UNFAMILIAR SOUNDS IN FAMILIAR SETTINGS:  
ON THE COSMOPOLITAN LABOUR OF FILM COMPOSERS IN ISTANBUL  

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ABSTRACT

Filmmaking in Turkey has long, convoluted history. The Turkish film industry developed, flowered, and declined before being nearly obliterated altogether by a military coup in 1980. Following the nearly total disappearance of a coherent studio system, a new approach to filmmaking, the New Turkish Cinema, developed during a time of economic and cultural resurgence. Now in a mature phase, Turkish films and television programs are rapidly becoming a focus of local and global interest, as Turkey grows as a consumer marketplace and as a player in global affairs. Films and television programs have become key players in Turkey’s economic, cultural, and diplomatic resurgence. Despite film’s reemergence, film music has not been a focus of scholarly inquiry until recently because critics and scholars have not seen it as a contributing factor to the development of the new Turkish cinema.

This dissertation examines the creative labor of film composers working in the Turkish film industry from 2010-2016. It focuses on the socio-cultural contexts that facilitate the work of filmmakers as they create films suitable for the Turkish market while working from within a much more globalized, cosmopolitan framework. Through a detailed assessment of film composers’ creative processes, it demonstrates that their work is that of a “first interpreter,” a role that makes them the conduit between the filmmaking team and the audiences.

The initial chapters develop a technological and social history of Turkish filmmaking. They identify the conditions under which diasporic Turks have come to dominate the role of film composer. These individuals brought new technologies and practices in the form of digital music composition and the use of DAWs (digital audio workstations) to create almost exclusively synthesized film scores. Their working methods are connected to a larger filmmaking context because of the unifying presence of these new tools. Consequently, they have brought new
practices and methods by participating globalized filmmaking *praxiscape* enabled by computerized technologies and fundamentally changed the way Turkish films are made.

Later chapters investigate the details of Turkish filmmakers’ work and demonstrate how their disinterest in identity politics has made them excellent conduits for importation and experimentation of outside influences. Their role as first interpreter grounds their work as they experiment with a combination of Turkish topics, global topics, and many different genres of music. Following a close analysis of how new technologies have influenced the practicalities of film music composition and cinematic interpretation, the final chapter closes with a description of the “return to home” trope. This cine-musical construction is found in a number of films of the New Turkish Cinema. Its construction and use is a significant manifestation of contemporary debates trying to locate Turkish social and cultural identity between old/new, eastern/western, rural/urban, and traditional/modern dyads.
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Chapter 1

Introduction: Scoring Real, Imaginary, and Cinematic Turkeys

One interesting aspect of new Turkish cinema is Istanbul’s fading out of the screen. New wave Turkish films concentrate not so much on Istanbul, but on provincial towns. In those instances when the story is set in Istanbul, the geographical, historical, and cultural characteristics of the city are often erased so that Istanbul turns into an oversized provincial town. In contrast to the privileged position of Istanbul in Turkish film history, the majority of the new wave films seem to have lost interest in the city. However, this does not mean that Istanbul has disappeared from contemporary films altogether. Instead, we can talk about a new transnational genre of ‘Istanbul films’ that offer alternative ways of seeing the city (Suner 20, 2008).

There are many Turkeys in Istanbul. Some are worldly, some aren’t real.

— Yildiray Gürgen

Asuman Suner’s statement identifies a shift in contemporary filmmaking. Current Turkish films differ strikingly from the work of previous filmmakers. The films produced since the 1990s look from the city out into the Anatolian countryside while tackling the influx of influences from outside Turkey. They are now simultaneously global and local, urban and rural, Anatolian, foreign, and İstanbullu (of Istanbul). Suner’s observation is important because it captures perhaps the most important feature of the New Turkish Cinema, a loose body of films created by filmmakers working in Turkey during the past 30 years. She has exposed the fact that these films are constantly under a creative tension, and that filmmakers are exploring what it means to exist on the boundaries of several binaries as well as what it means to be Turkish. Istanbul’s relationship with the Anatolian interior is a core feature of the nature of Turkishness. It is the lynchpin in a cluster of dyads (East/West, Ottoman/Turkish, secular/Muslim, modern/backward) that Turks use to define themselves in the contemporary world. In recent years, filmmakers have investigated the meaning of Turkishness by looking for its origin—following the post-Ottoman reconstructions of the concept in the early part of the twentieth century. They have created a cinematic and musical body of work that is looking for Turks’ true home, or at least to offer a perspective on where that home may be. But far from creating a copy of the real world, or a Turkey that is entirely fictional, filmmakers have
created a cinematic Turkey that interpenetrates the lived experiences of their audiences, initiating a soft statement of what Turkey is and how difficult topics can be broached and interpreted. Yavuz Turgul’s film Gonül Yarası (2005) exemplifies this well.

Gonül Yarası is a tragic story that confronts numerous issues that both define and plague contemporary Turkey. It begins by showing a committed republican believer, Nazim, packing up his life as a teacher in the dusty, sun-drenched Kurdish regions in eastern Anatolia and returning to his first home in Istanbul. He has spent his life educating underprivileged and marginalized people in the east and is leaving after having retired as the village’s schoolmaster. As the opening credits roll we see Nazim say good-bye to the villagers and the children he has taught over the years. He bids them all farewell, shaking their hands and saying something personally significant to each of them in well-groomed Kurdish. We also see him collecting his belongings in preparation for the trip back to Istanbul. As he is packing the camera lingers over old, worn photos of children that indicate he gave up a happy family to follow his political and social convictions to bring education and a sense of Turkish belonging to the wilder and more untamed regions of the country. After the opening titles stop rolling, we see Nazim finally settle into his new apartment in the city. In the final scene of this montage, at a point only seconds before the plot really begins, we see the camera linger on Nazim’s face as the enormity of this change settles in on him. We come to understand that although he has come to a home of sorts, he has left his life behind. He is lost and confused with the world he just entered.

Turgul shows us the city through Nazim’s eyes. Nazim takes a job as a taxi driver and the next few sequences take us through a few select moments of his new life as he drives around the city. The real point of this montage is to establish the city as a character in the film and to demonstrate Nazim’s alienation from the city he left to follow his ideals in the east. It follows a common structure for establishing montages: first we see Nazim in his taxi, then we see that taxi winding its way through several streets in Istanbul. We see all of the recognizable feature of the
city like the bridges over the Golden Horn and the Bosphorus, alongside nondescript lanes and avenues that serve as placeholders for any street in the city. What we are shown, however, is the city in its most glorious and banal manifestations.

This sequence is not wholly visual. One of its compelling aspects is the presence of the score and the centrality of music. This is not just a trip through the city. The emotive music that fills all the aural space in the scene tells us more about what Nazim is experiencing as he wanders through the city than minutes of dialogue could. The score also connects this music, a simple melody played on a saz backed by a thin smattering of strings, to the city itself. The Istanbul we see is one Istanbul. The city we hear is something more than the sum of the walls, streets, roads, and people. Its meaning is, significantly, legible to someone who knows very little about Turkish music.

The non-diegetic score is not the only musical component. Music, more specifically these diatonic arrangements of several folk songs, take a central role in the film’s plot. The main character, Nazim, eventually meets and slowly falls in love with a troubled, and much younger woman, Dünya, who is working as a singer and an escort at a seedy bar. She is separated from her abusive husband and trying to use what talents she has to make enough money to support herself and her young daughter. Nazim first encounters her as he is taking a break in the bar from driving and hears her sing a song from the region he has just left. He is overwhelmed by the pathos of her singing and that she would know music from this area. After contriving to accidentally run into Dünya several more times, he resolves to try to save her and invites her into his home to talk. He is largely driven to this act of kindness by his compassion for her circumstances. Very quickly, the two begin to fall in love despite the vast difference in their ages. This budding romance sets up the first real obstacle of the film: his family disapproves of the situation and this further strains Nazim’s relationship with his children. However, more trouble arrives when Dünya’s estranged, abusive husband appears, desperate to win her back.
As we saw in the opening montages of the Kurdish east, and of Nazim’s wanderings through the cityscapes of Istanbul, many of the film’s most powerful moments focus on long set-up shots accompanied by instrumental references to the simple, yet powerful, folk music. These sequences set up several set pieces where Dünya sings the songs alluded to by earlier instrumental material. These set pieces become pillars in the plot and demarcate the essential points of the action. She sings a song when they meet. She sings a song when they are falling in love. She sings for her husband once after he wins her back. And in the end, she sings a song for Nazim that drives her husband into a rage that results in her murder by his hand.

While the film is not a musical, these musical moments are essential to the fabric of the narrative. I did not know it at the time, but the deep presence of music, and the use of diegetic and non-diegetic music as a fundamental component in the narrative structure, is a hallmark of new and old Turkish films. *Gonül Yarası* is fairly typical of the contemporary manifestation of this use of music. However, *Gonül Yarası* is also fairly atypical because of its use of recognizably Turkish music as the grounding for the score. It is a film that exemplifies the kind of combinatorial negotiation that many Turkish composers must undertake to develop a score that is acceptable to a wide range of audiences in Turkey and beyond.

The score for *Gonül Yarası*, written and compiled by Tamer Çiray, is the key to understanding the film’s meaning and emotional depth. Through it, we as an audience come to understand the emotional lives of the characters, the depth of feeling that underpins each of the scenes, and the importance of the city as a simultaneously beautiful and alienating place. The score functions as a narrator and makes the unspoken elements of the film understandable. It also provides a number of carefully constructed indexes that refer to certain aspects of the geographical, cultural, social, and emotional phenomena considered by many Turks to be essentially Turkish.
Immediately, a very difficult question arises: whatever the linkages between a cinematic and actual Turkey, these films are often not the product of someone who is unproblematically Turkish. Tamer spent the majority of his life living in Germany. German is his preferred language, and he lives in a thin strip of experience cutting across national boundaries that is often referred to—for lack of a better term—as cosmopolitan. The cinematic Turkey assembled in Gonül Yarası is an articulation of several tensions in Turkish society (East/West, urban/rural, rich/poor, nationalist/cosmopolitan, and complicated class distinctions) as seen by those who have a distinctly cosmopolitan view of what it is to be Turkish. This necessarily forces us to ask several questions surrounding the notion of what a cosmopolitan viewpoint is within a Turkish context. Does it oppose one, or all, of the possible manifestations of Turkishness? Are they interrelated? If so, how? What does it mean to be Turkish? What does it mean to be cosmopolitan? Is it possible to be both? Few of these questions can be answered easily. It is possible none of them can be answered at all without examining the cinematic and “real” Turkey together. Yildiray Gürgen’s statement in this chapter’s second epigraph comes from a conversation he and I had about the responsibilities of a filmmaker. His point was that a filmmaker’s duty is to bring the real, the possible, and the fictional together to create a single vision of a Turkish reality. For him, filmmakers are artists who weave realities together from what is available and relevant. With this statement, he brushed aside the idea that competing conceptualizations of Turkey and Turkishness are mutually exclusive, and made the point that they are always present in real life, and must also be visible and understandable in the films he makes.

**Cinematic Nations, Cosmopolitan Experiments, and Technological Mediations**

Film composition is paradoxically one of the quietest jobs in filmmaking. While the product of a film composer’s efforts is heard by thousands, or even millions of people, it is rarely acknowledged by anyone beyond the immediate team of filmmakers working on the project. It is
true that there are notable exceptions. Musicians like Hans Zimmer, John Williams, John Horner, Alan Silvestri, Ennio Marricone, Andre Desplat, and Bernard Herman, to name a few, are well-known composers. Their scores are appreciated by audiences separately from their films. But they are not the norm. Most composers labor in anonymity to provide a soundscape for a film that is seen by audiences and critics alike as the work of the director. However, these composers provide one of the fundamental components of contemporary films. The musical score is as important as the script, the acting, and the cinematography in that it provides narrative support, makes important interpretive statements about the other elements, and helps the fragmentary presentations coalesce into a coherent whole. And while the other pillars of filmmaking (the narrative and the visual elements) are the work of tens, even hundreds, of people, contemporary film composers largely do most of their work alone. This is even more the case in the increasingly technologized contexts in which film composers work. With the aid of computers and powerful DAW (Digital Audio Workstation) software, single individuals in small, cash-strapped filmmaking contexts now do the work of an entire music department. Very often, they even replace the orchestra and other live musicians entirely. They are increasingly replacing the musical production and post-production teams, including recording engineers, mastering engineers, and sometimes sound mixers. Theirs is a special labor because to do this work, they must shoulder a considerable set of responsibilities. It is also significant, because as interpreters of its narrative and visual components, they provide an interpretive bridge between the filmmakers and the audience. They provide a score that creates novel semiotic associations and emotional cues that pass mostly unnoticed, but are capable of shifting an audience’s understanding of the film and initiating important socio-cultural dialogues beyond the limits of the film. Because composers work alone, their perspectives, tastes, and compositional habits matter and are attended to both consciously and unconsciously by their audiences.
In the Turkish context, film composers have begun to take on a comparatively powerful role not available to them until recently. The necessity that they work almost entirely alone means their creative voice holds a great deal of weight. And because current Turkish productions rely very heavily on music, their aesthetic and interpretive decisions have a significant impact on the film as a whole. Turkish film composers amplify the role a film can play in the cultural, political, and social discourse about Turkey, and they do this by making music.

Their production contexts also differ because Turkish filmmaking now stands beyond the conceptual and aesthetic boundaries built by the older models of national, or studio-system, cinema. In most cities around the world there are people who are hard at work writing, editing, rewriting, and reediting the scripts, musical scores, and video footage for films that will be seen by audiences of all kinds. All of these people can be said to constitute the filmmaking industry despite being a relatively inchoate cluster of skilled, creative people. However, it is no longer enough to describe a community of filmmakers as an industry in the contemporary post-national, post-studio context of 2015. In the past, the conceptual and political boundaries that delineated nation-states and the financial and technological monopolies of the studios operating within them provided clear lines of demarcation sufficient to separate one cinematic industry from another. A filmmaker was part of a particular country’s film industry by virtue of being part of the apparatus that made films in that country and for, and about, that linguistic group or national unit. This is no longer true. The boundaries between national cinemas are becoming increasingly porous, or are disintegrating altogether. And this follows the global weakening of borders between contiguous nation-states and their populations as the nineteenth-century concept fades in favor of a transnational concept of belonging.

Filmmaking is now a global and accessible process. It has become something that nearly everyone with a smartphone and computer can accomplish to a greater or lesser degree, regardless of their affiliations or geographical location. The financial backing that supports
filmmaking is also transcending the boundaries of nation-states and become transnational itself. Consequently, it is necessary to redefine what constitutes a national cinema, or to leave the concept behind altogether. A national cinema may be better defined through process, content, and intention rather than language, or ideology—in other words, to be described in terms of individual action. At minimum, filmmakers making films for an intended audience, in a language shared by their audience, and utilizing a culturally acceptable mode of performance, can be an active part of a national, or global cinema simultaneously. However, as I will demonstrate, filmmakers working in this new model in Turkey are often not willing to consider their work as part of a national, or global cinema. Rather, they see their work as intensely personal. For them, their work cannot stand as an example of what scholars and critics now call the New Turkish Cinema (Robbins 2006; Dönmez-Colin 2008; Bayrakdar et al. 2009; Suner 2010; Arslan 2011; Atakav 2013; Tuncer 2013).

The production contexts of the contemporary Turkish cinema exemplify why a broader concept is necessary. Turkish filmmakers are geographically spread across Turkey, the Arab world, Europe, Canada, and the United States. They are educated in schools around the world. They speak many languages beyond Turkish—and in some cases speak Turkish poorly. Some rarely visit Turkey, preferring to work in Los Angeles, London, or elsewhere. Many were not even born in Turkey. They are also not always engaged as Turkish filmmakers because they are also busy working on films that are not aimed at a Turkish audience; they are only engaged in the Turkish film industry when they are making a film for Turkish consumption. Theirs is an international practice. They work in a filmmaking milieu that is united by a set of increasingly shared practices, making films, television programs, and internet content for a wide range of uses and audiences. In short, to define the Turkish industry without incorporating this deep internationalist, transnational, and even cosmopolitan thread is to hold to antiquated definitions mired in nationalist language.
However, this is not to say that there are not strong commonalities and sympathies that can serve to define the aesthetic, thematic, narrative, and musical qualities of Turkish films. Additionally, a growing cluster of scholars, media journalists, and politicians are very interested in having the Turkish film industry return to, or even exceed, its former size and artistic prowess (Dorsay 1986; Robbins 2006; Dönmez-Colin 2008; Bayrakdar et al. 2009; Suner 2010; Arslan 2011; Atakav 2013; Tuncer 2013). These writers, scholars, and advocates are doing their best to encourage these scattered filmmakers to create films that together may constitute a corpus sufficiently robust to constitute a national cinema—one that encapsulates the people who make and enjoy the films, and can be read as symptomatic of their lives and lived contexts. Overall, their scholarly and critical work has focused on belonging and identity as the foundation of a new Turkish cinema.

However, there is a distinct problem: the very idea that Turkish films for the past ten years can be called Turkish at all is fairly problematic. For one thing, Turkish filmmaking has never had a continuous, unbroken development. The studios, the only institutional bodies that could qualify as the backbone of a Turkish film industry, shuttered their doors due to bankruptcy or censorship in the aftermath of the coup in 1980. The industry as it was ended, no films were made, and the studios were not replaced. What now exists is a looser collection of independent filmmakers and smaller independent studios working to make their own films in a very difficult market—one absolutely flooded with films from all over the world.

Contemporary scholars look to build the canon of New Turkish cinema from this disjointed and fragmented production history. To do so, they are obliged to make no distinction according to genre, actual country of origin, or quality of the work. In fact, some of the most prominent scholars like Dönmez-Colin and Suner go so far as to include the work of Fatih Akin, a German-born filmmaker of Turkish heritage in their lists of true Turkish cinema (Dönmez-Colin 2008; Suner 2010). This is somewhat problematic because it is difficult to consider him a Turkish filmmaker.
rather than a German filmmaker (Hartley and Stenport 2010). While his work tackles themes pulled from his experience living in the Turkish diaspora, his use of the German language, and his financial assistance from German and European funding schemes trouble any singular categorization. Despite this, Turkish audiences and scholars claim Akin as their own.

It is probable that scholars have pushed too hard to identify and delineate a national canon. They are too willing to include any filmmaker with a Turkish background into the sphere of Turkish filmmaking. Alternatively, they may even be stretching the very idea of what constitutes a national cinema to accomplish to accommodate these filmmakers. In either case, scholars like Suner and Dönmez-Colin, and newspaper columnists of many stripes hold that these works are prima facie Turkish and constitutive of the definition of Turkish film. Through their work, they have identified a commonly accepted corpus of films and declared them sufficiently Turkish to be analyzed and elevated into the canon of Turkish Cinema before its definitional characteristics have been sufficiently defined.

Curiously, film composers are largely uninterested in engaging in the discursive (re)construction of a Turkish national identity, preferring to focus on a level of experience that is more personal and unburdened by these constructs. This makes them unique in the industry. Many other filmmakers, producers, directors, and writers are fairly devoted to the idea of a Turkish cinema. Film composers are grouped with them by default, and their work is read as being symptomatic of these larger constructions. The gulf that exists between their intention and the reception of their ideas is a curious one because it illuminates the collaborative authorship that cinematic texts and musical works undergo throughout their production.

My dissertation addresses these issues, while also examining the creative efforts of film composers, their intentions, and their impact on how films are now made in Turkey. First of all, it summarizes my own investigation of filmmaking and writing music for film in Turkey from 2010 to 2013. Next, it is an attempt to describe how the production contexts confound any attempts to
label these films as Turkish unproblematically. Put simply, many of the people working as film composers in the Turkish film industry would not consider their nationality or ethnicity to be that important. This group is, after all, a loose set of ex-pats, returned diasporic Turks, Kurds, Greeks, Americans, and even foreign musicians. Thus, my work is also an analysis of the fault lines between the scholarly and vernacular discourse on identity politics and its place in the discursive and dialogic production of national sentiment and its formative mechanisms. Consequently, the figure of the rooted-cosmopolitan, or even, rootless-cosmopolitan, looms large in this work because each of the individuals I met in Istanbul and beyond is someone who wears personal, political, gendered, social, and national identities like clothes that can be shed at will to suit the situation.

Fundamentally, this dissertation examines the processes, products, and labors of four individuals: Mustafa Yazıcıoğlu, Yıldırı Gürgen, Tamer Çiray, and Faruk Ceviz. While I worked with many more filmmakers, these four exemplify what I saw. Each has a different background and status within the industry but works in similar ways. I begin by discussing the collaborative nature of filmmaking in order to point out that while a composer writes the music, a director guides the production, a producer handles the money, hiring, and logistics, an editor arranges the scenes, and a screenwriter writes the dialog. Each is responsible for managing these tasks as a member of the core team, but in every case, the work is done in collaboration with a team of several individuals. Unlike films make in Hollywood, or more formal, better-funded filmmaking arrangements, they assist each other in crafting how their work will appear in the final form. Thus, while my primary focus is the music makers, I also discuss the collaborative process of filmmaking in general. My purpose here is to illuminate the important contributions of the composer and to demonstrate that within a contemporary Turkish context, the composer has become quite a powerful figure indeed.
From here I move to examining the role of technology in filmmaking in general and in the studios in Turkey in particular as exemplars of an increasingly common and globally homogeneous approach to film scoring. I will show how cash-strapped filmmakers have come to depend on cutting-edge computer software and hardware, and how the way that film scores are composed and recorded for Turkish films is fundamentally different from how composers have worked in the past.

Finally, my dissertation is also an attempt to do what Latour suggests: to “follow the actors’ own ways and begin our travels by the traces left behind by their activity of forming and dismantling groups” (Latour 2005, 40). My intention is to show how films made in Turkey contribute to the new Turkish national cinema not because they have some quintessentially Turkish qualities, but because they are part of a larger, global, social discourse that is actively creating, destroying, and recreating what these qualities are and how they should manifest in life and in artistic production. I focus on how increasingly homogenous global film music production practices are connecting global filmmaking and local national cinemas. And I demonstrate how this connection is facilitated by the technological mediation of the DAW and the film composers themselves operating as rooted-cosmopolitans.

To this end I continue to use a micro-ethnographic method that is an ethnographically engaged way to examine the smallest of moments—particularly those decisions made out of focal awareness while a composer is engaged in the more technical concerns of creating a score with computer software. My intent is to show how this creative labor crafts something that is created in front of a computer only to later be read at the most macro social and political registers. I examine several individual decisions that were only manifested with the click of a mouse together with decisions made as a part of a working collaboration. My overall purpose with this small-scale approach is to show how film composition begins as a series of localized decisions that eventually grow to build the opening statement of a social dialogue that turns film music into social argument.
By focusing on the act of creation itself, and by examining music composition as a set of decisions and design methodologies, I want to contribute to the scholarly examination of the generation of artistic works and the ethnomusicological understanding how music becomes social and cultural action and performance.

**On Cosmopolitans, Cosmopolitanism, and Bi-Directional Nostalgia**

My fieldwork in Istanbul brought me face-to-face with people living lives in the interstices between several cultures and creative practices. Film music composers are involved in the work of making a film, but are separated from the principal work of writing, directing, and shooting a film. They are filmmakers, but not usually considered to be full members of the production team. Additionally, all of the people I met working as musicians in the film industry, are musicians that fall between the real, yet arbitrary, lines dividing popular music from classical music, Western and Eastern music making practices, and the divides between global and local lifeways. They were also people who could not easily be classified as Turkish, and make the most of their insider and outsider perspectives. By experiencing their work and their daily lived reality, I encountered people who are actually much like myself, given that my work and life is also lived in between countries, multiple identities, and categories. As someone who grew up in several countries and cultural formations, I immediately recognized a life lived with one foot in a social framework and one foot in another. I found people, who like me, are able to partake of each at will, and can codeswitch sufficiently to navigate several contexts simultaneously.

The word normally ascribed to people like us is “cosmopolitan,” a term that is burdened by an evaluative schema that sets it apart from “authentic,” “traditional,” “non-capitalist,” and “indigenous” lifeways. While it is impossible to deny that the argument grounding this opposition is valid, it cannot express the full ambit of the lived experiences of cosmopolitan individuals. People do not live this opposition on a daily basis, they navigate it in an attempt to resolve its
dichotomies. They either reinforce it or reject it through their actions. I prefer to see the cosmopolitan experience at the level of an individual’s negotiation of the strong and weak forces that guide their thoughts, deeds, and utterances. It is a way of living that is now imprinted on everyone’s experience, and it while it provides the framework for habitus, it is constantly in flux. It is therefore, a way of living that connects outside influences and daily lived experiences. And it is this that I highlight throughout this work.

Contemporary Turkish experience brings the discontinuities and nuances of this inbetweenness into stark relief because Turks are still living in the aftermath of a long, and even bloody, attempt to seek self-definition. Istanbulites in particular are caught between the histories of many different approaches to selfhood and identity and external and internal definitions. The city itself is a physical manifestation of an assemblage of competing identities and attempts at crafting cosmopolitan identities. Those people who are actively connected to larger, globalized formations are able to partake of these competing options. The musicians I met, partook of many of them as an essential feature of their work. Their music making was a way to select, prioritize, and alter the connectedness of these competing frameworks.

My role as a fellow cosmopolitan meant that I was able to follow them and understand the logic of these decisions. It also meant that I could be a more functional studio assistant or additional musician when necessary—although this was rare. My background as a trained classical musician, ethnomusicologist, and immigrant allowed me to immediately participate in the musical admixture that is a fundamental feature of their work, and to understand the intention behind these careful constructions without much explanation. But throughout my time in their studios, I was haunted by the problem that our similarities were clouding my ability to get to the core of what was different about their music making, and if that I was even looking for the right thing. I went to Turkey to investigate production practices in the Turkish film industry. I wanted to explore how music has contributed to the symbolic and social development of the New Turkish
Cinema. What I found was that the Turkish film musicians do not fit well into the narrative of a Turkish national cinema. The musical story of the New Turkish Cinema presented me a problem because it is one that is written and enacted by people who stretch the notion of Turkish to the breaking point.

My solution was to engage in a more focused examination of the lived experience of individual cosmopolitan actors to change the way we can conceptualize cosmopolitan being. By focusing on the work life and labor of a person who lives across many boundary lines, I was able to see them as individual navigators of global and local interconnections, rather than as exemplars of a social formation. It also meant that I was able to begin from a point where our commonalities would establish a working relationship and our differences would become more apparent. It allowed me to avoid the pitfalls of blending auto-ethnography and a study of another’s experiences because we moved past what we shared early in our relationships. We could then explore what it meant to be a cosmopolitan rooted and working in Turkey against a backdrop of what it means to be a member of our loosely organized global social formation.

Encountering the lived realities of life lived, and work done, on the boundary lines, led me to ask the question of just what is Turkish about what they are doing and what was not. How does their work fit into the greater framework of the New Turkish Cinema? I had to work to understand whether or not their work is Turkish at all, or could be something closer to bringing global practices and influences into contact with Turkish particularities. It led me to seek to define the concept of Turkishness as it pertains to film and music making and examine it in relation to a larger global framework of filmmaking.

**Dialectical Tendencies – Recasting *Alafanga* and *Alaturka* in Cinematic Practice**

An essential component of the discourse about Turkishness, and its relation to nationalist and cosmopolitan discourses, lies in the ideologically, culturally, and historically loaded dichotomy
between the East and the West. This has many forms and manifestations; among these is an
established dichotomy between *alafranga* and *alaturka* (Greve 1995; Signell 1977; Solomon
mobilized in music scholarship to differentiate between the aesthetic and practical differences
between the artistic and critical modes developed in Europe and the Ottoman Near East (Signell
1977; Stokes 1994). It is less a set of stylistic features and more an expression of an unresolved
dialectical pairing of origins, processes, and perspectives. Both terms, standing for overarching
concepts, compete for space within individuals’ consciousness or a society’s sense of self, only
inasmuch as neither can occupy the total conceptual space. Neither is sufficient for totalizing
cultural and social identity in Turkey. They must exist together, never touching or fully interacting.
In this way, only a parallax view can resolve the circumstance, and it means the dialog and
competition between them becomes a generative force for artistic expression (Žižek 2010).
Turkish films present both tendencies, and often the interaction between visual, narrative, and
musical fields embody or express the tension between them.

The *alafranga* and *alaturka* distinction emerges in daily conversation as the bridge
metaphor—where Istanbul is likened to a bridge joining Europe and Asia. It lurks in the current
political dialogue and public sphere discourse about the secular or religious (left-wing, centrist
post-Atatürkist republican elite vs. the conservative rural, populists), between rural and urban, and
between the middle class and the working class. Even racial and ethnic discourses are rolled into
the East/West dichotomy. To a very real extent, it has expanded beyond an easy cliché and grown
into something approaching a key metaphor for the current state of cultural and social discourse.
However, this is a paradox because, as I argue, Turkey is much more a place that rejects the
validity of both of these distinctions than it is one that melds them together. And this becomes
immediately evident when examining the process for writing, recording, and disseminating film
music. The production process through which culture is enacted and transmitted is no more or
less combinatorial and experimental than anywhere else. What makes the current circumstances in Turkey so interesting is that the Turks who are adding, mixing, joining, combining, and experimenting are so uncommonly well positioned culturally, financially, and socially, that they have a great deal of raw material to work with. These Turks are cosmopolitans in the most basic sense—they are of a global cultural formation first and a local construct second. Consequently, much of my work has addressed what these polyglot, worldly, cosmopolitan musicians are doing and how they learned to do it.

Because most of the composers who I met in Istanbul are largely from somewhere else, I must also discuss how they translate what they glean from non-Turkish sources, and from their foreign education to make them palatable for a Turkish- (or Kurdish-) speaking, Anatolian-based audience. To this end, I depend on the work and the assistance of Savaş Arslan, a film scholar who I met in Istanbul. Arslan is an important figure in this research because he talked me through a number of difficult problems I was having and provided insightful solutions. Additionally, his book, *Turkish Cinema* is the most analytically sensitive treatment of Turkish cinema yet produced (Arslan 2010). I have relied on our conversations and his text to understand the history of Turkish cinema. However, I am also aware that he represents a biased perspective. He himself is exactly the kind of cosmopolitan Turk that I am describing. He is a Turkish scholar with foreign degrees who writes and teaches about Turkish cinema and Turkish films in English, as is expected in Turkish academic institutions. Other current film scholars studying Turkish cinema, like Gönül Dönmez-Colin and Auman Suner, are cut from the same mold. This begs the question of whether his ideas are themselves symptoms of the same tendencies I am trying to analyze when I employ them. He is, after all, writing about Turkish-language film in English within a mostly English-speaking scholarly world perched atop the social ladder in Istanbul. I do my best to overcome this issue and include these problems in my analysis. However, I feel it does not prevent me from
mobilizing many of Arslan’s concepts, including the most relevant one: his developed notion of “Turkification.”

Savaş Arslan views the act of Turkification as operational, bordering on mechanistic. It involves the transformation of foreign films and filmmaking techniques, making them palatable to Turkish audiences and compatible with pre-existing rhetorical and dramatological techniques, as an important generative force driving the development of the Turkish film industry (Arslan 2010). Importantly, he identifies this process as one that became definitional, forming the practices, structure, and aesthetic sensibilities of the industry and audiences alike. This process involved adapting foreign films, particularly American films, to make them palatable, or fit, for Turkish consumption. This went beyond translating inter-titles,1 or dubbing the dialog after the arrival of sound. He goes into greater detail, as I will later on.

The implications of Turkficiation within and without filmmaking are clear. The concept of Turkishness constitutes one half of an oppositional or even dialectical process that lies at the center of how cinema is a medium for cultural development. It is also an easy way to describe the assimilation of anything that comes from outside a particular socio-cultural milieu. One could speak of any productive process aimed at developing a nationalistic sentiment or diasporic community in the same terms: Britishification, Americanization, and even Westernization. However, as I will show, while Turkification was a definitional ethos and formative practice for filmmakers, within the sphere of musical practice, which was integrated into filmmaking at around the same time, many forces were pushing in the opposite direction. And this is something no Turkish film scholar has discussed in their books in any great detail. From the 1920s until the 1960s, music in Turkey, particularly the musical tastes and practices of the cosmopolitan elite—the very same people who made and consumed the films of the time—was involved in the final

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1 Intertitles are the dialogue cards placed between shots in silent films.
stages of a long process of Westernization that manifested in music in a particularly strong way (Greve 1995).

For Arslan, the most notable of the technological and artistic forces influencing the development of the film industry in Turkey arose in the attempt to “translate, adapt, remake, vernacularize and domesticate a medium that is inherently Western and demands a response on the grounds of its otherness”—a form of “Turkification-from-below” (Arslan 2010, 61). He sees this as an important thread that holds the history of Turkish filmmaking together. I want to isolate and trace this same tendency in contemporary practice, because it is largely what governs the production of film music in the contemporary manifestation of the Turkish cinematic industry today. However, filmmaking is no longer a western practice. Additionally, Turkish cinematic production practices do not merely involve reworking western cinematic works. Instead, Turkish filmmaking practices draw from a set of global production practices that are particularized locally. Unlike their predecessors, contemporary Turkish filmmakers are not adopting western practices, but those that are simultaneously western and Turkish to produce works that are also dualistic in nature. One must understand the rise of the Yeşilçam industry in the 1950s as the first true Turkish cinema to contextualize this dualistic nature, particularly because filmmakers working at that time relied upon a number of strikingly different methods to organize themselves in response to foreign, mostly American and European, filmmaking.

This necessarily raises the question of how Turkishness can effectively serve as a locus of identification in a milieu that is dualistic in nature. The paradox is that Turkishness results from a number of unstable associations, and may not be able to satisfactorily serve as a ground for a set of stable descriptors. It suffers the same problems as what it means to be British, as outlined by Hobsbawm and Ranger in *The Invention of Tradition* (1992). Importantly, I use the phrase “locus of identification” rather than identity because I feel the latter, as it is commonly used, reifies the acts of building identity and enacting it. Because individuals and communities are constantly
in flux, and are redefining themselves moment by moment, it seems odd to fetishize a singular identity, or even interrelated plural identities, as if they are static or describable singular phenomena. Therefore, I feel locus of identification better articulates this phenomenon. It acknowledges the dialogic and dialectical nature of the process of identification and can accommodate the idiosyncratic appearances of this process and the dizzying numbers of possible identities. Identity is not singular; it is what arises during conversation. And like the social production of memory described by Maurice Halbwachs, nothing an individual does occurs without holding the needs and thoughts of others in mind. Thus, the act of identification more closely mirrors the production of the commind as described by Peirce, and is a dialectic of individual and social (Peirce 2000, 477-491). It is a linkage between people that is constantly being changed by the individuals involved. To speak of identity in the singular, suggests there is some idealized version that can be shared by each of the individuals or groups involved.

Much of the public debate regarding Turkey's film industry involves whether Turkey can legitimately claim an industry of its own equal to that of larger countries such as the United States, Nigeria, India, or Germany. In part, the question is whether or not Turkish filmmakers are capable of producing quality work that is indicative of a Turkish identity. However, critics also question whether Turkish filmmakers can make a decent film at all (Zaman editors 2012). This debate is necessarily a comparative one. It compares Turkish films with those made in more financially stable circumstances—arguably on unequal terms. But it also questions whether or not Turkey has a national cinema, and just which definition of nation to use. The distinction between Turkey as cosmopolitan community, that is, one which acknowledges the long history of social and cultural exchange with the world outside the physical boundaries of the republic and the linguistic boundaries of the Turkish community, and Turkey as distinct based on its historical, linguistic, and cultural background becomes important. While participants in this debate often collapse these themes into simpler descriptions, employing East vs. West, rural vs. urban, or traditional vs.
modern dichotomies as proxies, the core of the debate actually addresses whether Turkey, as one of the longest-standing cosmopolitan areas in the world, can claim to own its society and its culture, or if it owes it to everyone who has passed through. The fundamental question is: can Turkey even have a Turkish cinema, or is it just a collection of films (that are inherently Western) in Turkish?

Since the very beginning of the film industry, foreign works have presented a constant incoming tide threatening to wash away the comparatively small output of Turkish filmmakers. Throughout the twentieth century foreign filmmaking companies owned and almost totally controlled the distribution networks. They made sure to distribute their own works alongside the films produced domestically. They often outnumbered domestic productions, and the presence of a vast number of foreign films meant both the production and distribution channels were always weighted in favor of foreign imports. As a consequence, Turkish filmmakers had to compete for space within the distribution channels established to disseminate these foreign productions. The first true domestic production companies were actually opened by the established import companies. They expanded their business into creating films in Turkey by leveraging the existing infrastructure they had developed to adapt foreign films. The large number of dubbed foreign films in the system meant that audiences were used to the visual and narrative language of foreign films. Turkish filmmakers had to work within an aesthetic and technical framework that was largely out of their hands in order to compete with the better funded, and technologically more advanced foreign products.

This is still true for filmmakers working in the contemporary industry. Turkish audiences’ expectations still present a problem for filmmakers because as one director told me, “we must choose between being derivative or risk the people hating our work. There is no other option.” Many aesthetic decisions and production practices that have come to define the Turkish cinema have been greatly affected by the presence of foreign films. In particular, the sound of Turkish
films is evidence of this. After the introduction of sound to films in the late 1920s, European and American film import companies began hiring Turkish actors to voice the foreign films they were distributing. Turkish audiences became very used to the sound—and even the look—of dubbed films. Later, when the Turkish affiliates of these distribution companies began to make their own films, they used the dubbing technique as a quick way to make domestic films. Even Turkish films were shot silently and dubbed. Beginning in the 1940s, in an effort to keep costs down, even the new Turkish productions were shot without sound and simply dubbed later on. The sound of a dubbed voice became a sonic sign for the industry in general and dominated the cinematic experience in Turkey for decades. The sound itself is unmistakable because there are no foley sounds or diegetic noises. Even scenes set outside sound as if the person is speaking from inside a small cabinet—which of course, they are. And because these dubbed films also suffer from fairly primitive sound mixing equipment, the musical score is forced into the background and is lost amidst the dialog. The peculiarities of this sound continued to be a marker of Turkish films for decades, particularly when the money began to run out.

