. He appears to be more assertive and even more aggressive representing himself and his feelings than the dwarf whose attitude towards his environment is conventional and introvert as a sort of protection. The contradictory personalities of these two characters are revealed in the scene in which the rain starts all of a sudden while they together drink raki at the terrace after the trouble of the pimp. The transvestite, who is upset with his pimp friend in the sequence, rises happily from his seat when he feels the raindrops, and starts dancing with the dwarf, taking him into his arms. While dancing, he sings and tells the dwarf in a loud and cheerful voice: "Don‘t always be calm. Get loose. Love! Deceive! Be Deceived! So is life!" These words of the transvestite are quite meaningful following from the discussion above.

This scene reflects, in a sense, the way of survival of the transvestite. Despite all troubles and tribulations he experiences in the city, he attempts to cling to life in some way even though it might be an illusion.

Another important point that one should consider about the characters in the film is the distinction between the ways of exclusion faced by the transvestite and the dwarf in accordance with the source of their otherness. As it is clearly seen in the film, the dwarf is in harmony with accepted ways of thinking and behaving in society. His problem is, instead, physical appearance because of which people would stare at, laugh at, and insult him. For this reason, the dwarf tends to be invisible and does not go outside during the day, unless he has to. On the other hand, the sexual choice of the transvestite brings him into direct conflict with moral principles and legislations of the society; so that, he experiences discrimination and repression in a more harsh way, and also more constantly than the dwarf. Even the dwarf does not understand the problems of the transvestite with the police and why he has to escape from them. For instance, in one of the scenes, the transvestite asks the dwarf for a loan to go away for a while since he is afraid of being cross-examined for the killing of the prostitute by her husband, Adiguzel. Yet, the fear and worries of the transvestite concerning the police does not make sense for the dwarf, which would be clearly seen in the conversation of the characters:

| | |
|---|---|
| **Transvestite**: | Lend me some money. I've to get lost for a while. I'll pay you later. |
| **Dwarf**: | Why should you get lost? You are not guilty. |
| **Transvestite**: | You don't understand. If Adiguzel tells I was also there they will cross-examine me. |
| **Dwarf**: | What's wrong with this? Afterwards they'll let you go. |
| **Transvestite**: | You don't understand. You don't understand!.. |

What this dialogue implies is the dwarf's straight thought of what things should be; his words are very certain and simple. Despite the fact that the neighborhood he lives in is composed of largely outcasts of the society, surprisingly, the dwarf cannot even think of the big probability that the transvestite is exposed to

violent treatment by the police because of his sexual practices. Nevertheless, this would be understandable considering the dwarf's lifestyle which is rather close to the outside world as a protection that he develops for his own otherness. Thus, in the film, both characters develop different survival strategies depending on the source of exclusion they face in the city.

Having considered the main features of the characters in all three films as discussed until now, there seem to be certain points that they have in common. In the first place, all (Mahsun, Isa, Meryem, Transvestite, Dwarf) occupy "a negative subject position"[317] in the films even though their personal attributes and living practices are considerably different from each other. What this means is that none of the characters have any control of their own lives. They are deprived of strength, will, and hope to interfere in what happens in their surroundings. In this sense even a small unexpected incident or a sudden encounter with someone might serve to change and even destroy their lives. The characters are enmeshed in the very midst of the struggle and turmoil of life. Moreover, in all three films, there is no particular information about the origins of the characters (except the general portrayal of Isa which is presented by himself in the scene of player election for advertising film). Throughout the films, audiences are not given the previous experiences of the characters; what they were doing in the past, where they lived, when they came to Istanbul and why they are here. All these people appear in the films thus are with no past to hold them back, and they seem to live in an eternal present being devoid of any sense of what the future would bring. That means, simultaneously, the lack of belonging anywhere and the disappearing of the future. Indeed, all five characters in the films do not have any hopes and expectations for either the present life or the life to come. What this brings to the fore is the transformation of Istanbul from the city of dreams into the place of despair, fear, and sorrow.

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[317] Asuman Suner, op. cit. , Autumn 2002, p. 98

### 4.3.3 Istanbul: The City of Fear and Despair:

If every discourse sets up a particular spatial order and practice, the cinematic film would be the most appropriate form of this as a narrative generated by the features of the transience, movement, and flow. That means, the constituent which makes the film is not only the characters and their lives, but also, even sometimes more, the world/environment they live in. "As a language, a way of picturing and enframing the world", the film brings onto the scene a whole range of spaces in different characteristics[318]: pastoral landscapes, villages, rural towns, suburbs, small cities, metropolises, and the like. What this brings to mind is the question of what place the film tells the story, and this is one of the major elements that connect the three films to be examined in this thesis. Remembering the characters and their lives discussed in previous part, all stories being told in the films take place in the city of Istanbul; so to speak, they all are films of Istanbul. From the general point of view, in all three films, the changing cityscape of Istanbul and its living experiences come into sight, even though certainly from different aspects. In this sense, the interest of this part would be to attempt to reveal the spatial and social representation of Istanbul in the light of the cinematic journey of the city in Turkish cinema.

Before starting to examine the films, however, there is need to mention some points that would, I believe, be helpful for the discussion of the cityscape of Istanbul appearing on the screen, both visually and conceptually. In the first place, despite the fact that all the film narratives take place in Istanbul, the city they put into picture is highly diverse from each other; each film tells a different story about the city of Istanbul. There appear various city experiences, and, in parallel to that, various city images and visual perceptions. At this point, one might ask in what context the three films would be taken into consideration. As a matter of fact, there

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[318] Iain Chambers, "Maps, Movies, Musics and Memory" in *The Cinematic City* ed. by David B. Clarke (London and New York: Routledge, 1997): p. 230

is not a certain way to be followed in this sense, because the films do not present the city of Istanbul in its totality, but rather they reveal its many layers as a fragmented and fluctuating object consisting of dissimilar realities and different practices. What this implies is a special nature of modern city and of urban experience, which is that "it offers a merely particular adventure for each individual."[319] Indeed, all these films bring onto the scene the cityscape of Istanbul through the stories of single individuals. Just as the characters in the films change, so do their living quarters and, in this way, the social and spatial practices in the city take a new form. Thus, in each film, the audiences witness a different facet of Istanbul both conceptually and visually. Nevertheless, there remains something they have in common: in all of the three films, the city of Istanbul come into sight with a particularly dark urban imaginary, which is very consistent with the current representation of the city in Turkish cinema. This is the main issue to be addressed in analysis of the films.

From the general point of view, the films in this thesis might seem to present mainly two different and even perhaps contradictory city views. The city of Istanbul disappears from the screen in the films of "Whistle If You Come Back" and "The Third Page", while the film "Somersault in a Coffin" presents the city with its representative images and symbols which have hitherto been continuously used in Turkish cinema; the view of Bosphorus, historical places, and its natural beauty. However, despite the classical spatial presentation of the cityscape, the film "Somersault in a Coffin" does not have any similarity and consistency with old Turkish films in terms of the visualization of Istanbul; it is closr to the city images that appear in the films of the nineties.[320] That is to say, it releases from the old discourses on the attraction of the city and, instead, creates a new social format using urban space in a completely different context. Accordingly, the distinction in

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[319] Nermi Uygur, "Kentler, Köyler" in *Cogito*, Number 8, Summer 1996, p. 142

[320] Asuman Suner, op. cit. , Autumn 2002, p. 90

the visual representation of Istanbul vanishes in the conceptual image of the city, and all three films come together in the social setting of the urban landscape.

To start with the film “The Third Page”, the visual setting of the film is limited to some particular places, and most of the action takes place between the neighborhood of the characters and their work place. In this sense, apart from a few scenes, there are not any city images seen throughout the film. Since the narration for the most part occurs in inner spaces, the visual atmosphere providing by the film is grim and dreary in a certain sense. With its miserable buildings, rundown apartments, and poor houses, the film gives to the audiences a sort of feeling of depression and gloom which penetrates the lives of the characters. In the film, the main characters Isa and Meryem live in the basement of an old apartment in fairly bad conditions. The flat of Isa consists of merely a tiny single room with an iron-fenced window from which the feet of the people walking on the street can be seen. All his household goods in the room are a bed, a table, a chair, and an old carpet on the floor. The walls of the room are covered by the posters of arabesk films and some photographs which were shot in the set where he works. This is the small world of Isa, and his only connection with the outside world is a small window whose curtains are almost always closed. Opposite the one room flat of Isa is Meryem’s house, which is relatively better, but still in poor living conditions. The most noticeable object is an old television which is on most of the time. Except that, there are only some basic goods in her flat.

In addition to these two main settings, there is need to mention about the inside of the apartment building, which plays a substantial part in the spatial setting of the film. Many of the incidents throughout the film take place in apartment corridors, particularly at the doors: the threat of the landlord to get the unpaid rent from Isa, the killing of the landlord, the attack of the mafia type leader’s henchmen to collect the stolen money from Isa, and most conversations between the characters. Thus, this transitional place itself becomes significant in terms of the development of

the film's story; and, more importantly for the discussion here, it has an undeniable effect on the construction of the visual atmosphere of the film. With its narrow stairs, ruined plaster and crumbling walls, and dark brown painting, the inside of the apartment gives the viewer an oppressive and stifling impression. In particular, the use of rather dark tones and dim light and also the frame in frame technique employed in the film reinforce that effect while at the same time making it aesthetic.[321] Apart from the view of the camera which constitutes the outside frame, in most scenes the incidents are shown within another frame, using one of the spatial elements in the film such as a door or window. Moreover, the interior spaces in the film are mostly displayed in a distorted perspective through high or low shot in order to emphasize the sense of being of closed-in or of being suppressed. Thus, the film "The Third Page" creates a claustrophobic atmosphere which effectively mirrors the pressure on the characters and their isolation.

The spatial setting of the film "The Third Page" does not merely consist of inner spaces, however. Even though the majority of the incidents take place in the interior of the apartment, the flats of the characters and their workplace, some shots of the cityscape environment also appear. These city images, however, have almost no relation with the city of Istanbul. Sometimes it is even uncertain whether the location of the film is a city or a small town. The city space becomes nothing more than "any space whatsoever" which lacks of singularity and particular determination.[322] Despite the fact that it took place in Istanbul, as Suner states, "the film does not reflect the historical and geographical sights of the city."[323] In "The

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[321] Asuman Suner, "1990'lar Türk Sinemasından Taşra Görüntüleri: Masumiyet'te Döngü, Kapatılmışlık, Klostrofobi ve İroni" in *Toplum ve Bilim*, Number 92, Spring 2002, p. 186

[322] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement Image* trans. by Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1989): pp. 111-122

[323] Asuman Suner, "Horror of a Different Kind: Dissonant Voices of the New Turkish Cinema" in *Screen*, Number 45, Winter 2004, p. 315

Third Page", for instance, there is not one panoramic shot of the city of Istanbul. Instead, the city comes into sight with its deserted streets and obscure alleyways in an ordinary flow of everyday life. The important point here is that the sense of oppression and claustrophobia which pervades in the scenes of inner spaces also continues to be felt in the exterior shots. With the close-ups of the characters, the scenes of the city streets with narrow angle, and the consequential exclusion of any views of the environment, the film does not allow the viewer to be released from the stifling atmosphere, even in outer scenes.[324] Thus, in "The Third Page", the city of Istanbul itself becomes a closed landscape which offers a dreary, suffocating, and isolating experience.

