

Istanbul 2013

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With independent theatres on the festival circuit closing one after the other, the last one being the historical Emek sacrificed to a shopping mall, securing sufficient exhibition space has become increasingly challenging for Turkey's most prestigious film festival (30 March-14 April, 2013). Notwithstanding the comfort the new theatres in shopping malls in rich neighbourhoods may offer, the cinephiles are weaned on watching films in an atmosphere of culture and history in the Beyoğlu district, the old Pera, where Turkish cinema's seeds were sown almost 100 years ago.

The good news is that Turkish cinema is alive and well, with an immense interest on the part of the young, especially women, to join the profession, the autobiographical *Köksüz (Nobody's Home)* by Deniz Akçay Katıksız, which later would have successful screenings in Venice; *Saroyan Ülkesi Saroyanland* on the American-Armenian writer William Saroyan and his Anatolian roots by Lusin Dink, the daughter of the assassinated Armenian journalist Hrant Dink and *Hayatboyu (Lifelong)*, on the disintegration of a relationship, the second film of Aslı Özge. Three remarkable male film-makers brought unusual renditions of extraordinary characters trapped in ordinary circumstances: Sen Aydınlatırsın Geceyi (*Thou Gild'st the Even*) by Onur Ünlü, *Soğuk (Cold)* by Uğur Yücel and *Yozgat Blues* from the director of *Uzak İhtimal (The Wrong Rosary)*, Mahmut Fazıl Coşkun. On the more commercial side, from actor-director Yılmaz Erdoğan, remembered for his exceptional role as the police chief in Nuri Bilge Ceylan's masterpiece, *Bir zamanlar Anadolu'da (Once Upon a Time in Anatolia, 2011)*, came a period-piece romance *Kelebeğin Rüyası (The Butterfly's Dream)*, which, incidentally, is Turkey's entry to the Oscars in the Foreign Language Film category. The Golden Tulip National Competition, presided over by director Tayfun Pirselimoglu, saw ten films, two of which had their Turkish premiere and six of them their world premiere.

The jury for the festival's International Competition of films relating to arts and the artist was headed by the Australian director Peter Weir. 13 films competed for the Golden Tulip Award in the International Competition in which *Lifelong* by Aslı Özge was the Turkish entry along with Erdoğan's *The Butterfly's Dream*. *Lifelong* is about an alienation of a couple approaching middle age. The character of the wife, a contemporary artist at an emotional and professional deadlock, is portrayed with remarkable sincerity by Defne Halman. The photography of Emre Erkmen, with the icy blue tones accentuating the sense of alienation, is also remarkable. Another competition entry, the Iranian *Pardé (Closed Curtain)* by Jafar Panahi and Kamboziya Partovi, is a film which suggests oppression, censorship and suffocation, rather blatantly referring to a society where it is forbidden to even have a dog, or gather with friends on the beach. Perhaps the film is self-indulgent as Iranian scholar Hamid Dabashi claims, then again this is not a film realized under normal circumstances.

Darezhan Omirbaev, one of the most important filmmakers of the *new wave* of Kazakh cinema, whose previous film *Chouga* was an adaptation of Anna Karenina, this time adapted Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* entitled *Student*. The film carries the Bressonian elements evidenced in Omirbaev's earlier films while examining the ruthless capitalism of the post-independence years that have created despair in many citizens. *Foxfire*, the second English-language film of Laurent Cantet (*Entre les murs*), is the adaptation of the novel *Foxfire: Confessions of a Girl Gang* by Joyce Carol Oates, on a woman's rebellion in New York in the 1950s. Adapted to the screen from Yasmina Khadra's international best-seller, Ziad Doueiri's Lebanese *The Attack* told the story of an Israeli Arab doctor, Amin, discovering the truth about his wife and confronting this discovery.

The Human Rights in Cinema Competition included Ali Aydın's *Küf (Mold, Turkey)*, which had won the Lion of the Future at the Venice International Film Festival 2012; *Syngué Sabour (The Patience*

Stone), by French-based Afghan auteur Atiq Rahimi, based on his award winning novel, Danis Tanović's *Epizoda u životu berača željeza* (*An Episode In The Life Of An Iron Picker*) about a man who makes a living by collecting scrap metal and *Inch'allah*, written and directed by Anaïs Barbeau-Lavalette, a film that had received the Panorama Special Mention and the FIPRESCI Prize. Apichatpong Weerasethakul's *Mekong Hotel* was shown out of competition.

One of the most beautiful love stories of the golden years of Turkish cinema, *Vesikalı Yarım* (*Licensed to Love*, Lütfi Ö. Akad, 1968), about the impossible love between a greengrocer from the outskirts and a Beyoğlu prostitute, starring Turkey's all time *sultana* of actresses Türkan Şoray, was brought to screen in its restored version to the delight of cinephiles. The nuanced dialogue in the film has lost nothing of its contemporaneity in 45 years. Nobel laureate Orhan Pamuk in his novel *The Black Book* creates a brothel where prostitutes assume the personalities of popular characters from Turkish melodramas and the protagonist encounters a Türkan Şoray look-alike who repeats the classic lines of Sabiha from *Licensed to Love*.