The Problem of Technology

The last issue I examine is the impact of technology on the production of music and music making alike. As with my other areas of inquiry, my view of technology arises mostly from the fact that it (in many manifestations) was present and manifest in the lives of those I worked besides for many months, and partly because ethnomusicologists are still struggling to develop a view of technologized music making that acknowledges technologies’ (of many kinds) role in the social and cultural forces that shape people’s lives. This is something that is an emerging area of inquiry in ethnomusicology, as composer and ethnomusicologist Bruno Descenes remarks in his article “Toward an Anthropology of Music Listening”:

> No studies seem to exist either in ethnomusicology or anthropology examining the impact [that] technological upheaval has forced upon the musical situation in
Humankind's societies in this century. Moreover, few ethnomusicologists or anthropologists have shown an interest in investigating Western society and, in particular, the multi-ethnicity of its social development and the globalization of communications and exchanges between all countries in the world [that] has continued to occur in this century" (Descenes 1998, 136).

While I was in the field, I was confronted with the fact that the computer software and integrated hardware used by my composer friends were functioning more as a musical instrument than as a computer or something akin to a musical word-processor that manipulates sound directly. These composers were as much virtuoso computer performers as they were composers. For me this forced me to begin to see their tools in a new light. Their compositional process is more a form of performance than it is composition in a traditional—pen and paper—format. This realization forced me to re-evaluate the way that I understood musical instruments, technologically mediated performance, and indeed the criteria we use to differentiate those who write music from those who play music. This new perspective requires a more robust, and indeed radical, view of technology and the role it plays in musical performance and composition: namely that technology is a tool that is entirely subsumed by the will and the intent of its user. It has also forced me to re-evaluate the nature of music produced with the aid of recording technology and with the aid of synthesizers and other technology enabled sound generators. I now realize that technologically-enabled performances must include those where the technology in question is a simple reed pipe or a Digital Audio Workstation controlling a dozen VST (virtual studio technology) instruments, or VSTis.

The importance of technology stretches beyond musical production or performance. Because my work examines film music, I must also consider the way that new broadcast technologies are expanding the expressive and communicative reach of both the films and their scores. Digital file sharing, video streaming, and on-demand viewing are now fundamental aspects of the act of reception, it means that the audience for these films is larger, more enabled, and more active than ever before. It also means that the act of watching a film no longer has to
be a public act. This means that these films are speaking to a wider audience in more intimate settings than ever before. They are shifting in form and content to capture the attention of audiences that can watch anything else whenever they want.

Finally, technology features very prominently in my work because it is used strategically by contemporary Turkish filmmakers to overcome their crushing lack of money and time. Turkish films are still made with tiny budgets and on shorter schedules than many filmmakers would be comfortable with. As I will show, this is nothing new. The Turkish film industry has been perpetually low on cash. However, computer-aided composition and editing have become the norm because they allow a small team to do the work that would traditionally be done by dozens of people. As I will demonstrate, this allows a single composer to be an entire orchestra, and to write and perform the entire score in days, or weeks, rather than months. Fundamentally, Turkish cinema is currently working at the cutting edge of filmmaking technologies out of necessity. I demonstrate how filmmakers have used these technologies to change not just their compositional processes, but indicate how these technologies have impacted the form and content of these films as well. My point is that one of the characteristics of a contemporary Turkish cinema is that it is highly technologized. This is something that it shares with many of the cinemas, film studios, and filmmakers that the Turkish filmmakers emulate. They are linked by their technology and process, both of which are channels through which admixture, borrowing, stealing, and incremental innovations flow.

This work has several points of investigation and several points of departure. Just as it is impossible to separate the two sides of a fused dialectical pair, it is impossible to describe the work of Turkish film composers without considering the world outside Turkey. It is also impossible to examine and describe what they do and think without also coming to terms with the analytical framework that analysts use, and have used, to understand Turkey, film, and music respectively. Thus, this work is an ethnography that is intertwined with a larger discussion about the destructive
and creative powers of an analytical process. For instance, in taking Turkish Cinema as a central focus, it is essential to also consider the cinemas that exist beyond the linguistic and geopolitical borders of Turkey. This is more than just a theoretical concern. It is also a practical requirement because it is an essential part of the way that Turkish filmmakers make films.

Chapter Overview: From Establishing Shot to Close-Up

I begin as they do in the movies: first with an establishing shot that sets the scene, and then, with increasingly tighter shots, I examine both the people and the processes that are the focus of this work. I end with a “close-up” concentrating on the composers’ interpretive labor, methods, and the products of their work: mediated musical performances that are an essential part of contemporary cinemas all over the world. My purpose is to first set the stage by outlining the essential components of the creative labor that is most simply called Turkish Cinema and its practical, ideological, and semiotic connections to that arena of labor we normally refer to as “real life.” I will highlight some of the essential phenomena and discursive flows that are part of Turkish filmmakers’ creative process. First amongst these is the problem of “Turkishness” as an aesthetic and discursive construction and its relationship to a cosmopolitan rooted in Turkish culture as a focus of the process of identification.

Because my dissertation examines the creative labor of musicians who work as partners in a collaborative unit, I must expand my examination beyond music to the other features of films and filmmaking. Film scores are not just musical works unconnected to a film’s narrative and visual aspects; they cannot be considered set apart from these other elements. Soundtracks exist solely to help an audience parse and interpret a film’s narrative and structure. The music is an interpretive tool and deeply impacts how an audience receives the film as a whole. Thus, composers are as much a part of the core filmmaking team as the cinematographer,
screenwriters, or and editor. However, it is also possible to see them as members of the audience. They are the first to interpret the visual and narrative content of the film.

Film music must be understood as a part of a total work; it has a specific role to play but fails if it exceeds its mandate. In a practical sense, this means I must consider composition alongside directing, writing, editing, and all of the other tasks that lead to the creation of a cinematic work. I must consider music composition within two nested contexts. The first is the temporally and conceptually prescribed sociocultural milieu that contextualizes the activity and experience of all Turks. The second is the subcultural context that is peculiar to the activity of filmmaking in Turkey. The latter is certainly a subset of the former.

But it is also something that directly connects to cultural and social currents guiding the development of global processes—both literal and figurative. Thus, it is a productive act that involves joining the experience of a single individual—the composer—together with that of the multitudes in the audiences who see and hear it as they watch the film. What a single individual creates in front of a computer is heard and consumed by audiences seated in multiplex theatres and curled up on their couches at home, with the total audience numbering in the thousands, if not millions. And this only covers the material realities of production and consumption. Film music production is also a productive act that aims to bring many conceptual extremes into some sort of resolution, or at least into uneasy synthesis. Filmmakers blend a fictional world of cinematic experience together with a nearly equally arbitrary world of “real-life.” Using the language and sign systems of myth, filmmakers also bind the particular to the general by making heroes out of nothing, and by bringing shared experience to everyone.

More specifically, film music is a productive act that puts filmmakers into two spheres of filmmaking. The first is a local sphere of production that includes the other filmmakers and the particular project they are working on. The second is an arena of global discourse and practice that constitutes the global sphere of filmmaking in general. Because media now flows relatively
easily between these two extremes—crossing national borders and cultural boundaries instantaneously—filmmakers are now part of a large dialogue that incorporates filmmakers and audiences from around the world. The global features are penetrating the local context more and more. It is not a stretch to say that most filmmakers working today are aware of other films and the processes of other filmmakers, even those many thousands of miles away. The global trade in films has created a body of work so ubiquitous that it has transcended the arbitrary boundaries of national cinemas. Works like *Star Wars, The Lord of the Rings,* etc. are known to just about everyone who wants to try their hand at filmmaking. As a result, they are exemplars of a common creative approach, aesthetic sensibility, and design language shared by filmmakers across the globe.²

The changing practice of filmmaking now requires filmmakers (especially composers) to navigate, and creatively combine, these increasingly interpenetrated local and global contexts. This task is not an easy one, and as a consequence, filmmakers must be fluent and agile social and cultural insiders capable of exploiting a deep knowledge of social and cultural phenomena found at both the local and global strata. They must be able to work alone while thinking of the expectations of wildly divergent audiences. They must be aware of the tastes and cultural norms of both local and global audiences. They must also be able to speak the formal and aesthetic language of global filmmaking together with various bodies of local national and sub-cultural filmmaking. Film composers must be fluent and effective filmmakers while also being musicians of considerable ability. The purpose of this chapter is to locate the filmmaker as an individual within the threads of interpenetration that connect local and global filmmaking, producers and

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² These large-budget productions serve as an ideal for filmmaking. This idea serves as a goal for filmmakers who do not have the financial resources, time, or expertise to make fictional film in the same way. There is a gap between filmmakers working at this level of the industry and those working in more modest circumstances. However, because filmmaking technologies are rapidly improving and decreasing in price, while the scale may not be the same, the production practices are now increasingly common between filmmakers working in different scales or strata of experience.
audiences, and the creation of a work like a film score and the concomitant production of a socio-culturally specific sense of selfhood that can be shared by many.

Given that the creative inputs in question are coming from musics, films, literature, art, and consumer culture from around the world, the only term that seems appropriate for such a person is ‘cosmopolitan’. However, because this term is laden with problematic meaning, I do not use it lightly. Rather, I see the need to rehabilitate it somewhat. At its core the word really only means “citizen of the world.” It serviceable as such, but I believe it requires some rehabilitation, because this particular meaning is only truly applicable if we strip away some of the negative layers of meaning it has accrued due to the cosmopolitan ethos being so deeply connected to colonial activities and exploitative capitalist business practices and consumption. I will use it here to refer to a person who is adept at navigating the boundary lines and borders that separate the local and the global flows, and who revels in using these distinctions as fodder for creative and productive acts. Film composers working in Turkey today must be adept at these things and more. It is easy enough to call them cosmopolitans on this basis alone. However, it is essential to recognize that the distinctions that the term cosmopolitan has demanded in the past, are in fact the problem with the term. One does not need to choose between being a cosmopolitan and anything else—indigenous, sub-altern, nationalist, patriot, stateless, etc. Most of these filmmakers have many constructions of selfhood, some of which include being a Kurd or an Australian, and beyond. Although they do feel the tensions of accommodating some of these constructions in their cosmopolitan outlook, they are able accomplish their work successfully because they adeptly inhabit all of these subject positions simultaneously.

There are a finite number of places where one can gain the skills necessary to make multi-million dollar films. Filmmakers from many nations congregate in these centers—places like Los Angeles, London, New York City, Paris, Toronto, Hamburg, Mumbai, and Trollhätten, to name a few. This has the effect of creating a connected community of filmmakers who are linked by
This is not a monolithic community, however. The control of dedicated professionals has waned in recent years. Technological advances pushing the development of consumer electronics over the last decade have placed powerful but inexpensive cameras and software editing suites within reach of millions. Filmmaking is no longer the domain of only those who can afford expensive cameras and film development. Professional film composers are active members of this international formation and thus a defining characteristic of their work is the attempt to resolve a cosmopolitan ethos, with their local contexts and constraints.

Chapter two is an establishing shot that sets the scene. It opens my narrative, and provides an establishing shot of the larger context inhabited by the composers. Its purpose is to intensify and open the central themes and problems that will be addressed by the subsequent chapters. The chapter opens with a statement of an essential problem: the fact that my study has two field sites. While both field sites are firmly set in Istanbul and in Turkey, only one is the real city and cultural context. The other is an imaginary Turkey and a fictional Istanbul that exists only in films and in the imaginations of the audiences that watch these films. The filmmaker occupies both spaces. My reasons for beginning in this way are twofold: first, I want to truthfully describe how I entered my field site myself and demonstrate why my status as a dualistic cosmopolitan researcher allowed me greater access to what I was studying than I could have hoped. Secondly, I am making an essential distinction that contextualizes much of the creative labor and discursive effort that creates and positions a Turkish national cinema complete with its musical content. The cinematic Turkey, like its counterpart, is the product of the collective labor of film composers and filmmakers, except that this invented Turkey is forged through much more intentional creative effort, and only later consumed readily and hungrily by audiences all over Turkey, in the Arab world, and in the living rooms of those in the Turkish diaspora. It is Turkey in as much as it constitutes, for a large number of people, their only contact with many aspects and areas of the country and its cultural development. This is particularly true for first generation immigrants who
may only have contact with many aspects of Turkey through these works. Fundamentally, the relationship between the real and cinematic Turkey is a productive one for many people. However, an important question arises: is the cinematic Turkey capable of generating a real Turkey, or does this only work the other way around?

The chapter continues with a long-range shot where we can just begin to make out the outlines of people who live in both Turkeys: the filmmakers and film composers themselves. I argue that these people are archetypal cosmopolitans who are omnivorous consumers of media and from all over the world. They must be to do their work. My point in this section is to challenge components of several prevailing notions of cosmopolitanism and to develop a sympathetic view that can accommodate the increasing rise of young professionals who are enthusiastic producers and consumers of media—especially mediated music—from around the world. This section closes with a brief ethnographic description of an event that encapsulates the heady mix of influences that impact Turkish cosmopolitans’ perspective of their milieu.

After this I discuss how notions of Turkishness can develop from within a decidedly cosmopolitan perspective. I engage with these concepts in order to demonstrate that this Turkishness is something that is employed not as an oppositional other for cosmopolitans, but as an intimate concept that is simply a constituent element of their larger multifaceted view of the world. I demonstrate how this dialogic pairing (Turkish and Cosmopolitan) is at the core of dialog seated deeply within contemporary Turkish cinema, and set the stage for a deeper exploration of this issue in later chapters.

Chapter three provides a brief overview of the history of Turkish film because it is impossible to describe the current state of contemporary filmmaking practice without developing a baseline view of what happened before. The contemporary Turkish film industry is an inchoate entity that is really more of a loose clustering of filmmakers and funding opportunities than it is a formalized business. This has not always been the case, and in the first chapter I explore the
roots of a Turkish film industry that flourished in a more formalized institutional form prior to the political and social turmoil of the three coups that drastically reshaped Turkey and its economy. Because mounting a truly thorough treatment of the history of Turkish cinema is outside the scope of my work, I rely on secondary sources and several interviews with Turkish film scholars and academics to develop this history. My purpose is to establish several points that will return later when I describe the work of film composers who are working in the contemporary filmmaking industry in Turkey.

Two central themes that arise in this brief history are the connection between money and technology and the fact that Turkish filmmakers have been short on both throughout the entire history of Turkish cinema. The seemingly permanent lack of money has contributed to an approach to filmmaking that is at once resourceful yet lags behind the larger national and international film industries and cinemas in its technological sophistication. Turkish films in the middle of the twentieth century bear the markers of crushingly meager budgets and the low expectations that accompany them. However, the scratchy sound, bad colorization, over-acting, and badly framed shots have not diminished people’s enjoyment of these films. Today many of these low-budget films still fill considerable airtime on a number of Turkey’s 24-hour, conservative cable television channels. The films’ weaknesses have undergone an aesthetic apotheosis, and they are now fondly remembered as a nostalgic marker of a more innocent time—despite being made in a politically and economically unstable period marked by military coups and economic crashes. Nevertheless, these works established a set of aesthetic norms that are still shaping the production and reception of Turkish films today. The purpose of this chapter is to provide enough background to establish their impact on contemporary filmmaking.

Chapter four is a close-up shot introducing the heroes of my story: the composers with whom I worked from 2010 to 2014 in Istanbul, Ankara, Los Angeles, London, New York City, and Toronto, Canada. Here I develop a portrait of the kind of person who works as a film composer in
the very volatile world of Turkish film. I begin this chapter by profiling each of my close friends and demonstrating how they inhabit and typify the subject position of a Turkish cosmopolitan. With this in mind, I discuss the important role that I call the “first interpreter.” I demonstrate that much of the work that film composers do goes beyond production to reception. The first step in developing a score for a film involves watching the film or discussing a director’s vision for the production. Composers must work within these constraints and write music to complement the work of the other filmmakers. This is a receptive act as much as it a productive one. I argue that their social and cultural fluency as cosmopolitans and as omnivorous consumers of global media are essential qualities. It is their education and cultural background that affords them the ability to do this work.

Chapters five and six focus on the compositional processes and the details of creating a film score. This examination begins with an ethnographic description of the daily practice of two composers’ compositional processes, moves to an examination of the role of technology and the development of a technoculture of film composition, and ends in chapter six with the productive labor of the first interpreter—the role that composers take as they complete their initial draft of their score. Importantly, chapter six brings into focus the most striking aspect of contemporary film scoring by demonstrating how computer-aided composition is actually a creative act closer to instrumental performance than it is to composition in the traditional sense. Freed from the limitations of paper and pencil, these do not just “write” music by encoding performative instructions to aid a performer’s appropriate realization of sound, but are now work with the sounds themselves. However, with this newfound capacity comes a terrible burden. Composers who write music using synthesizers and computer software have to encode and realize all of the minutiae of a musical performance themselves. They have to laboriously set out all of the discrepancies and stylistic alterations that are normally rendered by a skilled performer. As such, they take on both the role of composer and performer themselves and are obliged to realize these
details in the tracks they produce as they compose the score. They do not compose with a computer so much as they play the computer. I argue this is actually a new kind of musical performance where time is stretched to the breaking point and the performance is only consummated when an audience hears the rendered score in the movie theatre or on television. With this in mind, I also demonstrate that while this is a feature of electronic music production, it is something that is distinct from the other kinds of production practices found in recording studios.

I demonstrate how the collapsing and combining effect of the digital audio workstation (DAW) eliminates much of what is typically found in recording studios. I show how the mediation of the DAW depopulates the studio and shifts the relationship between performer and performance. I argue that this work is different and that the technologies common to both recording and production studios are not used in the same way and cannot be seen as equivalent.

The final chapter is the most finely-grained view of a film composer’s activities. As such, it is a reading of several films that exemplify a major cinematic trope in the New Turkish Cinema. Each of these films has central sequences that I have called the “return to home,” where the characters transition from a dangerous urban space and seek out a safer place in rural Anatolia. These sequences effect more than a narrative change because the “return to home” trope is a cinematic tool for shifting the film’s aesthetic completely. It becomes a key evocation of a multidirectional nostalgia that points both to an imagined past and to a cinematic past—mediated statements of nostalgias that were constructed in the 1970s and 1980s as contemporary Turkey was being forged. Film composers play an important role in building the return to home trope because much of the moment’s indexical signs are musically based; it is the only point where these multiple nostalgias are brought together. They construct a score that signals and consummates the transition from the contemporary, cosmopolitan urban spaces to the more traditional, Turkish milieu of rural Anatolia. But these musical moments are also evoking a cinematic past that brings the audience into contact with their experiences of Turkey’s cinematic
past. They combine nostalgias for an invented national imaginary, for a time before military interventions, and for a time when Turkish cinema was an explicit part of building the national sentiment that is now slipping away in the face of changes wrought by increasing globalization. This chapter sits between two ethnographic examinations of film composition to demonstrate how the composers make musical choices to activate this multi-directional nostalgia and to make use of the space between Turkey’s history, its imagined national story, and its mediated national identity.

My purpose is not just to demonstrate how this process unites Turkish filmmakers with a vast network of colleagues around the world, but also how this process serves as one side of an increasingly important dialog about who Turks want to be. Film music is a symptom of their connection to each other and to the world outside their geographical, cultural, and linguistic borders. It is also a site for pushing how Turks are to understand what happens within and without these limits. Returning to Yildiray Gürgen’s statement (“There are many Turkeys in Istanbul. Some are worldly, some aren't real.”), we can now see that the Turkeys he references reflect contemporary experiences of the nation born of a multitude of different perspectives. The films that he and others make are collective statements of these perspectives, inflected with the economic, political, and practical constraints of the filmmaking process. I will demonstrate how these competing perspectives are brought together and how film music has become an important part of this process.
Chapter 2

The Cosmopolitan and the Composer in Istanbul

Istanbul is in almost every film from the traditional commercial cinema to contemporary self-reflexive auteur films. Lovers separate and reunite on the shores of the Bosporus, the turbulent strait that divides Europe from Asia. The Lonely man draws a long puff from his cigarette cursing his fate (say poverty) for losing his beloved. The disillusioned artist/intellectual has a moment of reflection on a bench facing an Anatolian coast and perhaps begins to see the point of view of the provincial, his suppressed “other,” while the young provincial watches the cargo ships he thinks may one day change his destiny but always leave without him. Istanbul is where cinema was born in Turkey (Dönmez-Colin 2008, 8).

With this statement, Dönmez-Colin calls attention to the centrality of Istanbul to contemporary films, and alludes to the reasons why. In its cinematic presentation, the city is a metaphor for Turkey, its people, and its problems. As such, it serves as the backdrop for filmmakers’ treatments of the social and cultural realities of Turks. When I went to Istanbul, I was entering into a place that I had already inhabited and come to understand quite deeply. However, the Istanbul I already knew was the one I had experienced through Turkish films and television. My fieldwork for this project was conducted as much in Istanbul the place as it was in “Istanbul” the cinematic construction. As I arrived for the first time, the cinematic Istanbul was much more real to me. However, the cinematic city bore little relation to the one that I found myself in that September morning. None of my preparations of learning Turkish, studying Turkish musical performance practices, and watching far too many Turkish films prepared me for what I found. It was at once strange and banal, and above all else I was entirely surprised to discover that the city was just a city.

I was immediately caught up with Istanbul as a much larger place than I had imagined. I landed fully expecting to see the corners, nooks, and crannies I already knew. I left the airport and took the Havaş bus that regularly takes travelers to Taksim square in the heart of the European side. During the ride into town, I was straining to recognize of the places I thought I
knew. But it took forty-five minutes of driving before anything even remotely familiar came into view. Atatürk airport sits at the outermost limits of the western side, and for most of the trip you see only the edges of the newly constructed suburbs. One does not really get a sense of the place or the size of the city as a whole, except the very real sense that it is vast. On the bus, at eye level, what you get is a sense that this place is truly a mixture of many places and ways of living. I was sitting amongst a group of Dutch tourists, watching taxi drivers squeeze past the bus in Korean-made cars, while Russian oil tankers floated past on the Marmara sea. The TV on the bus was showing an episode of the British version of *The Dragon’s Den* with Turkish subtitles.

After leaving the airport and the west suburbs, the bus takes you right into the center of Istanbul proper by charging up Tarlıbaşı Cdessi. Tarlıbaşı is a main thoroughfare behind the storied neighborhood of Pera that winds up a hill from the Golden Horn to the broad plaza and public square called Taksim. It is a steep road that winds around the chaos of the old city and climbs circuitously into the heart of everything. The final stop, Taksim Square, anchors the European side of the city and serves as both the center of the tourist attractions and the locus of public life on the European side. The area surrounding Tarlıbaşı Cd. encapsulates much of the character of contemporary Istanbul. As it winds up the hill to Taksim it takes you by Galatasaray’s football stadium, the confused public architecture of the TRT (Turkish Radio and Television) buildings, and a number of seemingly bombed out, gutted husks of late Ottoman period buildings that are still home to many junkies and marginalized people, some of them possibly former tenants. Opposite this scene are a number of cheap tourist hotels, the town houses of the old Greek, Armenian, Jewish, and European inhabitants intermingled with a great deal of gleaming contemporary architecture—all glass and reflected sunshine. This is Istanbul now. It is everything muddled together. It is auto mechanics and car part shops situated right next to food marts and hairdresser’s salons. It is history and the present competing for space.
The old and the new buildings occupy the same space and often encroach upon each other, neither one gaining an edge or overpowering the other. It is a city that accepts incongruence as a matter of fact.

In this way, Istanbul was nothing different. It was just another city where money, culture, and history collide. And yet, this is not just any city. Taking any reading of human history and the state of contemporary geopolitical and economic conditions, Istanbul is one of the cities. Like Beijing, Rome, Mexico City, Baghdad, Paris, London, and New York City it and its inhabitants have been evolving and driving the development of many cultures for a very long time. It has been the centerpiece of a vast number of commercial, military, religious, political, and artistic movements for almost its entire history—now over two thousand years. In part, as all of the old stories go, this is because it is perfectly located—placed on the edge of two continents, at once bringing them together and yet being built out of neither. Istanbul is supposed to be the place where the east literally meets the west, where the East meets the West, or at least where the West sees the beginning of the East. Certainly, if you listen to the tourist board’s ad copy it bridges the East/east and the West/west, partaking of the best of both.

Taking that trip from the airport mirrored many of the scenes in the various films about Istanbul I have seen. It is an undisputed fact that Turkish films are obsessed with the city, and a good number of them take place there. The first sound Turkish film, *Istanbul’un Sokaklarinda* (In the streets of Istanbul, 1931) is, as its title suggests, set in Istanbul’s populated backstreets, and the history of the Yeşilçam studio system was played out on Yeşilçam Sk. in Beyoğlu, a street that I unknowingly passed on my way into town. My bus trip was every bit a drawn-out establishing shot pulled from one of these films. But what it demonstrated to me in a way that none of the carefully edited travel montages did, was that this place is really less about the meeting of the East and West, and really more about the uneasy juxtaposition of old and new. But until I had arrived, the dominant narrative I had gleaned from Turkish film, or films about
Istanbul, was that the city it is the bridge between. Indeed, this is what everyone I told me, Turks and non-Turks alike. But when confronted with the reality of daily life, all of this fell away. It seemed like many other old cities that have been many things to many people for a long time. So why do we focus on the East-West distinction so much? Why are the films so focused on presenting the tensions that lie between these two concepts? How does music fit into this discourse, and does it offer any way to manage the divide?

Questions about how music contributes to this discourse lie at the center of my examination of the films of the New Turkish Cinema. How are we to understand what kind of music is in these films and whether or not it can be symptomatic of a particularly Turkish perspective? Are these scores Turkish music, or do they fuse musics from multiple musical practices and socio-cultural perspectives? Are they part of a production practice common to individuals who do not observe the boundaries of national formations? Are the two mutually exclusive? Is it even possible to speak about Turkish film scores? Or is it better to see contemporary filmmaking as an inherently cosmopolitan labor that has rooted, particularized expressions? To address these questions, I interrogate the analytical deployment and power of the term cosmopolitanism. I argue that internationalized, cosmopolitan Turks are the core of the filmmaking landscape in contemporary Turkey, and that the perspectives they bring to their work, and the production practices they use, are shaping the films of the New Turkish Cinema more than anything else. Their role as the conduits of new influences and practices is changing the mediated presentation of Turkey in ways that are affecting how Turks around the world understand themselves, their origins, and the modern Turkish nation-state. But to use the word cosmopolitan is not without its problems. I want to address these issues before I locate these people and describe their interpretive labors.

In my opinion, “cosmopolitan” should be not be a limited concept or category. It should reference what exists across the boundaries of the existing nation-states, homogenous social
identities, and in the relatively alienated marginalized interstitials of inter- and transnational communities, or individual experiences. It should be used to describe people and actions that connect the global and the local, and partake of both and not be reserved for those who come from outside alone. This is in stark contrast with the pejorative sense of the term that is activated when a commentator wants to make a distinction between authentic, indigenous culture and the specter of some alien, transnational, or West-centered elitist cultural formation. Thomas Turino highlights this problem when he says, “At this point, I simply want to note that this view of Zimbabwean musical and cultural history is widely held both inside and outside the country, and that it was generated both from local experience and from nationalist and other cosmopolitan (e.g. ethnomusicological quarters, who assume the cosmopolitan is an alien presence and cannot be part of “local experience” (Turino 2000, 34). The parenthetical portion of his statement signals that there are many who consider the cosmopolitan experience to be one that cannot partake of local, or even indigenous experience. And here it is too easy to slip into arguments where authenticity is evoked to help differentiate local and cosmopolitan experience and action. With Bruce Robbins, Paul Rabinow (1986), Arjun Appaduari (1991), Homi Bhabha (1996), Michael Cohen (1991), David Hollinger (1991), and Martha Nussbaum (1996), and Richard Robbins (1998), I want to elevate the notion of cosmopolitan beyond this gloss, and avoid the coarse language usually employed to distinguish a group of supposedly authentic native culture from a colonialized upper-class with some, or even in some cases, no international connections and a healthy dose of false-consciousness. However, this distinction is difficult to write against, because even when it is not intentionally activated, it is a sub-text in the reportage of many non-Western analytical gazes. Anthropologists, sociologists, and engaged cultural analysts try to write around it, despite the fact that it may be guiding their thinking. Nevertheless, the positive aspects of this distinction lie at the core of many anti-colonialist and even post-colonial statements—where the preference is always given to those authentic,
marginalized communities of people who are seen as subjected by the hegemonic presence of an ill-defined internationalist (not in the Marxist sense) elite. And much of this perspective must be preserved because it is a necessary part of the work of social scientists. However, it is possible to take the castigation of the cosmopolitan too far; the relatively fuzzy group turns into just another post-Marxist term for ‘bourgeois.’ This is what should be avoided, simply because the notion of the cosmopolitan is an analytical key to understanding actors engaged in a process of global and local sharing and translation.

A robust view of cosmopolitans is needed to engage a larger discussion about people’s activities that deliberately, and consciously, puncture the boundaries of any single geographically or culturally closed area. This means moving beyond the notion of a nation and its nation-state as the limits of social, political, cultural, economic, and legal activity, especially because under the intellectual hegemon of nation the very idea of an international or interstitial public sphere was very hard to develop (Negt and Kluge 1993). But I want to push it past its internationalist roots to understand how creative action, i.e., film music composition, is connected to a truly global set of practices and understandings but practiced locally. I also want to employ it to explain why the individuals I worked with are caught between worlds and yet are able to do the work of contemporary filmmaking—work that is characterized by experimentation, admixture, and reinterpretation.

All of the composers I worked with in Turkey are not entirely Turkish, and do not consider themselves as such. They were born in Germany, Australia, and the United States. Only one was born and raised in Turkey. Without exception, all of them were educated outside of the country. They are all highly educated and well traveled. They all speak languages beyond Turkish—some even learned Turkish very late in life. They now divide their time between several countries and spend much of their time navigating the complexities of lives lived in between places. Perhaps most importantly, they also work in several countries, for many
different filmmakers. Sometimes they are Turkish film composers, sometimes they are Hollywood hacks writing cues for commercials and TV shows shot in L.A., and sometimes they are working on a one-off contract for a Scandinavian television program. Taken together, all of these points build an argument that these composers push any conventional, untroubled meaning of Turkish to the breaking point.

Moreover, I argue that their ability to pass through the many boundaries that exist between the different national, social, economic, and class-based spheres they live between is an essential skill required to create the kind of music that dominates contemporary global filmmaking. These composers are able to write for film because they are able to partake of the breadth of their background and experiences. They are able to fuse, mix, and remix a wide range of disparate influences to create a single, cohesive whole. That they are able to ground it within a Turkish context is only partly due to their connection to Turkish lifeways. Thus, I argue that Turkish cinema, the music tailored for its purposes, and the composers who write this music are at once actualizations of a dialectical process of reconciling this set of disparate influences. By this I mean they themselves can be read as symptomatic of the circumstances that forge these ideas and also operate a fertile ground or force for is transformation and alteration. They can do this work because they are rooted-cosmopolitans, or those who are internationally minded while still grounded in a local culture.

However, to asses this, my primary thread of discussion depends on a central thesis concerning our scholarly view of these circumstances: that we struggle from an analytical failing when examining Turkish culture, and that Turks—like most people—have an essentially dialectical existence which is often developed and built through the consumption of media from a wide range of sources. Knowing this leads me to the initial conclusion that looking to identify an authentic Turkish culture, or “Turkishness,” is actually a red herring that prevents us from seeing the productive act that forges the artifacts of Turkish culture in an adaptive,
schismogenetic, and syncretic process. It is not an issue of either/or, but one where only both will do. Turks are a little bit of everything. Turks taken as a whole, especially many Istanbulites, are omnivorous pan-enthusiasts, and this makes them Turkish more than any other quality. Indeed, their enthusiasm and apparent cosmopolitanism is at once both definitional of a kind of Turkishness that counters the usual tropes of nationalist discourse, and is entirely in line with a pluralistic, cosmopolitan Ottomanism. This should come as no surprise given that Turks have only recently come to terms with what it means to no longer be Ottoman—but to even suggest such a thing is potentially damming. Within the larger scholarly discourse the notion of cosmopolitanism is often treated with disdain—the cosmopolitan is often seen as a threat to the notion of traditional or indigenous culture (Turnino 2000, 31-59, 154-157, 244-261). Additionally, within many scholarly, political, and journalistic circles in Turkey to suggest that contemporary Turkey is harkening back to the Ottomans is heresy (Özyürek 2006, 154-156; Özel 2007). But it is difficult to escape this thought, and in fact the current trend in filmmaking is to make this point in as heavy handed a way as possible—the first of many examples where Turkish filmmakers of all kinds are anticipating the social, political, and social discourse about Turkish life and history.¹

But it is not a literal Ottoman history; what attracts these filmmakers is the potential of a multi-faceted existence that is hinted at in a history of social, cultural, and political heritage that was constantly in flux and unsure of itself.

One possible reason for this is because, as Delanty notes, “cosmopolitanism reflected the revolt of the individual against the social world, for to be a ‘citizen of the world’ was to reject the immediately given and closed world of particularistic attachments. Not surprisingly it became associated with the revolt of the elites against the low culture of the masses” (Delanty 2006, 26).

¹ Turkish filmmakers have been obsessed with Ottoman topics since 2006. Films like Cenneti Beklerken [Waiting for Heaven] (2006), and Osmanlı Cumhurriyet [Ottoman Republic] (2008), are part of a cinematic trend that is casting the Ottoman period in a much more positive light. Many filmmakers are embarking on new Ottoman works to avoid angering the government following the 2016 coup.
This association still holds except that in many cases the culture of the masses has come to mean the endangered indigenous culture in a post-colonialist nation-state. And it is impossible to argue against this view given that a global cosmopolitanism is parallel or indeed a manifestation of an elite-oriented commercial enterprise.

In the post-national conceptualization, cosmopolitans are able to locate themselves outside a particular social frame, and connect themselves to something that transcends the local and particular. However, this can mean that they become elitists: romantic subjects standing in opposition to a material object, or against objectified peoples who disappear into the mass of non-cosmopolitans. This was a major feature of the early discourse in anthropology that served as an articulation of civilization over the savage. While this is worthy of the derision it garners, we should be careful not to lose the idea that cosmopolitans have a choice. They cannot leave their social or cultural context, but they can choose to pass between the ones they inhabit, be they micro or macro strata of experience. This choice, and the ability to pass into different socio-cultural contexts at will is a skill that is most obvious among cosmopolitan qualities.²

Ultimately, the fear of the cosmopolitan is born out of a fear of potential loss. As Kwame Appiah points out

Behind the objection that cosmopolitanism is parasitic, there is, in any case, an anxiety we should dispel: an uneasiness caused by an exaggerated estimate of the rate of disappearance of cultural heterogeneity. In the global system of cultural exchanges there are, indeed, somewhat asymmetrical processes of homogenization going on, and there are forms of human life disappearing. . . Nevertheless, as forms of culture disappear, new forms are created, and they are created locally, which means they have exactly the regional inflections that the cosmopolitan celebrates (Appiah 1997, 619).

² I say most obvious here because while the ability to pass between different frames of experience is something all humans can do, because cosmopolitans pass between more visible frameworks, it is easier to trace.
He then goes on to state that a liberal cosmopolitanism respects these local differences and is actively working to maintain their longevity (620-622). And this is the essential point. Rather than just fearing cosmopolitans, and identifying them with suspicion on the grounds of their impact and their destructive potential, we should also recognize their place in the preservation and development of difference. The implications this has for rehabilitating the model cosmopolitan and shifting the term out of this rather closed perspective are important. We no longer need to see the cosmopolitan as an individual who stands in opposition to the particular, the local, or the subaltern. Now we must see the cosmopolitan as one who partakes of, and is able to pass between, these now deeply connected categories—and connect them to their polar opposites. We must also look to the interpretive and social work of pastiche and to the media of mass consumerism, specialized discourse (like science or a technological specialty) and to the role of computer-aided communication. The composer populating this work is a master of all of these things, and indeed a virtuoso manipulator of them all. The composer in my work is the model of Appiah’s “rooted cosmopolitan,” one who builds her reality and her life from whatever is available but is not limited to one particular source for her cultural resources (Appiah 2005).

Cosmopolitanism is not a singular ethos or mode of being in the world. Nor does it manifest as a single perspective—Eurocentric or otherwise. Cosmopolitanism is best understood as an articulation and enactment of plurality and competing yet interactive multiplicities. Following Delanty, we must recognize “that the very notion of cosmopolitanism compels the recognition of multiple kinds of cosmopolitanism, including earlier kinds of cosmopolitanism, and which cannot be explained in terms of a single, Western notion of modernity or in terms of globalization” (Delanty 2006, 27). Moreover, any model of a cosmopolitan must also allow for conscious and unconscious choice in how a cosmopolitan ethos is manifested. It must allow for the possibility of flux and even intentional play in how cosmopolitans position themselves between the global and the local poles: between the
universal and the particular. In this way, a functional model of a cosmopolitan—one that can serve as a way to understand the majority of the people actively engaged in filmmaking in Turkey today—is to be built on action and agency. It will not be constructed as a description of some innate qualities that arise *sui generis* from some innate source.

Pastiche, a discursive organization of selfhood, and computer-mediated discourse are all essential components of the way an individual manifests and experiences a globalized, cosmopolitan selfhood. These are the basic actions, the goals, and the network through which all of this becomes possible respectively. But none of these things provide a stable foundation for a more robust cosmopolitanism to be built. For this we must look to different ways that groups of people unite while still maintaining some degree of difference. The first examples of this kind of foundation are the ethoi of multiculturalism, universalism, and the collection of additive and syncretic ideals most commonly encapsulated under the term hybridity. Each of these has a troubled past, it is true. They have all been manifested as ideals that reify old hierarchies and prejudices, because as Calhoun is careful to suggest, “that cosmopolitanism comes in several variants makes it less coherent theoretically, but it makes it easier to take up in shifting ways to address different ethical, political, socio-psychological, and cultural ideals. Cosmopolitan rhetoric can be appropriated by global corporate elites as easily as NGO activists” (Calhoun 2003, 4). Here, Calhoun’s point is that the cosmopolitan ideal is difficult to nail down because it relies too much on the Herderian liberal view of the nature of an individualist approach to solidarity. This perspective holds that heterogeneity reigns because cosmopolitans are free to choose how they align themselves, and therefore cosmopolitans are less likely to connect with other cosmopolitans to form a more coherent group based on the same ideals. It is difficult to create a shared point of identity out of a plurality that has no possibility of coalescing.