Similar to the city images in "The Third Page," Istanbul also comes onto the screen with its unknown cityscapes and ordinary streets in the film "Whistle If You Come Back." Except the view of Istiklal Street, throughout the film, no picture that signifies the city of Istanbul is seen. However, this time, the mundane flow of daily life in the previous film is replaced by the rather gloomy and dangerous night experience of the city, in particular of the region around Beyoglu. There are only a small number of scenes which are shot in the daytime, and even these are used to strengthen the effect of the night views through the juxtaposition of light and dark. The daytime shots of the city in the film do not give the viewer a feeling of spaciousness and relief however. On the contrary, the fearful and oppressive atmosphere of the city during the nights continues to be felt in the daylight hours. In my opinion, such representation is strongly related to the replacement of ordinary people in the previous film (The Third Page) with the marginal people of Istanbul in the film "Whistle If You Come Back." This is not surprising, considering the living

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[324] The shot of outdoor spaces in such way, which gives the impression of being closed and pressure is highly observed, too, in Demirkubuz's other film "Innocence". For a detailed look at the spatial setting and visual atmosphere of the film "Innocence", see Asuman Suner, op. cit. , Spring 2002, pp. 185-187.

practices of the characters of the films in the city. Since the dwarf and the transvestite in the film are harshly excluded by urban life, their living spaces within the city and also the times they experience the city are very limited. Throughout the film, there is almost no shot in which the characters appear in urban open public spaces during daylight. Instead, naturally, much of the narration takes place in no-go areas and bad parts of the city of Istanbul, and so in this way the viewer witnesses the harsh and perilous nocturnal lives on the narrow, gloomy streets of the city from the very start of the film. On this point, the scenes of the dwarf encountering the incidents of murder, rape and other acts of violence and crime during his way to home at night, and, in particular, the sequence of the pursuit of the transvestite by three men on the back streets of Beyoglu at the beginnings of the film, are the most outstanding parts of the film "Whistle If You Come Back."

The inner spaces used in this film are quite similar in certain respects to that of the film "The Third Page." In the first place, the apartment building that the dwarf lives in, which is the main location of the film, looks very old and dilapidated as it does the same with that of Meryem and Isa in the previous film. However, this time, instead of the basement flats, there appears a small terrace flat, which is in relatively better condition. In the film, the dwarf does not seem to lack for nothing essential in his house. Nevertheless, in all scenes of the flat, the viewer is given a stifling and heavy impression that reminds the atmosphere of the film "The Third Page." In a similar way with the appearance of Isa's one-room flat, the dwarf's flat is conveyed throughout the film by using dark tones and dim lights; even some daylight shots of the place almost seem to be taken at night. Certainly this dark and gloomy view is not peculiar to the flat of the dwarf; it is the overall general visual atmosphere of the film, with only one exception: the flat of the landlord, Madam Lena. In the film there exist two shots of this place, and, in both shots, the interior of the flat is shown in relatively bright tones or sunlight in contrast with the rest of the film. However, it would be hard to tell that these scenes give the viewer the impression of liveliness and hope. Rather, the flat of Madam Lena stands as another world apart from

the whole film, which seems to belong to a different time slice. Even more, it is considerably felt as if time stopped in the scenes of Madam Lena talking to the dwarf in her flat. In particular, a slow moving shot of the interior of the flat from left to right with the melancholic talk of Madam Lena who is seen at the end of the movement of the camera sitting on a chair holding the dwarf is, I think, the most remarkable image in the film that conveys the state of timelessness or, more correctly, of being outside the present time. Everything in the flat, an old fashion big double bed with white sheets, old furniture, and the pictures of the youth of Madam Lena, are reminiscent of early times. Thus, the film creates a partially nostalgic atmosphere emphasizing on the beauties and values to be lost in the face of the changing living conditions in the city.

As for the last film to be examined in the thesis, "Somersault in a Coffin" puts into picture the city of Istanbul in a considerably different manner from the previous two films. In contrast to the unexceptional city image appearing in the films of "The Third Page" and "Whistle If You Come Back", Istanbul comes into view in the film "Somersault in a Coffin" with its most well-known spatial characteristics. The film with most of the narration taken place in outdoor settings uses the historical sites of Istanbul and its natural beauty in almost all scenes. The blue water of the sea, the the view of the Bosphprus, the Rumelihisari Fortress and its surroundings, Asiyan Cemetery, Fatih Bridge, and Galata Bridge are continuously displayed throughout the film. On the account of this overwhelming use of the cityscape of Istanbul in the film, "Somersault in a Coffin" comes into conflict with not only the other two films under consideration here, but also with the general tendency in Turkish cinema of the nineties which is that the city of Istanbul apparently starts to disappear from the screen.[325] Contrary to the claustrophobic places, rundown buildings and ordinary cityscapes in such films as "Innocence", "Trace", and "The Third Page", or, on the

[325] Asuman Suner, op. cit. , Autumn 2002, p. 86

other hand, dark and dingy places of no-go areas of the city in the films like "Heavy Novel", "On-board", "The Bandit", and "Whistle If You Come Back", Istanbul comes into view in the film "Somersault in a Coffin" with the charming scenery of the city environment. A large majority of the incidents throughout the film occur outdoors; there are only a few scenes that actually show interior spaces even though the film was shot during the winter season. Even more importantly, a house or something similar does not appear in any of the shots of interior spaces. Instead, the film "Somersault in a Coffin" displays the transitional places such as a coffee house, the coffee house's toilet, a police station, a construction site, and the inside of a car and other motor vehicles which do not allow the viewer to feel the sense of belonging, protection, warmth and safety. For this reason, in this film, "the inside" is not constructed in a positive manner; but rather it conveys negative connotative meanings such as confinement, restriction, and frustration.[326] Particularly, the scenes of the police station that show the intense violence that the chief character (Mahsun) is exposed to are the most prominent examples of the use of the inside in that sense.

The choice of such inner places and also the intense use of the city environment in the film are not accidental. They are closely connected with the story of which the film "Somersault in a Coffin" tells, and even perhaps more correctly, whose story it puts into picture. That is the main element that connects the city image in the film "Somersault in a Coffin" with that appearing in the other two films to be examined here, e.g., "Whistle If You Come Back" and "The Third Page." Since most of the characters in the film are homeless or poor people with no regular job and family, naturally, the film's narration for the most part takes place in the outer spaces of the city of Istanbul. At this point, there is need to consider the visual representation of Istanbul in the film "Somersault in a Coffin" with regard to the conceptual image of

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[326] Asuman Suner, op. cit. , 1994, p. 96

the city. As it is mentioned at the beginning, the cinematic view of Istanbul in the film is considerably different from the classical city image which had been used during the history of Turkish cinema. Despite the significant use of familiar visual images of the city of Istanbul that have taken place in collective memory, the film "Somersault in a Coffin" does not share the old discourses on the attraction of the city which (re)produce the mythos of Istanbul. Instead, in the film, the same city scenes are shown from a distinct perspective which provides to the viewer a new way of perception and interpretation for the city of Istanbul. The film "Somersault in a Coffin" empties the content of well-known city images and representational forms and gives them new meanings by using the urban space of Istanbul in different social contexts. For instance, the view of Bosphorus is used to an excessive degree throughout the film; yet this beautiful city scene which has appeared in the background of most love stories in Turkish cinema is foregrounded as a physical living space of homeless people in "Somersault in a Coffin"; and thus it addresses a completely different urban reality. Contrary to the appealing atmosphere in the films of the sixties and seventies, the view of Bosphorus here corresponds to cold and death. Throughout the film, the viewer sees this admiring city scenery alongside the bruised face and shivering body of Mahsun who is freezing from the cold weather. Moreover, in the very beginnings of the film, Sari, a friend of Mahsun, freezes to death while sleeping in a boat on the seashore. Therefore, on the one hand, the film "Somersault in a Coffin" makes aesthetic the city of Istanbul consistent with the general tendency in the history of Turkish cinema, and on the other hand, creates the impression of discomfort and unease through the same image.[327] This is in a sense nothing more than the destruction of the city myth of Istanbul. The important point here is that, this time, Istanbul loses its magic and appeal not through the disappearance of the cityscape from the screen as it occurs in the previous two films ("Whistle If You Come Back" and "The Third

[327] Asuman Suner, op. cit. , Autumn 2002, p. 100

Page"). On the contrary, ironically, the film "Somersault in a Coffin" demolishes the city myth of Istanbul using well known city images over and over again.

As it is mentioned earlier, the transformation of the city image of Istanbul on the big screen has occurred not only in terms of the spatial characteristics of the cityscape, but also in terms of the social dynamics of urban living. In this sense, there is need to examine the conceptual presentation of the city of Istanbul in relation with the changing living conditions and shifting values in urban area alongside with the visual appearance of Istanbul in the three films to be discussed above. However, this time, the films would not be taken into account one by one separately, as it has been done in previous parts. Instead, the social construction of urban place will be examined by considering the three films together in relation to each other in order to provide a general picture of urban conditions in the city of Istanbul which are inscribed by the films. The main reason for choosing this approach is that the social construction of the city in the films is quite similar in opposition to the differentiation that appears in the spatial representation of the city. In this sense, the general attributes of the characters, their social relations, and also, even more importantly, how they perceive and interpret the city of Istanbul will be analyzed by following the common elements in three films of which each presents a different face of the city.