Patricia Arquette, a leading actress in Roman Coppola's film *A Glimpse Inside The Mind of Charles Swan III* and Bille August, the director of *Night Train to Lisbon*, were in Istanbul for the screening of the respective films at the festival. On the opening night Arquette and August presented the new sections of the festival programme, respectively, "Stories of Women" and "From Literature to Silver Screen". The special section, titled "Am I Not A Citizen? Barbarism, Civic Awakening and The City" prepared in conjunction with the 13th Istanbul Biennial was presented by actress Nazan Kesal, a familiar face in Nuri Bilge Ceylan's *Climates* and *Distant*).

After the opening ceremony, Pedro Almodóvar's latest feature, the comedy *Los amantes pasajeros* (*I'm So Excited*), with Carlos Areces, Raul Arevalo and Javier Camara, was screened.

A demonstration against the expropriation of the Emek cinema took place. The participants included directors Costa-Gavras, Mike Newell, Marco Bechis and Jan Ole Gerster, alongside film professionals, actors, directors, and film critics from Turkey and abroad. Those who tried to enter the Emek Movie Theatre were subject to disproportionate force.

The Meetings on the Bridge platform, which has been taking place for eight years as a part of the Festival with the aim to create opportunities for international presentations of new feature film projects by bringing together producers, directors and scriptwriters from Europe and Turkey awarding cash prizes to several works in progress.

On the closing night, after the Awards Ceremony of the Festival, guests watched *What Richard Did* by Lenny Abrahamson, which received the Golden Tulip in the International Competition.

The poster of the 32nd Istanbul Film Festival featured a photo shot by the leading auteur of contemporary Turkish cinema, Nuri Bilge Ceylan. The artist and graphic designer Bülent Erkmen, who chose the photograph titled *Uy kusuz Gece* (Sleepless Night) from Ceylan's *Babam İçin* (For My Father) photographic series, commented: "Cinema is what is seen by an open eye blinded in a sleepless night. Dreamy assurance of a blanket wrapped around our body and pulled over our head sunk in a pillow in the darkness of the night is reciprocated by the moment of sinking in our chair in the darkness of the movie theatre". Using Ceylan's handwriting on the festival poster, Erkmen said: "With an inverse relationship between Turkish and English, the title, written in Nuri Bilge Ceylan's own handwriting, accompanies the open eye in a sleepless night like a film strip".

References

AWARDS



Figure 1: Istanbul FF 2013 poster

Golden Tulip in the International Competition
What Richard Did by Lenny Abrahamson

Special Jury Prize
Camille Claudel 1915 by Bruno Dumont

Golden Tulip in the National Competition
Best Film
Sen Aydınlatırsın Geceyi (Thou Gild'st the Even) by Onur Ünlü

Best Director
Ash Özge for her film *Hayatboyu (Lifelong)*

Special Prize of the Jury
Devir (The Cycle) by Derviş Zaim

Best Actress
Sema Poyraz in *Özür Dilerim (Forgive Me)*

Best Actor
Ercan Kesal in *Yozgat Blues*

Best Screenplay
Onur Ünlü for *Sen Aydınlatırsın Geceyi (Thou Gild'st the Even)*

Best Director of Photography
Emre Erkmen for *Hayatboyu (Lifelong)*

Golden Tulip Best Music
Murat Başaran for *Soğuk (Cold)*

Best Editing

Emre Boyraz for *Sen Aydınlatırsın Geceyi (Thou Gild'st the Even)*

Seyfi Teoman Best Debut Film Award to the best debut film from Turkey to Deniz Akçay *Katıksız for Köksüz (Nobody's Home)*

The Council of Europe (FACE) Human Rights Award to *Syngué Sabour (Patience Stone)* by Atiq Rahimi

Special Mention Prize in the Human Rights in Cinema Competition to *Epizoda u životu berača željeza (An Episode In The Life Of An Iron Picker)* by Danis Tanović and *Jiseul* by O Muel

FIPRESCI Awards

in the National Competition to *Sen Aydınlatırsın Geceyi (Thou Gild'st the Even)* by Onur Ünlü

in the International Competition to *Camille Claudel 1915* by Bruno Dumont

Radikal Newspaper People's Choice Awards sponsored by the *Radikal Newspaper* and determined by the votes of the festival audience

Dom s bashenkoy (House With A Turret) by Eva Neymann
and *Köksüz (Nobody's Home)* by Deniz Akçay Katıksız

Cineuropa Award for *The Attack* by Ziad Doueiri

Author Information

Gönül DÖNMEZ-COLIN is an independent researcher and writer whose publications include *Women, Islam and Cinema, Cinemas of the Other: A personal Journey with Filmmakers from the Middle East and Central Asia, Cinema of North Africa and the Middle East* (ed.); *Turkish Cinema: Identity, Distance and Belonging* (Reaktion Books), and *Routledge Dictionary of Turkish Cinema* (2014).