Multiculturalism, universalism, and hybridity are attempts to address, and possible reverse, this tendency towards individuation (Calhoun 2003, Nussbaum 1996, 1997; Bhabha
1994, 2002). Under their sway, cosmopolitans are able to organize around a collective concept of selfhood that is paradoxically built on their individuality and difference. As Calhoun notes, “multiculturalism sometimes took the form of a seemingly endless division of every potential solidarity into a proliferation of internal identities” (Calhoun 2003, 10). This multiculturalism is a pluralistic alternative to aspects of a cosmopolitan structure. It opposes the individualistic nature of the cosmopolitan ideal by placing a plurality of groups at the center. The multicultural view also posits these groups as internally coherent enough to be comparable to the others irreducible and discrete enough to be equivalent but unmistakably different.

However, many, if not all, forms of cosmopolitanism are under tension; cosmopolitan collectives are continually under the stress of potential disintegration. The only solution is to continue to redefine the collective in order to keep it together. The action of definition, and redefinition is the action that maintains cohesion. This means that these three major formal features of cosmopolitanism—multiculturalism, universalism, and hybridity—are the result of the work of asserting and reaffirming the utilitarian validity of each. They are concepts in constant motion and involve constant connection, reconnection, and mixture.

One of the essential problems arising when considering a cosmopolitan’s relationship to other people or social formations is the question of whether or not cosmopolitanism must necessarily be set against nationalism, and whether or not this is true for those who adhere to their precepts in their processes of identification. The divide lies between the universalism promised by the more abstract cosmopolitanism and the matter-of-fact particularism of post-Herderian nationalism. More simply, cosmopolitanism offers social actors the possibility to group themselves together through processes of accretion and mixture, whereas nationalism is developed with processes intent on making the most out of difference and idealized similarities. At the more global level of experience, cosmopolitanism combines; nationalism divides.
Cosmopolitanism will always be a matter of a universal view set against the particular. Beginning with Kant, the central thread of cosmopolitanism was to forge a community larger than the fragmented ones that existed at the time. In the nineteenth century, the community that was meant to arise changed in character—it stopped being the ideal, moral citizenry of the enlightenment and became, paradoxically, a more particular universal polis. Marx’s proletariat was meant to rise up in an internationalist worker’s revolution—that itself was counter to the Prussian nationalism of the time—and assume the societal position that their moral imperative demanded. However, with the philosophical and practical failures of these internationalist and transnational movements in the nineteenth century, the particularist movements of nationalism took hold. Out of a universal Germany came a Prussian-led nation-state. From a post-revolutionary France a new French empire arose. In Turkey, the officious and bureaucratic pluralism of the Ottoman Empire began to be undone by the increasing social force of national sentiment. Interestingly, Delanty suggests that “viewed from a different perspective . . . the decline of the cosmopolitan imagination associated with the Enlightenment and the rise of the nation-state could be seen as the beginning of a different kind of cosmopolitanism, one less premised on the assumptions of a world republic or on elites and also one less Eurocentric” (Delanty 2006: 27). Thus, cosmopolitanism was not opposed by national movements; it was merely redirected. The work of nationalism can only be done in the face of an identified other. That other must be a sufficiently legible foil for the nationalist ideal to come into focus. Such others were found globally just as easily as they could be locally.

The Orientalist agenda identified by Edward Said is an example of the kind of globalized othering that can only happen in a global context where cosmopolitanism is a viable option. Furthermore, Delanty articulates notion of a cosmopolitanism built on a critical sociological view of the cosmopolitan ethos upholds the necessity of the simultaneity of the global and the particular. According to him, must understand cosmopolitanism through “a sociologically driven
critical cosmopolitanism [that] concerns the analysis of cultural modes of mediation by which the social world is shaped and where the emphasis is on moments of world openness created out of the encounter of the local with the global” (Delenty 27). That is to say, that we must understand cosmopolitan and national agendas not as diametrically opposed to one another, but as a part of a single movement that negotiates the different registers of lived experience at the local and global level (and everything in between). Ultimately, as Smith points out “it is really only at the polar extremes that cosmopolitanism and nationalism are diametrically opposed . . . developing global culture may in practice resemble nothing more than a patchwork of ethnic and national motifs, a pastiche of local cultures, underpinned by mass consumerism, scientific discourse, and digital communications” (Smith 2009: 73).

While Smith’s remark focuses on the particularist aspect of cosmopolitanism, I find it much more important to consider cosmopolitanism’s tendency to include, combine, and universalize as much more important. This kind of universal cosmopolitanism is grounded in the connection of individuals to a set of social ideals. Smith writes, “the hallmark of individualist cosmopolitanism today is the liberal insistence on individual human rights in a global culture” (Smith 2009, 65). This of course, requires that there be a global culture sufficient to insist on such lofty ideals. But this culture must also be one that can carefully differentiate between individuals and their place in the group. This means that this community’s needs and processes of communication and organization are centered on an individualistic agency—something that is entirely in keeping with the current neo-liberal articulation of global flows the place of the individual. Smith, however, also provides an alternative in multicultural cosmopolitanism: what “devotees of cosmopolitanism have in mind: the heterogeneity of peoples, the mingling of cultures, a dialogue of faiths within a polity, a polyglot society of differences, a “community of communities”” (Smith, 67).
Smith points out that this kind of cosmopolitanism was something that flourished during the late Roman period (Smith 1998). We can see it as something that continued in the crucible of Constantinople and became a feature of the Ottoman Empire and its approach to handling its various constituent millets. To a degree, the Ottoman approach was dependent on a weighted cosmopolitan that saw the individuals living under the centralized bureaucracy’s rule as unequal equals (Finkel 2005). The citizens of the Ottoman Empire were given preferential treatment if they were Muslim and aligned with the universalizing presence of the Ottoman elite. However, imperial subjects who did not fit this description were equally discriminated against according to the taxation laws and governing statues. It did not matter if one was an Arab-speaking farmer or a Bulgarian peasant, the Ottoman Empire relied on the concept of millet, a distinction that divided its subjects by religion rather than ethnicity.

In this Ottoman model, cosmopolitans exist outside the conceptual and real boundaries nationalists prefer to employ in order to bind, the ethnie, the patrie, and the nation. They are a universal community that necessarily subsumes and overcomes divisions drawn along these lines, and consequently are othered from it. They are always at risk of being rejected by the state, be it based on an Ottoman or nationalist model. This distance can also be achieved by avoiding the political sphere altogether, which affords greater freedom of identification. A cosmopolitan can be a non-political entity that only manifests at a different social register, one we colloquially call cultural. This cultural cosmopolitan is drawn along the lines of the apolitical aspects of (true) cultural interaction. This makes them even more vulnerable despite their ability to transcend the structure of their local circumstances. Despite this, cosmopolitanism affords people a way to stand apart from the current political and social circumstances to some degree. This distance requires them to learn to live in many spheres simultaneously. In Turkey, this means being perpetually caught on the fault lines between the West and the East.
Suturing the Bosphorus: “Istanbul has always been cosmopolitan”

I maintain that Istanbul is not really a bridging city as is so often asserted. It is an incubator for synthesis and experimentation. It is a place where the tensions of east and west, and all they entail, are held in suspension after having already co-existed for some time. It is the product of a long history of being under the strain of sustained human occupation and cultural change. But while the synthesis of many combative clusters, east and west, old and new, first world and second world, etc. is definitional of the space and the people, it is an untidy duality that is constantly threatening to break apart. Walking the streets of Istanbul you get the sense that the synthetic object that is Istanbul is going to shake itself apart at any moment only to violently recombine in a new way moments later. Nevertheless, it is essential to see not a city defined as a bridge bringing discrete things together, but a place that is built of a constant and ongoing process of combination and recombination. This process makes the city. It makes Turks. And through the activity of everyone living in the city, it produces a culture that is capable of making something that is also built from many things and yet is not their sum.

Istanbul is the oldest site of this great productive debate. What defines the city is not the tenor or the content of the debate, but the form that defines the city and its people. The Istanbulites are a population who will debate this divide forever, but this does not change the fact that all of the talk about bridging and fusing the two polar opposites together just serves to reify their continued difference. In trying to come to terms with the city and its inhabitants, I learned very quickly that while not bridging the East and the West, Istanbul is able to embody and foster both at the same time. All of the components that constitute the East and the West are present simultaneously. They become visible only when one’s perspective shifts, despite being there all along. This means that the Turks who live, work, and create in Istanbul have some form of both to draw upon in their daily lives. They simply choose to partake of one or the other. And because the city is neither fully either one, both of the versions of East and West are
partial and incomplete from the perspective of those who are more fully ensconced in what some commonly call the East or the West. The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate that there are a group of people who live their lives across these boundaries and experiment with the limits, and meanings, of what it means to be simultaneously of the East and of the West. We commonly call these people cosmopolitans. My purpose is to locate them in this city and to demonstrate that they are a group of people who are at the forefront of pushing the interplay between these two worlds. The film composers I discuss later on are part of this group of people, and understanding the cosmopolitan in Istanbul provides an excellent foundation for understanding film composers who play with the relationships between East and West in sound.

Before Istanbul was Istanbul, it was Constantinople. And while both cities occupy the same space they differ greatly. However, they share the role of incubator for multicultural exchange. They have been important staging grounds for thousands of years of cultural, economic, and political activity. Some form of cosmopolitan community has populated the city at least since the eastern Roman Empire settled on the location as the site of its eastern capital. Constantinople under Ottoman rule was Europe’s gateway to the economic might of China and India, the focus of the intellectual and artistic output of the Near East, and the political and economic obsessions of Europe (Finkel 2005; Baer 2007; Özel 2007; Meyer 2007; Robinson 2009). Pluralism and multiculturalism were a necessity for the Ottoman imperial administrators. The empire was peopled by a wide range of different ethnic groups and religious communities—all with differing international ties and pressures—and was fueled by intensive international trade. Their system of managing this varied empire was a careful mix of the threat of violence and with permissive bureaucratic disinterest. As long as the taxes and levies were paid, the Empire was largely uninterested in the ethnic backgrounds of its inhabitants—although it was preferred one that became a Muslim. The impact of this relatively permissive system was that the capital, Istanbul/Constantinople, benefitted from the presence of peoples from all over the
empire and beyond. It was a place where European merchants and diplomats could mingle with artisans, soldiers, politicians, Sufis, İmams, and other people from throughout the empire and its major trading partners. While it is not within the scope of this project to dig too deeply into the history and makeup of these cosmopolitan circumstances, they inform Istanbul’s contemporary cosmopolitan character now. Relatively permissive pluralism remained until the political balance was upset by nascent nationalist sentiments and European pressures at its peripheries. The empire’s pluralism suffered defeats during a series of damaging wars, exacerbated by the fact that the empire was over-extended. That the Ottomans supported their multicultural core through blinkered brutality at the edges eventually destroyed the empire as a whole. However, the cosmopolitan ethos of Constantinople/Istanbul persisted, and survived the evils of the pogroms of the 1950s. Istanbul now hosts an urban population that appreciates its history and its present status as an international, multicultural city.

However, Istanbul’s contemporary cosmopolitanism still has several cracks. Liberal or neo-liberal cosmopolitanism are still identity formations. As such, they rely on a permissive and free-flowing view of the symbolic economy of identity, and are difficult to manage. The plurality of voices from within this social formation makes it even more difficult to maintain a singular identity. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, his AKP government, and sympathetic media, are making many moves to control this openness and to redirect the social and cultural effects of a cosmopolitanism that transcends the binaries (Muslim/non-Muslim, Turkish/European, and Turkish Muslim/non-Turkish) that they are trying to establish as the core of contemporary Turkish identity.

This means Istanbul’s cosmopolitanism is under scrutiny, and may be under threat. Its residents’ cosmopolitan ethos may not be strong enough to tolerate fissures between those who see themselves living along a Turkish/internationalist axis, a Turkish/Muslim axis, or even a republican secularist/Muslim axis (Hakura 2007; Özyurek 2006). All of these distinctions pull in
many directions and put pressure on the inclusiveness of a broadly liberal, universalist notion of cosmopolitanism. It is the nature of this inclusiveness, along with the breadth of its permissiveness, that is currently under scrutiny throughout Turkey. The effects of the July 15, 2015 coup attempt have already begun to tighten governmental controls over this permissiveness. One consequence is that many of the conceptual pillars of Turkey’s republican cultural reforms are being drastically rewritten. It was these reforms that created the cosmopolitan world of contemporary Istanbul.

The early republican period was a time of radical social and cultural reforms. Atatürk and other reform-minded republican leaders pulled the Ottoman Empire out of the nineteenth century by forcing the newly forged Turkish people to align with their Western-focused ideals (Finkel 2005). Ottoman subjects were transformed into Turks almost overnight. The eastern elements were purged from their language, and they had to learn to use new “Turkish” words based on philological and linguistic reconstructions of the original Turkish language. They had to learn the Latin alphabet. They had to address each other with their new last names. And they had to learn to watch films. All of this was sponsored by an active government and intellectual elite eager to join Europe and the United States and to participate in the technological and financial revolution sweeping the first world.

One feature of this newly forged internationalist perspective was an emphasis on urban spaces, a Westernized middle class, and consumption-oriented economic behaviour (Keder 1999; Stokes 1999; Özyürek 2006; Baer 2007). Rural and poor populations rushed into the cities to try to capture some of the new energy and success. This rapid movement produced a culture of displacement that unseated any possibility of maintaining a connection with their older, rural lives. In this gap, the nationalists produced a new kind of Turk, one who was urban, but still connected to a rural, romanticized village that was quite unlike the ones they had just left. These ideals were based on Gökalp and Atatürk’s anti-Ottoman visions of the Anatolian
past (Gökalp 1964; Finkel 2005; Özyürek 2006). The state then began a social and cultural blitz designed to help these new Turks to forget the old Ottomans they once were. They were helped to remember a new past—one that made the Turkish present possible.

During this time, cosmopolitan Turks and Turkish Turks were produced simultaneously—often using the same methods and media. Newspapers, films, books, music, theater, and eventually television were all organized around connecting the new Turks to their new past. Music and film were essential media for the development of an appropriate history because they provided alternative semiotic systems and aesthetic norms for these new social and cultural ideals. Music could be both familiar and also totally new. Music was made to conform to European “scientific” ideals while also embodying a comfortable aural history. Film could “show” a fully formed vision of these ideal histories. As Martin Stokes and Koray Değirmenci outline, these new processes and meanings were co-determined in a careful and organized fashion (Stokes 2004; Değirmenci 2006). This work centered on first developing a coherent identity to serve as the central ideal. Next the population had to be rooted in this ideal. Finally, people had to be encouraged to enact it on a daily basis. Unfortunately, this was done in such a way that for many, there was no place for a pluralistic identity, let alone a cosmopolitan one. At best the cosmopolitan had to be grounded in a Turkish identity to be acceptable.

This brings me to the important possibility of rootedness as a component of cosmopolitanism. Developed by Kawame Appiah, a “rooted cosmopolitan” is an individual who is able to navigate the disjuncture between local and global experience (Appiah 1997, 2006). A rooted cosmopolitan is connected, like Bhaba’s “vernacular cosmopolitan,” in the local and in the particular but yet is not entirely defined by it (Bhaba 2001). While neither are unproblematic constructions, they offer a solution to the bind of the nationalist, where one is defined by one’s origins. But what this means is that a rooted cosmopolitan must also partake of the homogeneous aspects of this national identity. It is possible to be a cosmopolitan rooted in a
nationalist ethos and identity and yet expand beyond it. But to understand this, it is necessary to examine Appiah’s articulation of identity and its relationship to cosmopolitanism.

For Appiah, identity is a problematic construction. He states, “one problem with identity: it can suggest that everyone of a certain identity is in some strong sense idem, i.e. the same, when in fact most groups are internally quite heterogeneous, partly because each of us has many identities” (Appiah 2006). While it is simple enough to explain away this important construct by suggesting that we simply concentrate on one of the many identities we cleave to, we have to pay careful attention to the qualities of a particular identity or an act of identification in order to understand how these various identities collaborate and combine to create an individual.

Appiah’s model is an excellent departure point because it demonstrates that identity is not a thing in itself, but a set of processes and actions requiring common agreement as to the meaning of a particular identity, its distinctive qualities, and its limitations (which helps in seeing how it is not something else). Appiah’s operational model is also circular because the establishment of behavioral norms not only allows others to predict and verify someone’s affiliation with a particular identity, but also serves to produce additional qualities through which this identity can be ascribed, i.e., its discursive formation. It is essential to see that this is a process of identification. It is a creative act. Because of this, I want to use it as the basis for a way of talking about the processes necessary to create and maintain a cosmopolitan ethic within a Turkish context.

Ultimately, the kind of cosmopolitan I am interested in is one who is part of a community based on shared difference and the careful—and playful—manipulation of that difference. The cosmopolitans that I encountered in Turkey working on films were not interested in identity as such, but in the interaction of the qualities normally ascribed to identities. They defined themselves through a love of pastiche, admixture, and combinatorial play. They were, and are,
rooted in Turkish and non-Turkish qualities and interested in how they can be creatively combined. They are rooted cosmopolitans of all kinds. Their particular form of cosmopolitanism is well described in Kwame Appiah’s fuller definition of a rooted cosmopolitan:

... attached to a home of one’s own, with its own cultural particularities, but taking pleasure from the presence of other, different places that are home to other, different peoples. The [rooted] cosmopolitan also imagines that in such a world not everyone will find it best to stay in their natal patria, so that the circulation of people among different localities will involve not only cultural tourism ... but migration, nomadism, diaspora. ... I have been arguing, in essence, that you can be cosmopolitan—celebrating the variety of human cultures; rooted—loyal to one local society (or a few) that you count as home; liberal—convinced of the value of the individual; and patriotic—celebrating the institutions of the state (or states) within which you live ... (Appiah 1997, 618, 633).

Appiah’s comments allow for an alternative between determinism and volunteerism. One can be a cosmopolitan while also actively enacting the accepted qualities of local identities. One need not be either, or both. One can slide between them when it is convenient to do so.

Yet, Appiah’s model, while commendable, does not do enough to undermine the unnecessary dichotomy between cosmopolitanism and nationalism. Nationalism and a liberal cosmopolitanism are not diametrically opposed. They are, as Kai Nielsen hints, complementary.

To be a cosmopolitan—“a citizen of the world”—is to identify with and have a commitment to and a concern for all of humankind and not just for some sub-unit of it, and it is, as well, to have some reasonable understanding of, to prize and to take pleasure in, humankind’s vast, and sometimes creative, diversity. It is not just that a cosmopolitan will grudgingly accept, as an intractable fact, the great variety of forms of life, practices, art-forms, languages, religions, cuisines and the like that the world has to offer, but she will take pleasure in the very existence of them, feel at home with a goodly number of them and wish to see them prevail where their prevailing does not harm others (Nielsen 1999, 446).

Thus, to be a rooted cosmopolitan it is still necessary to have a global view that appreciates and partakes of another stratum of experience and cultural flow. This is independent from one’s ability to be at home in a local culture and yet able to span the gaps between local cultures, but it can be complementary. This leads in a direction that is not immediately clear. For if this is true, it must be equally true for someone socialized within a cosmopolitan ethic and identity system as for someone brought up in a mono-cultural, nationalist context. Individuals are able to
socialize themselves out of their cultural context and to apply them themselves entirely to a newly acquired context. They will then also be able to assume the resultant identity or to fall into one in between. Indeed, this is a typical pattern for many cosmopolitans in the Turkish context. Through their personal experience or by choice, travel, they live abroad, and study elsewhere. As a result, they become cosmopolitans simply because they are now fluent in two languages, and understand the ins and outs of two cultural formations. They can live globally and locally, embedded in the global and the particular equally, and shift between them at will.

Identifying and locating rooted cosmopolitans only establishes how a cosmopolitan social formation can organize around a locus of identity. To understand the rooted cosmopolitan also requires us to address the problems of how we are to understand their relationship to global flows of information, people, and ideas, and how they link the global and particular through action. To do so, we have to first divest ourselves of a negative view of the role of the cosmopolitan. Martin Stokes argues in his article “Music and the Global Order,” that “globalization implies notions of change and social transformation” (Stokes, 2004, 47). He notes that individuals less amenable to cosmopolitanism imbue this change and transformation with a sinister destructive quality. They assume that globalization is a force that destroys more than it creates—something that assumes an inherently solid diffusionist model of cultural flow. This apocalyptic vision is made all the more horrifying when various forms of media are implicated as the conduit through which the cultural well is poisoned. Media like television, music (through cassettes, downloads, or DVDs), or films are seen as potential carriers of the global virus deadly to the local and particular. And while this can be true, it does not typify every aspect of mediated, global cultural contact. There is agency and choice involved here too. For media to have a global audience they must have a receptive audience, which means people must choose to buy, watch, or listen to them.
Countering this negative view, Mark Slobin suggests that there is little evidence that believing in the existence of a system that forces a particular vision of globalization on others gets us closer to what may be occurring (Slobin 1992). While there may not be a global order being impressed on individuals, there is an individual desire to access a larger system, perceived or otherwise, amongst enough persons that it can be considered a moderately robust cosmopolitan ideal. However, because this group of persons is fragmented and inchoate, it is impossible to say that there is a single cosmopolitanism. Rather, there are communities of people interested in the very idea of partaking in what far-flung others are doing and creating. They need not know of each other or condone each other’s approach. The simple fact that they are participating is enough.

Martin Stokes later goes on to critique the way that world music, in particular, is discussed and formed as a definitional category. He points out that the reasons for its existence owe as much to a clever marketing push as to an attempt to identify musics affected by global cultural flow and exchange (Stokes 2004). However, while many of the studies he describes are themselves critiques about the damaging effects of these processes of exchange, they collectively seem to be stories focusing on a particular kind of relationship between global commerce and local musical practices. The scholarly dialogue Stokes references concerns the appropriation of music an artifact of culture rather than the infusion of music with new sounds through thoughtful experimentation (Guilbault 1993; Langlois 1996; Schade-Poulsen 1999; Frith 2000; Turino 2000; Brusila 2003; Stokes 2004). In these studies, Stokes sees the specter of cultural imperialism. And this may often be the case. But within the context of Turkish film music, these forces are weaker than they may be in contexts that are systematically treated as the sources for the raw material of international music commerce.

Film composers in Turkey are as much receivers as transmitters. They beg, borrow, copy, steal, and more importantly, create their own music. In the model of cultural imperialism,
they are the exploiters rather than the exploited. And for this reason, we must take a much
different view of their efforts and the resulting music. Certainly, their clear disregard for
international copyright laws demonstrates in no uncertain terms the depths of their disinterest in
participating in exploitative commerce. The area in which Turkish film composers are most
vulnerable to critique is in their habit of mobilizing examples of the folk repertoires from more
exploited regions of Turkey in a symbolic economy aimed at reifying or essentializing the
referenced peoples for narrative and commercial purposes. Put more simply, they have a
tendency to use Kurdish music or even Kurdish musical sounds—most commonly the sound of
the *mey* (or *düdük*)—to serve as a shorthand for rural and backwards village people.

Speaking about hybridization, Stokes declares that the

... study of music hybridity in the past decade provides evidence of diasporic cultural
and political strategies in which migrants, refugees, and diaspora populations
detached from nation-states situate themselves in global flows and build new homes
for themselves. The privileged status of music in these kinds of analyses is connected
to its perceived capacities for simultaneity and heterophony (and thus, pastiche, iron,
multivocality, and the embrace of contradictions), its collective nature (and thus,
imbrication with everyday lives), and its capacity to signify beyond the linguistic
domain (and its binary “either/or” codes) (Stokes 2004, 59).

He continues noting that “from a critical perspective, the language of hybridity and diaspora is
conceived in opposition to the theory and practice of authenticity” and that “authenticity and
hybridity are, from a discursive point of view, more complexly entangled concepts” (Stokes
2004, 59). And here he has identified an important fact. Hybridity and authenticity are in fact
referring to identical ideological roots, namely that there are discrete entities that are available to
join together to create a hybrid object, and that by doing so, the process is destroying something
that cannot exist in harmony with this dualistic phenomenon. That is, authenticity is what is lost
when one combines two previous phenomena assumed to be discrete rather than the result of
hybridity themselves. The process denatures what was pure in favor of something that refers to
both but is no longer comprised of either. Thus, the ideological aspect of hybridization is one that sees purity in a set of categorical qualities and laments their loss.

While this might be the case, and hybridization “erodes important and necessary aesthetic, political, and social distinctions,” it is again difficult to discuss within the context of Turkish film music, because all of these effects are necessary when transforming music of any sort so it is suitable for use as a cue in a film. The music must be sufficiently sterilized so that it can mean only what the composer and the director need it to mean—or this is the idea. Whether or not this works in practice is hotly debated in the broader discussion of film music. However, the hybridization, fusion, transformation, and reification of various “authentic” musics is in part a by-product of the filmmakers’ standard creative process. Everything used to make the film is bent to serve the purposes of the filmmaker.

Cosmopolitans are uniquely positioned to do this work well because their perspective on the ideologies of hybridity and authenticity are quite different from the scholarly perspective and the perspective of those political actors who seek to maintain the hard lines demarcating national, cultural, geographical, and aesthetic phenomena. For Turkish filmmakers, the process of hybridization often involves grafting denatured musics from around the world on to local musical material, rather than the other way around. In this, rooted cosmopolitan filmmakers are denying “world music” its authenticity and using it to satisfy their own ends. This stands in opposition to the standard model of corrosive cosmopolitanism.

What is not certain is if this process entails the imposition of music and aesthetic expectations from the United States and Europe on Turkish filmmakers and audiences, or if it is an active subversion of this hegemony. Many of the filmmakers in Turkey have a great deal to say about this. They emphatically state that “we borrow what we want, and leave the rest” when discussing their relationship with Hollywood films and filmmakers.
This hegemonic position is troubling because, like the notion of hybridity, it is also ideologically loaded. To employ it in this context, where Turkey is seen as the victim suffering at the hands of the denaturing effects of American or European influence, forgets the fact that Turkey was once itself a controlling hegemon that had a great deal of cultural, political, social, and economic influence on Europe itself. Certainly even the briefest of investigations into the impact of Turkish cultural and economic influence on Europe would demonstrate that Turks have not often been less than equal partners until the disintegration of the empire was forced by the British Empire in the early twentieth century (Finkel 2007; Robinson 2009).

Any real attempt to fully outline the characteristics of a rooted cosmopolitan in the Turkish socio-cultural context is ultimately doomed to fail. Partly, this is because Turkey is a place that defies any clear associations with other places. “Everything we are is back to front,” my friend Yildiray always says. In a way, he may be right. Not to overly simplify the circumstances, but it can be said that the Turkish economic and political situation—the very circumstances that would afford a cosmopolitan formation its social and cultural power—is not conducive to their success. Turkey is currently governed by a religious, neo-conservative, pro-economic expansionist government under Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his powerful AK party. However, Erdoğan’s party and government is quite progressive in terms of its approach to expanding social programs and in developing the rural population. They are however, very heavy-handed with dissenters and in putting down the Kurdish population in the east. The AK party’s parliamentary power is counterbalanced by an aging republican left embodied by the Cumhürriyet Halk Partesi, or Republican People’s Party, that is socially liberal but struggles under the weight of its own history and its conservative nationalist perspective. The CHP is the party of Mustapha Kemal Attatürk, the leader seen as the father (his name means father of the Turks) of the secular, republican state of Turkey. The contemporary CHP’s view of itself as the
holder of the secular, statist flame against the rising Islamist threat led by Erdoğan makes them a paradoxical conservative leftist party with few progressive credentials.

As the only two viable players on the current political stage, these parties, and their publicly held ideals, make for an uncommon division of the usual political associations. They divide nationalist perspectives, conservative and traditionalist religious belief, economic values, and social concerns among them in a way that cuts across European and American models that usually align conservative religious beliefs with patriotic nationalist sentiment and progressive politics with secular, liberal social policy. In Turkey the left is statist and backwards, while the right is populist and dynamic.

This political climate is partly responsible for the events that came to pass in Gezi park in late May 2013 when the government came into direct and open conflict against a number of groups who can be described as a loose association of progressive revolutionaries, global-focused neo-hippies, environmental activists, disaffected students, and anti-Erdoğan secular nationalists. Most of the people described in this loose list have a legitimate reason to see themselves as cosmopolitans because they include everything from multi-lingual shopkeepers, graduate students, foreign-born Turks, and individuals who are closely aligned with several global—even internationalist—movements such as communism and environmentalism. While the conflict began as an uprising of young, rooted cosmopolitans and non-cosmopolitans seeking to counter the neo-conservative authoritarianism of Erdoğan and his vision for the aggressive development of Western-style corporate capitalism, it rapidly expanded and was supported by people who would not identify as cosmopolitans. Nevertheless, the AKP’s response betrayed their deep-seated suspicion of liberal cosmopolitans. Despite the fact that the protestors were a diverse group, the high number of cosmopolitans, and educated urbanites, allowed the AKP to disseminate rumors that protestors were attacking covered women in the streets. This was an attempt to reduce the protests simple anti-Turkish fervor.
One major result was that the relationship cosmopolitans have with the current political and economic powers was laid bare. Rooted cosmopolitans are not welcome amongst those who have political and economic power. They are actually part of a group that is seeking to resist the AKP’s vision of a religious, pro-economic, anti-statist, yet inward-looking Turkey.

Currently, there is a clear attempt by many artists, musicians, filmmakers, writers, and journalists to counter the AKP’s attempts to craft a new Turk and engineer the society’s turn toward a religiously dependent mono-culture, with a vision of outward-looking, capitalistic plurality. The AKP directs people to return to more traditional values and to embrace their conservative flavor of Islam provided that it does not interfere with the strong economic growth that they have worked so hard to initiate and maintain. The counter-proposal is to look back into Turkey’s pluralistic past and to try to attain some idealized form of relativistic coexistence. One excellent example of this is the attempts of the ensemble Tatavla Keyfi to resurrect the nearly-lost İstanbul'lu Rembetika that used to fill the night clubs of Beyoğlu before the decimation of the Greek population in the 1920s and 1930s.

**A Night in “the Real” Istanbul: Portrait of the İstanbul'lu Cosmopolitan**

One of the most striking things about Istanbul is its ability to hide the true nature of the lives of its inhabitants from view. It is difficult to find the access point to specific social circles. One has to know where to be at the right time. One hot summer evening, my friend Richard and I stumbled into the right place at the right time. It was one of those nights when the very air seemed to suffuse the streets with the kind of glowing romance Orhan Pamuk writes about in his novel *Kara Kitap* (The Black Book). This is to say, it was one of those evenings when Istanbul comes alive with characters that have leapt from the pages of novels to live out lives that have more significance and intensity than is possible in the daylight.
After spending a long evening eating at one of the better restaurants in the well-known, perhaps infamous, Çiçek Pasaj, a somewhat touristy restaurant spot just off of İstiklal Cd., Richard and I decided to go home, and started the long walk back to Nişantaşı, the wealthy neighborhood near where I was living at the time. Turning the corner onto the main street, we passed a group of old men standing outside our local bakal (corner shop that sells alcohol) who were crowded around the entrance listening to some Arabesk that was blaring out of their tiny shop. The scratchy sound of the music on their aging tape deck gave their rough faces, dusty clothes, and the cloud of cigarette smoke enough context that they did not seem out of place just feet from the Burberry storefront. Their music and their relaxed ownership of the space are not typical in today’s gentrified Nişantaşı. And while this particular bakal is the one place in that neighborhood that approaches what my roommate İsmail called a “village lifestyle,” it is quickly disappearing from the area. This way of being was more common on the adjacent hill in Dikilitaş, where İsmail and I had lived in a small apartment above its tight lanes and staircases. However, here amongst the renovated marble storefronts and apartment buildings this other milieu seemed to be a bit out of place.

As we turned the corner of Teşvikiye Cd, we saw the sign of the Sofa Hotel, which is well known in the area because the rooftop bar-lounge, called frankie Istanbul, has one of Nişantaşı’s best views of the city. Instead of continuing to our apartment, we quickly decided to have one last drink and clambered into the cramped blue-lit elevator heading up to the eighth floor. Once the elevator doors opened we found ourselves in a surprisingly luxurious bar with truly breathtaking views of the lights of the city down below us. Because Nişantaşı sits on top of one of the taller hills in Istanbul’s European side, the eighth-floor Frankie bar provides a view of the European side’s cityscape, the Golden Horn, and the Asian side. I lived on a similarly high building in the same area and would often go up to the roof to look at the view and feel the seething energy that only a place with tens of millions of people can have. On this particular
night, you could see all the way to the edges of the city and could feel the energy of the streets below. Despite it being 1:30 am, the bar itself was packed to the breaking point with well-dressed, and clearly hard-partying, people. But it was less what we saw and more what we were hearing that was worth noticing. Once we acclimated to the dark of the space, we realized we had arrived halfway through a very intense set by a remarkable jazz singer. Her name was Ayşe, and she was in the middle of an impassioned rendition of “Mrs. Otis Regrets,” a song from the Cole Porter songbook made internationally famous by Ella Fitzgerald’s 1956 recording. What was significant was that despite the large crowd, Richard and I had to lower our voices to avoid being horribly rude and interrupt the performance. Everyone in the room was turned to face Ayşe on the stage and all were listening with rapt attention.

Settling down at a table near the front, Richard and I were treated to another thirty minutes of jazz standards. Sometimes Ayşe would sing alone and accompany herself on guitar. For other songs, she was joined by her drummer and a truly exceptional pianist. She sang in English, French, and Turkish, often mixing the languages as she moved through the verses of the text. Some songs would be standards familiar to European or American audiences; others were pulled from the *Turk Cazi* repertoire or had been adapted to fit a Turkish translation. No matter what Ayşe sang, she approached it with a breathy, golden tone that exactly matched the darkness of the space and the closeness of the crowd. And when she paused, you could hear the movement of people’s feet and the dull thuds of glasses being put back on wooden tabletops. She had the entire room in her thrall.

Curiously however, every now and then, an older woman sitting on one of the long bench seats that entirely filled the wall to the right of the stage would begin singing along with Ayşe. It was often quite jarring for me because it would interrupt the pure magic of the mood Ayşe and her band had set in the room. It was also a frankly shocking thing to see. People do not normally interrupt such wonderful performers. However, something was afoot, because the
interrupting woman’s voice was clear and remarkably skilled for what I assumed to be an unpleasant drunk sitting in the corner having her own private sing-along.

Remarkably, instead of looking annoyed, Ayşe would often turn to face this shadowy woman and smile. As the night wound on and the interruptions continued, Ayşe would even stop singing to allow this off-stage singer to finish a phrase or two. After the third time Ayşe did this, I was compelled to try to figure out what was going on, and I began staring intently at this mystery woman in the corner. There was certainly something familiar about her broad face and her blond hair. The fact that she was surrounded by about 20 people, many of whom were often leaving the group only to return with something for her, certainly indicated she was someone of some note and not just a drunk having some fun. It wasn’t until the fourth time that she interrupted Ayşe that I realized it was Sezen Aksu.

With this realization, it became immediately clear this was no normal nightclub, because Sezen Aksu is one of the most famous musicians in Turkey—if not the most famous. For her to be in the audience was itself a significant fact. It certainly spoke highly of the performers we had already been enjoying that evening. I was told later by jealous friends that Sezen is also known for her taste and her careful public image. The fact that she was here and singing in an informal setting means she was at home and far from the crowds of adoring fans. From the beginning of her career in 1975 she has been one of the most influential singers and songwriters in the business. She has also been a mentor and supporter of the then-current crop of Turkish pop-stars like Sertab Erener and Tarkan, to name just two.

At around 2:30 Ayşe thanked the audience and stepped off the stage. She was met with the full appreciation of a crowd that had not diminished or dwindled during her performance. The club was still packed and lively and everyone was clearly ready for more. Perhaps sensing this, Ayşe walked over to Sezen and leaned over to whisper something in her ear. Sezen smiled and waved her away, but it seemed Ayşe was insisting. She held Sezen’s hand and leaned over
again, clearly repeating herself. Sezen looked around to the people sitting immediately to the left and the right of her, all of whom were nodding and clearly agreeing with what Ayşe had said. After several seconds, Sezen rose from her chair and assented to be led to the small stage.

All of a sudden, the entire waitstaff of the restaurant seemed to jump up, as if driven by an unspoken but universally heard klaxon. Chairs were brought out. A microphone-stand appeared. A glass of white wine made it to Sezen’s hand just at the moment when she sat down in front of all of us. Ayşe’s pianist returned to his instrument and sat waiting for instructions. In the practiced manner of a major pop-star, Sezen took her time arranging herself before she addressed the audience. Speaking through the microphone she thanked all of us and said that she would like to sing a few songs if we wanted to hear them. The audience practically exploded; many people seemed to almost beg her to sing. After the cries died down, she smiled a contented smile and put her glass on the floor next to her chair. When she looked up she wore the face of someone transformed. Taking the audience into her hands, she drew breath and began singing the opening lines to “Keskin Bıçak,” one of her more recent songs.