Generally speaking, the main feature shared by all the three films here under consideration is that they all bring into view the city of Istanbul with a negative urban imaginary, as the site of anxiety, frustration, alienation and despair. Although each film reveals different urban realities and, parallel to that, different urban practices; the overall general theme of the films is based on the dehumanizing city conditions resulting from economic and social changes. It is possible to observe this issue, that is, the changing city life, mostly with reference to the past, in the case of either dialogues between the characters or the incidents that happen throughout the films. The most apparent example of this is, in my opinion, the melancholic

conversation of Madam Lena with the dwarf in the film "Whistle If You Come Back." In this part, Madam Lena (the landlord of the dwarf) talks about the old days of the city of Istanbul with yearning and longing: "It was not like this in old times. All people helped each other. The best of friendships and loves were there to live. Look at the streets now, listen to them… The voices are hung on the laundry ropes, window sills, halls of buildings. But nothing is for real. Like my game, everything is worked out. Everybody is aware of this, but they act as if they are not. Nothing is sincere. Purity is dead, even in children. Can you hear the voices? Listen…" In fact, this talk of Madam Lena gives the general profile of the current Istanbul which is inscribed in the narration of the three films to be examined here. What she tells about the transformation of the city, so to speak, particularly the degenerating social connections in the city, is noticeably felt in all of the three films." In particular, the film "The Third Page" can be seen as a concrete example of the words of Madam Lena, which is to say that the relations between the characters in the film and also their situation in the face of the difficulties of urban life confirm Madam Lena's wistful talk in most sense. Besides, in the film "The Third Page", the viewer is given some clues about the general portrayal of the people living in the city of Istanbul. Certainly, the change does not appear only in the city life itself, but also it comes out in the population of the city of Istanbul. This would be revealed in the film "The Third Page" through the scene of player selection for an advertising film:

**--** Start.

-- I was born in 1938 in Erzurum. I am married, have three children, one at university. I was a civil servant for 27 years. I worked for the Highway Department. I am retired. For four years I have been acting in films, soap operas and commercials. In speaking parts.

**--** Do you have any dreams you want to come true?

-- Why have dreams? We have them and what happens?

**--** Nothing at all? A house, a fancy car, a summer house maybe?

-- (Laughing), unfortunately.

……...

**--** Tell us about yourself.

-- How?

-- Where you were born, what you do, what you expect from life.

-- I was born in Maraş. I have done lots of jobs, all over. Building work, street selling. I have sold cassettes, posters

-- What do you expect from life? What do you dream of?

-- I dream but…

**--** Yes.

-- But dreams are a waste of time.

**--** Like how?

-- You dream, but nothing happens.

**--** Dreaming and knowing that nothing will happen makes you…

-- Makes you what?

**--** It is no good for you. Makes you feel bad.

-- What do you dream of most?

**--** SILENCE…

……...

-- I am from Adana. I am 21. I am a student in Istanbul.

-- What are you studying?

-- Business studies. But that is not what I really want.

**--** What do you want?

-- To be an actor and director.

**--** Actor and director?

-- Yes.

**--** Why?

-- I have got some ideas on life and society. I want to share these with people. Like Yılmaz Güney.

**--** Like Yılmaz Güney?

-- Yes.

**--** Do you believe in that?

-- Yes, I do. Besides, Yılmaz Güney was 21 like me when he came to Istanbul. If you remember, Mehmet the Conquerer was 21 when he conquered Istanbul. Who knows? Maybe…

……...

-- My name is Isa Demirci. I'm from Çankırı. I'm the oldest of four brothers. I came to Istanbul after my military service. An army friend was the reason I came. Like most people, I have done lots of different jobs. But none of them very long.

**--** What are your expectations?

-- I haven't really got big expectations. Maybe in time have a family, and be useful for my country.

**--** At least once play the lead role in a film or soap.

-- Why do you want?

-- I don't know. Yet, if I did, I think it would be good. I'd like to know what it feels like.

-- What role would you like?

-- It doesn't matter. But, I'd like to play someone who succeeds despite all the pain. Someone honest and good. Maybe, like Ibrahim abi.

-- Do you believe you could act a role that well?

-- SILENCE.

The interviews just above for the selection of a player give some clues, even partially, about the people living in the city of Istanbul. In this sense, the most common feature of the candidates which is very consistent with the current population of Istanbul is that none of them were born in the city of Istanbul. They all come from different parts of the country such as Erzurum, Maraş, Adana and Çankırı and struggle to survive in the city of Istanbul. Even the retired old man who apparently migrated to the city long years ago has to work in order to be able to make a living; so to speak, he is still in a struggle. What is more, the general portrait that is attempted to be given in the film "The Third Page" for the people in the city of Istanbul is quite miserable. Noticably, the answers given by the candidates, particularly for one question, are very similar. When they are asked about dreams or dreaming, almost all candidates respond in the same way, which is that none of them can tell something certain about what they want to have or to achieve. Even they seem to forget dreaming, aspiring or wishing; more correctly, the act of dreaming does not mean anything to these people. In this sense, the response of the first man who is a retired civil servant is very meaningful. When it is asked whether he has any dreams he wants to come true, he answers with a question of his own, such as "Why have dreams? We have them and what happens?" This implies, certainly, the man's loss of his hope and belief in life and, anyhow this is apparently felt in the bitter laugh of the man in the end when they insist with a similar question. This very pessimistic view, which can be observed in the answers of the second person, slightly changes in the case of the last candidate, Isa, who is the chief character in the film at the same time. In opposition to the other two people

coming for the player election, Isa has some expectations and wishes for the future; however, the important thing here is that he does not seem so hopeful or confident to be able to make them become true. Isa even himself cannot entirely believe in the fulfillment of what he wants. He is fairly aware of how difficult it is to achieve his demands, which are to have a family or more importantly to play a lead role, in the face of the hard living conditions of the city. On that point, the silence of Isa at the end of the interview, in response to the question "Do you believe you could act a role that well?", is anyhow the most evident indication of this situation. As for the student who wants to be an actor and director, his answers are noticeably different from that of the other three. At first, he looks very decided and self confident about what he wants to do. But nevertheless, this does not put him in a thoroughly distinct position, because the student as a young person does not carry much conviction with the words he tells about his plans for the future. In fact, I think the situation of the student is quite ironic, and even tragic, particularly considering the persons (Yılmaz Güney and Mehmet the Conquerer) with whom he in a sense identifies himself and the connection he tries to make between them and himself. He implies that he has a chance for accomplishing his dreams in the city of Istanbul by noting that he came to Istanbul at the same age as Yılmaz Güney and II. Mehmet, who conquered the city at that age. Evidently, these elements through which he tries to connect with and makes plans for the future are very mystical and unreal. This shows us at one level his desperate situation in the city of Istanbul.

Another important point associated with the conceptual representation of the city is that all the three films attempt to deal with the issue of alienation and its relation with urban living. In particular, they focus on the decline and degeneration in social relationships and, parallel to that, the sense of isolation, loneliness, and insecurity that modern urban life produces. The dwarf and the transvestite in the film "Whistle If You Come Back", the homeless people (Mahsun, Sarı) in the film "Somersault in a Coffin", the figure artist (Isa) and the cleaner (Meryem) in the film "The Third Page", all these characters, most of whom are excluded by the social order of

the city in different ways are extremely alone. They seem to have no family, no relative, and even no friend. For instance, in both "Somersault in a Coffin" and "Whistle If You Come Back", the chief characters share their loneliness with animals. While Mahsun steals into the fortress and gently caresses the peacock holding it in his arms, the dwarf, on the other hand, mostly appears talking to his dogs on the terrace. The words of the dwarf reflect his situation in the life: "He is right, I'm very ugly. That's why I'm alone. And, what if you were not here."

As for the film "The Third Page", there is almost no relation between the people who live in the same apartment. Even the chief characters (Isa and Meryem) as next-door neighbors are ignorant of each other until the killing of the landlord. In this sense, I think, the scene that shows the conversation between Meryem and Isa at the door of Meryem's house is one of the most apparent examples that reveal the deterioration and neglect being widely felt in social relations of big city:

**Meryem**: What is it? Come on, tell me.

**Isa**: I just wanted to ask…

**Meryem**: What?

**Isa**: Aren't you afraid of?

**Meryem**: Of what?

**Isa**: Well, you don't even know me? This is Istanbul.

**Meryem**: Why are you afraid?

**Isa**: I am not. Why should I be?

**Meryem**: Does it bother you?

**Isa**: Of course, not. You helped me.

**Meryem**: I don't know. Anyway, suit yourself. As I said, if you need anything, just say so.

**Isa**: Thanks. Goodbye.

The above conversation occurred the day after Meryem helped to Isa who had been violently attacked by a mafia type leader. The surprising thing for Isa, and also that which caused him to make such conversation is that Meryem took him into her home for breakfast even without knowing anything about Isa. This is certainly not typical behavior expected from a city person who always feels fear and

insecurity, and for this reason needs to preserve her/himself against the potential danger and risks that the city embodies. This is noticeably felt in the words of Isa, which is that, "Well, you don't even know me? This is Istanbul."

Moreover, it is possible to observe the similar attitude, even perhaps more strongly, in the scene that Meryem tells Isa about the night that the landlord was killed: "There was no sound in the building. The police didn't come. There was no sign of the neighbors. It was as though everyone was waiting like me. …… Somehow I decided to go upstairs. I kept remembering the murder films I'd seen on television. I listened to each flat as I went upstairs. In one flat they were talking and laughing. I could hear Yıldo's talk show in another. From another came the sound of a sex film turned up loud." This explanation of Meryem which reveals the alienation and segregation to be lived in modern urban life reminds, in a sense, the remarks of Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar about the city of Istanbul of the forties. In his book *Five Cities (Beş Şehir)*, Tanpınar interprets the changing spatial and social practices in the city of Istanbul at that time: "Today, the neighborhood is gradually replaced with the apartment in which the above flat is unaware, fatally ignorant of the one below, like a little Babel, and the sound of a different radio station overflow from its every window."[328] Over the fifty-year time period, televisions took the place of radios, and, in this way, the sound of different television channels started to be heard from each flat. In this context, it is not surprising that television takes a substantial role commonly in all the three films: the sequence of the affliction of the dwarf before his death at home in the end of the film "Whistle If You Come Back"; the scene of Reis and other people in the coffee house watching the news of Mahsun who strangled and tried to eat one of the peacocks at Rumelihisarı Castle in the film "Somersault in a Coffin"; the scene of Isa and Meryem having breakfast at Meryem's house and the scene that Meryem tells Isa everything from the beginning

[328] Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, *Beş Şehir* (İstanbul: YKY, 1999): p. 163

in her new flat at the end of the film "The Third Page". In most of these sequences, a turned-on but mainly unwatched television is used in the background of the main incidents. While the screen is mostly not shown, the sound of television is noticeably high to be heard alongside the conversations of the characters. The use of television in the films can be interpreted in different ways; either as to reveal the sense of alienation and loneliness or as to remind the viewer the relation between reality and fiction which becomes a blur through the film itself.[329] However, all that will not be discussed at present since they are not directly related with the main concern of the thesis. Rather, the attempt here is to point out the fact that television appears more or less as one of the main elements of modern urban life in all the three films.

Finally, the point which has to be considered in terms of the social setting of the city is that, in the films here under consideration, the city of Istanbul is marked by intensive violence and also, parallel to that, by fears and perceptions of violence and danger. Without any exception, the chief characters are repeatedly exposed to aggression and violent behaviors to an excessive degree throughout the films. To give an example, the terrible beating of Isa by a mafia type leader, the exposure of Meryem to harassment and abuse by her husband, and the killing of the landlord by Isa in the film "The Third Page"; the exposure of the transvestite to fierce assault by three men at night, the killing of the prostitute by her husband, Adıgüzel, being stabbed twenty times, the death of the dwarf owing to the brutal attack of two men who want to take his money in the film "Whistle If You Come Back"; the

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[329] Suner interprets the use of television, particularly Yesilcam melodramas in the films of Demirkubuz with the term "metafiction" that is taken from Paticia Waugh. For Waugh, metafiction is a fiction text which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its own statue as an "artefact" in order to be able to question the relationship between the fiction and reality. And by employing Waugh's theory of metafiction, Suner claims that the use of television and the references to Yesilcam melodramas, on the one hand, create an illusion, and on the other they uncover the illusion to be created in the narration. See Asuman Suner, op. cit. , Spring 2002, p. 192. For a detailed account of "metafiction", see Patricia Waugh, *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction* (London: Methuen, 1984)

continuous cruel beating of Mahsun by policemen, security guard, and, at last, by the local fisherman who helps him throughout the film "Somersault in a Coffin" are the most prominent sequences that reveal the violence and oppression arising in the city of Istanbul. The important point here, concerning the urban life, is that violence comes into sight as an ordinary part of everyday reality that the characters experience throughout the films. It constitutes one of the essential elements of the relation between the characters and modern city life. Certainly, in such conditions that no one is secure and safe, it would be unexpected that there would be the sense of ownership of or belonging in urban space. Instead the city of Istanbul turns into an arena of struggle for its inhabitants where they have to relentlessly struggle against the potential danger, violence and disregard.

### 4.3.4 Istanbul: The City of the Struggle and Survival:

In the light of the above discussions on both the general attributes of the characters and the representation of the cityscape of Istanbul, the attempt in this section is to explore the changing city experience of Istanbul that appears on the big screen. For this purpose, the three films, "Whistle If You Come Back", "Somersault in a Coffin", and "The Third Page" will be examined first in terms of the situation of the characters in the face of urban life which enforces the series of rules and commands, and then, in terms of the ways they struggle for being able to live in the city of Istanbul.

From a general point of view, the relation between the characters and urban life that they seem to experience in the films is based on exclusion, abandonment, and neglect. Common to all the three films, the urban landscape of Istanbul is constructed with reference to distance, obstacles and interference which prevent the people in the city from becoming involved in societal life. In this sense, the living spaces of the characters within the city and also the times they experience the city are very limited. They do not appear so often outside public places that serve as the

main areas for social interaction and collective activity in urban area. Certainly, this social and spatial exclusion takes place in different forms and levels parallel to the main attributions of the characters in the films. While ordinary small people of the city experience of Istanbul relatively easier and more comfortable though they still encounter great obstacles and difficulties, the people who live on the margins of the city, on the other hand, are harshly left outside urban life. I think, at this point, the film "Whistle If You Come Back" is the greatest example which reveals the negative and even destructive relation between the city of Istanbul and its inhabitants since the exclusion of the characters in the film derives from either the physical defects (the dwarf) or sexual identity (transvestite), which are certainly more visible and also more sensitive attributes.

Having considered the chief characters and their distinguishing elements in the film, it would be claimed that the dwarf and the transvestite almost have no place in the existing urban order. This situation is most evidently observed in the shots in which the characters appear in the open public spaces of the city of Istanbul. Remarkably, there is only one sequence that the dwarf and transvestite experience the cityscape together, and this is, in my opinion, one of the most striking parts of the film "Whistle If You Come Back." Before examining this sequence, however, there is need to consider the conversation between the dwarf and the transvestite which occurs in the previous scene. While the dwarf drinks alone towards morning at the bar where he works, all of a sudden, the transvestite appears and joins him. The talk of these two at the table gives some clues about the situation of the characters in the city of Istanbul, particularly that of the dwarf. When the transvestite asked "Do you always sit up?", the answer of the dwarf is very significant: "Not always. Why do you think I drink? Now all the city stare at me." This sentence expresses in a certain sense the exclusion of the dwarf in urban life because of his physical appearance. What is more, it is possible to find the traces of the same kind of relation with the city in the words of the transvestite that he tells before the attempt of experiencing one of the central streets of the city of Istanbul: "Come man, we're going. Do

we always have to walk at night? Let's walk towards the sun this time." That certainly implies the state of restriction which is lived by the characters in urban environment, particularly in terms of time; and, that would be poignantly shown in the next scene picturing Istiklal Street. In this scene, the dwarf and the transvestite appear on Istiklal Street in the lonely hours of the early morning when there are rather less people rushing and strolling hither and thither. While they walk hand in hand together, people on the street stare at this "extraordinary twosome" with curious and also even more cynical eyes. Then, a few people start following them and, gradually there emerges a circle around the dwarf and the transvestite that attempts to block their way, so that, they have to promptly escape. The sequence finishes with the scene of one of the gloomy and narrow crossroads of the Istiklal Street which the transvestite runs into holding the dwarf in his arms. Thus, the attempt of the characters to experience the city center of Istanbul results in frustration and eventually failure. What this shows is the limits of the capacity of freedom empowered by the city of Istanbul for the visibility of the outcasts and marginal people. As one of the main public areas which the city inhabitants are able to encounter and participate in urban life, the Istiklal Street in the film "Whistle If You Come Back" is represented in terms of exclusion, oppression, and inaccessibility. That is to say, as it is obviously seen in the scene just mentioned above, the city center turns into almost a no-go area for both the transvestite and the dwarf during the daytimes while, ironically, their own living territory is considered as a no-go area for many natives of the city of Istanbul. This would be anyhow reflected on the juxtaposition of two spaces at the end of the sequence by the passing from the light shot of the Istiklal Street to the dark and gloomy shot of the crossroad which the transvestite runs into.

At this point, there is need to remember the general aspects of the living quarters of the dwarf and the transvestite within the city of Istanbul as the outcasts of urban life. As it is mentioned in previous sections, these people have respective places to live in big city, which are however not within the sight of those respected

"urbanities."[330] The place which is given by modern urban life for either the transvestite or the dwarf is the poorest neighborhoods of Beyoglu behind the luminous city streets where no one can see them and hear their voices. Nevertheless, neither the dwarf nor the transvestite can leave the city of Istanbul. Because, even though it is not limitless, the tolerance for differences is at least relatively more intense in urban life than the small towns and villages. So to speak, there is no place to exist apart from this small world they create in the city. It is possible to observe this state of desperation in the words of the transvestite who is afraid of being cross examined by the police for the killing of the prostitute by her husband, Adigüzel: "You don't understand! You don't understand! I have no hair to be cut. They'll banish me to another city. I'll die in another city. I'll die." Indeed, having considered the societal structure, moral values and religious beliefs of the country, it seems very difficult and even impossible for the transvestite to sustain his life in another place different from the city of Istanbul, particularly in small towns or provinces. Thus inevitably, the city becomes "home" to him, which is, however, lack of the sense of ownership and belonging.

The peculiar construction of urban space as hostile and oppressive is similarly seen in the film "Somersault in a Coffin", but certainly in different ways and contexts. Similar to the situation of both the dwarf and the transvestite in the film "Whistle If You Come Back", Mahsun's attempt of practicing the cityscape of Istanbul always encounters difficulties and obstructions. The most often heard words throughout the film are "forbidden", "no", or "not allowed". This situation of control and restriction is acutely felt in Mahsun's talk with one of the peacocks, which he took from the fortress, while racing through the city at night: "I could only take you. I'm sorry for separating you from the others. I wish I could take you all away. But they won't let me. They never let me do anything anymore." As he says these things,

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[330] See the section "3.2.2. The Engendering Heroism in Modern City", pp. 49-51

Mahsun cries and screams from the car window towards the other cars passing him on the road; and, this is the reaction that he seems to be able to give in the face of the frustration and anger he lives in the city.

In particular, there are two main sequences in the film "Somersault in a Coffin" which actually reveal Mahsun's experience of being kept out of urban life. One of them is about Mahsun's encounter with a television crew in front of the Rumelihisari Fortress that makes news of the incident that fifty peacocks were given to the fortress as a gift from the Iranian president. In this sequence, a group of people, one of whom carries a camera and related equipments on his shoulder draws the attention of Mahsun; and hereupon he follows them till the front of the Rumelihisari Fortress. Then he approaches them to look at what they have been doing while the woman speaks into a camera. However, this attempt of Mahsun is immediately stopped and he is taken away from the camera. When he tries to look at it again after the speech of the speaker, this time, the foreign director keeps him away by saying "Hadi brother, yok bir şey, defol." The sequence finishes with the question the speaker asks the director about her speech as Mahsun appears to go backwards: "Modern life makes us all alike, that part?" In fact, by contrasting the visual images with verbal expressions, this sentence here is used rather as an ironic device in order to emphasize the excluded situation of Mahsun. As it is seen in the following sequence, modern life which is claimed to "make us all alike" would not allow Mahsun to enter into the Rumelihisari Fortress. The only response that Mahsun receives from the guard for his demand to look at the peacocks in the fortress is "Forbidden":

**Guard**: Where are you going buddy?
**Mahsun**: Into the fortress.
**Guard**: It is forbidden.
**Mahsun**: What?
**Guard**: It is forbidden.
**Mahsun**: I'll look at the animals.
**Guard**: You have to buy a ticket.

**Mahsun**: I know the fortress. I'll look at the birds.

**Guard**: It is forbidden to enter the fortress without a ticket.

**Mahsun**: But we used to enter this place.

**Guard**: It is forbidden now.

**Mahsun**: It wasn't before.

**Guard**: Past is past.

Accordingly, the fortress has become a disallowed area for Mahsun even though he leads his life around this region. Yet, it is seen that the Japan tourists freely and comfortably visit this same place as one of the most prominent visual objects of the cityscape. In the scene just after Mahsun argued with the guard, a group of Japan tourists come into view posing for a photo in front of the fortress with joy and delight. Undoubtedly, there is no place for Mahsun in this picture as a person who lives on the city streets. As Suner aptly says, Mahsun is "yersiz bir fazlalık" for the city of Istanbul.[331] At this point, there is need to consider the relation between subject and space, and therefore address the questions "For whom is the city space?, For inhabitants or for visitors?" In the case of the film "Somersault in a Coffin", this relation is constructed in a very negative way. Throughout the film, the physical proximity does not make any sense in terms of the relations of the characters with their environment; the inhabitant of the space is excluded while the foreign can be included.[332] It is a plain fact that this situation allowing limited spatial experience to Mahsun is directly related to the arrangement and governing of the city space intended for certain purposes, which is particular to present Istanbul as an attractive city with its natural beauties and historical places. That would be clearly seen in the speech of the woman speaker to the camera about the Rumelihisari Fortress in the sequence just mentioned above: "The Iranian President has made a gift of fifty peacocks to our president, Süleyman Demirel. They'll contribute a unique flavor to

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[331] Asuman Suner, op. cit. , Autumn 2002, p. 100

[332] Ibid.

the historically impressive atmosphere of the Rumelihisari Fortress as of this week. The peacocks are now awaiting you to visit them at the Rumelihisari. We strongly suggest you to visit the Rumelihisari Fortress; because here, you will be enjoying history along with the magnificent view of the Bosphorus." The city image of Istanbul which is attempted to be presented here is oriented for visitors, and certainly not part of urban daily life to be experienced by the inhabitants of the city. So to speak, referring to the relation of the characters with the city space, there appears another city image of Istanbul in the film which is unfamiliar to Mahsun's perception of the city and his experience, but even more importantly, which excludes the local residents.