After an evening of music in French, English, and other songs adapted into Turkish, the first phrases of this song were jarring. In response, the audience seemed to slip into a different mode of being. Much of this is part of Sezen’s stagecraft. She clearly knew what she was doing. She almost whispered the first lines. In fact, the sound of her first breath was sharper and more impactful than the notes that immediately followed. She slowly let the first words gain their full depth and eased us into the full weight of her voice. The melody of this song begins high and immediately descends with the words “Geldim yarın” (I came alone), and with these two words, she immediately changed the entire tone of the evening. They were the first notes we had heard set in anything approaching a makam, and the first music that stood outside a western idiom. The descent of her first phrase opened up a new world that grabbed everyone and seemed to catch even her entourage off guard.
One of Sezen’s prized abilities is to connect very deeply with the emotion encapsulated in the music she sings. She sings within the limits of what can only really be called a post-traditional Turkish style. Part pop-star, part jazz singer, part folk singer, she now mostly sings songs that are consistent within a repertoire of modern şarkı and türkü-like songs, which are traditional Turkish folksongs at their core. She has developed this form and corpus into an idiosyncratic contemporary repertoire with complicated arrangements that have significantly shifted them from their original contexts. As such, she is a perfect example of a rooted-cosmopolitan. What keeps her repertoire grounded, and serves to define a türkü is its vocal-oriented structure, its instrumentation, and most importantly its pathos. This is Sezen’s specialty. She is renowned for bringing this pathos to its highest—and lowest—extremes. She is almost universally adored for bringing this emotional content to her performances and to bringing the texts of her songs to life. This evening highlighted these abilities. Within the first few phrases of this song people’s heads began to bob as they quickly pushed way tears. Even my friend Richard, a Canadian with no previous exposure to Turkish music, quickly became overwhelmed by the emotional weight of her performance. Soon there was barely a dry eye in the bar.

After she brought “Keskin Bıçak,” to an end, she turned to the pianist and asked him a question. Although we could not hear his answer, it was clear he did not know the next song. She gestured to the group she was sitting with and a guitarist and percussionist walked towards the stage carrying their instruments. As they set up behind her with the help of another hurried cluster of waiters, she turned to us again and told us she would continue with one of her current favorites: a song first performed in a film by Ferdi Tayfur. She apologized that she did not remember which film it was from, but that she had always adored the song. She added that since they all sound the same we could just choose whichever film we pleased as the source material. I knew, however, that whatever the song was, it would be a dark song of loss, longing,
and disjuncture, because that is what they are all about. But because it was a film song, it was also an interesting choice. Tayfur’s songs are closely associated with the film industry and with an entire class of films from the 1960s until the 1980s, largely because he reached the height of his fame as the lead in a number of important arabesk films. Many of Sezen’s early contemporaries made their names appearing in the arabesk films and recording these songs, but their work is not the kind of music that would normally be heard in a posh bar high atop a trendy hotel in Nişantaşı.

To my surprise, instead of greeting this music coolly, the crowd began to weep even more and responded as if everyone in the room—all of whom knew every word, except Richard and myself—were being spoken to directly by Sezen. Clearly she had read the room correctly and had pushed the audience even further past the point they had been earlier in the evening. What shocked me was this now 35-year-old song pulled from a movie—one neither I, nor I suspect, anyone knew—was more powerful and emotionally loaded than I would have otherwise guessed. Later, when I asked her why she chose the song, she mentioned that this is “the kind of music every Turk knows in their hearts and in their heads.”

This attention to the mood and emotional readiness of an audience is something for which Sezen is very well known. Richard and I had seen exactly why her songs are so beloved: she seems to perfectly understand the emotional needs of a Turkish audience and tailors her performances to have the greatest emotional impact. Her performance style captures features from many of the most emotive genres in Turkish music, from Ottoman art song to village folk songs. As a consequence, she has herself contributed to films and been used in a countless number of film soundtracks. One of the most well-known is not really a Turkish film at all, but a German one by the German-Turkish director Fatih Akin. His film, called Crossing the Bridge in English, is about music in Istanbul from a German perspective. Narrated by experimental punk musician Alexander Hake, it explores the marginalized and often forgotten music of Turkey,
particularly the music of experimental musicians, street performers, and outsiders like rappers and Romani musicians. Sezen’s performance appears at the close of the film and is the emotional high point. It is essentially the climax of the entire film. And although it is essentially a travelogue of the edges of the music scene, this film is really a sampling of the emotional possibilities of music in contemporary Istanbul.

Despite Akin’s clear preference for the outsider, and marginal, musicians, he still ends with Sezen. When I asked musicians and non-musicians what they understood by this I got almost the same answer every time: Sezen is simply one of those singers who seems to have her finger on just what it is to be Turkish. She speaks to every Turk. Yildiray told me that although he is not her biggest fan, he understands why she is so beloved. He said simply that she is a master of Turkish sentiment. She can manipulate emotion, and her capacity for this makes her a credible arbiter of what is Turkish. Sezen’s careful curation of the emotional state of the crowd was a perfect example of her skill in handling her audience. That she chose to sing a well-known song from an unknown film not only demonstrates that she can handle a crowd, but that music like this speaks directly to Turks in the same way that a traditional folk song does. Weeping is an essential feature of a türkü’s reception, and it also governs cinema-going audiences’ reactions to the soundtracks of a number of film genres.

After she had finished singing, and the whole audience relaxed after nearly an hour of heightened attention, I decided to talk to her. I walked over to Sezen and introduced myself. She was quite inebriated, which sapped my confidence. However, I managed to struggle through and told her in my halting Turkish that although I was just a foreign visitor, I could tell that she had really affected the audience in the room. I told her that I enjoyed her performance and was so glad to have heard her sing in such an intimate setting. She told me she was quite flattered and was surprised that someone like me who had “an accent she couldn’t place”—a statement that was the most diplomatic assessment of my Turkish I have ever received—would appreciate
her singing. “You see,” she said, “most of this was Turkish music.” While in her case this was
strictly true, most of what we had heard that night was not. Switching from Turkish, she
continued suddenly with slow, unsure English, “not many people know how to listen, but I know
you can feel it.” Switching back to Turkish, she told me that while she sings for Turks, music is
“something we all share.” She then kissed me on the forehead and sent me on my way. My
audience with her had come to an end.

As the sun came up, ending the evening’s concert, all of us slowly left the club. I found
myself sitting at an early breakfast in a café just down the street trying to explain to Richard
what had happened. I struggled to explain just how varied and worldly the performances were
and how this was not entirely remarkable for Istanbul. It is a cosmopolitan city, I suggested. I
pointed out that most of the people in that room spoke at least two languages and were aware
of a wide range of music and cultural things. After suffering through several failed explanations,
Richard broke in and pointed out that the Turks reacted most strongly to Sezen’s performances,
especially the song from the film. He observed that it sounded the most “Turkish” and suggested
that perhaps this was why the audience reacted so strongly. I had to admit I was stuck. I could
not resolve his point with the fact that the audience was also so clearly enthusiastic about the
other music. They just responded differently.

Later, as I considered this issue, I realized something that is essentially true about this
cosmopolitan audience. They reacted differently because the two musics should always be met
with appropriate responses. They delighted in the jazz and cried at the türkü because that is
what one does. While simple, this observation resolves the tension and actually fully expresses
what a cosmopolitan is within a Turkish, or at least an Istanbul-ite context. It shows that a
cosmopolitan is best understood as an effective code-switcher, someone who can operate in
two or more relatively complete socio-cultural milieux. The people in this particular audience
were not concerned with the notion of authentic ontologies. I believe this evening was not just a
cosmopolitan event; it was an essentially Turkish evening. Cosmopolitan and Turkish are really not divorced from one another, and in this assertion we can see the beginnings of the resolution between the East and West dichotomy I identified above. To be Turkish does not preclude being a cosmopolitan as well.

Contemporary Turks are well practiced in accommodating outside influences into their milieu. They acknowledge many things as Turkish because they can be read as such—not because they are natively Turkish, but because within the contemporary Turkish mediascape all things can easily become Turkish. Anything can be “Turkified.” The process of Turkification is something that I have borrowed from my friend Savaş Arslan, a film scholar at Baçeşehir Universitesi. It is a process of adaptation that allows a foreign object, substance, idea, etc. to be more easily consumed and appreciated by a Turkish audience. Where I depart from Arslan’s description of Turkification is that this is not a process of assimilation or translation alone; it is a discursive adaptation where the object itself is altered to fit in a Turkish world, and where those responsible for doing the assimilating are changed themselves in dialogue with the object. Turkification is not simply a process of translation, but the very mechanism whereby contemporary Turks are discursively creating themselves and the world around them. It is also not new.

There is work to be done to make something palatable to an audience, no matter how accepting and pluralistic their views may be. I assert that music production in the Turkish cinema is one of the most fertile areas of action (or modes of cultural labor) where one can see this process in action. Film composers must embody the highest register of multi-fluent cultural action. For them, cosmopolitanism is an operational tool, rather than just a component (or modifier) of their identity. They must be social actors and cultural translators who bring pieces pulled from disparate sources together.
The impact of this means that when we begin to examine Turkish music, Turkish media, and life in Turkey, we must inevitably conclude that anything and everything is open to this process. Technically, just about anything can be adapted for use in film production, and Turkish audiences’ omnivorous consumption habits allow for a variety of media to be brought into view to be “Turkified” and then enjoyed. Of course, this ultimately makes it very difficult to describe what Turkish means as an operational adjective. Given that the media Turks were consuming while I was in Istanbul came from all over the world, the notion was itself constantly in dialogue with what being American, English, German, Mexican, Jordanian, and Egyptian is all about. This captures the essential point about cosmopolitanism. Far from being a threat to indigenous culture, it is actually a frame of discursive action where all participating cultures are constantly defining themselves and being redefined by the others. Participating in this discourse can also involve reception behaviors and attitudes. While Sezen and the evening’s other performers were actively making a statement about what was appropriate in that context, the audience avidly received it without comment or correction. For at least some people living in Turkey, “Turkish” is a slippery and changeable adjective that does not resonate with the singularity of nationalism alone.

As the sun was coming up and Richard and I prepared to leave, we chatted with many of those who stayed behind. Without exception, they were very proud of what we had seen. One woman, Aylin, had known many of Sezen’s retinue for some time. She told us, “this was not a typical night, because Sezen does not sing this stuff a lot. It was a treat for everyone here. What I want you to remember, since you are not from Turkey, is that we laughed to the French music, we danced to the American music, but we cried to the Turkish music. This is how it is here.” I interpret this by shifting my perspective from what is Turkified to looking at the processes involved in Turkification. It is not something that has to change the substance of the music. Rather it is a process of orienting one’s self to address the music appropriately and respond
accordingly. It is not the music that was Turkified, it was the audience that shifted to listen differently. They laughed when it was appropriate, they danced when the time was right, and they cried when they were invited to. This does not mean that Turkification does not also include the process of altering the music to suit an audience’s tastes, but that it also involves the manipulation of the audience’s horizon of expectations, as outlined by Jauss Holub, and Iser (Iser 1976, 86; Jauss 1982, 139-145; Holub, 82-99, 1989). They have to understand that they must bring a particular kind of knowledge to the encounter with music. They must have experience with this kind of music and must know how to react. This fluency is a kind of listening competency. However, it differs from the sociolinguistic models developed by Chomsky, Hymes, and others because it requires not just an ability to understand meaning, or to differentiate between grammar and idiosyncratic usages (*langue and parole*), but to understand the interplay between them (Chomsky 1965, 1986; Hymes 1972; Givón 1979). The ability to listen to this music requires an appreciation for *both* kinds of music. To be a skilled listener, one has to find enjoyment in the impossibility of their synthesis. This means a skilled listener understands, and appreciates, how these different musics do not fully integrate. Audiences listen closely to how the performers and composers go about trying to bring them together. They enjoy the knowing mistakes, additions, or omissions that show the artful failure. An audience listening to this kind of musical practice has the expectation that they must listen doubly. The enjoyment is not to listen to one musical moment, but to revel in the simultaneity of hearing one and thinking of another.

This brief passage affords a foothold in developing an initial taxonomy of the act of listening within a Turkish cosmopolitan context and even for the process of Turkification that is one of its essential components. A cosmopolitan’s work is a labor of admixture, synchresis, dialectics, fusion, assimilation, and even careful destruction. They harbor a suspicion of nationalist tropes, a willingness to accept outside influence, some degree of grounded fluency
with the original cultural norms of the music, and a willingness to assume these norms (aesthetics, understanding of frame, taste, language)—even if temporarily, an appreciation of the attempt to use, manipulate, and incorporate outside influences, a community of like-minded individuals with whom to enact this process. And while cosmopolitans are not the only people who mix, fuse, etc., they definitely delight in the process and ascribe an aesthetic and social value to the attempt. But while this grants us a view of a cosmopolitan through what they do, it is still not enough. To understand the cosmopolitan nature of a film composer working in Turkey today, it is essential to also understand what is being manipulated and what the nature of cosmopolitan is within a rooted, Turkish context.

*Globalized Local Nostalgia as a Cosmopolitan Perspective*

Many months after my encounter with Sezen Aksu, I attended a concert in a little-known nightclub above a small alleyway off Istiklal Caddesi, the center of Istanbul’s nightlife near Taksim square. This evening was quite different in its structure and its ethos, but was nonetheless an evening only fully available to the rooted cosmopolitan.

Tatavla Keyfi is a group of mostly young musicians whom I briefly met while living in a boarding house in Galata. My landlord, Mev, was a good friend of theirs. She used her income from renting the extra rooms in her spacious apartment to the wayward Erasmus and Fulbright students who needed to live cheaply to subsidize her unpaid role as the band’s manager. I attended many of their concerts at her invitation, and often discussed their music and their hopes for the band during many late-night meals and drinking sessions while watching ships float past on the Bosphorous from the roof of Mev’s building. The first of these performances was quite a significant moment for me because I found a network of young bohemians (their term) who were unified in their love and nostalgia for an Istanbul that no longer existed.
Tatavla Keyfi turned out to be a keystone in a social group of self-professed “hipsters” who were trying to access and capture some of the essence of the era of the gazinos, when Rembetika played by Turkish and Rum (the Greek population of Istanbul) musicians was a dominant popular music in Beyoğlu. Tatavla Keyfi is an ensemble of young, highly educated (one of them was a Ph.D. student of history at Boğaziçi University) musicians who were deliberately trying to resurrect music that dated from when Beyoğlu was the center of cosmopolitan Istanbul. Part of their mission was to return Rembetika, a music shared equally by ethnic Greek and Turkish (both Roma and ethnic Turks) Istanbulites, that was lost with the pogroms and expulsion of the Rum population in the early days of the new Republic—roughly following the 1923 exchange of populations.

Tatavla Keyfi’s name is a play on words. Their name serves as a key to the political, social, aesthetic, and nostalgic ethos that drives the group to build on the foundation of a mutual appreciation of the band and its music. Tatavla Keyfi is based on two Greek words: tatavla, literally meaning horse stables, but actually referring to an area in Şişli where Greeks, Turks, Armenians, and Jews lived together under Ottoman rule for many hundreds of years, and keyfi (also cef, kef, kefi), which while roughly meaning pleasure or happiness, actually refers to the euphoria that one gets from listing to Rembetika. The word play is not in the words themselves, but in the fact that the area once identified by the Greek word Tatavla now goes by the name Kurtuluş which is a Turkish word that can mean independence, freedom, or darkly, “being rid of” or “good riddance.” While we can only speculate over the intentions of those who renamed the region, Tatavla Keyfi’s intention was to make reference to what was liberated from Istanbul with the loss of the inhabitants of Tatavla—essentially a sly reference to the huge cultural loss that this “freedom” cost the city and its ethnic Turkish inhabitants.

The band’s stated intention was to do their part in bringing out that pluralistic ethos and the keyfi that came with it. They do not simply sing songs in the original Greek and Turkish
together. The band and their adoring audiences sought to bring the entire context back by recreating the nearly mythological communal parties that make this genre so attractive. What this means is that late most Friday nights in a few select clubs just off of the main drag in Taksim—just a few meters from tourist bars, a metal club, and several türkü clubs—a sizeable crowd would gather to drink raki, eat, smoke in opposition to the recent indoor ban, listen to music sung in a language few of them spoke, and to indulge in a nostalgic reimagining of a cosmopolitan golden age.

My first encounter with the band was not something I was prepared for. Mev had been pestering me for weeks about visiting the concerts, which at the time were roughly every other weekend. I was usually too tired to go out late on Friday night—the party usually began just before midnight—because I spent much of my day fighting through the traffic of Istanbul on my way to and from a recording session or a long conversation. Going out to see my friend Faruk was particularly tiring because I had to cross the Bosphorus and travel by bus for about an hour just to get to his neighborhood. By the time I got home at the end of the week, I was in no mood to go out drinking until the early hours of the morning. What finally got me to go was not Mev, but a close friend, Eleni, who was a Rum Greek who had grown up mostly in the US. She was living in Istanbul doing research for a novella about the Rum of Istanbul and had become quite close to many of the Fulbrighters that were living in the area. It was Eleni who finally got me to go out.

“You say that you’re here to study music in Istanbul. How can you live with yourself just sitting there in your room?” she enquired, her voice sharpened to ensure her words had their maximum effect. “This band is important. They are important to me. Hell, they’re important for Istanbul. They are amazing.” She added this last bit throwing one of my pillows across the room at me. “I’ll kill you if you don’t come tonight. Especially because the clarinet player is going to be there. He’s back from Chicago.”
“I know. I know,” I said. “I’ve got months to go. I’m sure I’ll get there. They play every weekend, don’t they? Can’t I just go then?”

She soured and walked around the room a bit. She was eyeing the clarinet that I had sitting in the corner and the lead sheet of my friend Mustafa’s most recent clarinet cue sitting on my music stand. Pointing at it, she said “what is all of this for then? Isn’t it time you got out to see what happens to this music before it makes it into the films? This is a great club and a really popular band. There are always poets, writers, other musicians. Hell, even some of your film friends there. Where do you think a lot of their stuff comes from? It comes from these guys. They are the cutting edge.” I sat on the edge of my bed with the sinking feeling that I was going to be hung over the next day. I took a few seconds to gather my strength, pulled on my coat and pushed Eleni out the door.

We walked down the stairs in my building and almost fell out into the street. I lived only a few steps from the Galata tower and the small public space around its base. It was about 10:30 pm, and there were a dizzying number of people already sitting around drinking out of paper bags and listening to many of the poets and musicians performing on the steps at the base of the tower. We turned and climbed the hill past all of the music stores that Martin Stokes talks about in *The Arabesk Debate* and onto Istiklal Caddesi. Istiklal is an absolute zoo on Friday nights. The street is nearly thirty meters wide at several points, and almost two kilometers long. On nights like this, people are packed in shoulder to shoulder the entire length of the street. It was a fairly cool night in early November—just cool enough that people needed to dress warmly, but not so cool that it was unpleasant to be walking slowly down the street. Eleni and I had to walk almost the entire length, and so we walked past open shops, the gaping mouth of the new Demiröen mall, and all of the second and third-floor nightclubs that were blasting music down onto the increasingly drunk and rowdy crowds. For tourists and new visitors, Istiklal on a weekend is a completely overwhelming experience of total chaos and concentrated humanity.
There are people from all over the world competing for space with political activists, teenagers, pick-pockets, tourists, policemen in full riot armor, busking musicians, street performers, government-employed food cart vendors, and homeless men, women, and children begging for money. All of this was the reason I did not want to go out. Fighting through these people at this time of night was absolutely exhausting, and we had over a kilometer and a half to walk before we got to where we were going.

As we were walking, what struck me was the fact that music was absolutely dominating the entire street. We walked at the only pace that the crowd would allow, and we encountered new sonic spaces every twenty steps or so. As we walked past a speaker blearing techno out into the street it washed-out the sound of the kemençe busker who was working his way through a quick dance in seven from Trabzon. Once we got out of the range of the speaker, we walked into the sonic domain of an Istiklal institution: a blind grandfather and his bored grandson. The old man sat on a filthy box and played a saz while singing into a microphone held by the young boy. The little boy, who could not have been more that eight years old, sat next to his grandfather, bored to the point of exhaustion, with one hand supporting his head making it so his cheek would bulge out between his fingers while lazily holding up the microphone with the other hand. They were there day and night, and seemed to be more a part of the life of this particular stretch of Istiklal than the Greek consulate building they were sitting in front of.

“These two have been here since before I got here too,” Eleni said eying the blinking red light on the digital recorder sticking conspicuously out of my pocket. “Perhaps I’ll put them into the book too. Hey, you should too! Then we’ll both be talking about how all of this chaos is what Istanbul is about. Oh, what I want you to pay attention to when we get to the club is the fact that they put all of this into their music. They have this hilarious song about the streets of Istanbul. Hell, the song is about this street, they even mention Istiklal when the Ottomans were in control.”
“Ok. I will make sure that it goes in,” I said, still marveling at the fact that although I walked this stretch almost every day, the entire experience was overwhelming my senses.

We walked the rest of the way in silence, mostly because we could barely talk to each other. With each step we passed some new sight, encountered some new smell, had to dodge some new set of obnoxious drunks, and passed through music that was so loud that it seemed as if it was turned up in an attempt to take over the whole street. We heard Madonna screeching out of the window of a nightclub. We heard a türkü spilling out of a doorway next to a large and very angry looking bouncer. Finally, we reached our street and walked by the death metal club that was surrounded by a number of young men who were dressed in a uniform that clearly came from the band picture on the back of Metallica’s *Kill ‘em All* (1983). They stood huddled around propane heaters, smoking in the cold, dressed in skin-tight acid wash jeans, huge white retro Nike high-tops, faded black band t-shirts, and black motorcycle jackets. All of them had the shoulder-length hair and eyebrow length bangs that were Metallica’s signature hair-style in the early 1980s. The only difference between these young guys and the band was the fact that all of these men had jet-black hair. This scene stopped me in my tracks, which forced Eleni to double back to pick me up.

“We’re here, she said as she shoved me into a small doorway between two shop store fronts and forced me up the narrow stairs. It was the kind of space that I would never have thought was the entrance to a restaurant, and the kind of stairwell I would have never made it up had I not been forced to do so. One needed to be brave to get into this place. Had Eleni not been there countless times before, I would never have found it on my own.

Once we got to the top, we passed through a white door with a pane of frosted glass. I could see a dim light through the glass that turned out to be the collective light of the many candles placed on each of the tables. There was no more light than what these small candles and the light from the street provided. The room was very large and had the high ceilings typical
of the Ottoman era buildings in the area. To say that people were tightly packed into this space would be a laughable understatement. The tables and chairs were set so closely together that some of the backs of people’s chairs rested against the tables behind them. People filled the empty spaces like the teeth in a zipper, with one table’s worth of people occupying the negative space between the people at the tables around them. The room was absolutely filled to capacity, but despite the close quarters the crowd looked friendly, very drunk, and alive with anticipation.

While pushing people out of the way to make her way through the crowd Mev appeared and started screaming, “Paul! Paul! You *made* it. I thought you were never going to come.” She said this in English, which made several people turn their heads for a moment. It was clear they had understood. They held me with their gaze for a moment and then went back to their friends and their conversations.

“Give me some credit, I am interested. I’m just lazy,” I protested in my best Turkish.

“Oh, stop that. Everyone speaks English here. In fact, let me introduce you to the guys,” she said while pushing even more people out of the way. Everyone seemed to understand that it was just part of the evening’s event to be manhandled by Mev. She did not sit down the entire evening and went from table to table, climbing over people and pushing everyone else out of the way as she marched across the floor.

Mev took me in hand and led me across the floor, up to a small raised platform that could not have been more than a few feet wide. This, she revealed, was the stage, and was only identifiable as such because it had several microphone stands and an odd instrument scattered about on the chairs that had been lined up in a tight row with their backs to the black wall behind it. There was no one on stage at this point and I wondered why Mev had dragged me through the crowd. She stopped short of the stage and stood in the only empty spot at a
large table that was already covered in empty plates, Erikli water bottles and several half-empty bottles of Yeni Rakı. “Here is the band,” she declared. “Band, Paul. Paul, band.”

“How do I tell you?” she snapped. “Do you think they don’t speak English?” “This is Haris [Rigas], he plays the bouzouki and is smarter than you. He’s actually getting a Ph.D. right now. Isn’t that right?” She said slapping his face like she was his mother. “That one over there is my Alper [Tekin], he sings in more languages than you know, my dear. The old one with the accordion is Mamed [Dzhafarov], and the one over by the bar is Ceyhun [Kaya], who plays everything. This is the band. Well, most of it anyway.”

Meeting the guys, I was struck by how young they all were—with the exception of Mamed, who is about 15 years older than everyone else. All of them are Turkish, but from widely different backgrounds. The three younger members, Alper, Ceyhun, and Haris, are Turks from Istanbul. I guessed that Mamed was not. He is likely a Circassian from the east—exactly where he did not say. He is also the one with the most musical education and the least formal education. The others were university students with a decidedly middle-class background. Only Haris was still in school. All of them were largely self-taught musicians, except that Mamed had been trained by his father as a young child. They sat at the center of the gathering in such a way that it was clear they were the centerpiece of the small society that had clustered around them.

The audience that sat eagerly awaiting the first set was remarkably diverse. There were many young people in their twenties. But they were sitting with much older people. There were even some faces in the very back of the room that looked old enough to have heard Rembetika when it was still a common music in the clubs of Istanbul in the 1920s and 1930s. Everyone was clearly there to hear the music, because as I looked around, the band pushed their chairs back and scrambled their way onto the stage. The crowd roared with excitement and those who were
up ordering from the bar or talking to people at other tables rushed back to their places. Even
the wait staff seemed to anticipate what was coming because they all jumped into the crowd to
take final orders before the music began.

Alper’s microphone crackled into life, and as he prepared to speak you could hear his
labored breathing from climbing over his friends. He gestured to the crowd and said first in
Turkish and then again in English, “Welcome everyone. It is good to be back up here again.
Let’s not waste time, shall we?” He then launched the band, and the crowd, into their first piece
of the evening. Alper sang in Turkish inflected with Greek as Haris accompanied him in the first
strains of “Gel Gel Kayıkçı.” The entire crowd burst into laughter because at the time another
version of this song was making its way up the mainstream charts played by clarinet superstar
Hüsnü Şenlendirici and Trio Chios, a well-known Greek rembetika ensemble from Chios. Mev
and I had sat down at the band’s table with Eleni by this point. Eleni leaned in and whispered in
my ear that this was apparently a point of contention among the group’s fans. According to her,
this was a calculated move by Hüsnü Şenlendirici, who was also beginning his career as a talk
show host. She believed Şenlendirici was capitalizing on the music’s newfound popularity, a
phenomenon she claimed was Tatavla Keyfi’s doing alone. Others took a more pragmatic view
and simply saw it as proof that this music was ready to return to Istanbul and that while Hüsnü
had recorded it too, he was ultimately helping their goals by creating a larger audience for the
music they loved so much. Mev later corrected some of her strong words by pointing out that
Hüsnü had been playing much of this repertoire for years and that the band did not share either
of her opinions. As I looked around at the crowd simultaneously laughing at the inside joke and
falling into rapture over the song’s truly sublime melody, I was caught by how deeply this group
of people reacted to this music. They were whipped into a near frenzy by the first strains of the
music, their sense of ownership and rapt engagement evident on their faces.
The evening continued at a hectic pace because the band played with such an infectious love for the music that it was impossible not to get swept up in the Rabelaisian atmosphere. They packed the set with an astonishing amount of material, not allowing any breathing room between the songs or instrumental interludes. The four of them sat with their backs to the wall, offering the crowd an unrelenting body of amplified sound that was pushing everyone to their emotional limits. They would keep the fast pieces going on until no one could take it any longer. They forced the crowd to lean in when they played several intensely intimate and sad songs. Then they broke the stillness of those moments with yet another rollicking, and wickedly fast offering. Everyone in the tiny room was both physically and emotionally hooked. The fact that the bottles of rakı on the tables began disappearing at an alarming rate only served to make the crowd much more pliable.

Haris and Alper worked the crowd as a pair, exchanging looks with friends in the increasingly sloppy mob and extending entire sections of songs so that the crowd received its fill of bouzouki solos and returns to the principal melodies. Alper would wink and smile as he sang the lines of songs, using his hands to guide the meaning of the text along. Before I too was completely swept up in the flow of the music, I noticed that they were constantly watching the crowd. Each new piece seemed to whip the crowd into greater heights of ecstasy. And this was clearly done by design; they were elevating the crowd into a state of keyfi which was every bit a part of the purpose of a rembetika performance. Indeed, keyfi is the goal, but it is not an easy thing to achieve. It requires the musicians to be fully connected with the crowd. They must anticipate their aesthetic sensibilities, keep their eyes focused on the stage, watch the level of drinks in their glasses, and always deliver the right strain of music at the right time. Done well, and the entire performance becomes an entirely tailored affair that will never be repeated. But it will be exactly right for the moment that gives it its purpose. Done well, and the the band will
respond to the crowd just as the crowd responds to the band. As I sat there, I saw Tatavla Keyfi perfectly anticipate the needs of their audience—people they knew well.

This process is the core of the participatory unity that can be achieved during live performance (Turino 2009, 2010). What is significant about this moment is that it is identical in its construction to the one Sezen Aksu generated. Tatavla Keyfi worked their crowd just as Sezen Aksu charmed hers. Both of these processes are discursive moments between musicians and their audiences. It takes both sides participating fully for it to happen. But fundamentally, these moments are moments of adaptation. The musicians are producing both the music and the event in response to the needs of the audience. My intention here is to highlight the fact that Tatavla Keyfi was not just drawing their audience in; they were drawing in a cosmopolitan crowd with music intended to activate a nostalgic sentiment and to create a new vision for contemporary Turkey. They were also involved in making and adapting the social and political circumstances for the audience. Their music, its lyrics, and its ethos, while providing an excellent foundation for a great night out, were also making an important statement about music making in Istanbul in the early twenty-first century. In reenacting a social event centered on the cosmopolitan (Greek, Jewish, Turkish, Romani, Armenian, etc.) heritage of Beyoğlu, they were making a statement about what they saw to be the cultural and social past and future for Istanbul. Their work and vision are only possible because they are rooted cosmopolitans, and as such are willing and able to both seek out the source materials (now almost totally lost to the general population) and to create a new audience and a new place for them in contemporary musical practice. Tatavla Keyfi is engaged in a process of Turkification; they are accessing, and even generating a model for how Turkey should be now, not asserting the validity of a set of established tropes or norms. They are playing rembetika to return it to Istanbul, but in doing so, they are reforging it in cosmopolitan terms that sit between the republican and conservative social politics of the past. In this, the revival is similar in form and intent to the Klezmer revival
that became part of the expression of Jewish identity for many young Jews in the 1970s and thereafter (Svigals 1998).

Esra Özürek discusses the centrality of a creative nostalgia to the Turkish republican project (Özürek 2006). One essential component of her excellent book is the fact that for the bulk of the twentieth century a form of revisionist nostalgia flourished in Turkey amongst the social and political elites who aligned most closely with the Atatürkist left. This nostalgia for a pure form of Kemalism served, and still serves after a fashion, as a counter-balance to the several conservative impulses in Turkey—particularly of the Islamist variety. The nostalgia she outlines is one clearly focused on the state and an attendant nationalist sentiment. The idea of the modern Turk is always at play in both the public and private lives of many citizens.

The nostalgic impulse conjured by Tatavla Keyfi is not the same nostalgia. Theirs is a public sphere nostalgia for a pluralistic modernity, one that denies the centrality of the Turkish state and its idealized notion of a Turkish citizen. Their musical choices reflect, and indeed generate, a nostalgia that places the marginalized cosmopolitan of the past. They celebrate the music of a Greek population and a Turkish population that were both banished during the fury and excesses of the birth of the Turkish republic. The Istanbulite cosmopolitan they mourn was destroyed when the Turkish half of this body cast out their Greek, Armenian, Italian, Jewish, and Italian neighbors.

They celebrate this older cosmopolitan ideal while going to great lengths to articulate their vision within the aesthetic and social norms of the new rooted cosmopolitan. They play with virtuosic exactitude and do not sing with the gravelly voice that served to index the criminal past of the older model of rembetika singer. They perform material that has been carefully chosen in performances intended to excite both a true party atmosphere and also the nostalgia of a group of people who gather specifically to be nostalgic for an artificial ideal. And this is a significant point.
As I was to find out later, Haris’ education as a historian made him especially well attuned to the social history of the music he played with his band mates. He was well aware, as were the others, of the deeper threads of meaning behind the lyrics, the aesthetics of their instruments’ timbres, and the ethos of their performances. In the group’s quieter moments away from the stage—often when they came to enjoy a night off on the roof of our apartment block—they did wander deeply into the emotional and historical depths that rembetika indexes. But that evening in the club they were recalling the cosmopolitan past of the city and trying to recreate it in a different model. That first evening was a performance of the heritage of Beyoğlu crafted to evoke a pluralistic alternative to the then current state of Turkish-centric public being. By bringing back the music of a lost time and a disenfranchised people, Tatavla Keyfi was giving the crowd of young, multi-lingual, hipsters what they wanted. The only omission was the overt associations with marginality that rembetika evokes.

This is the process at the heart of Turkification—the music and the frame of its performance were adapted to meet the demands of a new social formation. The seemingly small omission of certain aesthetic components, such as the grain of the singer’s voice, the unpolished bouzouki playing, and songs directly referencing marginalization or speaking of a life filled with misfortune, was all in aid of producing a performance fit for a group of people who gathered to let a nostalgic sense of a lost cosmopolitan Istanbul grow between them. Their cosmopolitan Istanbul is the one that did not exist, but perhaps may through their efforts. It is a fiction that comes into being through their enjoyment of Tatavla Keyfi’s music and through the bands efforts to perform and meet their audience’s expectations.

Tatavla Kefyi and their audience meet in clubs above some of the seedier alleyways of Beyoğlu to celebrate a past that did not exist in the way they imagine it now. In this way, they are both performing and receiving a fiction that they are willing to be true, if only for an evening. This impulse, and indeed the omissions, elisions, and amplifications necessary to curate a
repertoire so that it agrees with these ends, is a process similar to the work of a film composer. First of all, it takes a musical omnivore who is also possessed of an encyclopedic knowledge of musical genres. It also requires an audience willing to be guided by subtleties in timbre, melody, instrumentation, vocal delivery, and a number of other musical and aesthetic qualities. It requires a further willingness to see these musical features as signs that can be read as indexes of other truths. Finally, it requires people to be able to sense the basic differences between the fictional world they conjure together and the one in which they all live. My general argument for is that the same performative processes that make Tatavla Keyfi and Sezen Aksu so well connected with their audiences and allow them to create a musical vision of Turkey that is available and acceptable to a deeply cosmopolitan audience are the same ones that are required to make music for films.

Shortly after my first experience with Tatavla Keyfi, I moved to the Cihangir neighborhood in Beyoğlu, just south of Taksim square. For me this was the point when my dualistic experience of Turkey, and Istanbul, finally came together. Cihangir is a favorite location for film crews. But beyond that, it was also one of the centers of cosmopolitan activity. Cihangir is home to a number of foreign nationals. It is home to many artists, writers, poets, musicians, and filmmakers. It is also one of the few neighborhoods in Istanbul where you can get good Chinese food, sit in an exceptional teahouse and listen to modern Turkish poetry, and have brunch, complete with maple syrup, served by a Turkish-Canadian waiter. Cihangir looked like the Turkey in the films, and it was the home of the Turkey that I encountered while listening to Sezen Aksu and Tatavla Keyfi. Cihangir became the place in Istanbul that brought the cinematic Turkey and the real Turkey together. As I was to learn shortly after moving there, I was not the only one who felt that way. Many filmmakers either live or keep their studio spaces there partly because it is, and has been for over 150 years, a cosmopolitan hub. I had inadvertently landed
in an area where many of the first films were screened and where a great deal of Turkish films are made.
Chapter 3

Adaptation: A History of Filmmaking In Turkey

. . . Turkish children attending the shadowy missionary schools in the backstreets of Beyoğlu and the hills overlooking the Bosphorous had once been made to drink a certain lilac-colored liquid. . . But later on, the Western bloc’s “humanitarian wing” had declared this reckless initiative too dangerous on chemical grounds and switched to a gentler approach that promised longer-lasting results: the new plan was to erode our collective memory with movie music.

Orhan Pamuk, *Kara Kitap*

Music was not always a high priority for Turkish filmmakers. With few exceptions, the focus of filmmaking was on the visual and narrative aspects of the work. In the recent past, music was a last-minute consideration, tackled only when the money had run out and principal photography had come to a close. Under these conditions, film scores were patchworks of newly composed and prerecorded, found music, or were largely silences punctuated by musical events. However, while music’s status as an afterthought was common even up until the turn of the twenty-first century, it is no longer the case. Turkish films scores are now carefully constructed works, integral to the fabric of the film. Turkish film music production practices now follow the patterns established by an increasingly connected, global network of filmmakers. These changes are symptomatic of larger political and economic forces, and are not merely borne out of a desire to conform to global practices. Turkish filmmakers have had to weather several military coups and adopt new technologies in order to place a new focus on musical moments in film.

To understand the nature of this shift it is necessary to begin with an overview of the development of filmmaking in Turkey. Locating the recent changes in Turkish filmmaking and tracing their impact requires a historically contextualized perspective. However, because music was not the priority, this is not a musical story. Rather, it is a history of cultural and practical
adaptations, technological advances, money (or lack thereof), and expediency. Institutionalized filmmaking has not come easily to Turkish filmmakers because of the decline and destruction of the studios that reached their height before the debilitating military coups in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. The current rebirth of what was a moribund area of creative activity makes contemporary film in Turkey quite a remarkable achievement. The financial, political, and aesthetic problems that plague filmmakers still have presented considerable barriers to Turkey’s cinematic reawakening. To understand the successes, failures, and current difficulties surrounding filmmaking in contemporary Turkey, it is necessary to first see where Turkish cinema began and then follow its developments and setbacks. It is also necessary to understand that there has never been a single Turkish cinema—there have been many. Each has been constructed with different aesthetic foundations, social and cultural sources, narrative ethoi, and approaches to the project of filmmaking as a technical endeavor.

Because there has never been a cohesive industry in Turkey as there was, and still is, elsewhere (Hollywood, Soviet film, contemporary decentralized European networks, etc.), it is difficult to build a comparative history. No singular direction or established style can anchor the comparison. While there have been stand-out filmmakers and established genres, the industry as a whole did not cohere around films. Rather the industry is defined more by shared activity than any coherent sense of a corpus of work. There are few international auteurs like Satyajit Ray, François Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, Cecil B. DeMille, Ingmar Bergman, or John Huston that can be identified as early key developers of a particular filmmaking style, or serve as the progenitors of a national cinematic aesthetic. But this is not the case in Turkey, with only one questionable exception that I will discuss shortly. Additionally, the Turkish cinematic corpus is internally heterogeneous, and shares few similarities with other cash-strapped, national cinemas. With the sound turned down, it is often difficult to tell the difference between a mid-1970s era Turkish films from a Egyptian, Mexican, or Argentinian film of the same period. Their
technical quality and approach to filmmaking are strikingly similar. But that does not mean they are connected.