In the final sense, it would not be wrong to claim that the film "Somersault in a Coffin" constructs the city of Istanbul as a restrictive and obstructive space. Despite the fact that the big majority of the narration takes place in exterior spaces, throughout the film the viewer is given the impression that the characters are encircled by "invisible high barriers." [333] In other words, the urban space to be shown in the film encloses poor, homeless people surviving on the city streets by locking and confining them without exit or entrance. Thus, the city of Istanbul comes into view as if almost "an urban prison of modern society, and a modern cell of the human condition."[334] This would be reflected upon the scenes in which Mahsun experiences the city space, particularly the Rumelihisari Fortress. To give an example, the shot of Mahsun appearing on the fortress walls behind the iron fences holding one of the peacocks in his arms is the most prominent one that reflects the sense of restriction and imprisonment to be imposed by the city.

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[333] Zeynep Tül Akbal, op. cit. , p. 295

[334] Ariane Smart, op. cit. , p. 7

As for the last film under consideration here, the relation of person with urban life and environment to be presented in the film "The Third Page" is slightly different from the previous two films due to the change in the general profile of the characters. Since the chief characters in the film are mostly poor ordinary people of Istanbul, one is a home cleaner (Meryem) and the other is a figure artist (Isa), they seem to be able to participate in urban life and experience city environment more comfortably relative to Mahsun, the dwarf, and the transvestite, at least physically. Yet, undoubtedly, this does not mean that they are actively involved in urban life. On the contrary, both Isa and Meryem similarly live in the face of social exclusion, ignorance, and poverty; and, in this sense, they deal with great obstacles and difficulties in order to take place in the city of Istanbul. Even Akbal describes these characters as "itself of the societal residue."[335] The distinguishing aspect of Isa and Meryem from the characters in the other two films is, however, the reasons and the ways they are being excluded from the existing urban order. At the opposite end of the visual and sensitive features, both Isa and Meryem are kept out of urban life because of social and economical deprivations, and for this reason their excluded situation in the city of Istanbul comes onto the scene in the film "The Third Page" more implicitly and obliquely. That is also connected to the fact that most of the narration takes place in interior settings. Throughout the film, apart from the view of the children park and the Istiklal Street, except once, there is almost no shot of Isa and Meryem appearing in open public spaces; so that the audience is not directly given the encounter of the characters with obstructions and suppression in urban social life, particularly in terms of physical access, as it occurs in the other two films, "Whistle If You Come Back" and "Somersault in a Coffin." However, such representation should not be interpreted in the wrong manner; because the lack of the spatial experience of the characters in the film "The Third Page", is very meaningful in itself, which is to say that their invisibility in the urban landscape

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[335] Zeynep Tül Akbal, op. cit. , p. 153

presents the strong evidence of the exclusion, ignorance and frustration that Isa and Meryem live in the city of Istanbul. As it is similar to the examples discussed above, the city does not allow them to be involved or to enter into. Both characters throughout the film survive to be alive being confined to their respective places within the city of Istanbul without any way out, What is more, similar to the film "Somersault in a Coffin", this desperate situation of the characters in urban life strongly manifests itself in the visual presentation of the spatial settings in the film "The Third Page." In particular, the shots of Isa and Meryem appearing behind the chains of swings in the children's park, the shot that Isa appears writing his suicide letter behind the iron fences, and also the use of the shadow of the lattice or fences that reflect on the walls in most scenes are the most prominent examples that give the impression of being locked and imprisoned.

In the light of the above discussion about the situation of the characters in merciless urban life, now, it would be appropriate to take into consideration their ways of coping with the obstacles and difficulties they encounter in the city of Istanbul. Generally speaking, in all the three films, the characters have to find particular ways and means of defense in order to survive against the possible attacks and repression that may take place in urban environment. While this is sometimes an innocuous game to just make time pass, most of the time they are illegal, dangerous and even fatal activities. Certainly, this depends on the circumstances of each character in the films. The more oppression and suffering they experience the more likely the surviving practices become aggressive and violent. Despite the diversity and variety in both the living conditions of the characters and the forms and methods of their struggle, however, there is one point in common to all these, namely the faculty to be employed in order to stay alive in the city of Istanbul. The characters in the films mainly use their intelligence rather than physical prowess for the aim of self-preservation. They attempt to overcome the oppressive conditions of urban life through their particular skills, resourcefulness and also sometimes cunning; and, in this way, they are able to escape in most critical situations of danger and risk,

but certainly not always. Thus, the (practical) intellect serves, in a sense, as a protective organ for the characters in the face of big city which requires a special knowledge of human nature.

Before starting the examination of the films, however, there is need to mention that the attempt here would be to consider the particular examples that prominently represent the urban struggles appearing in the films rather than examining the ways of defense of each character in detail. So, to start, in the film "Whistle If You Come Back", there appear mainly two instances that presumably show different protective patterns and mechanisms, particularly in terms of urban life. The first case is concerned with the situation of an old woman, Madam Lena, who lives with her maidservant and whose son is in Selanik that seems her only relative in the film. In point of fact, Madam Lena plays a very small part in the narration which is as the landlord of one of the chief characters, the dwarf, and she appears only two times throughout the film. Nevertheless, in both sequences, the talks of Madam Lena (with the dwarf) are very significant, expressing her feelings and emotions in the face of passing time and also the changing living conditions paralleling to that. As a lonely old woman, Madam Lena seems to stay inside most of the time spending time with her maidservant, and she produces small innocuous games to stand the loneliness and continue her life. That is, in one of the scenes, Madam Lena clearly explains this "game of loneliness" to the dwarf who happens to see her while she is practicing the game with her maidservant:

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| **Madam Lena**: | You're surprised? This is a game of loneliness between her and me. I leave my jewels in the open. She tries to steal them, I see her at it. Sometimes, I let her take some away. |
| **Dwarf**: | But this is outright theft! |
| **Madam Lena**: | It is a just a game. A game of loneliness, a game of death. So the light falling onto the hall will keep shining, will keep alive. |

In view of that, the experience of Madam Lena could be possibly conceived as a sort of a protective mechanism. Having left all what she has in the past and being alone now, Madam Lena attempts to console herself with simple lies or

imaginary games that she creates on her own. In this way, she becomes able to bear, even partially, the burden of loneliness and boredom.

In the second instance, both the problems to be encountered and the ways and means of defense change to an excessive degree. Contrary to the previous situation, this time, the character of the dwarf is faced with concrete risks and real dangers that might cause serious harm and even death. He is within the realm of survival and struggle, in every sense of the word. The distinctive aspect of the dwarf's position is that the constraints and potential threats are imposed by the external world. Throughout the film, he appears struggling to stay alive in the night life of Beyoglu surrounded by crime and violence. The survival acts of the dwarf do not rely on his physical prowess or strength. As a powerless and vulnerable person, he has to find practical ways of escape from the situation of trouble and danger. In this sense, the solution that the dwarf hits upon in order to preserve himself happens to be pretending to be a night watchman using an alarm whistle while walking on the back streets of the city of Istanbul. During his way to home from work at night, he encounters various incidents of killing, rape, and other kind of violence and harassment. But, thanks to his resourcefulness, the dwarf is able to arrive at his flat without getting involved in any trouble. As the sound of the whistle gives the impression that a night watchman is coming, any person attempting to perpetuate the acts of violence and crime immediately escapes, running into the dark night when s/he hears the whistle. The most concrete example of this is undoubtedly the dwarf's rescue of the transvestite which takes place at the very beginnings of the film. While walking home in late hours of the night, the dwarf hears the screams and cries, and then sees from the distance three men attacking someone. Whereupon he uses the whistle without being seen and makes them run away. Thus, the dwarf happens to save the transvestite's life with a simple but very clever trick. The important point is that the whistle here really serves as a survival device for the characters in the film. If the sound of the whistle had not been heard, for instance, the transvestite would probably have been killed that night. This would come

true in the case of the dwarf. Towards the end of the film, he encounters a sudden, brutal attack of two men who want to take his money. This time, however, there is no one who could blow the whistle for him. So to speak, this incident brings about the end of the dwarf. Although he manages to arrive home, he cannot escape from death.

As it is similar to the living struggles of the characters in the film "Whistle If You Come Back", there appear different ways of surviving within the city of Istanbul in the film "Somersault in a Coffin", too. Remembering that the film tells the story of homeless people living around Rumelihisari, this time, the main endeavor naturally happens to be staying alive on the city streets against heavy odds. More specifically, the chief character in the film, Mahsun, struggles to resist very cold winter conditions of Istanbul being deprived of the most fundamental needs to sustain his life. Throughout the film, he appears trying to find either a place to stay at nights or food to eat. In such circumstances, doubtlessly, Mahsun has to create resourceful solutions, particularly in order to escape from freezing to death. Considering the dwarf's way of defense, however, this time a survival device gives its place to a particular survival skill, in the policeman's words "to practice an art." That is, Mahsun frequently steals a car or any kind of motor vehicle at nights mainly for the purpose of warming up and sleeping. Yet in fact, this act cannot be described as stealing in the exact sense. It would be rather appropriate to name it as "snatching a car;"[336] because, after using the car throughout the night, Mahsun leaves it where he gets it by the first lights of the day. In a sense, he borrows it for a night and that is a way for him to survive poverty and deprivation in the city of Istanbul.

However, at this point, there is need to differentiate the survival skill Mahsun performs in the urban environment from the strategy or tactics which are used to

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[336] Asuman Suner, op. cit. , Autumn 2002, p. 97

achieve certain goals and objectives. Since, in the film, Mahsun steals a car rather coincidentally, but not in a planned and organized way, his practice cannot be considered exactly in terms of purposive rational action or behavior. Noticably, his act of snatching a car or other vehicles occurs spontaneously and without any plan or arrangement for the most part of the film. For instance, in one of the sequences, Mahsun, being driven away from the coffee house comes across an empty public bus whose driver is waiting for sandwich in front of the launch counter. Following on, he all of a sudden gets into the bus and drives off while the driver talks about the result of a match. Mahsun's surviving practice in urban environment mainly relies on a momentary decision rather than systematic and premeditated act. Mahsun does not think one step further ahead. Otherwise he would not be picked up by the police almost every time he performs stealing act. Mahsun is continuously beaten by the policemen in either the police station or the construction site he frequently sleeps at, for the reason that he does not escape or hide, and instead returns straight away to his quarter where he can be easily found. This careless and unaware attitude is similarly observed in several acts of Mahsun throughout the film, such as his snatching reis's boat and sinking it, his attempt to eat one of the peacocks in the fortress and the like. What all this shows is that Mahsun's practice appearing in the film "Somersault in a Coffin" is lack of "exactitude, calculation, and solubility" which are required for surviving in urban environment.[337] That is why Mahsun always loses in the face of the harsh conditions of the city of Istanbul.