This chapter is not an exhaustive history of Turkish cinema. Rather, I locate several threads of activity in the history of Turkish cinema in order to identify what components of filmmaking in Turkey’s past have contributed to its current state and the rise in the importance of music and music making. To understand the full import of the contingencies under which contemporary filmmakers must work, it is important to see how Turkish cinema developed as an arena of filmmaking praxis that is in dialogue with global cinema while employing different aesthetics. My purpose is to highlight how twentieth-century filmmakers in Turkey used foreign films as a foil to develop their own cinematic practices and voice. To do so, I explore the tensions between global flows of information and technologies and localized practices, and a statement of how past filmmakers negotiated these tensions by adopting, and then adapting, film as an artistic and economic practice suitable for Turkish audiences.

A Turkish Cinema in Turkey and the Problem of a National Cinema

This is a history of how cinema developed in Turkey. However, it is not a history of a Turkish national cinema. It is a history that engages the rise of filmmaking in Turkey and identifies its porous, interpenetrated natures and demonstrates how Turkish film has always been in dialogue with the work of filmmakers from around the globe. But to do this, I must first begin with the origin of cinema and its introduction in Turkey. The origins of cinema in general are always a significant part of the discussion about national, or regional, cinemas. Because we know exactly how, and where, the technologies and aesthetic bases of cinema developed, and that most of it initially happened in the United States or Europe, a history of any local cinematic form can take on a decidedly diffusionist cast. This can be problematic, to say the least. A narrative built of difference and local exceptionalism—especially one that depends on the
causal connection between national essence and cinematic form—assumes that Turkey cannot be the source for its own cinema, or that its definitional elements are examples of how its nationalist spirit is imprinted on its cinematic works. Indeed, the history of cinema in general is articulated with the assumption that filmmaking is the product of the non-national cinemas—Hollywood and European film. Through this lens, a national cinema is established as a departure from this baseline norm. But a film is also a window into the societies and cultures that produce and watch them. It can be read as a way of understanding these cultures. But to claim a film or a body of work is part of a national cinema is only possible within the context of this discourse about nation. And while a film can be nationalistic, no film, or other creative work, is entirely of the nation. Films are also internationalist in their conception and construction; they are both local and international. Many writers examining national cinemas acknowledge that almost all films are made in relation to those that came before, including, and particularly, Hollywood films (Richie 1971; O'Regan 1996; Burgoyne 1997; Hjort and McKensie 2000; Dever 2003; Nestingen and Elkington, et al. 2005). It could even be said that a nation's cinema is symptomatic of that national context only inasmuch as it is different from the cinema of other nations. These differences, however small, constitute the features that distinguish the films and link them to one group of people or another.

It is therefore impossible to speak about Turkish cinema without discussing it as exactly that: a Turkish cinema. But because it is possible to call it both an internationalist cinema and a national cinema, it is difficult to define how it is Turkish, or even to settle the issue of whether this is prudent or not. As an art form, and as an economic engine, Turkish cinema has been at the center of a political discourse of international identity that has contested both points since its inception. Its arrival in the Ottoman empire in the 1890s came at a time when the decaying

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1 This list of works is only small when compared to the vast body of work done on national cinema. It is almost correct to say that identifying the national characteristics of films and cinemas has been one of the central goals of 20th century and contemporary film scholarship.
regime was going to great pains to adopt European habits, structures, and technologies. Its early growth was held at bay by several legal obstacles created by a sultan (Abdülhamid) who was suspicious of western technologies. It was later hailed by the great reformer Mustafa Kemal Atatürk as a technology of the future only to be crushed by successive regimes for being too Egyptian, too Westernized, or lastly, too Eastern. Paradoxically, it was also co-opted and turned into a political or economic tool by others for precisely these reasons. The story of Turkish cinema is therefore also a story of cultural revolution and suppression.

Additionally, the histories of Turkish film and that of its closely associated forms of social and cultural performance, such as music and visual art, are a tale of the struggle between the reforming forces looking west and the reforming forces looking east. As such, the story of the development of cinema in Turkey is fraught with the complete weight of the intellectual perspective at the center of the orientalist gaze and is a part of the larger historiography chronicling the social and economic development of the modern Turkish republic.

**Difficulties in Telling the History of Turkish Cinema**

Outlining the development of the Turkish cinema industry is not an easy task because the circumstances surrounding its historiography are nearly as convoluted as the industry itself. Confusing matters even more is the fact that there are few sources in that treat the entire industry as an object of scholarly inquiry (cf. Özön 1962; Dorsay 1986; Bahar 2000; Bayrakdar, et al. 2009; Arslan 2011). What exists focuses on small aspects of the whole, usually taking a biographical approach that focuses on their signature works. Histories of the early period depict the industry developing in a context where cinema was often ignored or irrelevant to the majority of Turks (Özön 1962; Dorsay 1986; Arslan 2011). But because they focus on films and filmmaking as the work of individuals, they often overlook the socio-cultural context in which the films were received. A history of Turkish cinema should be organized to tell the story
highlighting the shifts in the audience’s expectations and the development of a new Turkish lifeways. It must also consider the technological developments and evolution of filmmaker’s production practices. Only then can one tackle the story of the artistic work of a few individual directors. Because this is missing in most of the established histories, it is necessary to read around the accounts of the famous filmmakers, and look to the markers of the social and cultural contexts that explain why their works survived to this day.

One thorny issue with the historiography of Turkish cinema involves past scholars’ preference for periodization as a way to frame filmmaker’s work. At first glance, this may seem a tangential issue, but the debate over how to divide the history industry reveals how scholars, critics, and filmmakers of all kinds conceptualize filmmaking and its impact on Turkish societal change. Periodization allows us to see which era’s output is important, and worthy of scrutiny from the local perspective. The Yeşilçam era (the studio era that lasted roughly from 1955 to 1980) is both the Golden Age of Turkish cinema and the only time Turkey had a true studio-based industry. The Yeşilçam studio system produced the largest number of films and established many Turkish filmmakers who developed the financial structures, production practices, and aesthetic sensibilities that impact cinematic production today. The influence of this period of filmmaking is felt at all levels of production and reception. But it was a difficult and chaotic time and the Turkish industry did not enjoy the coherence or the tightly controlled, well-funded institutional mechanisms that defined the big studio era in Hollywood. How to delineate the periods of Turkish film history, and in doing so define Yesilçam films, consumes the scholarly work on Turkish cinema. Even the most recent books, such as Savaş Arslan’s carefully constructed Cinema in Turkey, takes this theme as its central focus (Arslan 2011). Despite this, most scholarly and critical discourse about the development of Turkish cinema has solidified around a teleological view terminating in the fully-fledged Yeşilçam era. They see the
eras leading up to it as embryonic, and the periods following it constitute its decline. However, just what defines a true Yeşilçam film remains a hotly contested problem.

This becomes all the more important because contemporary filmmakers, too, have begun to use Yeşilçam films as a point of departure. There is a growing nostalgia amongst filmmakers and audiences regarding the modes of cinematic presentation found in these films. Simultaneously, filmmakers are also seeking to redefine current narrative models and production practices by deliberately separating themselves from the technical and narrative limitations of Yeşilçam-era films. Additionally, the melodramatic genre that reached its fullest expression in Yeşilçam cinema has again become a foundational fixture on television in the form of dramatic miniseries analogous to Latin American telenovelas. Because these TV dramas are exported to Russia, Europe, and the wider Middle East, they have come to constitute a form of soft diplomacy and point of socio-cultural exchange that suits the purposes of the Erdoğan’s AK party and their desire to expand the influence of Turkey in the Middle East (Arango 2014; Hurriet Daily News 2014). Consequently, the Yeşilçam-era films are seen as worthy ancestors of the commercial production of the contemporary period. And as a result, they are seen as a fertile ground for inspiration and productive nostalgia. Nevertheless, the successes of current films are determined in how they improve on these earlier films.

In the Turkish cinematic context, the scholarly attention to periodization begins with the work of Nijat Özön in Türk Sinema Tarihi (The history of Turkish Cinema) (Özön 1962). Özön proposed what is now accepted as the correct periods of Turkish cinema’s development: (1) initial steps – Ottoman period, 1914-1922; (2) “Theatre Makers” – 1922-1939; (3) transition to cinema makers – 1939-1950; (4) “cinema makers” – 1950 to his present (1962). Although he updated the timeline later, this version has stood as the dominant articulation guiding scholars and filmmakers alike (Özön 1995). It is the outline followed by the majority of scholarly and non-scholarly descriptions of Turkish cinema, especially those rendered in English as part of cultural
outreach or vernacular explanations (Kamp 2009; Turkish Cultural Foundation accessed 2011). It established the Yesilçam-era as the centerpiece of Turkish film history, and reduced the importance of the others. Films that came after the “golden era of Yesilçam films” are relegated to the post-Yesilçam period, requiring a contemporary correction that sees the improved standards of contemporary filmmakers as exemplary of a New Turkish Cinema (Suner 2010, 24). Özon’s model forces a narrative of rise and fall. It reduces the divergent trajectories of significant technological and aesthetic developments to bit players while only highlighting the development of an industry model that can compete with the story of Hollywood’s development.

Within this Yesilçam-centric model, the rejisör, or director, becomes the conceptual center of the filmmaking process, and the filmmaker becomes the constructive axis around which the entire history turns. Setting directors at the center means that their personalities and the circumstances surrounding their lives replace larger discussions of production and financial details in the historiography of cinema. Consequently, this approach suggests that as the role of the director developed, Turkish cinema matured. This put the earliest true director, Muhsin Ertuğrul, center stage to stand as both one of the first professional filmmakers in a nascent Turkish cinema. He became the sole driving force behind entire periods of cinematic development, excluding other kinds of filmmakers, spectators, and the impact of reception. It also made it so that all of the aesthetic considerations, technical processes, and production practices of Turkish filmmaking as a whole are cast with a particularly personal bent.

Within the accepted historiography it is, therefore, only through the director as auteur—initially Ertuğrul—that we come to understand the other developmental tendencies of Turkish cinema. Described by the film critic Attila Dorsay as the “man alone,” Muhsin Ertuğrul was

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3 The term rejisör comes from the French regiseur is more typical of earlier usage whereas the öztürkçe term yönetmen replaced it in the later 20th century.
functionally the only Turkish filmmaker working from 1922 until 1939 (Dorsay 1989). He was a theatre director and actor and, in Dorsay’s words, “he perceived filmmaking as the mere placing on film of theatre productions. . . he cared little for creating a uniquely cinemamatographic language” (Dorsay 22). This explains Özön’s description of this period as that of the Tiyatrocular, or theatre makers (literally, those doing the theater). But considering the early aesthetic sensibilities and tendencies of the development of cinema elsewhere, the idea that early cinema reflected theatrical processes and modes of presentation is not surprising. The same is true for early European and American films (Cook and Bernick 1999; Altman 2002; Thompson and Bordwell 2003). Importantly Ertuğrul brought European theatrical formats to Turkey. His was trained in Germany and not in Ottoman or Turkish theatre. Ertuğrul is also considered significant in the face of this larger view of cinema because he made his films ten to twenty years after theatrical emulation began to wane in Europe and because he adhered to this method for his entire career. In this he may be symptomatic of a larger thread of technological lag in Turkish cinema, which later proved to be a more significant definitional characteristic of Turkish cinema as a whole. But the focus of the accepted periodization prevents this view. It holds that the retrogressive or static tendencies were Ertuğrul’s and not symptomatic of the entire system.

Regarding periodization, I want to be clear that this basic model is still viable, but really only in the altered form suggested by Savaş Arslan. His book Cinema in Turkey: A New Critical History focuses directly on the Yesilçam era, but in doing so he avoids the assumptions and limitations made by earlier writers, or those seeking to idolize the studio period. His solution to periodization is to articulate the development of Turkish cinema as symptomatic of later political, cultural, and social changes. In doing so, he provides subdivisions for the middle period: “Early Yesilçam” (1950-1960); “High Yesilçam” (1960-1970s); “Late Yesilçam” (1980s); and Post-Yesilçam (1990s) (Arslan 11). Instead of seeing Yesilçam films as the culmination of cinematic
development, this model articulates the period as significant but transitory. He relieves it of its teleological status, opens the possibility of the future, and enables a rearticulation of this future away from mere decline. I take this model as the starting point from which to discuss film music, which is usually omitted from these discourses. This is significant because while film music was an afterthought in the production practices of high Yeşilçam filmmaking, the influence of these films still impacts how contemporary Turkish cinema is produced. In the following historical overview I will discuss not just how Turkish cinema evolved, but also how the Yeşilçam period came to be so centrally important and how its presence is felt in every production decision made today. In doing so, as I am briefly outlining the history of Turkish cinema, I will also interrogate the reasons for how this Yeşilçam-centrism developed, and the implications of this in the contemporary conceptualizations of cinematic aesthetics and normative production behaviors.

**The Introduction of Moving Pictures**

The first film shown in Turkey was exhibited under circumstances that are in themselves indicative of the late Ottoman period and its byzantine social and cultural interconnections. However, descriptions of these events, and the discrepancy between the competing accounts, are symptomatic of the contentious circumstances in contemporary Turkey. Depending on one’s perspective, films first arrived in Turkey in Abdulhamid II’s Yıldız Sarayı (Yıldız Palace) or in a beer hall in Pera, modern day Beyoğlu. While both early showings certainly happened, the controversy over which was first lies in whether one wants to see the history of Turkish film beginning in an aristocratic court with the projectionist as supplicant or in a bourgeois establishment run and frequented by foreigners.

Seen through the lens of brute chronology alone, the first exhibition was a private screening of Lumière films in 1896 at the Sultan’s palace by a man named Bertrand, who was likely a Frenchman (Dönmez-Colin 2008, 22). It was the first of several private screenings in
aristocratic homes and salons throughout the city. But because these events were limited to the aristocratic audiences—an Ottoman, not Turkish, elite—the event is not often counted as the beginning of cinema in Turkey. The second came in 1897 and was a public screening in the beer hall Salle Sponeck, a popular nightclub in fashionable Beyoğlu. Records are unclear as to exactly who sponsored this event. We know it was one of three men, Sigmund Weinberg, a Jewish-Romanian and representative of Pathé Frères; a man known only as Hanri (Henry); or Henri Delavallée, a French painter (Güvenmli 1960; Özön 1962; Scognamillo 1998; Gökmen 2000; Evren 1995, 34; Arslan 2011, 25). The fact that this event was the work of a Frenchman or a Polish Jew, who was a citizen of Romania, acting as a representative of a French company points to the impact and place of cinema among audiences of this time. It was an internationalist, even cosmopolitan event, arriving as it did in the most international neighborhood of Istanbul amidst a social context that brought all of the foreign and pluralist Ottoman social threads together.

The timing of these screenings is important, because the Lumière brothers had only just begun their private showings of their new films in late 1895 in Paris. Their screenings are often considered as the beginning of modern cinema as a mass medium because the screening format was the first to introduce many of the cinematic conventions we recognize now (Cook and Bernick 1999; Altman 2002; Thompson and Bordwell 2003). Their presentational format mimicked serious stage productions and was drastically different from the novelty-focused nickelodeons and salon-style phantasmagoria presentations of the preceding decades. The Istanbul screenings occurred shortly after the screenings in Paris, a fact that demonstrates the speed in which interest grew throughout European and cosmopolitan Ottoman circles. The Lumières were among the first entrepreneurs and filmmakers to solve the final technological problems that then allowed for the relatively easy production of motion picture machinery. At the time of the early screenings in Istanbul the Pathé company was closely linked with the Lumière
brothers, and was screening films throughout Europe to advertise the new cameras and projection equipment based on the Brothers’ developments. While these evenings were aristocratic or wealthy middle-class diversions, they also served to introduce the new technology to the Ottoman Empire. As such, they were yet another point of European technological intervention into Ottoman life. They also exemplify how Turks began to use the distinction between *alafranga* and *alaturca*—between European and Ottoman—to also signify a divide between the modern world and the past. This distinction was made even stronger by the Sultan’s edict declaring electric generators illegal, thus preventing the exhibitors from demonstrating the full potential of the new technology. The projectors were actually hand-cranked and lit by oil lamp (Arslan 2011, 25). The introduction of cinematic technologies and new modes of viewing within the cosmopolitan and already transnational public spaces in Pera meant that the acceptance of these technologies was already at work within an Ottoman context. It happened slowly, but this is because cinema had to be properly translated for use in the new circumstances.

One can view the slow and partial adoption of cinematic technology in many ways. It can be a westernizing process where western technologies, and their associated social and cultural norms, infiltrate the existing Ottoman/Turkish socio-cultural context. In this view, the technology is alien and imposed upon a pre-existing society that was sovereign and secure without it. It supports a diffusionist model of development and suggests that the Western intervention is somehow forced or insidious in nature. Alternatively, the adoption of Western technology can be seen as part of a process of adaptation and strategic implementation. Rather than ‘Westernization’ through technology, it is equally possible to consider the introduction of cinematic technologies as a process of translation or Ottomanization, where the technologies were put to use for local, pre-existing ends.
One reason for the technological delay was the conservative attitude of Sultan Abdülhamid II, who was suspicious, if not openly hostile to many western technologies. His fears dampened the commercial advancement of many of the basic technologies, like electricity, that were essential to film’s acceptance and success. After he was deposed and imprisoned in 1909, his successor Mehmed V and his political handlers, overturned several previous edicts and allowed cinematic and technological development to move more quickly towards achieving their potential. That year, Weinberg opened the first purpose-built cinema, the Cinéma Théatre Pathé Frères (Arslan, 31). This began a period of rapid commercial expansion where theatres were built all over Istanbul and in other important cities in Anatolia. Following European practices, these theatres had orchestra pits to allow ensembles to accompany the screenings with live music (ibid.).

Partly because of a prevailing religious unease about the cinema, Abdülhamid’s reticence to embrace the necessary technologies, and the ineffective governance of the declining Ottoman state, there were few, if any Muslim Ottoman subjects making films of any kind. Early films shot in Turkey were made by foreign or peripheral filmmakers like Alexandre Promino, a Lumière cameraman, or the Christian Macedonian Manaki brothers (Dönmez-Colin, 22). Cinema historians consider the 1914 film Aya Stefanos’taki Rus Abidesinin Yıkılışı (The Demolition of the Russian Monument at St. Stephen) the first Turkish-made film (Dönmez-Colin, 23; Dorsay, 21). The official histories of cinema managed by the Ministry of Culture hold this to be the case and state it unambiguously as fact (Turkish Cultural Foundation, 2010). However, Dönmez-Colin suggests this film may have never existed (23). The film is at the very least now lost, but the fact that its purported production involved the participation of the Ottoman citizen Fuat Uzkınay as the camera man seems to be sufficient reason for analysts to count this as the first Turkish film. This is the official position even though, according to Özön and Arslan,
Uzkınay was trained on the spot to do the work by the Austrian film crew hired to document the dynamiting of the Russian monument (Özon 1970, 3-5; Arslan, 33).

Setting this film aside, the issue of what constitutes the first “Turkish” film presents a problem because it necessitates a larger discussion of just what can be considered “Turkish” in the first place. This problem arises because scholars and non-scholars alike cannot agree on what constitutes the delineation between Ottoman and Turkish. Do the works of the Ottoman citizens Yanaki and Militades Manaki count? Or does the Turkish cinema begin with the creation of the Turkish republic? The Manaki’s first film, The Weavers, was shot in 1905 and is often considered the first Macedonian film by some scholars (Vasilevski 1999). However, the Menakis were born in a town in Rumelia that was at that time still part of the Ottoman empire (Constantinidis 2000, 3). Does this, then, invalidate their film of Sultan Reşat Mehmet V shot in 1911 as a potential first “Turkish film?” All of this immediately calls into question exactly what can count as a Turkish film in the first place because the first films in Turkey were produced before the modern concept of Turkey was forged, and because the early form was not a national cinema, but a cosmopolitan cinema. What is clear is that this early history of “Turkish cinema” involves the complicated relationship of ethnicities, nationalities, and religious units under the umbrella notion of “Ottoman.”

The first substantive cinematic production—a film longer than a single-reel short—began with military assistance. During the First World War, both Weinberg and Uzkınay were employed at the Army’s photo and film center. However, instead of producing works like the Army’s initial attempts at propaganda films, which would have satisfied the military’s initial interest, they made fiction films under the noses of their new employers (Arslan, 39; Dönmez-Colin, 23). Under Allied occupation following the war, Uzkinay, and two others Ahmet Fehim and Fazlı Necip, continued to make films independently using equipment salvaged from the shuttered National Defense Organization. Limited by lack of resources, the interference of Allied
censorship, and a period of political and economic turmoil, filmmaking after the war was a difficult and financially unsupportable endeavor. All Turkish filmmakers, including Uzkinay and his compatriots, produced less than 65 films during the period between independence (1918) and the end of the Second World War. Those that were made were often documentaries about the War of Independence, or fictional films made by private cinema societies such as Kemal Film (Dorsay 22). It was during this time that Muhsin Ertuğrul returned to Turkey and made his first film.

Although Ertuğrul was not the only post-war filmmaker he effectively became, by accident or design, the young Turkish republic’s only filmmaker between 1923 and 1939. He was effectively the only filmmaker who was able to produce consistent work during this time. He gradually cultivated a monopoly on what was a marginal filmmaking community working on the periphery of several burgeoning national industries. One consequence of his singular grip on Turkish filmmaking was that he became responsible for a series of important “firsts.” He established several thematic and cinematic norms, both technical and visual. He also established the basic story-telling and visual language for early Turkish film. He was the progenitor of what became common narrative tropes, such as that of the heroic Turkish soldier. Finally, he was the first filmmaker to insist on a degree of realism that overcame the conservative prohibitions lingering from the old regime. For instance, all of his strong female characters were played by female actresses, which put women in front of camera for the first time (Dönmez-Colin, 25; Dorsay, 24).

Ertuğrul’s groundbreaking work was facilitated by the new government’s reformist attitudes towards cinema. According to Dorsay, the social revolutionary potential of film, and many of Ertuğrul’s innovations resonated with the Atatürkist ideology designed to push the newly formed Turkish people towards a more modern conception of society. He writes, they depicted “. . . the type of modern woman envisioned by Atatürk, who had made women’s
emancipation one of the cornerstones of his conception of social reform” (Dorsay 1989, 24).

Atatürk saw films as having a decidedly utopian potential:

The cinema is a discovery so important that one day it will change the face of the world’s civilization much more than the discoveries of gunpowder, electricity, and the continents. Cinema will bring about for all men on this earth, the possibility of knowing one another, of approaching and loving one another. . . Cinema will eliminate divergences of view among men and will be of great value in realizing the humanist ideal (Atatürk quoted in Dorsay 1989).

This view acknowledges cinema’s potential as a force within larger socio-cultural discourses, and is consonant with other revolutionary, propagandistic, and analytical properties on this art form.

For reformers like Atatürk, films were a way to build community. Their vision of films saw them as analogous to the textual documents that provide the linkages for the production of Benedict’s imagined community (Anderson, 2006; Arslan 2011, 37). They are the conduits or channels for the production of a public sphere discourse (Negt and Kluge 1993). They, as with the case of Ertuğrul’s films, are even the locus of political, or politicized, speech. They are ethnographic documents that speak of socio-cultural norms and behaviors to all audiences, analysts and casual viewers alike (Chow 1995). Ertuğrul’s films were part of a process to change the Turkish establishment and educate the newly forged Turkish people in the ideals of the future. As Dorsay points out, “these films show[ed] the ‘middle classes’ and were addressed to that group”; they represented a vision of a new kind of person that Atatürk wanted to create and strengthen, economically and socially (Dorsay, 24). Thus, Ertuğrul benefitted from the prevailing ideologies and reforms that were creating a new kind of Turk. His monopoly on film production was cemented because his work did not stray from this project and he remained in favor.

However, Ertuğrul’s capacities as a filmmaker disrupt any single view of his films. It is difficult to say that his films are only visions of a nationalist utopia as such, or that they are
successful films as we understand them today. His methods were not internally coherent, and his problematic approach to filmmaking calls into question his importance as the first true filmmaker in Turkey. He committed stories to film. That much is certain. But many of his innovations were incidental in light of his conservative tendencies as an artist. The fact that he is usually referred to as a theatre director indicates some scholarly skepticism about his qualities and intentions as a film director. He does so, to try to contextualize Ertuğrul’s place in the canon and to mark it as yet another experimental period—one distinct from those periods where real filmmaking happened. Ertuğrul himself believed in the primacy of the theatre, and insisted he was only making films to support his activities as a theatre director (Scognamillo 61). Scholars and audiences alike still dismiss his work as being too theatrical and not using the cinematic medium to its fullest potential (Arslan 55-60; Dorsay 1986; Kamil 2000, 15; Onaran 1973, 82). In this, he did not expand the ideological or idealistic boundaries for Turkish films. And by excluding his contemporaries by setting financial and professional blockades against them he severely limited the aesthetic and expressive potential of film during his tenure as the only viable filmmaker working in Turkey.

Ertuğrul was more of a gatekeeper for the introduction of Western cinematic norms than he otherwise could have been. Those he favored were incorporated, almost without question, those that he disliked were ignored (Scognamillo, 61). He could have done more to bring in cutting edge technologies and techniques. He certainly knew what western filmmaking was, and how it was done. Before he returned to Turkey in 1922 he worked in the German film industry as an actor and director (Dönmez-Colin, 24). He had the opportunity to bring Turkish filmmaking into line with the examples he experienced in Germany. But he did not. Instead, he sought to follow his own vision for filmmaking and create something that was his own. And he brought more to the Turkish filmmaking experiment than just his theatrical aspirations. Instead, it is better to take Arslan’s perspective and to see Ertuğrul’s work as “a combination of adaptations,
remakes, and theatrical elements” (Arslan, 59). Thus, it is appropriate to see that whatever Ertuğrul’s intentions, Turkish film began as a conscious blending of inputs. It was an adaptive, additive, editorial, and synthetic process from the beginning.

It is Ertuğrul’s willingness to adapt the work of others that has left a lasting impression on Turkish filmmaking. He remade Western films, augmenting or changing the plots and the narrative details to suit a Turkish audience. He adapted French vaudeville and German plays for the screen, and in this way created the first Turkish cinematic melodramas and tragedies. However, while at the time these adaptations were innovative, his theatrical background always held him back. He relied on theatrical presentations of space and movement, and used a compatible *mise-en-scène*. This rendered his work static and devoid of the numerous cinematographic innovations found in many of the films he copied (Dorsay 68). Consequently, most of his films are aesthetically similar, despite being the initial Turkish attempts at various genres. Actors enter and exit from off camera as if they are on stage and leave the story by ducking into the wings. The camera is usually static and frames a flattened, panoramic set as if the director’s intention was to objectively record a stage production for posterity. This reliance on the static camera is not altogether different from the early films made in Europe and in Hollywood, where theatrical norms dominated early film production. But by the time he was making his films, directors like F. W. Murnau, and Fritz Lang had freed the camera from its static watchfulness, and cinematography practices included graceful movement and carefully considered visual dynamism.4 Considering Ertuğrul continued to rely on a single static shot throughout his 17 years as a director, his conservatism slowed the development of Turkish cinema for some time. Again, this technological lag, where Turks either did not have access to

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4 One excellent example is the 1924 F.W. Murnau film *Der Letzte Mann*, which opens with one of the first dolly shots ever attempted. The camera had been attached to a bicycle, affording it the mobility to shoot a single shot beginning inside an elevator, traveling through the lobby of a hotel, and exiting out through the front door. It was a moment that broke with the usually static framing that dominated film production up until that point.
the latest technologies or techniques, or chose to ignore them, came to be an important factor in almost all eras of Turkish cinematic production in some way. I will return to this topic later.

Contrasting his conservative visual approach, it is important to note that Ertuğrul produced Turkey’s first true sound film, İstanbul Sokaklarında, (In the Streets of Istanbul) in 1931. It is the first Turkish film to incorporate sound of any kind, and as such is the first film to use the spoken Turkish language. This was a large technical and practical success, and is one of the first truly Turkish productions of note. İstanbul Sokaklarında was a Turkish film, made by a Turkish director, set in Istanbul, and featured the sound of the Turkish language (as it was in those days), it is also the first Turkish co-production (Dönmez-Colin, 25). The film was shot in Egypt, Greece, and in Bursa with financial and technical assistance from Egyptian filmmakers. Its significance for Turkish cinema is also due to its similarity to the Jazz Singer (1927), which was the first feature-length Hollywood film to present recorded dialog together with recorded music (Arslan, 59; Cook and Bernick 1999; Altman 2002; Thompson and Bordwell 2003).

İstanbul Sokaklarında came a mere four years after the Jazz Singer’s debut, six years after the first film to have a recorded film score, and seven years after the first experiments in sound synchronization were shown to the public (Cook and Bernick 1999; Altman 2002; Thompson and Bordwell 2003). Part of the reason for the continuing technological lag was that much of the new technology was developed and manufactured in the United States, France, Germany, and Britain by companies that did so either under contract from studios or as a commercial venture. Turkey had no such firms and thus had to purchase all of its own equipment. Also, because there was no cohesive studio system like those in the United States or at the UFA offices in Germany, there were few companies capable of managing the expense. The first soundstage in Turkey was opened by İpek Film in 1932, the production house that produced İstanbul Sokaklarında the year before (Arslan, 47). It was through their efforts that
sound finally came to Turkish cinemas. With this essential production capacity in place, Turkish filmmakers could begin to make films with sound economically, and independently.

The Transition to Sound Film

According to Savaş Arslan, the introduction of sound was an important moment in Turkish cinema because it established the Turkish language in film production for the first time (Arslan, 44-61; personal interview, 2011). Before the advent of sound, inter-titles and credits had presented a problem for audiences of all socio-economic levels. For screenings in cosmopolitan Beyoğlu, the inter-titles for some foreign productions, usually French films, were left in their original language, and thus only accessible to the educated elite. Later, for films not in French, Turkish inter-titles had to be added, or in extreme cases they had to be translated and read aloud for the audience to understand (Arslan, 46). Much of this was expensive, and was an obstacle to the expansion of affordable cinemas. Sound did away with the problem of inter-titles, and essentially facilitated the expansion of cinema into the rest of Anatolia. Sound allowed Turkish filmmakers to reach a larger audience and have deeper penetration into Turkish society given that it overcame obstacles like the prevailing illiteracy in Anatolia.

The European and American acceptance of cinema was part of a larger socio-cultural acceptance of technology. The novelty of moving images and the spectacle of the machines themselves were sufficient reasons for audiences to find film interesting. Indeed, the very early stages of cinematic production and reception in the west were focused on the novelty of the technology. Late nineteenth century fascinations with photography and film fueled the development and presentation of the technology of films and the films themselves on almost equal footing. The early nickelodeons, the first dedicated cinematic exhibition halls, were built around this idea of technology as diversion or entertainment. In Turkey, however, this was not the case. Turkish audiences had no incremental introduction to the technology as such. Indeed,
Abdülhameid II’s edicts against the use of certain technologies had prevented films from being seen beyond small private showings. Electricity and projection machinery were needed to bring films to the masses. In fact, these edicts severely limited both access to, and full appreciation of the cinema of the time. While it may not have been shared by the upper-classes or cosmopolitan populations of Istanbul, the impact of this attitude meant that when the cinema was introduced to Turkey, the populations were not prepared to understand it entirely. The requisite education in reception was entirely lacking, and they were not able to learn gradually as European and American audiences had done.

The argument that social training was needed to understand the recording and playback technology found in the gramophone and cinematograph, has been proposed by Jonathan Sterne in *The Audible Past* and Emily Thompson in her article “Wiring the World: Acoustical Engineers and the Empire of Sound in the Motion Picture Industry, 1927-1930,” suggests that the acceptance of technologically assisted consumption requires more than the simple presence of the technology itself (Sterne 2003; Thompson 2010). The society has to have a place for that technology and recognize its function as a facilitator of existing social behaviours. Following this argument, it is critical to see the period of early cinematic development in Turkey as occurring while this technological enculturation was progressing and transforming Ottoman and Turkish society as a whole. In other countries, the very idea of technology was introduced before cinema. In Turkey, they came at the same time, and Turkish audiences had to come to terms with foreign films, foreign languages, foreign topics, while also learning to accept the idea of cinema itself. It is important to see how the quasi-colonialist approach of foreign importers impacted this as well. According to Thompson

The American engineers who led [this technological development] perceived themselves to be on a technological mission. Their goal was to get the world “in sync” with the Modern United States, and they thought they could accomplish this through their synchronous sound technology. . . the engineers deployed military and moral rhetorics of colonialism to understand their role in this ambitious enterprise. . . (Thompson 2010, 192)
In the face of this technological ethos and world-building Turkish filmmakers used adaptation to blunt the naked intent of its importation and implementation. The Turkish response was about more than simply ensuring that audiences understood the aesthetic and narrative content of the films, because the apparatus itself was laden with meaning and loaded agendas. This fact is made even more prescient by Michael Bull, who argues that, “the use of sound technologies can be understood as part of the Western project of the appropriation and control of space, place, and the “other” (Bull 2010, 174). In the following section, I will discuss the importance of Turkification, or the process through which Turks brought foreign films into their socio-cultural sphere and adapted them for their own consumption. Additionally, I will discuss the technologization of Turkish society that gradually enabled cinema to become so influential. As I will show, the rise and fall of Yeşilçam cinema can be articulated as the rise and decline of technological development. In this way, the music, as a fundamental part of the sound of the films becomes an important player in the history of Yeşilçam and the setting of the stage for contemporary attitudes towards films. The sound itself is a marker of technological change.

The Rise of the Yeşilçam Period and the Flourishing of Turkish Cinema

By 1939, more filmmakers broke Ertuğrul’s monopoly, entered the business of making Turkish films, and ushered in the “era of the true film producers” (Özön 1962, Dorsay, 24). However, this new diversity was destroyed almost immediately by the economic problems that came with the Second World War. Only sixty full-length films were completed during the war, or roughly between 1938 and 1945 (Arslan, 49-54). The four years after the war saw film production match its wartime output—but this was a tiny number of films in comparison to the massive output of other film producing countries of the time. Turkish domestic production was low, but film viewership was increasing rapidly with the importation of foreign films.
During the war and the years after, Turkey’s domestic film market was growing rapidly with the benefits of foreign investment. But the massive production of the Hollywood studios could not be matched. And because the Hollywood studios were built on a vertically integrated model, they controlled the bulk of the distribution channels for films, within the U.S. and outside in markets like Turkey. Consequently, imported films, particularly from the U.S., dominated the Turkish domestic market and were the major force behind the growing number of theatres and the overall popularity of the cinema in general. Arslan and Scognamillo both emphasize the dominance of Hollywood films during this time by pointing to the Turk’s fascination with all things Hollywood (Arslan, 42-48; Scognamillo, 51-55). The public was bombarded by the kind of marketing campaigns used to address audiences in the United States. Theatres in the more cosmopolitan areas of Istanbul such as Pera in particular, and the rest of Beyoğlu in general, specialized in American films. Even the “People’s Houses” in the Anatolian interior that were part of the massive re-education effort designed to elevate the population and institute the social and cultural reforms in the rural areas showed foreign films (Özön 1994:49). Emulating marketing advances in the U.S., publishers began printing fan magazines focused on the star system and on the films that dominated the theatres. Turkish audiences became obsessed with foreign and local stars. However, Arslan sees this as partially a socio-cultural fascination that was part of the government’s attempt to carve out an identity for the fledgling Republic. He says, “not only did magazines promote American films, they also organized contests to send Turkish actors to Hollywood. . . This intense, perhaps excessive interest was motivated by the desire to remove the stigma of the sick man of Europe, to represent Turkey as a developed country equal to western nations” (Arslan, 42-43). While much of the fascination with Hollywood films was born out of their ubiquity and the intense marketing system focused on a populace that had not ever experienced such a thing, it was also due to the government’s economic and political changes, intended to push Turkey into the modern world.
Importantly, the 1950s marked the gradual expansion of the industry in terms of production, distribution, and consumption. And with Ertuğrul effectively out of the way—he completed his last film in 1953 and retired—new, and younger, filmmakers had the space to experiment. But this came at a time of great social, political, and economic change in Turkey, which had a positive impact on the development of a full-fledged industry. By the 1950s, the effects of the sweeping social and cultural reforms of the 1920s and 1930s began to take effect. Literacy rates rose dramatically, as did employment and domestic industrial production. The newly educated and moneyed people began to move into the cities, which shifted the gravitational center of the country from the rural areas in Anatolia into the more highly concentrated centers of Istanbul, the new capital Ankara, Izmir, and to an extent the eastern cities of Van and Kayseri.

During this time the growing industry was helped through direct and indirect governmental support in the form of tax law restructuring, subsidies, and legal aid. As Dorsay documents, cities throughout Anatolia lifted the steep taxes on tickets and the national government provided subsidies for the production and distribution of Turkish films (Dorsay, 24). In part, these changes were due to Turkey’s changing political circumstances. The elections of 1950 saw the end of the one-party rule dominated by Kemal Atatürk’s party, the CHP (Cümhüriyet Halk Partesi), and the rise of true parliamentary politics. The only viable opposition party, the Democrat Party—once simply allowed to exist to avoid the appearance of an autocratic government—won a landslide victory in May 1950. This led to a period of rare popular support and ideological release. The party dismantled many of the governmental controls set in place by the CHP, and drastically changed the face of Turkish society. Despite being immediately beneficial for the film industry, these policies eventually led to an economic disaster that contributed to the 1960 coup. However, in the years immediately following 1950, the
political conditions provided for the perfect regulatory and financial circumstances for the rapid expansion of a domestic industry that was on the cusp of flourishing. And grow it did.

According to Nijat Özön, the Turkish industry produced over 56 films a year during the 1950s, a number almost equal to the entire output of wartime Turkey, and half of all films made between 1938 and 1949 (Özön, 1962). It was also the era—across the globe—of the double feature and continual screenings, which increased interest and made films even more accessible. Areas that did not have a financially stable or full-time cinema were visited by traveling entrepreneurs carrying mobile projectors. The newfound accessibility of films contributed a great deal to the growth of the industry. Distribution networks were maturing in the 1950s and no longer hampered by the material and cash deprivations of the war years. This, coupled with the growing number of cinemas and theatres meant more people were able to enjoy a night at the movies. Also, the network of people’s houses provided access to a large and eager audience outside the city centers. Now, there was a larger audience able to afford going to films and more places for them to view them.

This newfound success was built on foundations laid by foreign companies. By the 1950s the Hollywood studio machine was reaching its maturity, and its global economic and political influence was deep and pervasive. Growing markets like Turkey presented an opportunity for financial gain and the studios pushed into Turkey with greater force using their foreign distributors as a foothold. Much of this influence came through owning the production technology necessary for filmmaking and in rental contracts, where they controlled the terms and cost of the prints of U.S. films shown in Turkish cinemas. This oversight also included ensuring that they held all of the contracts Turkish filmmakers depended upon to obtain cameras, lenses, film stock, printing services, editing tables, lighting and electrical equipment, not to mention the projectors needed to show films to the public. Since there were no domestic producers of cinematic equipment, Turkish filmmakers were entirely dependent on their foreign
suppliers and had to acquiesce to their desires and influence. The Hollywood controllers were backed by the fact that at this time, nearly two-thirds of the world’s manufactured goods were made in the United States. There simply were no other sources.

The production practices of this period are also marked by the presence of these foreign films and their attendant technologies. Once stuck in the relatively drab and derivative world of Ertuğrul’s theatre-influenced aesthetic, filmmakers began experimenting with new plot lines, new acting styles, new camera techniques, and new sensibilities, all in response to the new foreign influences. Early experiments involved directly copying the films exported by the Hollywood studios—acts that can be seen as explicitly plagiaristic, emulation, or even adaptation. Directors like Orhan Atadeniz and Mehmet Muhtar shot and released Tarzan films, Dracula films, and the like, all copied from the highly successful American originals. Often they copied these earlier films with little creativity or vision and focused solely on the profitability and commercial potential of the films. Unfortunately, this meant these films were effectively cheap knock offs of Hollywood films. While not careful shot-for-shot copies, films like _Tarzan İstanbul’da_ (Tarzan in Istanbul, 1952) and _Drakula İstanbul’da_ (Dracula in Istanbul, 1953) were quick adaptations that followed the originals’ stories and visual construction closely. The addition of “İstanbul’da,” literally “in Istanbul,” can serve as an indication of their intention to produce films for a Turkish audience and bring the subject matter closer to home. They were made with the expectation that audiences were already familiar with the originals and provided a Turkish twist to the story. Other directors also made costume dramas like _Kamelyali Kadın_ (The Lady with the Camelia, 1957), pirate and swashbuckling films like _Efelerin Efesi_ (1952), and _Yüzbaşı Tahsin_ (Captain Tahsin, 1951), and nationalistic histories like Aydın Arakon’s _Vatan İçin_ (For the Fatherland, 1951). But while many of these films themselves are, as Arslan and Scongamillo recognize, evidence of Türkifikaion or the tendency of adaptation, they are also expressions of new cinematic techniques (Arslan, 84-87; Scongamillo, 1972 57-59).
The choice to remake the films, rather than license and dub the originals, was foremost a financial one. It was simply cheaper to remake the films themselves than pay the often onerous licensing and projection costs. But because the crews of these copies did not try to copy the originals exactly, a great deal of new visual, dramatic, and narrative material made it to the screen. This is effectively Turkification by default. They used what resources they had at hand and shot the films in the streets and buildings of Istanbul, using Turkish actors, and Turkish-made props. While this may seem negligible, it is enough to make the films look decidedly different from their Hollywood or European originals. Another difference was the evident technological lack of Turkish filmmakers. They were not able to use the expensive large formats, color techniques, and sound technologies that made western films of the period so recognizable and financially successful. The spectacle of these Hollywood productions is missing in the Turkish copies.

As with any art form there is a certain truth behind the idea that to understand the full expression of the format and the techniques involved one must first study and copy the masters. Considering the financially underdeveloped circumstances in Turkey, Turkish filmmakers had much to learn about how films were made—especially since they were also well behind the technological forefront occupied by the major Hollywood, French, and British studios. This process of adaptation was as much an exercise in copying the masters and learning how to use new filmmaking technologies as is it a process of socio-cultural adaptation. The Turkish works of this time evidence the development of the techniques and technologies of film production as much as they do the translation process.

It is all too easy to suggest an entirely diffusionist model of production practices and aesthetic principles and ascribe the filmmaking indigenous to Turkey to the mere results of the Turkificação of films from other places. But that would be overly simplistic. Instead it is best to see filmmaking itself as an inherently internationalist endeavor. As was apparent in the last
chapter, the Turkish experience of films from the introduction of the technology right through to the present is a function of how connected the Turkish filmmakers were to the technological advances and filmmaking innovation from a wide number of other countries. However, this is true for every other film producing country during the same time. Hollywood, during its golden period, relied very heavily on immigrant filmmakers who came seeking their fortunes or fleeing the Nazi regime. Filmmakers like Billy Wilder, Fritz Lang, and composers like Hans Eisler, Max Steiner, and Erich Korngold all came to Hollywood and contributed greatly to the style that was then disseminated as Hollywood cinema. Turkish filmmakers of the 1940-1960s were often educated elsewhere. Their influence is an essential feature of those who write much of the music for films and television.

The Mature Yeşilçam Period – The Golden Age of Turkish Cinema

At the end of the 1950s the Turkish film production was about to reach its highest output in the history of the industry. The import market and its associated industries, dubbing, distribution, etc., were flourishing as well. Most scholars refer to this period as the beginning of Yeşilçam’s golden age. However, this should be interpreted in light of the military coups in 1960 and 1971 that overthrew the democratically elected governments. The first effectively ended the reforms enacted by the Democratic Party (DP). The Kemalist military stepped in ostensibly to protect the secular statism supported by the Kemalist vision and the movement's political arm, the CHP, then in the minority for the first time. However, while this intervention did limit the impact of the Islamic-tinged government represented by the Democratic party, it also interrupted the successes of some of the economic policies enacted by the DP. The 1960 coup came in the form of a letter, or memo, given to the prime minister by the head of the armed forces telling him that the army would no longer support the government's attempts to deal with the social strife and violence that was partly the result of the first coup and in reaction to the economic and
social deprivations that came with it. The military took over but hesitated to consolidate power because of the problematic example of the contemporaneous military rule in Greece.

This memo came on May 27, 1960, and ushered in a two-year period of military rule known as the White Revolution. As with many of the twists and turns of twentieth-century Turkish politics, this coup came with several paradoxes. Despite being a military intervention the political fallout was a new, more liberal constitution that tore down many of the controls on cinematic, musical, literary, and journalistic speech. This, needless to say, had a freeing effect on the film industry. These actions also allowed for the breath of the 1960s to fill intellectual spaces of the Turkish imagination. According to Dorsay, this revolution “opened new horizons, especially for those thinking people, the artists and intellectuals, who were no doubt reeling from the influx of Marxist ideas and works, whose translation and publication had been practically impossible until that point (Dorsay, 26). Filmmakers began to experiment with new modes of presentation and narrative themes that resonated with the new social and political concepts. Some even produced outright political films. It was also a time where some filmmakers, like Metin Erksan, made films that found success in the international market. His Susuz Yaz (Summer without Water) won the Golden Bear at the Berlin International Film Festival in 1964. Erksan, along with Halit Refiğ and Duygu Sağiroğlu began to promote the idea of a cohesive Turkish cinema that was truly an indigenous artistic corpus (Dorsay, 27).

During these decades of political, economic, and social turmoil, the film industry went through a number of fundamental economic and structural changes in response. But these changes did not immediately have an impact on the total production. There were many years in the 1960s and early 1970s where production topped 300 films a year (Dorsay, 26). But as the years went on, and the political and economic strain took hold, the quality of films suffered, particularly in terms of their technical production. The large majority of the films made during this period are very low budget affairs—particularly in the 1970s when the industry as a whole fell
into disrepair. The technological capacity of the industry remained in a state of stagnation that separated it from the technological and creative leaps made in the rest of the world (Arslan, 103; Erman 1973, 25-30). Color only came to dominate in Turkey in the early 1970s, over 50 years after it was available in Hollywood, and twenty years after it had become commonplace.\(^5\) Also, because so many of the foreign distribution prints available at the time were of such low quality, audiences largely missed out on the innovations that were occurring in Europe and Hollywood. The low quality of Turkish film became a widely accepted norm.

With the technical capacities and quality stagnating, the aesthetics of filmmaking also suffered. Throughout this time, despite the robust quantity of Turkish productions, filmmakers largely relied on the infrastructure assembled for adapting imported films to make domestic films. This means most new Turkish-made films were shot without sound and dubbed in the same sound studios that adapted imports. This practice began in 1943 when Faruk Kenç was forced to dub his film *Pinar* instead of recording the sound on set. It was a move born of desperation; he was forced into it because his production company, İpek Film, did not give him enough money to shoot it with sound (Arslan, 117; Sekmeç 2001, 6). To save money, he dubbed it later, despite his dislike of the entire process. Because money was perpetually a problem across the industry, this cost-cutting trick quickly became a norm and the sound of dubbing began to dominate the system. By the 1960s and 1970s it had become unquestioned, standard practice.

This marginalization of sound necessarily impacted film music and other sonic components like foley work. According to Arslan, musical scores were often assembled from personal record collections, taken wholesale from other films, or, in rare cases, quickly

\(^5\) The technology to make multiple-strip color filmstock predates the advent of synchronized sound in films. The first experiments in commercially viable Technicolor came in 1916, and in 1922 *The Toll of the Sea* became the first full-length color film.
improvised by freelance composers and musicians in hasty recording sessions. Over time, audiences became used to the low-quality look and feel of the films and to the very low-quality soundtracks. They also grew accustomed to hearing the same actors over and over again; since the number of voice-over actors was so small, they dubbed all of the imports and many of the Turkish productions with the same voices. Increasingly, the films of this period began to rely on these same voices and repeatedly used the same music. The result was an entire body of work that was sonically homogenous. The flat, scratchy, and mid-heavy sound of these films still lingers in Turks’ memories and has become an important basis for a strong sense of nostalgia about a cinematic past. The directorial and technical decisions forced by cost-cutting drove a set of changes that contributed to the evolution of aesthetic features that came to define the entire industry. Even when there was an influx of money or technology the films were made to conform to this aesthetic norm. Thus, the Yeşilçam period became uniform—so much so that, as Dorsay puts it, “the cinema was headed nowhere: stories were as much alike as two drops of water (Dorsay, 27).

This change in the approach to film sound also marked the beginning of a trend where cost-cutting necessities would shift the very fundamentals of production practices. This is seen in the impact of the growing carelessness of the sound engineers and their declining equipment, where background noise began to creep its way into the soundtracks. This became such a problem that it has led Savaş Arslan to make this observation:

The voice of Yeşilçam is inescapably coupled with its noise. The noise is neither mono nor stereo, or polyphonic, but cacophonic. It is in this cacophony that one may find what Yeşilçam Turkified with post-synchronized sound: not only voices, musical scores, and sound effects, but also the noise of the theater, of the projection machine, and of its spectators (124).

6 My conversations with Savaş Arslan were enlightening because he explained to me just how dire much of the production circumstances were. The picture he painted of the Turkish industry at its height is one of great energy but entirely without sufficient funds.
The sound of Yeşilçam films, particularly those from the 1970s and the decline in the 1980s, is therefore instantly recognizable. The voices are usually, though not always, out of phase and scope with the scene—meaning that the dubbing is imperfect and the volume balance clearly betrays the fact that they were dubbed—and are unaffected by changes of location or circumstance in the films. Voices are always loud and relatively clear. Characters speak with a more even tone of voice than one would expect in other cinematic traditions; this often cuts across the dramatic meaning of the scene. But perhaps more important is the noise on the tracks. The recording and print transfer technologies available to late Yeşilçam filmmakers were often old and worn-out. The soundtracks have a great deal of white and pink noise—the products of age, wear and tear, cheap filmstock, and low-cost production. The effect is a sound that is compressed and muddy. The high and low frequencies are largely gone, which makes the sound fuzzy and causes the music and the actor’s voices jump out of a chaos that is always churning beneath the scenes.

These factors profoundly affected the how the sound of these films have been received by audiences. Many of the films from this period are still shown on television or exist in VHS and DVD collections; their sound has degraded further as they were transferred to these new formats. The fact that many of the available copies are badly made bootlegged versions of copies of copies has exacerbated the problem even further. To someone with ears more attuned to non-Turkish films, a few are entirely unwatchable because it is impossible to hear anything that is going on. However, because the bad sound is very much part of the aesthetic of these films, many people seem not to mind. Several roommates of mine watched these films obsessively and always considered the sound to be part of the fun. Theirs is a positively inflected variant of politicized listening that hears the value amidst the “bad” sounds. They hear the Yeşilçam in such a way that they can pull enjoyment from what others hear as a sign of Turkish backwardness. In this way, the sound of these films are a ground for a politics of
hearing as posited by Charles Hirschkind and Anne Rasmussen (Hirschkind, 2010; Rasmussen, 2010).

Interestingly, because few people now can remember the films as they appeared in the cinemas with enough detail to diffuse the more recent memories of the video and televised versions, the horrible sound has become an indexical marker for Yeşilçam cinema, and as Pamuk argues, for the essence of the era itself (Pamuk 2006, 2010). Consequently, the Yeşilçam films are seen as being part of an aesthetic of poverty or technical failure that speaks beyond the films themselves. The understandable mixed attitude towards these films—particularly in the face of widely available multi-million dollar international productions—is also a source of shame for many Turks—so much so, that people always questioned why I was wasting my time watching them. The poor sound quality of the Yeşilçam films is seen as proof of the backwardness or tragic-comic political and economic circumstances of Turkey in the 1960-1990s. Following Erlmann and Clifford, people listen with an “ethnographic ear” attuned to the nostalgia of the moment (Erlmann et al., 2010). The booming voices straining over the hiss of the background noise is a reminder of the political and economic deprivation felt by many Turks during the time. Because most of these films were also low cost productions aimed at the migrant workers who had flooded into the cities, even the dialogue is mildly embarrassing to affluent, educated Turks today.

This was not without a backlash. In the late 1960s and early 1970s audiences lost their interest in domestic films, which created an economic paradox. At the time, the industry was dependent on private investment and ticket sales. Turkish filmmakers had lost their governmental support and did not enjoy any of the governmental subsidies that maintained the large national industries in Europe. The entire production process from development to distribution was financed using a kind of ‘nick of time’ system where the distribution costs were covered by the success of the film itself. In the face of declining ticket sales filmmakers could no
longer pay for some or all of the process of filmmaking. In part, the turn to color was a reaction to audience’s declining interest (Dorsay, 28). But this expensive process put a strain on already strained budgets. Filmmakers had to continue to rely on the stock plots and cheap sound techniques to keep costs to a manageable level. They also relied on the small cadre of bankable actors. All of this, of course, further alienated the already bored ticket holders, who stopped buying tickets so often. And so the industry began a slow financial slide.

The 1970s also saw the introduction of privately owned televisions and the expansion of the national radio corporation to include a national television channel, which was a catastrophe for filmmakers. Until this point, they had enjoyed a near monopoly on visual entertainment, particularly in the rural areas. By drawing away already dwindling audiences from the cinemas, television further exacerbated these circumstances. It was not until the 1980s that films fully made the transition to television—an event that both destroyed the old Turkish cinema and set the stage for a new one—defining a new industry in the process.

It was during this uncertain time that Yilmaz Güney began to direct his first films. Güney was an unorthodox and troubled figure. The son of poor farmers from the Adana region in southern Turkey, he was an outspoken and highly politicized reconstructed Marxist whose fierce demeanor and defense of rough lifestyle of the lumpen masses often landed him in jail. In fact, after several years as a successful director he killed a judge in plain view of many witnesses and was sent to prison in 1974. Undaunted by his more restricted circumstances he still managed to write and direct several films from prison, including Yol (The Road, 1982), which shared the Palm d’Or with Costa-Gavras’ Missing at the 1982 Cannes Film Festival. After directing the film by letter, he managed to escape and edit the film himself in Paris. Güney, along with other filmmakers like Lüfti Akad brought a gritty realism to Turkish cinema with films that directly address social problems. Yol dealt with the lives of the people at the bottom as it followed several prisoners going home on leave from their sentences. Akad’s trilogy Gelin (The
Bride, 1973), Düğün (The Wedding, 1974), and Diyet (Ransom, 1975) took the plight of rural migrants in the cities as a central theme.

Developing the “Heart” of Turkish Cinema: The Mature Melodrama

Contrasting the work of auteurs like Güney, commercial filmmakers responded to the changing nature of domestic tastes and developed a set of established patterns for rapid filmmaking that eventually matured as important cinematic genres. The earliest and most important of these is the melodrama (melodrama). Filmmakers made romances, morality films, theatrical films, comedies, dramas, action films, science fiction films, and melodramas, amongst others. Because television was uncommon well into the 1970s, the wide variety of genres was a way to attract, and keep, the widest possible audience. Filmmakers had to make movies for just about every taste. While none of these genres were unique to Turkey, some became very popular, establishing a foothold in the national imaginary. Others were almost entirely borrowed from foreign sources, and failed to last. Most, if not all, of the films in these categories, however, bear the traces of Turkification, and the process of adaptation becomes most apparent when we consider the most important genres in which borrowing features strongly: the melodrama, the sex film, and the arabesk film (what Arslan calls the singer film). These genres developed during the middle Yeşilçam period, but their impact continues to resonate today. The melodrama in particular has become a very particular modality in Turkish filmmaking. The sex film and the singer film, on the other hand, demonstrate a few, very particular, approaches of pastiche and borrowing. As such, they are fertile ground for understanding the process of Turkification as it stood in cinema’s past. Understanding these genres illuminates how these processes are still at work today; all three genres were the result of the adaptation of foreign influences into more culturally aligned storytelling, aesthetic, and emotional frameworks and formats.
The melodramatic modality is a very common stylistic element that is found in almost every Turkish film in some way. The genre has become an essential dramatic presence. It can be manifested in cinematography, in actors’ performances, in narrative design, in the script, and in the musical score. Importantly, the development of the contemporary melodrama is a process that has been one of the most fertile sources for technological and aesthetic advancements in Turkish cinema. I would even argue that all Turkish films are melodramas at their core. Every scene, every musical gesture, every plot point is at least somewhat rooted in melodrama. As a consequence, the melodramatic mode that marks these films is an important, if not the predominant, component in Turkish filmmaking.

For Arslan, the melodrama is also central to the process of Turkification. He notes that to a certain extent, the melodramatic modality was incorporated into all adaptations of non-Turkish films (Arslan 86-87). It survives even today, as an essential feature for films and television shows. As such it is also an important modality for storytelling, aesthetic and formal organization, and music production in the industry. The most apparent effect of this is the curiously Turkish delineation of realism and fantasy (or perhaps it is better to say, affectation) in filmmaker’s approach to cinematic presentation. The melodramatic modality stands in opposition to the formal and aesthetic sensibilities that produce what in all cinematic eras can be called ‘reality’. It is not predicated on historical detail, and is most often evoked through a musical cue rather than a cinematographic feature. Turkish films are marked by their approach to realism, which is always a fragile construction straining to hold back the melodramatic modality that is usually lurking beneath the surface. In this way, past and contemporary films are markedly different from Hollywood, and globalized fare, that exemplify filmmaker’s push towards finer and more totalizing realism.

Very early Turkish melodramas relied on pre-existing narrative structures borrowed from Karagöz shadow plays. When the Hollywood melodrama came to Turkey in the 1920s and
1930s, it did not bring the genre or provide the outline for that kind of film. Instead, it only
provided a template for how to bring a melodramatic modality to the screen. Turkish filmmakers
used these films as a point of inspiration to develop melodrama in forms better understood by
audiences in Anatolia. But this does not explain their popularity. The heightened emotional
content, high-contrast, black and white characterizations, and affected acting are easily
accessible entertainment. The features of melodrama translate across social lines, despite
being the very qualities that critics complain about in their sometimes classist and elitist critique
of Turkish cinema (Zaman, 2010). Dömez-Colin locates melodrama’s popularity in its
archetypical quality when she says, “the reason for the extensive popularity of melodramas lay
in audience identification. They knew the end from the beginning: nonetheless they watched
them as stories resembling their lives” (Dönmez-Colin 2013, 31). This has two important
components. The smaller point suggests that Turkish audiences had a need for familiarity and
predictability: they wanted to watch films they had essentially seen before. This topic arose
again and again during countless conversations. For example, while watching television with my
roommate and idly flipping through channels, we found a film from the late 1970s made by
Kemal Sunal, who is more commonly known as Şaban. Sunal is analogous to Charlie Chaplin or
Mexico’s Cantinflas, and is the most instantly recognizable comedic leading man of that era.
Actually, because of his continued presence on cable television, he is one of the most
recognizable Turkish actors of any sort. His character “Şaban” bumbles and smiles his way
through seventeen films, and the fact that they are still showing on Turkish television in 2010,
ten years after Sunal’s death, demonstrates how much loved they actually are. This is especially
fascinating because for the most part the films, made in late 1970s and the 1980s, have very
low production standards in comparison to everything else that is on cable or satellite television.
They are perfect examples of the “noise” that characterizes much of the Turkish output of the
time (Arslan, 124).
Catching a faint glimmer of this film as he channel surfed, İsmail stopped and watched just long enough to catch one of the jokes—something that at the time was too quick for me to catch. Laughing, he told me how important these films are for him. He explained how he remembered his mother used to watch these films while cooking in the kitchen. He said she really enjoyed doing this because she was not obliged to give the film her full attention. She already knew the stories and could follow along by listening to the few snatches of dialogue she could hear over the noises made by the cooking food, and—this was the surprising part—by listening to the songs. Despite the noise, both on the soundtrack and in the kitchen, it was the sound of the films that gave them their familiarity. Because this sound suffused their home, the noisy soundtracks and the tinny, screeching musical moments became a marker for domestic life. While this was clearly an important thing for İsmail, it was a very common story. I heard it several times—in almost the same form each time.

For İsmail, these films were something that families shared. They were accessible to children and simple enough that a busy parent could “keep track of them” while doing something else. The repetitive narratives enables this kind of viewership, and consequently the popularity of these films was, and is, due to the stock plots. It is possible to see the popularity of these films as being more a function of how they fit into people’s lives rather than the fact that people identified with them. They filled a function in the home and were beloved for being such a good fit in this role. However, this is a new and somewhat revisionist interpretation because these movies were shown in the cinema before they were fodder for television. People went to see them in the theatres during a time when television in Turkey was a long way from the shiny, loud, and omni-present, 150-channel experience it is today. İsmail’s story is a description of how melodrama transitioned to television, but does not address how it was understood in the 1950s-1980s when these films played in cinemas across Turkey.
For me, it was significant that although these films provide a basis for many new productions, they offer audiences something that is not present in contemporary Turkish multimedia. They are paced more slowly and are filled with notable silence—as much silence as is possible with the constant hiss of the degraded soundtrack. The shots are longer and editing slower than the current quickly edited, taught productions. Also, they treat dialogue and music as something to listen to, rather than presenting everything as a kind of experiential _gesamtkunstwerk_ that overwhelms the senses with spectacle. These melodramas are modest works that are designed to speak to a wide range of the populace and stick out from the tightly focused, targeted fare on every other channel of Turkish television. It is no wonder that they still hold people’s attention. While they are technologically poor by comparison, they are accessible and easy. The melodramatic modality signals that one need not pay too much attention, but should have fun. Even with my tortured Turkish, I found them fascinating and endearing. They are the perfect ground for nostalgia.

Predictable repetition is a necessary feature of Turkish melodrama, and occurs at several levels. Different films share basic plots and structures. Actors usually play the same kind of role and often repeat popular characters. Dialogue makes sure to repeat essential plot points so everyone in the audience can keep up. Actor’s gestures and the _mise-en-scène_ are based on stock examples. But this repetition does not mean that the form diminishes the emotional content in any way. Rather, cinematic melodrama depends on the stock formats and predictable self-quotiation to structure the audience’s emotional response. The purpose of these standardized formats is to push the audience to the same place each time. They are engineered to fit a ritual frame where the predictable dramatic inputs are expected to lead to an inevitable conclusion. That much of the repetition is also the product of small budgets and rushed filmmakers is almost incidental. The impact of this requirement is that these stock formats become agnostic of the local conditions—by which I mean it does not matter what movie they
appear in, or who shoots them, they will be mostly the same each time. This is why melodramas tend to closely resemble each other, and films that make use of this modality must incorporate the rules of the melodramatic format into the scenes where they employ the device.

The repetition in, and across, melodramas is also deeply connected to a kind of cinematic nostalgia. Most often, their scenes, set in the melodramatic modality, refer to some crisis of identity, some return to a rural setting, or some problem arising from the past. This continual watching and re-watching has given these films an important place in the Turkish experience because they have become part of a person’s general education. Everyone knows the music, the characters, and the stock plots and can usually describe tens of films from memory without hesitation. This habitual re-watching has made these films nostalgic by default. They are intimately connected with family life and the past simply because they have always been present in people’s experiences. They are now central to a form of cultural memory that is built on the mythology of the melodramatic stock plot. This cultural memory is nostalgic in nature, but it does not point to a real Turkey. It is nostalgia for a cinematic Turkey—one governed by the strong emotional intimacy of melodrama.

The nostalgia is twofold, because the repetition of the melodrama’s paradigmatic structure creates a template for this cinematic nostalgia. The template itself then becomes the ground for nostalgic experience. For example, more often than not, these melodramatic scenes reference some sort of lost, painful event in the past. The protagonist is presented as someone tormented by this past and trying to find a way to atone for what they had done. The pain of this even is heightened by a return to a period of happiness before the even occurred. This return to the happier time, is actually on major trope of the *arabesk* melodramas. The intensity of the painful event becomes evident when it constantly intrudes in the memories of the lost bliss and reminds the character of what happened, and what was lost. This disjuncture lies at the core of the nostalgia and the melodramatic modality; the more acute the sense of loss, the more
dramatic the moment. Cinematic nostalgia depends on the repeated return and the experience of this disjuncture.

In fact, this sense of loss is a fundamental component of the formal, narrative, musical, and aesthetic features of the arabesk film and musical genre, as Martin Stokes makes clear (Stokes 1994, 2000, 2010). In his book _The Republic of Love_, Stokes is quite specific about the close connection between the emotional content of arabesk and even the türkü, and the direct connection this intimate, and interior emotion has with some of the more ambiguous features of Turkishness and Turkish identity (Stokes 2010). The intensity of this intimacy is an essential component of the melodramatic modality as well. Melodrama is the point where musical and cultural intimacy combine in Turkish mass media. It can even be argued that the homogenous nature of the cinematic presentations of melodramatic narratives are engineered to ensure these connections are accessible to the audiences and remain semiotically intelligible.

**Musicians in Melodramas and Melodramatic Music**

By the 1970s, the increasingly heavy migration from rural areas to the cities and manufacturing centers began to create a number of social problems. The migrants themselves were often very poor or lacked basic education. They began moving into illegal settlements called _gecekondu_ on the edges of cities. Filmmakers like Güney and Akad, who themselves came from poor regions and sympathized with the migrants, took these peoples’ lives as the starting point for their cinematic productions. They were not alone however. In the 1970s, other filmmakers transformed the melodramatic genre by joining its affective modality with the neorealism of Güney and Akad’s representations of the lives of this marginalized populace. Still others followed suit and their work eventually came to define a new genre called arabesk. These were musical films and often cast a musician or singer as the central character. They are significant for the history of music production in the Turkish cinema as well as being the
foundation for a particular kind of music that has had a great impact on the development of Turkish, and indeed, Balkan musical life (Stokes 1992). Martin Stokes addresses the musical connection with these films quite closely in the Arabesk Debate. But while he and others correctly point out that the arabesk films are the launching point for a musical genre, they minimize or ignore the fact that they are also an important example of Turkish filmmakers’ attempts to blend Turkish cinematic modalities and thematics with the more realistic aesthetics and formats of western films. This argument is lost partially because the political and social debate surrounding arabesk fetishizes the Egyptian influence on the musical form and pays little or no attention to the obvious European and American influence on the films (Stokes, personal conversations with Şavaş Arslan). In this way, audiences and scholars understood Western influences as normal and even unremarkable and chose to instead focus on the influence of the Other in the form of Egyptian musical practices. Taken within the context of Arslan’s Turkification, the influence of Egyptian music and the attempt to combine musical features becomes only a part of a continual process of adapting Turkish production to meet the demands of an omnivorous public. The debate about arabesk music then becomes largely one of thematics, poetics, and the part the music played as a marker for the social struggle between established urban elites and an impoverished rural class.

Importantly, the attributes of the arabesk films emerged from tendencies and practices that began much earlier. Filmmakers were able to experiment and explore the cinematic potential of an aesthetic of realism that did not have much currency in the Turkish cinema until this point. However, the production practices of the 1960s and 1970s are still evident in these films. In this way, they are very much a product of a film industry in steep decline.

Arslan includes the arabesk film in a genre calls the “singer film” and identifies as impacting the social fabric of Turkey greatly. He sees them as the primary source for the formal aesthetic components of the melodramatic mode, and as pregnant with possibility as a result
(Arslan 157). He states that these films are the locus of much of the productive dialogue about current, past, and future social ills that continues to shape contemporary filmmaking. As Stokes points out, the *arabesk* genre is fraught with class and identity politics (Stokes 2000). It evokes, and is indeed symptomatic, of the voice of a marginalized underclass of displaced migrants, undereducated members of an imagined or real working-class, and the injustices of an urban class system based in distinctions between urban and rural populations and degrees of politically appropriate Turkishness. But while *arabesk* music was lifted from these films to stand as the voice for real Turks living outside of the cinematic world, it was only able to do so because it was driven by the engine of melodrama. All of these themes—and their logical extensions like ill-fated relationships between people of different classes—are fundamental to melodrama as well. They precede *arabesk* and are constitutive of it partially because they contributed to its evolution.

In the previous periods, such as the Yeşilçam period, musicians featured prominently in films, but not as musicians. Rather, these popular musicians took on the role of actor, or even star, and their musical and acting careers became inextricably linked. This was not without precedent; Turkish films of the mid-twentieth century cleaved to the Egyptian model of the 1930s where the star and lead character were both famous musicians (Racy 1976). These early films, almost by necessity, were musical films and their success was mostly due to the crossover popularity of their star (Racy 1976; Danielson 1997; Seeman 2002). The very sound of the star singing was a central draw for audiences still fascinated by the representational and technical capabilities of the early cinema (Racy 1976).

Like the Egyptian musical films, the melodramatic Turkish films made between the 1940s through to the time just before the catastrophic political and cultural collapse of the 1980 coup were musically driven films (Arslan 2005). The music was a significant part of the action of the narrative and gave rise to the films’ most dramatic and emotional moments. Unlike the
musical genre that we associate most closely with “golden age” Hollywood films, the musical moments did not step outside of the action. Rather they served as the emotional pillars of the visual and narrative flow of the films themselves. The basic construction of these films and the centrality of their musical stars is of central importance. These films set the expectations for how music was incorporated into later films for directors and audiences alike.

The plots of these films follow a typical trajectory. The main character begins as a young rural worker or villager lost in the city. He—for it is always a man—is always found singing in a typical dive, or even simply out in the street, by a famous producer and elevated to being a national, or indeed folk, hero. The hero’s newly found status is always difficult and alienating, and he falls into self-hatred and decline. In these films, the screenwriter inevitably contrives to include several musical numbers that devolve the action into the purely emotional realm of song. These numbers punctuate the often epically banal series of events that surrounds them. The music signals the end of a failed romance. It brings to light the oppressive loneliness or helplessness of the characters.

Filmmakers often used these musical scenes to pad the film, filling the running time out to the full eighty or ninety minutes typical of the era. However, because such scenes relied on the singer-star, not his character, as lead they were often their most credible moments in what were otherwise lack-luster films. Consequently, these numbers were the focus of the films, even comprising the only musical moments in films with the no budget for additional musical material. The only exceptions to this pattern are the arabesk films of the late 1970s and 1980s. Here, the lead character remains in poverty and in the squalor of the migrant shanty-towns. The musical numbers then speak to the emotional desolation of this alien and alienating milieu. The trajectory of the actor/singer’s career is often different too. Singers like Ferdi Tayfur, Orhan Gencebay, and Müslüm Gürses became widely popular largely because of their films and not
before. Films were musical vehicles that contributed to these singers’ such longstanding successes. Martin Stokes’ study of Orhan Gencebay demonstrates how films served to increase the career opportunities for once marginalized musicians (Stokes 2010, 74-82). For instance, Gencebay’s first hit “Bir Teslii Ver,” was pushed to new heights when it “. . . was attached to a musical film . . . and a great many other musical films followed over the next decade” (74-75). Such films contributed to their later success in the increasingly visual music industry of the 1980s, and their survival following the collapse of the film industry, when many of them transitioned to television.

This essential dualistic nature (singer and actor) for lead actors obliged others, many of whom were not musicians, to sing on film. Kemal Sunal, whose Şaban films I described earlier, is an example of someone who, though being a comedian, also had to sing for his stardom. Sunal's comedies Hababam Sinifi Sinifta Kaldi (1976), Tosun Paşa (1976), En Büyük Şaban (1983), Şabaniye (1984), and Ortadirek Şaban (1984) were centered around his character’s relationship to music, and Şaban plays at being a bumbling singer in each. The success of these musical comedies allowed Sunal to gain fame and cemented Şaban’s place in the cultural fabric of the period. In these musical Şaban films the stock situations serve to highlight the social structure and foibles of urban society in comedic ways. The tension of the films pivot around whether or not he will be revealed as a country bumpkin, while the comedy makes fun of how his actions compound the problem. It is unclear if Sunal was in fact trying to make a meta-commentary, satirizing the singer-actor genre itself because each film holds so closely to that formula as well. What is clear is that even in the comedic format, the close association of the plot and the music was enabled by the character Şaban. Sunal as a singing Şaban is what

7 Ferdi Tayfur is an interesting case because he began his career as a dubbing artist before he became an on camera actor. Essentially he lent his voice to the films of the Yeşilçam well before he was recognized for it. His career came from his work in the film industry and his recognition as a musician and singer came from his appearances as a singing actor. His trajectory demonstrates the dominance of the musician-as-actor because he was obliged to sing to have a acting career (Arslan 49-50)
holds the entire film together and joins the soundtrack and the narrative through action. This essential connection marks a vast majority of the films from the Yeşilçam period.

The scores from this period were essentially patchworks. The musical numbers stick out as moments where the scene breaks through the narrative and also because they are so sonically remarkable. They also break through the relative silence of scenes lacking music or other incidental sounds. But they are pastiche scores because the cues are pulled from existing recordings rather than being composed and edited especially for the film. During a long conversation, film scholar Savaş Arslan explained one of the untold secrets of the Turkish film industry. According to him, most of the scores of this period were essentially pirated pastiches. He said, “the score was put together by whoever had the largest record collection.” When referring to this practice, Nezih Erdoğan whitewashed it, using the industry term for this practice, “döşeme,” or “upholstered,” and noted how this term implied how the new fabric of the music would be pulled over the framework of the scenes (2002, 239).

Today, this relationship has loosened; actors are actors and musicians rarely act. However, in the recent decades since the inception of the new Turkish cinema (1994) musicians, singers, and pop stars have found a new role in the Turkish film industry: that of director. To have a musically inclined person in this role has greatly impacted the sound of films and even the relationship between narrative, mise-en-scene, and score. It also marks a change in how the world of popular music and its close relationship with cinema has changed in the period of reconstruction beginning in 1995.

**The Beginning of the End – The Steep Decline of Yeşilçam**

By the middle of the 1970s, the industry was in a dire financial state. The quality of domestic production had degraded to the point that many films were simply cheap copies of foreign films or half-hearted attempts at rehashing an old story line. Borrowing and outright theft
were rife in the industry, and many studios did away with the expensive aspects of filmmaking. Original film scores became rare as a result. But as the industry declined further, filmmakers began to liberally steal from foreign productions. This went beyond simply copying plots or translating dialogue. They began to intercut scenes from foreign films to create new films. This gave rise to the sex drama and pastiche film, both of which betray the importance of outright theft as a fundamental production practice.

While not an important genre overall, the exploitative sex dramas of the 1970s—made possible by the permissive legal system of the time—made heavy use of theft and piracy as a key production method. As such, they are excellent examples of a different kind of adaptation, albeit extreme ones, that set the historical precedent and limits for a production tactic that is still in wide use today. According to Arslan (2011), Atadeniz (1999), and Scongnamililo and Demirhan (2002), there are two waves of sex films. The first came in the late 1960s when filmmakers began to include female and male nudity as a visual device to shock and titillate bored audiences. The idea was to slip in a few shots of almost needless nudity into several scenes to excite the male members of the audience. Over the next few years, filmmakers became increasingly brazen in including these shots, added bawdy jokes, and funny bedroom scenes for good measure. The second arrived in early 1974 when Italian comedies and low-budget Scandinavian sex films became increasingly popular in Turkey, and Turkish filmmakers began to adapt these films for local consumption. Low-budget filmmakers working outside studio controls made cheap copies of many of the relatively safe, Italian comedies but would incorporate borrowed or stolen footage from pre-existing pornographic films into the narrative to turn their works into sex films. Arslan points out that this practice was so prevalent that many “were shorter than regular features films in order to allow projectionists at film theaters to insert hardcore footage that had been shot separately or spliced from foreign films” (114).
In a conversation I had with Arslan in 2011, he pointed out that he did not fully disclose the predominance of this practice in his book because it is still a sensitive topic. These films are also largely an embarrassment, simply because of the filmmaker’s low standards. He laughed at the absurdity of our conversation and told me that filmmakers would not even consider the physical characteristics of the actors, which meant that Turkish characters suddenly transformed into tall, blonde Swedes during the sex scenes without any attempt to justify or smooth over the abrupt change in the narrative. Ultimately, the military intervention in 1980 put a stop to these films. And they are not remarkable for their content or their cinematic style. What makes them significant is that they are symptomatic of a practice of outright piracy as a method of adaptation. This adaptation cuts in two directions as well. Turkish actors and actresses did not usually participate in the production of the pornographic content. This is why the foreign material was pirated—it was a way to get around the social norms and the shock of seeing Turks participate in sex acts on film.