It is also decisive that the act of snatching a car provides the character of Mahsun an opportunity of movement and action in urban environment where he always encounters interference and blocks. Mahsun becomes capable of moving away from his neighborhood and experiencing the city space of Istanbul, particularly its city

[337] David Frisby, op. cit. , p. 150

center through this act. In a manner of speaking, he hence enters into city life which rigorously excludes him. However, as required by its definition, snatching a car as the field of activity which contradicts with Mahsun's passive and dependent way of living does not bring a real change; instead it gives him a chance for limited action.[338] Mahsun's travel into the city finishes by the end of the night, and most often by strong violence and oppression. So, his action is nothing but a vicious cyclic movement. He constantly moves throughout the night, but without going anywhere; as if he were stuck in a labyrinth with no way out. That is, paradoxically, Mahsun cannot get outside, escape the city that excludes himself as much as he cannot enter it.[339]

The state of confinement and concealment Mahsun encounters in urban life is strongly felt in the film "The Third Page", too. In fact, this is the prevailing characteristic of Demirkubuz's films in general. As Suner aptly puts, his films "revolve around journeys of entrapment in a social labyrinth," where the characters are "caught up in situations from which there is no way out."[340] Indeed the chief characters in the film "The Third Page", both Meryem and Isa, are plagued with serious physical, financial and emotional blows of urban life, which is possibly observed in the words of Meryem about the incident of the landlord's murder "Everyone is caught in a corner. If you treat people like that of course they will turn on you." Remembering the film plot, the landlord is shot by his tenant (Isa) who is in desperation because of money problems; namely, four moths unpaid rent and fifty dollars that he is supposed to have stolen at his temporary job.

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[338] Asuman Suner, op. cit. , Autumn 2002, p. 98

[339] Ibid.

[340] Asuman Suner, op. cit. , Winter 2004, p. 315

In the face of such circumstances, undoubtedly, the characters in the film could endeavor to do everything possible in order to maintain their daily existence. In this sense, there can be seen different ways of surviving and escaping in the film "The Third Page", just as it is similar to the other two films under consideration here. However, this time, deep laid schemes and diabolic plots are replaced with innocuous games, surviving devices or particular skills appearing in the case of the previous characters, that is, of Madam Lena, the dwarf and Mahsun. To say more specifically, detailing the struggle of wo/man in urban life, the film "The Third Page" reveals the intricate story of how the characters deceive, manipulate and even exploit each other in order to reach their aims and demands. Though it is possible to see this kind of behavior and acts more or less in each character, I think, the strategic position Meryem occupies in the film narrative is the most demonstrative example in this sense which deserves to be examined separately. The distinguishing aspect of Meryem from other characters, particularly from Isa is that she is very determined and driven to escape from her oppressive life being abused and exploited by both her husband and the landlord. Meryem does not care for anything or anyone around herself other than her own interests; and, in this sense, she makes no bones about using Isa who coincidentally (and also strangely) comes into her life and falls in love with her in a short time. She shrewdly manipulates him to get rid of her abusive husband who remains the only obstacle, after the killing of the landlord, to be together with her secret lover, the landlord's son, and also, perhaps more importantly, to reach better and more comfortable living standards. Anyhow, this wish for a good life manifests itself in "the lengthy confessional monologue scene" in which Meryem narrates her story.[341] At one moment of this approximately six-minute long monologue, she says that she would choose the landlord if asked to make a choice between him and her husband: "So what, I thought. They were both

[341] Asuman Suner, op. cit. , Winter 2004, p. 321

despicable wretches. At least, this one had money, we could move upstairs. I could look after my baby." Accordingly, it would not be wrong to state that to get a better life, in her own words, "to move upstairs" is one of the main compelling forces that bring Meryem to the point of doing everything, even to murder.

What is more significantly at issue here is that Meryem already sets herself to get rid of both men her husband and the landlord. As she confesses in the last scene of the film, when Isa finds her in a beautiful apartment, Meryem and the landlord's son would anyway kill him that night unless Isa does. This planned act of murder is similarly seen in her attempt to kill her husband. She concocts a meticulous plan for him when Isa could not manage to do though he attempts twice. At this point, the calmness in Meryem's voice and her consideration of even a tiny detail merit attention. While talking to Isa about such a vicious act of violence including slashing the man's face, she does not seem to have any hesitation or stumble; but, instead, Meryem sounds like "a housewife giving a recipe."[342] Isa, on the other hand, is bewildered and even a little bit frightened by Meryem's cool, calm attitude, particularly about the issue as such.

**Isa**: How shall we do it?

**Meryem**: We'll wait for him to return from the café at night. When he is asleep I'll let you inside. We'll tie his hands and feet, and then strangle him. It won't take five minutes.

**Isa**: Then, what?

**Meryem**: They're digging the foundation of a new building behind here. I looked at it yesterday. It is nearly ready for the concrete. We'll put him in a sack and bury him there. No one will ever find him. And we'll smash his face in. So even if they find him no one will recognize him. The police won't even have a photo to show me.

**Isa**: I can't do that.

**Meryem**: I'll do it then so long as the rest is done. The sack and the rope are ready. So what do you say?

**Isa**: …… (looking at her face)

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[342] Asuman Suner, op. cit. , Winter 2004, p. 317

**Meryem**: Don't look at me like that. If you can't do it, tell me. I won't be angry or blame you. I'll do it myself.

**Isa**: That's not what I mean. But when did you think of all these? You have planned everything. What if had killed him already? You didn't trust me.

**Meryem**: It is not that. I just thought it might take time. This isn't a film. Killing someone isn't easy.

The importance of the dialogue above lies in the fact that it actually exposes the distinction between the two characters, Meryem and Isa, in terms of the values, attitudes, or behaviors they acquire. Though Isa killed someone once before, for instance, he is unable to commit such premeditated act of violence and horror. In contrast to Meryem, his killing of the landlord is unintentional and almost unconscious. While he is about to kill himself, a sudden and unexpected visit of the landlord for unpaid rent changes everything. In the throes of a nervous breakdown, after the landlord, Isa goes upstairs, shoots him dead, and then himself keels over there. Yet, on the other hand, he would not be able to manage murdering Meryem's husband in a planned way; or similarly, when he goes to see Meryem at the end of the film, he cannot kill the woman who stands very calm and cool before him at the threshold of the door. Instead, Isa shoots himself being petrified with the fact that the landlord's son is her secret lover from the beginning. In view of that, as it is seen in most part of the film, the approaches of these two characters to life and death are substantially different. Even he learned all the truth, Isa cannot believe and understand how they, Meryem and the landlord's son, could easily behave like this; making deep laid schemes, deceiving and exploiting people. This is one of the main reasons that Isa fails in the face of ruthless and deceitful conditions of big city.

The last point that is worthy of being made here is that the characters in all the three films are forced to sacrifice in some way for living in the city of Istanbul. Since urban experience turns into a thoroughly defensive, survival-oriented strategy for the characters in the films, everything in their surroundings becomes meaningful only in the sense of pragmatism. So, for that reason, they have to abandon their values, beliefs, emotions, so to say, all that make them human and also provides

meaning to life for the sake of self-preservation. They even give up their own lives to continue the daily existence in the city of Istanbul. To give an example, Mahsun's attempt to eat one of the peacocks that he is strongly interested in since his first sight of them (in the film "Somersault in a Coffin") is one of the most illustrative instances in this sense. At the end of the film, when he is left to his own fate due to his crashing of Reis's boat, Mahsun appears suffering hunger; and, hereupon, he steals into the fortress and attempts to eat the bird which takes place in his dreams. It is also decisive that, the act of death, suicide, murder and prostitution which reveal the self-sacrifice aspect of the characters appear in all the three films in a considerable degree; the death of the dwarf by the attack of three men, the killing of the prostitute by her pimp husband being stabbed twenty times, the suicide of the man who is the frequenter of the bar the dwarf works in, the suicide of Adıgüzel in prison, the surviving of the transvestite in a prostitution (Whistle If You Come Back); the death of Sari, Mahsun's friend, freezing from the cold; the heroin addict's prostitution to get money for drug (Somersault in a Coffin); the killing of the landlord by Isa, the death of Meryem's husband through gambling fight, the suicide of Isa shooting himself (The Third Page). Thus, the characters in the films become self-sacrificial figures that have to sell their bodies, or to give up their own existence in order to stay alive against the merciless conditions of the city of Istanbul.

# CHAPTER V

# CONCLUSION

## IS IT REALLY THE END OF THE CITY MYTH OF ISTANBUL?

*Kublai asks Marco, "When you return to the West,*
*Will you repeat to your people the same tales you tell me?"*

*"I speak and speak," Marco says, "but the listener retains only the words he is expecting. The description of the world to which you lend a benelovent ear is one thing; the description that will go the rounds of the groups of stevedores and gondolisers on the street outside my house the day of my return is another; and yet another, that which I might dedicate late in life, if I weretaken prisoner by Genoese pirates and put in irons in the same cell with a writer of adventure stories. It is not the voice that commands the story: it is the ear."* [343]

Throughout history, one of the most elementary goals of human beings is to understand, to interpret the world that surrounds them and their place both within and in relation to it. For that purpose, they have developed various modes of thought, expression, and representation. More specifically, through creating

[343] Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities* trans. by William Weaver (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974): p. 135

narratives with any material that can "fit to receive man's stories," people have sought to engage with the external world somehow in a meaningful way.[344] Certainly, in this sense, myths are the first narratives that express and illuminate the actual experiences of human beings with nature. During the primeval (rather than primitive) ages of the world, people attempted to overcome the contradictions and conflicts they encountered by generating mythical narratives. Should we therefore conclude that myths only pertain to the past or old stages of human development? In fact, quite the contrary is true. Every historical period has produced its own myths peculiar to itself for people have never stopped (re)shaping and (re)interpreting the world they live in even though scientific knowledge provides rational and causal explanations.[345] So accordingly, myth cannot be confined to only primeval ages, nor to oral tradition. "As a system of communication" it still exists as active and alive in several "modes of writings or representations; not only written discourse, but also photography, cinema, reporting, sport, shows, publicity."[346]

As mentioned in the very beginning of the thesis, the concept of myth takes place in the main axis of this study. If there is need to make a general view, the extensive involvement of this study is the attempt to examine the development of the modern epoch in the frame of three relevant phenomena which are myth, city, and cinema. To say more precisely, I have sought to present and discuss mythical aspects of the modern age considering the close interrelation between the city and cinema. So, for this aim, I have analyzed the cinematic representation of the city in terms of the concept of myth through the discussion over the construction of Istanbul in late modern Turkish cinema.