Ultimately, it was also a quick and cheap way to create films, or adapt films for a Turkish audience. The earlier forms of sex comedies created an appetite for this kind of content. Because the filmmakers were working outside the established system, and also outside the subsidies provided by the Turkish government, they had to cut corners. Shooting storylines to serve as wrappers for pirated content was an inexpensive means of production. But far from being just a shortcut, piracy was rampant throughout the system. Music was lifted from older films and from foreign films just as freely as these pirated scenes. While it is almost impossible to pinpoint when this practice began or where it originated, by the time of the sex film it was in full flourish. It is still a major component of filmmaking today. Copying and outright piracy are still tools that Turkish filmmakers resort to when the money runs dry. Because it has been an important part of Turkish filmmaking, it is also accepted by audiences and often passes unnoticed.
**Pastiche as Turkification: What is Theft?**

While faithful copying and mimicry were both important parts of the development of Turkish cinematic practices, so too was the inevitable backlash. Some filmmakers countered these practices by pushing them to their breaking point, and parody and satire also became an essential component of many genre films. An extreme case, *Dünyayı Kurtaran Adam* (The Man who Saved the World, 1982), provides an excellent example of the power and centrality of both pastiche film and parody in Turkish cinema. Directed by Çetin İnanç, *Dünyayı Kurtaran Adam* is a nearly incoherent film that was produced by patching together found and stolen footage from a number of old newsreels and George Lucas’ *Star Wars*. The plot is extraordinarily difficult to follow and is seemingly a commentary on the scenes that intercuts newly shot and stolen material. It has come to be known as the Turkish Star Wars, despite not being a remake of the film at all. The only resemblance lies in the film’s use of most of the space battle scenes from the original. The script that Cüneyt Arıkı̀n wrote tells a story of two men stranded on a desert planet after a battle in space who are captured by a wizard who forces them to fight for his amusement. After fighting skeletons, zombies, space ninjas, and several monsters, the hero Murat seduces many women and kills the wizard, which allows him to escape back to earth. Although the film is tedious and difficult to watch, it has since become a cult classic. Those who are devoted to it cite its truly bizarre approach to weaving the stolen material together with the Turkish-produced footage. It is celebrated as an almost psychedelic experience and hailed as a masterwork of avant-garde pastiche.

Significantly, the filmmaker’s approach to pastiche did not stop with his liberal use of stolen footage. The film’s score is itself a pastiche of music from several other films. It incorporates well known cues from John Williams’ score to *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981), Miklós Rózsa’s *Ben Hur* (1959), and other contemporary science fiction films and television
shows like *The Planet of the Apes* (1968), *Silent Running* (1972), and *Battlestar Galactica* (1978). This is a significant point because while aggressive pastiche is the central conceit of the film, the cobbled together score is not so anomalous. During several conversations with Savaş Arslan, I learned that pastiche was a common tactic when creating film scores. According to him, directors would often run out of money as they shot the film, leaving little left for post production. They often could not afford to record a new score for the film and resorted to recycling older scores and other recordings to fill out the soundtrack.

What is significant about this film is that although it is considered by most an almost ridiculous work, it was an attempt to take many of the existing practices in the industry to their logical conclusion. It is an example of pastiche *in extremis*, and only stands out because it took the practice beyond anything that had been done before. It can be seen as a statement on the practice of borrowing that had been a part of the Turkish filmmaking method since cinema came to Turkey. And its resonance can still be felt today. Cem Yılmaz references *Dünyayı Kurtaran Adam* directly in his film *G.O.R.A* (2004), while also including (now fully licensed) references to the *Matrix* films, the *Star Wars* trilogy, and Luc Besson’s *The Fifth Element*. The lasting impact of *Dünyayı Kurtaran Adam* comes in the fact that pastiche is still accepted, only now it is described as an homage to this maddening film.

There is a thin line between pastiche, borrowing, and outright theft. This is a line that was, and still is, continually crossed by Turkish filmmakers. It is, rightly or wrongly, a central component in how films are made, and actually stands as a process central to Turkification. Whether or not the reuse of old, borrowed, or stolen material happens is not at issue. What is important is how this practice continues—what is borrowed, and how what is repurposed is of significance. Filmmakers copy foreign films all the time. They pull inspiration from contemporary Hollywood scores, and borrow techniques from other filmmakers. This borrowing and reuse within a new context effects a transformation where the original content is divested from its
original meaning and purpose and is made to fit new circumstances. The interpretive intention behind these decisions is of great importance because it is a process whereby the original is made palatable for a new audience. Within the contemporary context, where audiences will often know the original, this approach is doubly important because it establishes a set of connections where the Turkish film is literally connected to a non-Turkish original. The interpretive labor is thus conducted within a set of expectations where the original version exists within the fabric of the Turkish film while it is also made to serve a new purpose. As with any act of pastiche or parody, the two must co-exist. In essence, such coexistence closely mirrors the very nature of the East/West dialectic.

A Brutal End

The coup on September 12, 1980 effectively ended any freedom filmmakers had enjoyed under the earlier regimes. Unlike the previous coups, this military intervention was violent and reactionary and had an immediate impact on both civil liberties and creative production. The time following the 1980 coup was an economic disaster for much of Turkey (Pekman and Kılıçbay 2004, 42). Once the army stepped in, they suspended the earlier constitution that had been so beneficial for the film industry and the legal protections for politicized, sometimes morally risky, productions ended. Military leaders led by General Kenan Evren extended martial law after abolishing the government and banning political parties. They even went so far as to execute opposition leaders in a move to consolidate power and establish the rule of single-party Kemalism—the ostensible reason for the coup. Part of the reason for the violence and authoritarian nature of the crackdown was the fact that these events began in the mid-1970s as a proxy war between Soviet and U.S. political forces.

The long period of censorship and economic decline damaged the film industry almost beyond repair. Under Turgut Özal, the prime minister backed by the military, the Turkish
economy declined steeply. These economic difficulties were the result of the new government’s mishandling of many of the western-looking economic policies that sought to join Turkey to larger global markets. Unable to compete in this new arena, Turkish exports stagnated, the Turkish market was flooded by foreign products and interests, and capital disappeared from the economy. Coupled with the instability of the Turkish Lira, which underwent destructive inflation, Turkish buying power decreased significantly. Given that citizens were unable to buy the new western goods, and the producers were unable to provide domestic alternatives, the economy stagnated for more than a decade. Luxury items like film tickets became impossible to afford. The bottom dropped out of ticket sales, producers and distributors ran out of money, and by 1985 there was almost no domestic film production. An industry that had once produced over 300 films annually now made no more than a dozen low-budget films a year. This state of affairs continued well into the 1990s.

For filmmakers, the biggest impact was that the local cinemas closed down en masse (Arslan, 204). Those that did survive did so by showing imported films, mostly old, worn prints from Hollywood. In part, this contributed to the greater impact of television as both a productive force and the main medium of reception. Of course, it did not help that the major Hollywood studios were controlling distribution. They simply made it impossible for Turkish films to break into Turkish cinemas (Dorsay 1995, 17). This effectively ended the time of the Yeşilçam both literally and figuratively. Yeşilçam sokağı emptied—it is now an alleyway next to the modern Demir Röen shopping mall—and the production companies scattered across Istanbul and further afield. This relatively quick shift marked the beginning of the distributed model of filmmaking that exists now.

Foreign money began to dominate what was left of the domestic film industry. What little infrastructure was left disintegrated as the distribution companies were bought out by foreign distributors. This meant that while the video market was robust in the late 1980s, it was largely
focused on Hollywood films. Even where Turkish films were available, the distributor was likely to be foreign-owned and uninterested in using the money to produce new Turkish films. Even the productions themselves acknowledged this disastrous decline. In 1989 Yavuz Özkan made *Filim Bitti* (Film is Over) as a conscious nod to the state of affairs. However, while production ceased, people’s enthusiasm for Yeşilçam films remained. People were no longer going out to the cinema, preferring to stay at home to watch TV. And because the television stations lacked programming, the broadcasters—at first simply the TRT—made use of the large backlog of inexpensive domestic films. Thus began the tradition of the Saturday evening film—a tradition that still continues on several cable channels. The domestic interest in videotape as a production medium began in the mid-1980s as the technology became more affordable. The distributors rushed to flood the market with their back catalogue because it was cheaper than producing new works. In this way, the films of the 1960s and 1970s began to fill the entertainment landscape, simply because they were cheap, available, and on TV.

The constant repetition of these earlier films, coupled with their low production values, and the shifting social and political frame surrounding their distribution led to a drastic decrease in audience interest. By the late 1980s, a large number of Turks gave up on Turkish films, consequently, this time marks the birth of an antagonistic attitude towards films now shared by many people. Commenting on this problem, Arslan notes, “when seen through the eyes of the contemporary spectators . . . such a dream and imagination of happiness, romanticism, innocence, and purity, which was the quintessential makeup of Yeşilçam, was no longer able to disregard the very impure social and political history in Turkey” (Arslan, 209). Asuman Suner goes even further, saying, “apart from a few successful films, the term ‘Turkish Film’ turned into a joke, connoting bad taste and banality. In order to survive under these adverse conditions film companies changed the medium and began to produce films in video format, targeting Turkish migrant workers in Europe” (Suner 2010, 8).
Suner’s remarks are apt. Turkish cinema ceased to be a shared mode of production and became inexorably associated with the poor and those perceived as the low classes. The negative attitude that arose during this period still persists today. Even the very concept of studying Turkish film, as opposed to cinema in general, seems a very odd concept for many Turks. Young Turkish film critics even spend much of their time mocking the “feeble” and “insipid” contemporary domestic productions in part because of the general disgust with the cinematic traditions that began in the 1960s and came to dominate the Turkish imagination through their constant repetition in the 1980–1990s. As the social conditions changed, so too did attitudes surrounding even the most basic concern of who the films were for. This had a considerable impact on the aesthetics of production and the industry’s financial survival.

The decline of Turkish cinema enabled, in part, the rise of a very robust television system that continues into today. Contemporary Turkish television is replete with over 100 cable and satellite channels, and some of the most popular dramas available. The audience for this output is high, and Turks are enthusiastic followers of long-running primetime mini-series.

In 1994 the government ended the total monopoly on radio and television broadcasts enjoyed by the TRT since the 1970s. Large numbers of new channels and radio stations began commercial broadcasts and a new distribution infrastructure began to grow along with the number of channels and the investments that supported this growth (Dorsay 2004; Suner 2010, 9). Additionally, European grant money became available as the Turkish government moved to join the existing Turkish film funding schemes, such as Eurimages and later MEDIA I. These bi-lateral and multi-lateral co-production funds provided money and production support to domestic Turkish filmmaking and opened the possibility of European co-productions. This new access to funds and reconstructed infrastructure came at a time when the political turmoil of the 1980s receded. What followed was a new period of economic and social freedom and growth, perfect conditions for the rise of new Turkish productions. Because little of the old Yeşilçam still existed,
except as a collection of films in cans and on cheap videotapes, the return of healthy domestic production is less a revival and more an entirely new period of Turkish filmmaking. Scholars and critics alike refer to this era beginning in the mid-1990s as the “new Turkish cinema” to mark the difference. And this is more than a simple semantic difference. The new economic, technological, and global reach of film production has prompted markedly different films from those of previous decades. Aided by European co-production funding, Turkish films began to compete on a global scale. European-trained filmmakers brought production practices from the first world of cinema and transformed many of the aesthetic sensibilities of filmmakers and audiences alike. This is most evident in the art house, auteur-modality productions of filmmakers like Nuri Bilgi Celan, Yavuz Turgul, Derviş Zaim, and Zeki Demirkubuz, and in critics’ and scholars’ desire to claim Turkish-German filmmaker Fatih Akin’s films as Turkish.

Arslan, however, calls this period the “post-Yeşilçam” as a way to distinguish the films from the earlier forms without losing a sense of continuation or connection. For him, many of the thematic and aesthetic features common in Yeşilçam films still have a place in contemporary production. Again, this continuity is partly the product of the staying power of the films themselves. The Yeşilçam of the 1960–1980s is still a major part of the offerings on the cable channels, illegal DVD stalls, legal DVD stores, illegal file-sharing and streaming websites, and in home video collections. Newer productions still refer to these films, borrow from them, and conspicuously set themselves apart from them. Perhaps even more importantly, the new telenovela-style short-run dramas that dominate television, like the recent Hayat Devam Ediyor (Life Continues) (Kırmızıgül 2011-2012, music by Gürgen), partake of the Yeşilçam format. Simply put, Yeşilçam has moved to the television, both literally and figuratively, and as a consequence its presence is felt throughout the Turkish mediascape.

Yeşilçam sensibilities can also be found among the time capsules of diasporic families’ video collections and in Turkish-language satellite offerings. It is not an exaggeration to say the
immigrant families in Germany, the Netherlands, the UK, and North America may know these films better than Anatolian Turks. A Turkish family in Germany with the ability to buy satellite service from a Turkish-German company has more access to Turkish language content than someone living in Turkey. Because Yeşilçam films dominate satellite offerings broadcast in Europe and North America and make up a large part of the DVD or VCD collections in immigrant shops in places like Toronto, London, Münich, and Amsterdam, they are a substantial part of the viewing diet in the diaspora. Viewership divides along generational lines; younger Turkish Germans are less likely to actively watch the films now. But, as my roommates and friends in Istanbul explained, someone who is in their teenage years today would have grown up with these films at home and be at the very least familiar with their peculiar details.

**The New Turkish Cinema: 1990s until 2014**

It is particularly difficult to begin a historical narrative outlining the growth of Turkish cinema in the past twenty years because that history is only just being written. Not only is it actively evolving, scholars are still struggling to catch up. Journalists often ignore much of the good going on in the industry because there is still an antagonism towards Turkish productions amongst the middle class lingering from the days when Yeşilçam production targeted poor migrants as a way to survive. Thus, there is little conscientious journalism or criticism examining contemporary production. Certainly, no one beyond a few interested scholars like Suner, Arslan, and Dönmez-Colin has yet spoken about the formal features of contemporary films in detail. And no one has focused on music as a definitional feature of the transition from the Yeşilçam.

The practicalities of filmmaking have changed dramatically, and what constitutes an industry today does not resemble the studio and distributor controlled system of the past. Filmmakers are now entrepreneurial artists who find funding through private sources, the federal government, and bi-lateral and multi-lateral international film funding agreements like the
Council of Europe’s *Eurimage* treaty that Turkey joined in 1990. While scholars call contemporary filmmaking the new Turkish cinema, or Turkish cinema, and seek to describe it as a coherent national product, the filmmakers who are doing the work are seldom interested in participating in a national cinema. They are a fractious, diffuse group who are competing for a small, albeit growing, pool of resources. Many, like Özcan Deniz and Cem Yılmaz, and Ahmet Faik Akinci, go about their work with little interest in engaging larger themes beyond the local content of their films. Others, like Mahsun Kırmızıgül, have a very specific agenda, and ensure their films are focused on achieving their social goals. However, in Kırmızıgül’s case, this agenda does not easily align with any nationalist model given that he is Kurdish and is trying to make films that advocate tolerance, pluralism, and a middle path for Islam. He tries to deliberately work around the qualities that would enable people to easily connect his films with a Turkish national cinema.

The production environment is now entirely omnivorous and unfettered by the political constraints of the past. Contemporary Turkish filmmakers can make almost whatever film they want provided it returns the investment paid out by the financial backers. In this way, the industry has come to resemble the rather wild and uncertain mode of Hollywood. With the end of studio control, movies are made by directors and producers who are a sure bet for investors and who have skill in bringing together enough money to complete large projects. In Turkey, as in Hollywood, directors with past successes who choose to work with other known co-workers (cinematographers, editors, composers, producers, etc.) are able to make films with enormous budgets. Composer Yıldıray Gürgen showed me the budget for what was at the time his last large-budget film *New York’ta Beş Minare* (2010), or *Five Minarets* in New York, with his friend Mahsun Kırmızıgül, pointing out that it was the most expensive Turkish film ever made, at nearly 100 million U.S. dollars. With a budget like this, they were also able to make it the first Turkish film with a full orchestral score performed by a foreign orchestra (the non-union Prague
Symphony), and with more special effects than had been seen in a Turkish-produced blockbuster. In fact, one can argue that it is the first big-budget Turkish blockbuster.\footnote{Danny Glover, Gina Gershon, and Robert Patrick also appeared in major roles in the film. Employing well-known Hollywood actors was also a first for Turkish cinema.}

Discussions of the new Turkish cinema must now also accommodate a much larger international scope, with all of the complex interactions this entails. For instance, new filmmakers like Fatih Akin are now claimed by Turkish audiences, critics, and scholars alike, and this forces a conversation of just what constitutes Turkish film in the first place. Kevin Robins and Asu Aksoy have attempted to incorporate diasporic media under a larger umbrella of “deep nation,” whereas Catherine Simpson has discussed the same films and filmmakers within a larger notion of bridging or hybridity (Robins and Aksoy 2002; Simpson 2006). Journalist and film scholar Gönül Dönmez-Colin and film scholar Asuman Suner have both chosen to discuss the new Turkish cinema as a global phenomenon obsessed with belonging and identity (Dönmez-Colin 2008; Suner 2010). Dönmez-Colin goes as far as to begin her book with commentaries on identity and migration. All of this suggests a return to the history of Turkish film where the distinctions between Western and Eastern—regardless of how they actually manifest—have become currency in a larger economy of symbolic exchange. The films of the new Turkish cinema are seen as the loci of the debate over Turkish identity and how Turks are to locate themselves within the polar opposites of West and East.

Taking film and filmmaking and making it a Turkish endeavor required a process of adaptation that was scaled to fit all levels of the industry. Filmmaking itself had to be ‘Turkified’ to fit the local circumstances. Filmmaking technologies like cameras, sound equipment, and editing equipment had to be adapted to fit the cash-strapped circumstances Turkish filmmakers found themselves working under. Aesthetic norms, approaches to narrative development, and styles of acting had to be adapted to fit between the norms being presented by foreign films and
the finely tuned sensibilities of audiences who were themselves undergoing Turkification. Because this process existed at all levels and infiltrated every layer of experience surrounding films and later television, it was something that often went unnoticed; its effects were attributed to the development of a national cinema. However, it is essential to see this process of adaptation—whether we call it Turkification or not—as key to the evolution of the industry and as a major force in filmmaking today. Little has changed in contemporary Turkey. Filmmakers are still stuck between the examples of high-budget foreign films, limited financial resources, and the expectations of local audiences.
Chapter 4
A View of Film Composers in Turkey

The New Turkish Cinema is not produced by a film industry. In fact, the term “industry,” and all of its connotations of factory work, mechanized production, and film as “product,” does not apply to filmmakers working in Turkey today, or their work. The studio model of film production that once existed is now largely gone, and Turkish films are produced by a set of loosely connected contractors who collaborate on a project and then move on to work on a new project. This decentralized system operates at several registers of experience organized around the practicalities of making a film. There are small production companies that handle the money and the intellectual property—scripts, rights, and financing. Then there are small companies and individual contractors who do the work of making the films themselves. These include cinematographers, editors, composers, colorists, mixers, gaffers, costume designers, actors, and caterers, to name a few. For the most part, these people work for small, specialized companies that fill these roles. They are brought together to work on the film and ensure its production. After they have completed a work, distribution companies manage its dissemination. Finally, audiences of all kinds view the film. These audiences are ticket payers, pirates, and critics—all of whom view the film with differing agendas. Seen from this perspective, the New Turkish Cinema is a corpus of work that is brought into being by a number of interrelated, yet separate, groups. It is hard to say that this inchoate clustering of professionals is working towards a singular goal.

Locating film composers within this chaos requires seeing them as both artists and businesspersons. They way they network and find work is as important as the way they create music and build a score for a specific film. But I do not want to suggest that musical production and business are discrete aspects of their work. They must be successful business people first.
And they must also gain access to likeminded co-workers. Here again, the conceptual and practical distinction between the East and the West inasmuch as it guides the creative work of artists. It divides people, working relationships, financing opportunities, and production practices. How film composers navigate this productive distinction, and its many manifestations, defines who they will work with, what kind of work they do, and how successful they will be as creative artists and businesspersons. With this in mind, this chapter presents an overview of the essential characteristics of film composers working today. My purpose is to examine what kind of people are able to navigate the landscape of Turkish filmmaking and is able to make a living as a composer. I will focus on how the East/West divide, their educational background, their international experience, and their flexibility as practitioners come to define them and their ability to be successful.

**Circles and Cliques: Networks of Filmmakers**

Quite late in my time in Istanbul I had a conversation with my friend Faruk at a small lokanta (a kind restaurant that serves an alternative to street food) near the Kadıköy ferry terminal on the Asian side of the Bosphorus. It was an excellent spot for a long Istanbul lunch, and we found an outdoor table sandwiched between the building and the busy street, surrounded by other diners. It is the kind of place that resonates to the same hectic and expectant vibration of most of the city, but because the streets on the Asian side are somewhat wider and airier, they offer just a touch of protection from the crushing history of the other districts. Faruk and I were enjoying the relief the shade offered on such a hot day and were deep in a conversation about his frustrations with the city. Like me, Faruk was at the end of his time in Istanbul, and was starting to realize his efforts to find work as a film composer were not going as well as he had hoped. He was thinking about going back to London to pick up where he had left off as a gigging musician and composer. He suddenly said (in English so as not to
be understood by the waiter), “the trouble with people in this city is that they only talk to the same people. There are fifteen millions here in Istanbul and they all only talk to the people they went to school with.”

“What do you mean?” I asked.

“They only ever talk to their friends from high school, when they go out. They don’t want to meet new people even though they don’t even like the friends they have.”

I laughed at this, but quickly realized that not only was he right, but that this tendency came close to explaining both of our predicaments. Faruk’s evident frustration came from his bad luck finding work in Istanbul, and he had just put his finger on exactly why he was having trouble. I had also had trouble meeting the right people in Istanbul, but for different reasons. This conversation was not the first or last time we discussed this issue. But it was the conversation that provided the most clarity for me.

I had met Faruk during one of his last trips to Istanbul from London. He was living with his wife’s family and trying to gain a foothold in the right circles of filmmakers so he could work as a composer, orchestrator, copyist, and guitarist. Despite being a qualified and talented professional, he had not found lasting or meaningful work for many months. His job search had yielded only a few small jobs. Earlier on, he had even shown me the materials he was distributing to announce his presence and list his many accomplishments. I had been surprised and pleased at the skill that went into the design and presentation, all of which he had done himself. The quality of this press packet alone made me wonder if he could have a career as a graphic designer. But beyond this, his music was usually exactly what was needed and expected. Yet, he had had only managed to secure a few small jobs while he was there and was finding it difficult to even get the meetings that could result in more work. Those jobs he had managed to land did not even earn him a credit on the films. He was only working as a subcontractor for other composers. Consequently, his work was just absorbed into the score
that would bear someone else’s name. This, of course, was frustrating because he knew that much of what he had been doing would likely work in a different filmmaking market.

Faruk’s background was typical of someone working as a film composer. He had been trained as a musician at Aegean (Ege) conservatory in Izmir but left Turkey to get a postgraduate degree abroad. Faruk went for this training in the U.K. and eventually permanently settled in London with his wife, who was also Turkish. He found work as a gigging musician and as an engineer and composer for a small TV/Film production company. He was settled and happy with this arrangement. But eventually it went wrong. A year before I had met him was a tumultuous time that eventually resulted in his tentative return to Turkey. He had been working for a single company and his relationship with his employer had begun to deteriorate. He said his boss, a Serbian musician, had always been an abusive person, but their interactions had become much more than Faruk could take. Faruk is a quiet and unassuming person. He felt bullied and decided it was time to leave. The only trouble is that the London music scene is tight, and as he pointed out, the “number of composers in London has always been more than the city can handle.” Also, Faruk is not English, which is always a problem in the working world of London where people in the arts are suspicious of outsiders. He ended up joining the lists of underemployed musicians. Because he wanted to continue composing he decided to try his luck in Istanbul, back in Turkey where he began.

But his troubles continued, largely because the Istanbul music scene is, like its counterpart in London, also very closed. The musicians and composers who participate in the collaborative working circles of filmmakers are very jealous of their positions and are also suspicious of outsiders. Faruk’s time in London seemed to be as much an obstacle as his Turkishness and timidity were in London. As Faruk saw it, the problem was that he had lived in London for nearly 20 years by this point and believed he was more English than Turkish. He felt he was now in a difficult position, because by living in the U.K. he had “lost what it is to be
Turkish.” Upon reflection, this was perhaps why he tended to use English when we spoke. Like me, Faruk was struggling with his Turkish and with what it meant to work in Istanbul. He identified this problem as the single most important issue contributing to his difficulties. When he met with people, he felt like an outsider and was afraid they agreed with him. He located the other part of his problem directly with the Turks themselves. Although this may have been a contributing factor, the insularity of the filmmaking networks and Faruk’s inability to make the right kinds of connections were hurting him as well.

It can be a bit of a cliché to say that in Istanbul it is not what you know, but who you know that matters. This, however, does not diminish the truth of the observation. It is especially true for the film industry, which is run by close-knit groups of producers who work on each project together and who do not easily accept outsiders. The insularity is partly the product of the protectionist attitude that pervades an industry with a great deal of government oversight and few available sources of funding. Filmmakers cluster around what funds are available and protect their sources jealously. The lack of easy money requires filmmakers to work within the limits set by very small budgets. The resulting pressure makes filmmakers inclined to work only with those people who they are sure can complete the required tasks within the allotted time and within the budgetary limitations. Failure to do so can be catastrophic for projects running on a shoestring, and so seems a prudent way to do business. However, this also means that unless you are already part of a tightly knit group, or known to someone in that group, you have very little chance of getting work from them. These relationships replace most of the formal contracting found in other filmmaking cities around the world. Often, they constitute the totality of the contract when one is hired to work on a film. This is especially true for department heads like cinematographers, composers, and art directors. A strong pre-existing relationship with either the director or the producers is all that is required to “get the job” and work on a particular
film. In Turkey, the fragmented nature of the filmmaking apparatus compounds this problem and makes it likely more severe than in other filmmaking contexts.

For my own part, Faruk’s comment about the closed nature of social groups in Istanbul explained why I had struggled to find my way into the circles where film music is made. It took me nearly three months to befriend several of these groups myself. Even after making several important contacts, it took me several weeks to find the appropriate people to talk to. The essential point from all of this is that we both came up against a wall that prevented easy access to the circumstances and social contexts of film production. The composers in what can only loosely be called “the industry” only know each other by association. They live and work amongst the same set of people they have known for years. Many of the composers I worked with did not personally know the people outside their immediate working group.

It used not to be this way. Faruk always pointed out that he had been born too late, noting that the studios lining Yeşilcam Sk. in the 1970s were the entire industry. If he had been born at the right time, all he would have had to do was work for them. In those days, almost all filmmakers worked within this studio system, and as a consequence all of them were in-house employees of a shop with a particular vision and set of competencies. Most things were done internally, so the studios duplicated many roles. As a consequence, there were many more steady jobs for more filmmakers of all types. With the decline of those small studios came the rise of the independent producer and a new emphasis on personal relationships to find work. But Faruk’s troubles also stemmed from hard distinction between pop musicians and classical musicians in Istanbul. For one group his work was too pop inflected. For another it was too “classical to be usable.”

This pop/classical distinction a major point of differentiation that separating groups of musicians from one another and affecting potential collaboration. The pop/classical axis organizes musicians according to how they are trained and determines the composition of social
units, cliques, and peer groups. These units effectively organize the distributed model governing the Turkish film industry today.

One is either a “pop musician” who writes tracks in either western or Turkish popular music and who might have studied at the contemporary music program at Istanbul Technical University (ITÜ), or one is “a composer” who studied western methods at one of the other conservatory programs in Turkey, like those at Ege Üniversitesi, Mimar Sinan GüzelSanat Üniversitesi, or foreign universities. Once one is on one side of the divide it is very difficult to find one’s way to the other.

The simple fact that composers are effectively small-businesses in themselves, additionally means that they are also competing for resources, and do not think of themselves solely as composers, musicians, or artists. They do not necessarily need to know each other if there is no reason for the relationship. Ultimately, that reason is to make money. Consequently, school ties are important because they are both the ground for professional divisions and the foundation of an important conceptual divide that marks music making as a practice. Education is both a contributor to the constitution of the business networks and the stylistics and aesthetic vision of the circles that collaborate to make films. In practical terms, this means that directors work with either one type of composer or the other; the films produced by pop musicians feature scores of one kind, while those films that have a score by one of the Western trained ‘classical’ musicians have a score of another kind.

This is not to say that audiences can always notice the differences in the scores. What is, or is not, pop music in a film score is a problem that even the composers whom I asked struggled to answer at first. Despite this, everyone insisted that this is still an important factor in how the industry works. And while composers must be able to produce music that is right for the film, it is still a distinction that explains something essential in the way film music is made in
Turkey. It is a way of explaining how a composer views their work, how they manage their resources, and how they approach the compositional act itself.

Composers of Many Kinds

I worked directly with five composers during my time in Istanbul, and had ongoing conversations with many more. Out of the group of five, two of them, Yildiray Gürген and Ercüniyet Özdemir were firmly planted in the pop music industry, whereas the other three, Mustafa Yazıcıoğlu, Tamer Çiray, and Faruk Çeviz, were products of western conservatory training—training that pushed them to resemble their colleagues working in other film spheres around the world. With the exception of Ercüniyet, who was a well-known pop star and had never lived outside of Turkey, the major commonality between them was that they had all lived and studied outside of Turkey for quite some time. Faruk and Mustafa were born in Turkey and left to be trained as composers. Significantly, Yildiray and Tamer where born abroad to Turkish parents and only returned to Turkey as adults seeking to build a career in music.

Yildiray was born in Sydney, Australia, and studied music and sound engineering at university. He worked for several years in recording studios in Sydney apprenticing and honing his skills as a recording engineer and pop producer. He moved to Turkey in the early 1990s when he was 26 years old to try to build a career as the proprietor of his own recording studio in Izmir. His arrival in Turkey was actually quite a significant moment because, as one of the earliest adherents to computerized recording techniques, he effectively introduced, and normalized, computer recording to a music industry that was, as I have mentioned before, significantly behind the times in its adoption of new technologies.

After moving to Izmir he recalled that he began to get a large number of visitors who had heard about the gear he was using and the capacities of computer recording. During the 1990s, the technological lag in Turkey had kept the expensive computer music tools out of reach for the
majority of music producers. Yildiray mentioned that everyone in those days marveled at his ability to do everything “in the computer” rather than relying on very large, bulky, and comparatively slow DAT or analogue multi-track analog tape machines. Their interest was piqued because he was one of the first to bring these tools to Turkey and to build a complete studio around this burgeoning technology. In those days, his studio was centered on an Apple Quadra 950 and an early version of the ProTools DAW (digital audio workstation). But it was not just his equipment that made him popular. His use of this gear put him also on the global cutting edge of recording methods. This, along with his good ear and talent for self-promotion, made him a major fixture in a minor Turkish city. He eventually worked up enough capital, both financial and social, to move to Istanbul and establish himself in the center of the Turkish music business. Once situated there he became one of the most successful songwriters and producers in the 1990s and 2000s.

In the twenty years before I met Yildiray, he worked with some of the most well known singers and developed the pop music careers of several of today’s most influential pop musicians, including Mahsun Kırmızıgül, Özcan Deniz, and Ercüniyet Özdemir. Yildiray estimated that he has recorded, produced, or written music that has sold upwards of 20 million albums since the early 1990s. It is important to note that Yildiray currently works very closely with Kırmızıgül and Deniz, both of whom began as singers and have successfully made the transition to film directors. He works with them as their film composer, but because their relationship was built upon that of producer and artist, Yildiray is also a very close collaborator. This is relatively unusual. Usually the film composer is little more than a hired hand. The uniqueness of Yildiray’s position depends on the fact that he was once their mentor and producer. Although he now works under them as a member of the principal creative crew, this close relationship, and the unusual power he has to collaborate on critical decisions, means his role goes well beyond that of simply being the composer. Consequently, he exemplifies a
particularly unique model of film composer that many other film composers are trying to copy. Of all the composers I had the good fortune to work with, Yildiray stands most solidly in the “pop music” camp. He still continues to work as a producer and recording engineer. However, while Yildiray still composes and produces about seven pop albums a year, it is now his work with Mahsun or Özcan¹ that dominates most of his time and imagination. He has transitioned from the pop music world to the film world, but his network and solid reputation have allowed him to break the boundaries that proscribed the role of film composer in the past.

Tamer, Mustafa, and Faruk on the other hand are the best representatives of those composers educated in the conservatory system and trained within the western aesthetic perspective. They began their training as performers in the western idiom and later explored composition. They were trained in formal harmony, counterpoint, and in a wide array of composition practices. While the institutional structure of their education is functionally the same as that in the conservatories teaching the Turkish idiom, the content is consciously grounded in the European milieu. In fact, their descriptions of their training greatly resemble those outlined in Bruno Nettl’s *Heartland Excursions*, particularly when he says,

> A small and specific set of principles of specific organization govern the relationships among people in the Music Building in their everyday contacts, and these same principles govern their relationships as musicians. . . these principles also help to illuminate the association among structural components of Western art music such as the order of events in concerts, the relationship of parts in the ensembles, and of the ensembles to each other. . . *Music Building society to some degree perceives its musical repertory, and the relationships among its components such as works and genres, in ways derived from its conception of human society* (Nettl 1995, 44 emphasis mine).

Put differently, the content and structure of the composers’ education provides them with a newly acquired habitus that structures their musical lives throughout their careers. Because the conservatory model is, at its core, an international model, the emic knowledge they gain about

¹ Here I switch to their given names as it is more typical in Turkey to refer to someone by their first name. Additionally, this is the only way Yildiray ever referred to these individuals. The only exception is that he often called Mahsun ‘Mason’ because he found it funny and it annoyed Mahsun.
the structure of musical society allows them to leave Turkey and seek post-graduate education in universities and conservatories in Europe and the United States. The Western conservatory trained musicians are able to move outside of the much tighter-knit educational community of the Turkish and popular musicians. As a result, their networks and outlook differ significantly. Taken together, Tamer, Mustafa, and Faruk represent the heterogeneity of background and experience of western-trained film composers.

Tamer was, and still is, by far the most experienced of the group. When I first met him he had been a film composer for over a decade and had been the principal composer for twenty films, including the internationally successful Gönül Yarası (2005). He owned his own studio in Cihangir and maintained a large network of live musicians—an essential resource for a working composer. Tamer was widely respected for his ability to blend live performances with synthesized music in such a way that a listener may not hear the difference. He was one of the few composers who could do this with finesse. And although synthesized performances are normal throughout the Turkish industry, simply because of budgetary necessity, Tamer’s skill made him an essential part of a mid-budget filmmaking crew.

Tamer was born in Cologne and still considers German his first language. He was brought up in a Turkish-speaking household that had close, but frosty ties to Turkey. When I met Tamer, he was in his early forties, which means his parents had left Turkey during some of the adolescent nation-state’s most troubled times in the 1960s. Like others during that time, his entire immediate family left for more the more stable political climate in Germany. Only Tamer has since returned. He explained that he returned because he was interested in finding a career in Turkey and because he was curious to know what it might be like to live as a Turk. However, before he left for Istanbul, he had completed his training as a musician and composer. His musical life was developed in Germany and he only went to Istanbul to try to make his way as a film composer.
On one occasion, Tamer mentioned that being a Turk in Germany meant that you had to try to reconcile two worlds. A Turkish-speaking, first-generation immigrant in the 1980s lived in two places. The first was the German-speaking world of daily life outside the family home. The second was the Turkish-speaking world of VHS videos, shortwave radio, and cassette tapes, the meditated Turkey of the diasporic Turk described by Kevin Robins, Asu Aksu, Thomas Solomon, and Çağdem Bozdağ (Aksu and Robbins 2003; Robins and Aksu 2001a, 2001b, 2006; Solomon 2008a, 2009, 2010; Bozdağ 2014). Far from being unique to Turks, this is the same divide that all immigrants experience. But it is definitional, nonetheless; the particularities of being Turkish abroad are manifested in this experience. It is the divide between one’s immediate social reality and the mediascape that connects the larger diasporic community with the object of their identification. It is also the two spheres through which I came to know Turkey. Tamer, like Yıldıray, was a permanent inhabitant of the interstitial space between these two realities. He explained it was like living in a world of his parents’ memories and watching them come alive in the films and videos he saw. For him, Turkey was a real place that one experienced between school terms, was a confusing mix of unfamiliar relatives, and was only located in a series of encounters that left him with a consuming, burning indignation from not being able to speak Turkish properly. His desire to go to Turkey was, as he suggested, a way to reconcile all of these memories and experiences and to “find a job that paid for once.” Moving to Turkey to become a filmmaker was at once intensely personal and also a sound practical choice.

Unlike Tamer and Yıldıray, Mustafa is much younger, and at that time was only just out of school. He grew up in Istanbul and initially trained at the Conservatory of Fine Arts. He studied both piano performance and western composition. His compositional practice is informed directly by both because he composes at the piano, a practice he shares with a large majority of western composers. Following his undergraduate conservatory education, he left for
Toronto, Canada where he got a master’s degree in composition from the University of Toronto. When we first met, he was only just in the process of setting up a private studio and was still working out of his bedroom in his mother’s home, a situation very typical for young, unmarried people. Mustafa already had steady work, but had not yet built up a reputation equal, in the opinion of many observers, to that of Yildiray or Tamer. Much of his work was still coming from outside Turkey. He had only just begun working on a few local projects of significant size. He was, however, making a decent living composing incidental music for American and Turkish commercials. These short spots were affording him the luxury of choosing which films he would take on. Usually, this meant finding work with a small group of friends or established colleagues.