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[344] Roland Barthes, op. cit. , p. 251

[345] Lenn E. Goldman, "Mythic Discourse" in *Myths and Fictions* ed. by Shlomo Biderman and Ben-Ami Scharfstein (Leiden, New York, Köln: E.J. Brill, 1993): p. 53

[346] Roland Barthes, op. cit. , pp. 93-94

Certainly, this addresses a process that moves from general to specific, following certain stages. Having considered the project of modernity as a mythical phenomenon in the general unity of the thesis, social and cultural transformations of this new epoch have been proceeded by three main chapters. However, to understand this process only as a linear route with one particular direction, towards one singular end would be very misleading. Rather, here, I have attempted to follow a more interconnected and intricate way, which can allow assembling different elements, concepts and examples in some ways. What this brings us is inevitably the idea of "montage," which is highly evident in the writings of the German thinker Walter Benjamin, particularly in his unfinished work *Passagen-Werk*. In the overall organization of the thesis, though quite partially, it is possible to observe the traces of this form of writing. So to speak, paralleling the fragmented and discontinuous experience of the modernity, this study has consisted of a series of sections and subsections of which each provides connective linkages through consideration and elaboration of various central themes and issues. In this sense, unquestionably, the three phenomena that constitute the frame of the thesis, myth, city, and cinema, would play a key role in making connections and transitions between the sections. Nonetheless, at least as important as those three, there also exist other figures and elements such as "sacrifice, heroism, cunning, Odysseus and *flâneur*" that serve as supportive and facilitative tools for understanding the intricate relationships and interactions amid which the modernity experience of the individual has taken place.

To formulate in a more detailed manner the way this study proceeded; at first, I started attempting to seize and understand the intertwining of myth and modernity with reference to the Enlightenment. This chapter can be conceived as the main realm of the thesis in which we can observe the very first roots of the development of the modern epoch. Accordingly, the chapter has provided, on one level, a preparatory stage for the following analysis and discussion. Then, having considered the city as the place for the creation of myths of modernity, the

second chapter sought to present and explain the city experience of the modern individual, particularly in terms of the concepts of heroism and survival. Finally, in the last chapter, whose main intent is to reveal the mythical dimensions of the cinematic medium regarding the perception of the city and its experience, I have tried to examine the (re)creation of the Istanbul-myth in Turkish cinema of the nineties and the representation of the destruction of such myth by focusing on the collective imagination of the city-image.

Having presented the general structure of the thesis, now, it would now be appropriate to discuss each of the steps in our pathway by the elaboration of the main themes and key points located in every chapter with their interconnectedness and mutual implications. To start with, the first chapter attempts to explore the dialectical relationship between myth and modernity which takes its roots from the eighteenth century thought, that is, the 'Enlightenment' era. Following Adorno and Horkheimer's allegoric reading of Homer's *Odyssey*, I have examined and tried to understand the mythical elements of modernity; that is, how modern thought has reverted into mythology in its attempt to free the world form mythical forces through Reason. In their book, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, these two thinkers explained the failure of the modernity project in the light of the ancient epic *Odyssey*. In view of Adorno and Horkheimer, the figure of Odysseus is a primeval model giving the first signals of the enlightened self while the world in which he struggles with mythical forces of nature reflects the rationalized world of modernity. What is significant for me at this point is the faculty that brings together the modern individual and the hero of Odysseus. Despite the fact that each one belongs to a different time period, they both employ the same kind of rationality, which is derived from cunning. To say more precisely, the way Odysseus deals with the problems throughout his journey to Ithaca, his manipulative abilities to master natural deities, establishes a kinship with the modern individual who owes her/his strength to the faculty of reason.

However, at this point, without being able to mention the concept of allegory, the relationship between myth and modernity and also particularly between the enlightened self and ancient epic hero, Odysseus, could not have been appropriately expanded. Speaking in general terms, allegory is a mode of interpretation by which each element of what is used is "pulled out of the totality of the life context," being isolated and deprived of its function.[347] Therefore, through the elimination of the elements and figures from their original context, allegory enables to make use of each figure in different connotations, and at the same time it creates new meanings connecting separated fragments. This is, in a certain sense, what I have attempted to carry out in the first chapter in the footsteps of Adorno and Horkheimer's allegoric interpretation of Homer's *Odyssey*.

Then, paralleling Odysseus' adventures with mythical forces during his voyage, my next step has been to examine the modern city experience that embodies fascination and horror, hope and despair simultaneously. Thus, in the following chapter, I have sought, firstly, how the modern city has appeared as the most appropriate place for the rise of a mythology of the modern while it is proclaimed to be the center of rational order and symmetry against the chaos of pre-enlightened age; and secondly the transformation of the city space from the dreamscape into an arena of the struggle for the modern individual. In order to reveal the situation of the city person struggling to survive in the face of the merciless conditions of the city, Odysseus' encounter with natural deities in ancient world is taken as a parable.

Notwithstanding, another figure has been used that reinforces the interaction and linkage between ancient and modern experience since the figure of Odysseus itself remains insufficient for understanding the mythical dimensions of modern city and its practice. So, at this point, there comes into the story the figure of *flâneur* which

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[347] Peter Burger, op. cit. , p. 69

is used first by Baudelaire, and then Benjamin, to describe the city person and her/his ambivalent experience in urban environment. In particular, following Benjamin's allegorical reading of the city in his works on Paris, I have discussed this new mode of social living of modernity which presents a thoroughly different kind of reality to the individual through all of its signs and stimuli. As an enormous complexity of things and powers, the city has given the sense of fascination; and on the other hand, it has demanded from its inhabitants a special knowledge of human nature to survive, a sort of knowledge which is based on the faculty of Reason. In order to deal with the material and psychological life of the modern city and to find a way to escape from even the most critical situations of danger in urban everyday life, the individual has to develop certain practices, defensive tactics and strategies using her/his "intellect" in the manner of "purposive rationality." That brings to mind, inevitably, the mythological hero of Homer, Odysseus, who overcomes the mythical forces, gods or semi-gods through his resourcefulness and intelligence. Considering the attitude they hold in common towards their surroundings, in a sense, it is possible to find the traces of Odysseus on the streets of modern city.

However, as mentioned in the very beginning of the thesis, such comparison between these two figures of which each belongs to a different time period does not imply the equation of the modern city person with the heroes of the ancient world. Rather here, the attempt is to understand experiences, incidents and happenings associated with modernity through bringing together the common elements of the past and present. Its reverse could not have been in accord with an allegorical way of thinking by which the concepts posit new different meanings and functions independent of their actual context. Therefore, the city experience of the modern individual has been discussed in terms of the correspondences and interactions between modern epoch and antiquity.

Finally, for the last turn in our discussion, I have taken into consideration the mutual relation between the city and cinema. Remembering our starting point

which is that the overall project of modernity itself is a mythical phenomenon, I have sought to depict and examine the mythical aspects of modern epoch in terms of the close interrelation between the city and cinema. In that vein, having considered cinema as a mythical apparatus of modernity, the focus of attention of this chapter is on the cinematic representation of the city space and its experience and, parallel to that, the (re)creation of myths and narratives rising within urban culture through the cinematic medium. To say more precisely, I have attempted to understand how the particular urban images and representations are set up on the big screen which leads to the (re)production of the myths generated within urban culture through the cinematic medium.

This interrelation between the city and cinema, particularly with regard to the creation of the collective imagination of the city, has been attempted to be explained through discussion over the representation of the city of Istanbul in Turkish cinema of the nineties. It is a plain fact that, in Turkey, Istanbul has always been the most prominent city figure appearing on the big screen. As the main paradigm for the city space, Istanbul has come onto the scene in a variety of forms and contents from the beginning of Turkish cinema, and, it has gained different connotations and shades of meaning in accordance with economic and social dynamics of the society. As a result of the continuous representation of the city space and its imaginary construction on the big screen, the city of Istanbul has inevitably been ingrained in collective memory of Turkish society. Yet, what is significant for this study at this point is the fact that Istanbul has generally come into view as a mythical city with its appealing atmosphere and beautiful scenery. That certainly brings us to the main issue just mentioned above, which is the (re)production of city myth by means of the cinematic medium. Indeed, repeatedly throughout the history of Turkish cinema, the city myth of Istanbul has been (re)produced, though in different ways and modes, through particular urban images and symbols. Speaking in general terms, this mythical journey of Istanbul in Turkish cinema can be described as the transformation from “the city made of gold” firstly to the “arena of struggle”,

and then to the city with a "dark urban imaginary." The fabulous city image of Istanbul in the films of the fifties and sixties gradually was replaced by the dark and gloomy face of the city. Certainly, the shifts and changes in the image of the city is closely connected to socio-economic and political conditions of Istanbul. For that reason, considering high unemployment rate, increasing poverty and insecurity in urban areas starting from the eighties, it is understandable that the city of Istanbul and its experience has been presented in recent Turkish cinema mostly in terms of danger, powerlessness, unbelonging and the like. This historical change in the city image has taken place at the center of the discussion on the interaction between Istanbul and cinema; the appearance of negative imaginary of the city in the films of the nineties has been interpreted mainly as the destruction of the city myth of Istanbul.

In order to understand and reveal the changes and shifts in the spatial and social representation of the city of Istanbul, I have taken into consideration specific films which were made in a ten year period between 1990 and 2000. Having considered certain criteria such as the production year, director, and the city image of Istanbul, I have chosen three films that, I believe, reflect the main portrayal of the city of Istanbul in Turkish cinema of the nineties in certain senses: Whistle If You Come Back, Somersault in a Coffin, and The Third Page. Consistent with the general tendency in Turkish cinema during the nineties, the three films here bring a particularly dark urban imaginary of Istanbul through the attempt of revealing different realities and experiences the city embodied. While the film "Somersault in a Coffin" puts into picture the living conditions of homeless people in the cold winter of Istanbul, in the film "The Third Page", on the other hand, there appeared the lives of ordinary small people of the city, a figure artist and a cleaner, who do not have any protection against the physical and emotional blows of urban life. As for the film "Whistle If You Come Back", this time, the characters become more marginalized, and the dark and fearful city experience of the dwarf and the transvestite comes into view in this sense. Thus, Istanbul appeared as the source

of sorrow and despair in the films to be examined here opposed to its mythical city image created in previous years with reference to city of lights, magnificence and beauty. That is conclusively the creation of a new social format through the use of urban space in a completely different context by releasing the city image from the old discourses on the attraction of Istanbul. Accordingly, my contention is that all these three films come together in the social (re)configuration of urban space of Istanbul, which is certainly in a negative and even destructive manner.

Finally, I would like to bring to a close this study by reiterating the main argument, which is that the city myth of Istanbul which has hitherto been (re)produced in Turkish cinema came to the end in the decade of the nineties by the transformation of the city image from the mythical city view appearing in the films of the fifties and the sixties to the dark urban imaginary. However, at this moment, instead of ending with certain arguments, I prefer bringing the study to a close with some questions that, I believe, would be helpful to think on the discussion throughout the thesis from different angles: Is it really the end of the city myth of Istanbul? Can we not interpret the change in the cinematic representation of the city as the (re)creation of the myth, though certainly in a negative manner? And if myths exist in every age, every place, and every society in infinite diversity of forms and if anything can be a myth, even retelling itself, then is it simply possible to argue that the city myth (or any kind of myth) came to the end? In this context, we can ask if it is not more appropriate to regard the shift in the city image of Istanbul as the change of myth itself rather than its disappearance or destruction, remembering Octavo Paz's words on the rise of modernity, that is, "the change of reality; the change of mythology." So, in a final sense, would it be considered that even this study itself is a part of (re)making the myth of Istanbul?

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# APPENDIX

## Film Identities:

Ağır Roman: **Director:** Mustafa Altıoklar, 1997; **Scenario:** Mustafa Altıoklar and Metin Kaçan; **Production:** Ses Film, Özen Film, Belge Film; **Starring:** Okan Bayülgen, Müjde Ar, Mustafa Uğurlu; Color, 121'

Ahh Belinda: **Director:** Atıf Yılmaz Batıbeki, 1986; **Scenario:** Barış Pirhasan; **Production:** Odak Yapım; **Starring:** Müjde Ar, Yılmaz Zafer, Macit Koper; Color, 100'

Ahh Güzel İstanbul: **Director**: Atıf Yılmaz Batıbeki, 1967; **Scenario:** Ayşe Şasa and Sefa Önal; **Production**: Be-Ya Film, **Starring:** Sadri Alışık and Ayla Algan; Black and White

Amerikalı: **Director:** Şerif Gören, 1993; **Scenario:** Ümit Ünal and Şerif Gören; **Production:** Filma Cass, Anadolu Filmcilik; **Starring:** Şener Şen, Lale Mansur; Color

Anayurt Oteli: **Director and Scenario:** Ömer Kavur, 1987; **Production:** Odak Film; Alfa Film; **Starring:** Macit Koper, Şahika Tekand, Orhan Çağman, Serra Yılmaz; Color, 101'

At: **Director and Scenario:** Ali Özgentürk, 1983; **Production:** Asya Film; **Starring:** Genco Erkal, Harun Yeşilyurt, Güler Ökten; Color

Ayastefanos'taki Rus Abidesinin Yıkılışı: **Director**: Fuat Uzkınay, 1914; **Production**: Turkish Army; Black and White

Binnaz: **Director**: Ahmet Fehim and Fazlı Necip, 1919; **Scenario**: Münüf Fehim and Yusuf Ziya Ortaç; **Production**: The Association of Disabled Veterans; **Starring**: Matmazel Blanche, Hüseyin Kemal Gürmen and Ekrem Oran; Black and White, 45'

Bir Avuç Cennet: **Director and Scenario:** Muammer Özer, 1985; **Production:** Mine Film, Devkino, Belge Film; **Starring:** Tarık Akan, Hale Soygazi; Color, 104'

Bir Avuç Gökyüzü: **Director and Scenario:** Ümit Elçi, 1987; **Production:** Varlık Film; **Starring:** Aytaç Arman, Zuhal Olcay, Şahika Tekand; Color

Bir Millet Uyanıyor: **Director and Scenario:** Muhsin Ertuğrul, 1932; **Production:** İpek Film; **Starring:** Ercüment Behzat, Emel Rıza, Ferdi Tayfur; Black and White

Biri ve Diğerleri: **Director and Scenario:** Tunç Başaran, 1987; **Production:** Magnum Film; **Starring:** Aytaç Arman, Meral Oğuz, Mücap Ofluoğlu; Color

Bitmeyen Yol: **Director and Scenario:** Duygu Sağıroğlu, 1965; **Production:** Gen-Ar Film; **Starring:** Fikret Hakan, Erol Taş, Selma Güneri; Black and White

C Blok: **Director and Scenario:** Zeki Demirkubuz, 1993; **Production:** Mavi Film; **Starring:** Serap Aksoy, Fikret Kuşkan, Zuhal Gencer Erkaya, Selçuk Yöntem; Color

Diyet: **Director and Scenario:** Lütfi Ö. Akad, 1975; **Production:** Erman Film; **Starring:** Hülya Koçyiğit, Hakan Balamir, Erol Taş, Erol Günaydın; Color, 90'

Düğün: **Director and Scenario:** Lütfi Ö. Akad, 1974; **Production:** Erman Film; **Starring:** Hülya Koçyiğit, Ahmet Mekin, Hülya Şengül, Kamran Usluer, Erol Günaydın; Color, 84'

Eşkiya: **Director and Scenario:** Yavuz Turgul, 1996; **Production:** Filma Cass; **Starring:** Şener Şen, Uğur Yücel, Yeşim Salkım, Kamran Usluer; Color, 121'

Fahriye Abla: **Director and Scenario:** Yavuz Turgul, 1984; **Production:** Kök Film; **Starring:** Müjde Ar, Tarık Tarcan, İhsan Yüce, Mesut Çakarlı; Color

Gecelerin Ötesi: **Director and Scenario:** Metin Erksan, 1960; **Production:** Ergenekon Film; **Starring:** Erol Taş, Hayati Hamzaoğlu, Kadir Savun, Ziya Metin, Tolga Tigin; Black and White

Gelin: **Director and Scenario:** Lütfi Ö. Akad, 1973; **Production:** Erman Film, **Starring:** Hülya Koçyiğit, Kerem Yılmazer, Kamran Usluer, Aliye Rona, Ali Şen; Color, 92'

Gemide: **Director:** Serdar Akar, 1998; **Scenario:** Önder Çakar and Serdar Akar; **Production:** Yeni Sinemacılık; **Starring:** Erkan Can, Ella Manea, Haldun Boysan, Naci Taşdöğen, Yıldıray Şahinler; Color, 110'

Gizli Duygular: **Director:** Şerif Gören, 1984; **Scenario:** Turgay Aksoy; **Production:** Uzman Film; **Starring:** Müjde Ar, Bülent Bilgiç; Color

Gurbet Kuşları: **Director:** Halit Refiğ, 1964, **Scenario:** Orhan Kemal and Halit Refiğ; **Production:** Artist Film; **Starring:** Tanju Gürsu, Filiz Akın, Özden Çelik, Pervin Par, Cüneyt Arkın; Black and White

Hanım: **Director:** Halit Refiğ, 1988; **Scenario:** Halit Refiğ and Nezihe Araz; **Production:** Odak Film; **Starring:** Yıldız Kenter, Eşref Kolçak, Müşrif Kenter; Color

Hayallerim, Aşkım, ve Sen: **Director:** Atıf Yılmaz Batıbeki, 1987; **Scenario:** Ümit Ünal; **Production:** Odak Film; **Starring:** Türkan Şoray, Oğuz Tunç, Müşfik Kenter; Color

Herşeye Rağmen: **Director:** Orhan Oğuz, 1988; **Scenario:** Nuray Oğuz; **Production:** Mine Film; **Starring:** Talat Bulut, Şerif Sezer, Bülent Oran; Color

İstanbul Kanatlarımın Altında: **Director and Scenario:** Mustafa Altıoklar, 1996; **Production:** Umut Sanat; **Starring:** Ege Aydan, Okan Bayülgen, Batriz Rico; Color, 120'

Istanbul Sokaklarında: **Director and Scenario**: Muhsin Ertuğrul, 1931; **Production**: İpek Film; **Starring**: Talat Artemel, Semiha Berksoy, Behzat Haki; Black and White

Istanbul'da Bir Facia-i Aşk: **Director and Scenario**: Muhsin Ertuğrul, 1922; **Production**: Kemal Film; **Starring**: Anna Meriyeviç and Vahram Papazyam; Black and White

Kaçakçılar: **Director and Scenario**: Muhsin Ertuğrul, 1932; **Production**: İpek Film; **Starring**: Behzat Butak, Sait Köknar, Talat Artemel; Black and White

Kanun Namına: **Director:** Lütfi Akad, 1952; **Scenario:** Osman F. Seden and Lütfi Akad; **Production:** Kemal Film; **Starring**: Ayhan Işık, Gülistan Güzey, Muzaffer Tema, Neş'e Yulaç, Pola Morelli and Settar Körmükçü; Black and White

Karanlıkta Uyananlar; Director: Ertem Göreç, 1964; Scenario: Vedat Türkali; Production: Filmo Ltd. Şti.; Starring: Ayla Algan, Beklan Algan, Fikret Hakan; Black and White

Kasaba: **Director and Scenario:** Nuri Bilge Ceylan, 1997; **Production:** NBC Film; **Starring:** Fatma Ceylan, Mehmet Emin Ceylan, Mehmet Emin Toprak, Havva Sağlam; Black and White, 82'

Masumiyet: **Director and Scenario:** Zeki Demirkubuz, 1997; **Production:** Mavi Film; **Starring:** Güven Kıraç, Derya Alabora, Haluk Bilginer; Color, 110'

Muhsin Bey: **Director and Scenario:** Yavuz Turgul, 1987; **Production:** Umut Film; **Starring:** Uğur Yücel, Şermin Hürmeriç, Uğur Yücel; Color

Mürebbiye: **Director**: Ahmet Fehim, 1919; **Scenario**: Ahmet Fehim and Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar; **Production**: The Association of Disabled Veterans; **Starring**: Mme Kalitea, Ahmet Fehim, and Bayzar Fasulyeciyan; Black and White

Susuz Yaz: **Director:** Metin Erksan, 1963; **Scenario:** Metin Erksan, Kemal İnci, and İsmet Soydan; **Production**: Hitit Film, Erksan Film, and Doğan Film; **Starring:** Hülya Koçyiğit, Ulvi Doğan, and Erol Taş; Black and White, 90'

Tabutta Rövaşata: **Director and Scenario:** Derviş Zaim, 1996; **Production:** İrf; **Starring:** Ahmet Uğurlu, Ayşen Özdemir, Tuncel Kurtiz; Color, 74'

Yılanların Öcü: **Director and Scenario:** Metin Erksan, 1962; **Production:** Be-Ya Film; **Starring:** Fikret Hakan, Nurhan Nur, and Aliye Rona; Black and White, 82'

Yusuf ile Kenan: **Director:** Ömer Kavur, 1979; **Scenario:** Ömer Kavur and Onat Kutlar; **Production:** Çağdaş Araştırma Grubu; **Starring:** Tamer Çeliker and Cem Davran; Color