Both Mustafa and Tamer were educated mostly outside Turkey and are very much embedded in a more universal, taught method of film composition. Unlike Yildiray, both of them studied with composition professors who do this work themselves. This point is significant, because both film and video game composition are rapidly becoming areas occupied by academic and independent composers. Both of them think of themselves as working within the western harmonic tradition. And both of them reserve a suspicion for what Tamer called the “melody writers”—the pop musicians—who were, as they saw it, quite different from themselves.

Faruk also held these suspicions, because he too trained as a composer outside Turkey after spending his undergraduate years as a performer in the conservatory system at Ege Üniversitesi. He left Turkey to continue his education in London as a gigging musician and gained experience as a composer working as a sub-contractor. As I indicated above, Faruk was struggling. He was not established enough to have his own studio, not connected enough to have his own projects, and was not well known enough to be the principal composer on a film.

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2 This fact was made clear to me during a series of conversations with Canadian composers Kevin Lau and Erica Procunier in 2014. Kevin and Mustafa share a composition professor at the University of Toronto.
However, he had worked as an in-house composer for several production companies in London, and was far from being an unseasoned novice. He had just failed to find work in Istanbul, a problem that demonstrates the risks that many of the western-trained composers face when seeking post-graduate training abroad. Faruk exemplifies someone who works in support roles for principal composers. For Ylidiray, Tamer, and Mustafa, their foreign training was an asset, particularly because they brought a considerably high level of facility with the latest computer recording techniques, whereas Faruk was somewhat behind the times in this respect. He was not able to bring this training into the equation, and this seems to have had a deleterious effect on his career.

From these examples, one can conclude that Turkish film composers are mostly trained abroad. They leave Turkey or live abroad and essentially import the skills they gain elsewhere. This view immediately suggests that film composition is something learned outside Turkey and thus not really part of what one would call Turkish cinema. But this is not entirely the case. There are notable exceptions. The well-known and successful Rahman Altin was entirely educated and trained in Turkey, having attended university in Ankara and the conservatory at Hacettepe University. He initially worked as a journeyman composer, writing jingles for commercials and music for the radio. He then began scoring films for Yılmaz Erdoğan and Derviş Zaim, including Zaim’s acclaimed Cenneti Beklerken (2006), and Erdoğan’s ground breaking Visontele Tuuba (2003) and his recent big-budget production Kelebeğin Rüyası (2013). He has since made the transition to living and working in LA despite working mostly on Turkish films as a named composer. Thus, what seems to define a Turkish film composer is really more the ability to leverage connections with the cinematic world outside Turkey and to bring those skills to Turkish filmmaking contexts.

This apparent requirement for international connections should not be minimized because it stems from at least two clusters of expectations. Composers must leverage their
international experience as professionals and as musical artists. As Mustafa told me, “part of a composer’s job is to bring some degree of prestige to the film.” In this light, international experience and exposure are key parts of a composer’s ability to find work. However, it is more than just a professional asset. International experience is a way to ensure that composers have experience with the appropriate source materials, and ways of thinking, that are essential in doing the work of making music for films. Composers with foreign training are exposed not just to the music in foreign films—for anyone with a computer or a DVD player can do that—but to what I call the global praxiscape of film composition. Thus, what they bring back with them when they return to Istanbul—because they usually go to Istanbul—is a view of music that is decidedly internationalist in its scope and connected to the cutting edge of filmmaking. This is a significant feature for composers who are then asked to write music for a Turkish audience. They become the connective nodes of praxisascapes, mediascapes, ethnoscapes, and technoscapes that connect audiences in Turkey with Turks in the diaspora and with the cosmopolitan world outside Turkish cultural spheres. What they bring to a production is easily recognizable to the more cosmopolitan audiences in the major urban centers; their work presents a perspective that is significantly othered and novel for many audiences in rural Turkey or in the neighborhoods of Istanbul. These composers take the role of tastemaker, someone who pushes the boundaries of accepted, local aesthetic norms and acts as a translator, bringing new influences into social and cultural spheres that may not seek such influences.\(^3\)

The necessity of this international experience essentially guarantees that film composers are part of a particular social and economic class. Film composers are relatively well-off, middle class people with cosmopolitan sensibilities. Because they must be able to work abroad in

\(^3\) I use the term “tastemaker” here because it is part of the vocabulary of the industry. I myself find it to be a difficult term because it betrays the alignment with a commercialized view of audiences. The term tastemaker, used in its untranslated, English form, is symptomatic of the encroaching influence of market research perspective that dominates big-budget, globalized commercial filmmaking practices.
addition to in Turkey—in part because there are few well-funded projects in Turkey—they must be able to move easily in several spheres of music making. Rahman has to be able to build a career in Istanbul and Los Angeles. Mustafa must do the work wherever he can find it, including smaller productions in the U.S. Current technologies allow him to live in Istanbul and do much of his work in the U.S. remotely, sharing digital files over the internet. Tamer, on the other hand, does a lot of work in Germany and on European co-productions. So while these artists are so-called Turkish film composers, they are really just film composers who work wherever they are needed. Only Yildiray, whose career is bolstered by his activities as a pop producer, is able to work entirely in Turkey and on Turkish projects comfortably. This presents a difficult problem for analysts trying to define a Turkish cinema or filmmaking practices that are unique to the Turkish context. Because these individuals work on films originating all over the world, their Turkish citizenship, or place of residence, is effectively immaterial. This suggests that they are film composers generally and only become Turkish film composers when they work on Turkish films—their Turkishness is only foregrounded in Turkish contexts. This begs the question of what constitutes Turkish films and film music.

This question does not have an easy answer. In our post-national reality, it is impossible to assert that a Turkish cinema with Turkish music is one that embodies the characteristic of a nation state, a folk, or a national identity. It is not enough to say that because a director is a Turk that their work is Turkish. The very idea that a national cinema has come undone in the face of transnational discourse, the rise of corporate commercial filmmaking, and increasing evidence that filmmaking is best characterized by its engagement with the plurality and plasticity of identity (Chow 1995; MacDougall 2008; Nestingen, Elkinton, et al. 2005; Dönmez-Colin 2008; Suner 2010; Arslan 2011). In fact, one major commonality cohering Turkish Cinema is not Turkish identity, but a desire to question its character. Scholars and non-scholars alike argue that the New Turkish Cinema filmmaker’s experiment with, and reject, a singular, monolithic
concept of Turkish identity and its constituents. For Suner, “. . . new wave Turkish Cinema, popular and art films alike, constantly returns to the question of belonging and interrogates it from different social, political, and aesthetic perspectives. New Turkish films revolve around the figure of a spectral home, which takes different forms and meanings in the work of different directors” (Suner 16, 2010). For Dönmez-Colin, “the case of Turkish Cinema is particularly noteworthy because in the process it has also been searching for an identity of its own, and both are interlinked to Turkey’s quest for an identity or its confirmation” (Dönmez-Colin 18, 2008). However, Arslan articulates it best when he says, “of contemporary cinema, then, it could be said that it is neither national nor transnational, neither popular nor art, and neither cinema nor new media; instead, similar to culture, it is of these singularities, each of which is single and unique. As there is no pure and simple origin . . . both the culture and cinema of a nation should be seen as already multicultural (Arslan 241, 2011). Simply put, the New Turkish Cinema is not about being Turkish, but about experimenting with identity, and trying to either remember, or create, what Turkish means.

In my experience, however, few composers are trying to experiment explicitly. Rather, they are working in a commercial, capitalist film making business where identity doesn’t matter, up until the point when it does—that is, when it becomes open to exploitation and management. They are focused on making films, not contributing to a body of work that scholars call the New Turkish Cinema. Film composers in particular exemplify what Mark Slobin calls the “Steiner superculture,” or where following the example of early Hollywood film composer Max Steiner, the film composer “marshals music materials to describe how a human community lives” (Slobin 2008, 5). Except that in this case the community is not of the real world as such, but the community that resides in the film. The practical needs of the cinematic reality hold priority over those of the world outside the film, despite the fact that the two are inextricably interlinked.
Further complicating these issues is the increasingly transnational interconnections that are unifying production practices across the globe.

It is, therefore, very difficult to identify a Turkish cinema solely by its production practices, which are usually common to many other cinemas across the globe. It is difficult to identify a Turkish project from a non-Turkish project. Rahman has contributed to scores by Vangelis (Alexander, 2004) and Mustafa has (as of 2014) been hired to work on, to date, more than twenty independent US-made cartoons, and the pilot of an HBO series (untitled as of March 2015). Faruk spent several years as an uncredited composer contributing to scores produced by his production company in London. In all of these cases neither they, nor their scores, were qualified by the adjective “Turkish.” They were simply composers. They were working for productions that, because of their international crew, defy any national label and stand as examples of a global, commercial cinema. This hints at a larger notion of a post national cinema. However, given that it is difficult to successfully articulate a model for a Turkish national cinema it is difficult to see how a postnational cinema can be defined. Relying solely on a traditional critical model where only the work is considered, both the concept of Turkish national cinema and a postnational cinema defy aesthetic and formal categories. This is further complicated by the fact that composers like Rahman and Mustafa are postnational composers only inasmuch as their practice extends beyond, or breaks, the boundaries of the bounded nation-state. But largely this is only possible when one abandons the perspective of traditional work-based film criticism. It is possible to suggest that when they are working on a Turkish film, they are Turkish filmmakers. When they are not working on a Turkish film, they are simply composers who happen to be Turkish. Seeing their practices as postnational depends on the view that they see this circumstance in a different way, which they do not. The German-Turkish director Fatih Akin is perhaps the only truly post national filmmaker working within Turkish cinema and its orbit, but as I have noted in the introduction, this is only due to his stated
intentions as a filmmaker, and not his status as a member of the Turkish diaspora working in a
decidedly German filmmaking milieu (Hartley and Stenport 2010).

I argue that intention is an essential quality of filmmakers’ work. Their desire and the
impact of its manifestation in sound is the first statement of what their work ‘is’. If their intention
is to create a Turkish film, that may be enough to override the fact that their production
practices, and in the case of composers, compositional practices, are shared by filmmakers who
do not share their background. Filmmaking is becoming increasingly post national because
national distinctions are largely irrelevant in a praxiscape of filmmaking—that is, a global set of
compositional practices connect film composers across national boundaries—and in the
business of gaining funding. However, when cinematic practice becomes national, it does so
because the filmmakers are deliberately trying to address distinctions that are only legible within
a socio-cultural complex that we define as national. In the Turkish context, the distinction
between the East and the West is a fertile dichotomy fueling this dialogue. Filmmakers choose
to take on this as their subject matter, making the content of the films national while their
filmmaking practices remain resolutely global.

Education, Process, and Distinction – Points of Demarcation for East vs. West

The prevailing discourse among Turkish audiences, scholars, critics, musicians, and film
composers concerning the distinctions between eastern and western music is an important
indicator of community demarcation. The categories of Western and Eastern music, or even
“Turkish” and “Western” music serve to delineate the aesthetic, semiotic, and formal differences
between musics that arose in Europe or the Near East, and now coexist within the sphere of
Turkish music making. Within the Turkish context, these terms have a great deal of political and
social currency because they been activated by scholars, politicians, and musicians in the
development of Turkish national identity and in Turkey’s vision of itself as a modern nation (Cf.
Gökalp 1981; Greve 1993; Stokes 1992, 1992b, 1994, 1999). However, contemporary musicians’ and composers’ use of this dyad is not limited to purely musical considerations.

Today, the division between Eastern music and Western music is largely one that is a lived distinction rather than an entirely rationalized one. Musicians align themselves with one kind of music and leave the other for their colleagues to worry about. They play, write, earn their living from, or inhabit one or the other category of music. But this need not mean that the divide is rigid and the two spheres of music making are mutually exclusive. On the contrary, while they evoke this distinction and see it as a convenient marker for important professional distinctions, film music composers largely acknowledge that this distinction is largely beside the point. The political or social overtones of this distinction do not really occupy much of their conscious working lives, and only arises when they are asked to be critical about their music making. When confronted about their role in the development of a Turkish form of music making or Turkish cinema, they told me that it is a convenient way to organize and understand the groups of professional musicians working in Istanbul. For most, the ‘east vs. west’ distinction is a demarcation of community and social network and not just a commentary on music. Everyone is writing and playing both kinds anyway. Audiences certainly listen to both with enthusiasm. For composers it is more important to consider how a scene is to be set than worry about the politics or origins of the music they choose.

For me this information was hard won. All of my first conversations with musicians always involved a lecture on the importance of “Eastern” (read Turkish) music and its essential differences from “Western” music. Indeed, if I went solely by these, often lengthy, statements, it would have been impossible to question the veracity of this point. But as I got to know Yildiray, Mustafa, and the rest better, the differences of opinion began to appear. I noticed that they would always say this first and then hold to a completely different set of practices. Their actions were at odds with their assessments of the facts, and I was not sure why. It was not until I took
this point to my friend Aykut, who also struggled with this problem, that I began to understand its implications.

Aykut was my guide in Istanbul for the first few months I lived there. While not a full-time film composer, Aykut is a composer and electronic musician and was connected to many of the clusters of filmmakers because of his expertise. His personal connections afforded me access, but because he was not of these communities as a participant, he was able to move freely between groups that otherwise did not have a great deal of direct contact with each other because of professional rivalries and competition. This allowed me to navigate the different, often fractious, groups with more ease. Aykut had studied in the U.S. as a Fulbright fellow and was one of the standout students at both Ege Üniversitesi and Mimar Sinan Üniversitesi’s Güzel Sanat Konservatuvarı (Fine Arts Conservatory). He had studied in Turkey, the U.K. and in the U.S. A proponent of art music, he was an adherent of mid-century modernist, and postmodernist, compositional techniques like dodecaphony, aleatoric processes, and algorithm-driven computer music. His interests at the time focused more on computer music and the musical repercussions of the experimentation that arose from Schaeffer’s *musique concrète* in Paris in the 1950s. His time in the U.S. was spent studying computer music and compositional practices of the academic composers working in the U.S. today. His fascination with the contemporary computer-enhanced avant-garde was all that separated him from the gigging film composers in Istanbul. They used the same equipment. They were connected by the same production practices, but not by their professional intent. Aykut had left for the U.S. because he found it impossible to study this kind of composition in Turkey. There simply were no schools with programs and no professors with any experience or interest in computer music. He had returned to Turkey after his studies and was looking for opportunities to have his work performed.
Like the other composers I met, many of Aykut’s opinions about music were born of having a foot in many spheres of music making. Above all, he was a proponent of what Adorno would have called “good music,” by which I mean (as did Adorno) difficult, challenging music that did not depend on modal or tonal practice (Adorno 1991, 29-37). Despite the fact that his preferences bordered on prejudices, Aykut was a careful analyst of the world of music making in Istanbul, and I found our conversations to be helpful in pulling apart the web of connections and barriers that demarcated the local groups of musicians and composers. It was during a number of long and detailed conversations with Aykut that I first learned how Turkish composers are, in general, part of a very intense and wide-reaching dialogue concerning what constitutes Turkish music and, more importantly, why this even matters. Through these early conversations I was able to begin to see why everyone in Istanbul seemed intent on lecturing me about the distinction between the East and the West and how this plays out in musical composition and performance practices. One conversation in particular provided a clarification of one of the many facets of the eastern/western music distinction.

After having spent weeks talking about the state of music composition in general, Aykut and I eventually turned to the problem of where Turkey fits in this sphere of activity in a global sense. Aykut was concerned about this issue particularly because he has found Turkish musicians to be antagonistic towards most forms of experimental music. Despairing of live, human musicians—the people who actually play the music he writes—he moved on to critique the composers saying, “the thing about Turkey is that there are two kinds of composers. There are the pop musicians and there are the Western-trained composers. They don’t really get along and they don’t talk to each other because their worlds are so different.”

“But what marks the division? Why are these groups so different?” I asked.

“Well, first of all it is because they are trained at different places. The conservatory at İTÜ is really more of a pop music place. You go there to learn how to play the saz and to write
pop songs. The other places, like Mimar Sinan or Ege, are more like western conservatories. You learn how to write Bach chorales, do twelve-tone stuff, or work with granular techniques. You know, actually write music."

“But surely you can do that at the other places too, right? What do they teach at İTÜ that is so different?”

“Well first of all you can study ‘Turkish’ music.”

“Like makam müsiği?” I asked, referring to the traditional modal theory used by Ottoman classical music and Mevlevi ritual practice.

He responded, “yeah, but more like the stuff that you hear on the radio or on TV. They learn how to play Turkish instruments and to write more, um, well….traditional stuff I guess, except that it isn't traditional. It is that pop stuff. You know, the shit you hear in some taxi driver’s car. It is all melody for them. And that isn’t a bad thing. It is just one way to make music. It’s certainly easier to listen to.”

“Yeah, I know.” I said. “But a lot of that pop stuff is really well loved. It sounds like İTÜ is a lot like Berkelee [School of Music] in Boston. The kind of place that has 200 electric guitar majors but also produces all of the studio musicians that are driving the pop music production houses.”

“Yeah, exactly, except that the essential problem here is that İTÜ produces people who write melodies. The other type of composer writes music. Well, that is a bit strong. I guess what I'm trying to say is that there is a difference between Turkish musicians and Western trained musicians. It is like the difference between craft and intuition. The Western-trained composers focus on the vertical stuff, whereas the Turkish musicians work only in melody. This shows up in pop music and in the film industry because they are still obsessed with melodies. They don’t want to hear the kind of music that is crafted by a composer.”
This conversation, among others we had, introduced me to a series of themes that dominate the discourse about music’s place in contemporary Istanbul, but also explained many of the fissures and divisions within composer-dominated film music production. First of all, the differences in the available training are an immediate and seeming irreconcilable point of division. The divisions drawn along institutional affiliation alone divide composers and determine their professional connections. Their musical habits and compositional practices are seen as symptomatic of this division and also the reason for it. But because different institutions have very different pedagogical lineages and approaches to practical training, the division between institutions builds very different composers with very different production habits.

Aykut highlighted difference between “design and inspiration” to ensure that I understood that musical practice is part of this division. His point is essentially that the East/West distinction is a discursive conceit that hides the more practical manifestations of difference within musical life in Turkey. To assume that it is entirely linked to a discourse of identity misses the point that, when it is used, people are talking about the act of music making and the sound of music. His “design” and “inspiration” categories explain how a composer approaches making the music that is then interpreted through the “melody/harmony” dichotomy. And this is important because it is now possible to map the larger framework of meaning that sits under the Eastern and Western division of musicians. The commonly held meaning of Eastern musician is someone focused on melody and is inspired in the moment of composition. A Western musician is someone who concentrates on designing music that is harmonically organized, and does so through intentional skill and effort.

Within this framework, designed music can only be the product of a classically trained Western musician. Musical composition is work done by a composer, and a composer is not a generic term but specifically speaks about training and careful practice. It is effort. It is the product of the mind. It produces rational music, or what Gökalp called a “scientific music”
It is Western or at least westernized, and is the product of attempts to westernize the Turkish republic through education and the application of new ideologies of artistic creativity. Karl Signell notes that early Turkish musical theorists tried to regularize *makam* practice and bring it in line with what they saw as the more ‘scientific’ nature of western art practice. This process included efforts to reconcile it with Western harmonic practice and gave rise to mid-century composers like Adnan Saygun, who wrote in a Western idiom using Turkish source material (ibid.). Aykut echoed this ideology by using the same terms, casting this kind of music as mathematical.

All compositional effort is focused on the application of learned skill—the processes learned through study in a conservatory system. In this context, composition is a process controlled by the rules of harmony and melodic development, and is informed by an engaged study of musical theory, music history, and the crafting of an idiosyncratic musical palette. Following the conceptual revolutions of the modernist composers, compositional work is conceived as more akin to careful construction than to inspired creation. More often than not, designed music is also harmonic and has a vertical component. It is not modal or entirely melodic, but has the polyphonic and contrapuntal components of Western art music. Aykut’s fundamental point was that this music is “fashioned” and carries a degree of complexity that requires years of training. It is, therefore, professional work done by qualified practitioners bearing the marks of a classical education—where the markers are manifested through practice and in the music itself.

Inspired music, on the other hand is discussed in nearly metaphysical terms. It simply “is,” or “becomes”; it certainly is not made. First and foremost, inspired music is meant to sound and flow effortlessly. It is something that can be done by almost anyone, even someone with little training. Conceptually, inspired music is connected to improvisation and to the non-literate musics that are still part of daily music making in Turkey. It is part of the musical ideology of the
aşık, a musician who is seen to sing and play the saz through divine inspiration (Reinhard and Pinto 1990). Although it references the tradition of this folk music, it is a term that is now most often associated with pop music. Those wielding it with both positive and negative connotations actually come to agreement on this point. Inspiration is not something that exists in the world of the western trained classical musician. But this need not be a derogatory term. In fact, those who have a more pop music bent actually prefer the notion that music should come easily to a composer. Ercüniyet and Yıldırıym were content to say that their music came “naturally” and was not a forced process. This is not to say that they did not work hard at their craft, but rather that they saw it as something distinct from the toiling methods that Aykut referenced.

Importantly, the distinction between “designed” and “inspired” music actually makes an important ontological point of demarcation that is part of the east/west dichotomy used by the composers to outline the limits of their community. Inspired music can be part of Turkey. It can be Turkish, whereas designed music is seen as an import. Inspired music is also afforded a greater emotional component and a wider emotional range, thus making it something more natural. As Yıldırıym put it, “it closer to what people actually hear in their hearts.” Faruk mentioned that Turkish music was usually composed through inspiration and not through hard work. He said this is why it is easier to put it into films. One had to work harder to use western compositional practices. While it is difficult to tell how audiences feel about this, it is certainly true that composers follow these guidelines when composing for films.

This interpretation was further cemented by an intense discussion I had with Tamer at a tea house where he turned to me with a wry smile, and said “I hear you have been meeting with some of the others.” I had just managed to sit down at our usual cafe table in the central square of Cihangir next to the Kardeşler and Firuz Ağa Cami when he just waded into what seemed to be the middle of a conversation. It was startling, because Tamer was a quiet person and usually waited for me to begin our conversations. He also spoke in English rather than our usual mix of
Turkish and German. He was clearly trying to point out something that mattered and ensure I understood it properly.

    Taken aback, I said, “Yes, but I hope you don’t mind. I need to speak to a lot of people for this work.”

    “No, no.” he replied, still smiling. “I just wanted to talk to you about it because you are going to get something quite different from the rest of them than you will from me.”

    “Oh? Why is that?”

    “Because,” he began with a sigh, “they are pop musicians, and they live in a very different world. They think a different way.”

    “Why do you say this?” I asked. I was more interested in what he meant by “they,” than anything else. He seemed to be trying to indicate that the meaning of this word was important.

    “Well, there are musicians, and then there are pop musicians. The pop musicians only write melodies. That is why they are different. And it is really frustrating for me because when someone wants me to write a score they often tell me that I need to put more melody in it. All these pop guys do is write melodies, and that is what directors and the people really want. No one is interested in really good music. All directors want me to do is write melodic stuff. Well, that and copy things they cannot afford to pay for.”

    I quickly realized that Tamer was continuing the conversation I began with Aykut. As Tamer explained, the melodic approach of the pop musicians was much more fluid and intuitively composed. For Tamer, their music lacked the “carefully composed” qualities that “people who have spent a lot of time learning about how to write good music” put into it. In asserting this, Tamer was finishing Aykut’s thought and thickening the distinction between the two groups of composers. This final piece of the puzzle brings one of the most important distinctions to bear. Composers’ approaches to composing for films are clearly marked and qualified by their compositional methods. Those who write “melodies” are composers who come
from the Turkish conservatories. Composers like Yıldırımy, Rahman Altın, and Ercüniyet fit into this category, and were the kind of musicians that Tamer was discussing. Their music strongly emphasizes melody. Their approach to melodic writing is drawn from the makam-based compositional methods of Turkish musics, and is consequently associated with the East and the "inspired" musics.

Drawing closer, Tamer fixed me with his eyes and said,

Remember that melody isn't everything. You have to also work in harmony. When I was in school in Germany, I was taught how to compose according to Western conservatory rules—Bach chorales, and all of that. I learned how to write four-part harmony. I was taught extended nineteenth-century harmony. I studied jazz harmony: sevenths, fifteenths. Do you know what I mean? I also had to learn proper orchestration. I can think vertically as well as horizontally—you know polyphonically. And this is what makes me different from these melody people. I write music that has harmony, it has a foundation. Of course, I can do the melodic stuff too. I had to learn how to do it when I got here. But I always think harmonically first. It was how I was trained.

With this, Tamer added another layer to the set of distinctions dividing composers into two relatively neat groups according to compositional practice. Those who write melodically are clearly differentiated from those who think vertically and write according to western harmonic conventions. He was implying that those who only understand the Turkish compositional methods cannot write 'real' music. In doing so, he was also making an implicit distinction between Turkish music and western classical music, and thus further emphasizing the distinction between 'eastern' and 'western' music in Turkey.

Tamer and Aykut were both trying to find a way to articulate how composers could be divided up into camps by examining their approach to musical composition. However, what they were doing was articulating the aesthetic foundations of a distinction that not only applies to compositional methods but also to musical traditions. The differences indicated by the opposing pairs of 'inspired' and 'designed,' 'melodic' and 'harmonic,' 'pop' and 'classical' neatly map onto the 'eastern' and 'western' distinction.
Among the people I came to know, the only real exception was Yildiray Gürgen. He was trained as a pop musician in Australia and worked as a pop musician in Turkey, but he considered himself a film composer in the style of Hans Zimmer and saw himself as part of larger group of musicians able to transcend the locality in which they live. He would say he is a global composer participating in the production of commercial films that transcend local, nationalistic distinctions. For Yildiray this discourse about the connection between training, musical style and affect, and place in the network of filmmakers, was irrelevant.

Ultimately, the eastern and western distinction is not one that is employed solely to demarcate music that comes from particular places. Composers, and working musicians, activate it as a way to distinguish between compositional and performance practices, and thus as a way to demarcate the professional skill of the various composers in the working community. Those that employ it in this way also use it as a way to highlight their pedigree and professional accreditation—which is important as they try to build and maintain a career. It is even a way to signal how music is intended to be interpreted and heard, the idea being that Turkish is more emotional while western is more rational or appropriate for specific narrative functions.

This last point is important because it exposes how a small part of the performance-reception complex functions: filmmakers, scholars, and audiences see film genres as aligned with different musics and see the connection as a key to interpretation. Musical style becomes a marker for generic distinction. It also a factor in how film composers are selected to work on film, how they construct a score. For instance, “Turkish” music is closely associated with melodrama. Modern comedies or dramas are scored with western influenced pop music in a way that references the juke-box score of many contemporary American films. Genre films like sci-fi or action are scored with westernized film music—often directly referencing, or even
emulating, the work of major Hollywood composers like Hans Zimmer, Andre Desplat, Alan Silvestri, John Williams, and the like.

The conceptual division between melodic and harmonic music is also mobilized as a point of difference in the symbolic economy of film sound. For conservatory trained musicians, western music is more serious and less commercially motivated, while Eastern music is more accessible and more pop influenced. Eastern music is made for young, commercial audiences. It is an expected component of low-budget productions and popular, for-profit films. Western-trained musicians like Tamer and Mustafa often said that serious films play well in Europe are scored differently. They compose these films to conform to the global model—orchestral scores in the Wagnerian mold that arose with the Hollywood films of the early and middle twentieth-century (Kalinak 1992; Prendegrast 1992; Brown 1994; Altman 2002; Adorno and Eisler 2007). The only exception arises when they score a film using Turkish folk or classical music to emphasize the Turkish topics in the films. These Turkish cues become important statements because they stand out from the rest of the score and are placed in such a way that their very sound makes important narrative, and extra-narrative associations. It is important to note here that for films scored according to the global model for commercial films, the use of music with Turkish features—instruments, melodic modes (makamlar), or rhythmic cycles (usullar)—is always done deliberately. These Turkish sounds point to Turkish referents, and are both iconic and indexical of Turkishness.

Film composers must therefore not simply write music, but write the “right music.” Mustafa often pointed out that the hardest part of his job was to find the right music for the moment. He had to take many, non-musical details into consideration before he was able to begin sketching out cues of actual music. He had to read the script, watch rushes (raw footage of scenes), and/or engage the director, music director, art director, cinematographer, and actors in constant dialog to make sure he captured the intent behind a particular scene. He then had to
build a cue that was evocative of what was captured in the scene without overpowering it or “blowing it up” beyond the limits of what an audience could handle.

In a practical sense, this means he had to interpret the intention of everyone involved while considering the emotional and narrative requirements of the audience. He had to interpret the scene and provide the touches that could create a halo of meaning around the narrative and visual constructions but not damage it. His work was divorced from the larger debate about what kind of musician he is.

The Realities of Daily Life in the Trenches: The Multi-Talented Composer

I argue that this means that the divisions between East/West, pop/classical/ and melody/harmony are somewhat divorced from the daily work of a composer. They inform the working relationships among composers along clear lines, but things become blurrier when we begin to examine the daily work of writing music. The closer one gets to the practical decisions composers make as they build a musical score, the more it becomes clear that most of the ideological distinctions that serve to hold their working life together fall away in the face of the requirements of filmmaking. Therefore, it is not enough to understand these composers in terms of what they are, especially since the similarities are not to be found in their backgrounds. It is necessary to also look at what they do. They must be global and local, of the East and of the West, and pop and classical musicians simultaneously. Consequently, film composers must be flexible and multi-talented musicians. They play at least one instrument well and are facile performers able to improvise and perform in several genres. They must also be musical and cultural omnivores. While their lived experience, and internationalist background, provides them with a wide range of stimuli, they have to be constantly looking for new material and new inputs into their musical palette.
Film music production is carried out in circumstances that are intensely private and localized. It is done in the solitary darkness of small rooms filled with equipment, punctuated only by the glow of computer screens. In addition to being highly skilled, flexible musicians with a cosmopolitan ethos and omnivorous tastes, composers wanting to work in film must also be capable studio engineers, familiar with the massively complicated and difficult methods that make up computer recording. This is a similarity that cuts across the divide delineating pop music composers and their western trained colleagues. Both groups must be virtuoso operators of the various software packages and hardware systems that are part of computer music composition. This requirement is one of the major reasons why, until recently, they were forced to seek the appropriate training outside Turkey. As Yildiray explained, in the 1990s when the equipment was prohibitively expensive for anyone who was not a professional recording engineer or recording studio, no one in Turkey was using it. Recording studios and TV production facilities were still using the legacy ADAT and DAT recording platforms that were more common in earlier variants of recording studios. This meant that the limitations of the recording media—that precluded the easy integration of MIDI controlled synthesizers—ensured that multi-tracked live performances were still the most common way to record film and television scores. The process of film composition was still very similar to that of a classical music composer or popular musician. Music was prepared beforehand by a composer, notated, and then performed by musicians who realized the music in a recording studio. The ADAT and DAT formats allowed for quick and easy synchronous or asynchronous multi-channel recording, which means the score could be performed in a single performance or in several performances at different times. But this is essentially the same composition and recording process that had existed since the introduction of multi-track recording in the 1960s.

The introduction of the computer software capable of managing synthesizers and live recordings simultaneously meant that composers could easily compose in the software and
bypass the live performances altogether if they so chose. The computer interface allowed them to carefully craft the computer’s performances without having to perform the music themselves. They could work on all of the musical sounds and stylistic features of a score without needing other people. The implication of this is profound: the typically differentiated work of a recording engineer and a composer was collapsed into a single role. Composers could now compose not just in notated music, but now in sound as well. The score, as well as the recording of the score, could be produced and assembled by a single individual using a single computer interface. And it is this reason why composers now have to be extraordinarily well versed in recording techniques and the use of very sophisticated sound editing and mastering software and the computers that run them. They must be very technically adept and open to learning new technologies and processes to remain relevant in the Turkish industry.4

Mustafa was fond of saying that “a film composer needs to know how to do it all.” What he meant was that film composers must be flexible and able to write any kind of music. But he also meant that the composer is not just responsible for “the music” but also for “the sound of the music.” First and foremost, they have to be able to write anything that a scene or a director requires. For a film in recent years this can mean anything from a Turkish folk song using homemade instruments to a rock song with English lyrics, or even a fully orchestrated symphonic cue in the style of Alan Silvestri. This skill is essential because often directors are not specific about their needs, but have very strong opinions and conceptual models for how they want the score to fit into the film. Tamer, Faruk, and Mustafa told stories about working with difficult directors who wanted a specific thing but were unable to articulate what this was. Whenever they told these stories I would always sit in shock as they outlined the same problem: the directors would get very angry about the state of a cue and say that they wanted something that sounded exactly like another film. Usually the example they used was a foreign film, and

4 This is obviously true of most mid to high-budget film productions, and all major national and international cinemas.
they would say “just do that and it will be perfect.” Because Tamer and Mustafa were more experienced, they would always dismiss this criticism and simply incorporate the essential formal qualities of the director’s example into a new cue. This would require them to pull the music apart and decide which of its constituent elements they needed to borrow and which they could discard. Being able to analyze, copy, and rewrite a cue in these conditions is a basic skill, and it makes them able to write any kind of music needed. As a consequence, they are careful analysts and skilled mimics.

Beyond this, composers have to be translators able to turn the emotional thrust of a scene, or even an actor’s gesture into a musical moment. This is also a skill that must be developed over time, but is not something everyone has. Tamer likened it to “a bag of tricks,” because many of the musical gestures that are clear indexes of a particular emotional state—or are at least sufficient to indicate that that emotion should be connected with a particular narrative event—are already fairly well established. His view is that the core of composers’ skill in keying and cueing a frame lies in their ability to organize the vast number of musical indexes known to film-going audiences. It also lies in their ability to create fresh associations. This is particularly difficult to do, because the sources for these associations are found in the common musical culture that binds audiences and producers together. Given the fact that Mustafa, Tamer, and Yildiray have to work within many musical forms, styles, and expectations simultaneously, this means their fluency with musical construction must go beyond the mechanics of scoring and orchestrating the gesture.

Because films—and by extension television programs like melodramas—are important popular entertainments in Turkey, this interpretive role is quite an important one. Filmmakers address a large majority of the Turkish population, and have a large voice in many socio-political and cultural conversations. Due to their place in the production process, film music composers are really the film’s first audience in that they are watching nearly complete work
when they spot a scene (the act of watching a clip to prepare the musical outline). They are the first to view the work and respond to it. The decisions they make of how to cue a particular moment are both part of the construction of that moment and also the first step in interpreting it. Their work should be seen as providing interpretive aids to the audience—this is something I heard over and over again. Cues and scores provide an emotional and narrative underpinning for what occurs in a scene. Done correctly, an audience knows how to respond. Done poorly and the audience feels the disjunctures created by the poor alignment of musical affect of the music and the scene’s emotional and aesthetic construction. However, even when it is done well, the composer has in effect created a sonic shorthand for the audience to follow. They respond to the total presentation often without being conscious of the score’s content.

Needless to say, this work is the core responsibility for a film composer. It goes beyond writing music. It is this job that deserves scrutiny because of all of the things that a film composer does, this is the most burdened with meaning. To be successful at this, a composer has to not only be an excellent technician, they also have to be attuned to a host of competing emotional, cultural, and aesthetic threads, all of which necessitate a fluency with the sign systems of multiple cultures and an ability to combine them in novel ways. But they must do so with care, and avoid breaking the boundaries of the film. They must preserve the frame set by the scene and the film. It is for this reason that the most successful composers working today are omnivores who are familiar with the media from multiple countries and from a wide range of sources within those other musical contexts. It is also evidence for a social role that requires the perspective of what we would have in the past called a cosmopolitan. This, of course, immediately raises the question of whether such a person is qualified, or indeed able, to do the work of translating a cinematic narrative for an audience that is not cosmopolitan or similarly omnivorous. Another fair question would simply ask why does the Turkish film industry need someone like this at all? Why now?
Chapter 5
Scenes of Composing

In this chapter, and the next, I explore the creative process of film composition and demonstrate how what begins as solitary work can amplify a single voice in a very profound way. Because film composition is an idiosyncratic process, and every composer does it in a very different way, over the next two chapters I contrast the methods of four composers in turn to highlight the similarities and differences. In doing so, I explore and interrogate the role of their computer and its Digital Audio Workstation (DAW) software as a collaborator, facilitator, and mediator of their work. I outline the basics of film composition practices that are becoming globally harmonized and how the DAW provides a locus upon which to ground this standardization. Beyond this, I also demonstrate how the context and use-cases particular to film composition in Turkey show us that we must avoid assuming that audio technologies are uniform in their meaning, purpose, and presence in music studios around the world. Turkish film composers use their DAW differently than recording engineers or producers use the same software. This difference is large enough to question whether or not it is useful to see all studios as the same, or to view electronic music technologies equally.

I will begin with Mustafa Yazıcıoğlu and Yildiray Gürgen to provide the broadest and most comprehensive statement of both individual practice and the commonalities that knit composers into a single, describable unit. I will discuss Mustafa first because he studied with film composers before he began his career. His is, therefore, the most orthodox method and the best way to introduce the basic steps that are part of contemporary film score production. His process most closely mirrors the examples described in film music scholarship (Kalinak 1992; Predergast 1992; Brown 1994; Getter and Balasubrahmaniyan 2008). It also exemplifies the processes used by a growing number of computer-enabled composers who are blending pen-
and-paper composition with a significantly different model of writing and making music. As such, his process shares a great deal with synth-pop music producers around the world, and most importantly with successful film composers from other non-Turkish filmmaking communities across the globe. After that, I will examine Yildiray’s process in detail. Yildiray is one of the most prominent figures in contemporary Turkish filmmaking despite the fact that he prefers to remain more anonymous than some of his colleagues. Yildiray is important because his long experience as a pop music producer has deeply impacted the way he works. The two together provide an excellent overview of film music production practices in Turkey from 2009-2013.

Mustafa Yazıcıoğlu

For Mustafa, writing music for films is above all a business. He has to think about it this way because he has to ensure that his music pays for his life and the salaries of his employees. As a business owner, he must find work, and establish and foster a set of productive relationships with other filmmakers. He often lamented that this was really all he actually did and that he never has the chance to get on with the actual work of writing music. But because he is also a composer, he must work on his business and on his music simultaneously. His work as a business owner depends on artistic success. Without that, he would have little to sell through the business side of is work. He told me that to be a successful film composer is to “find the balance between the art of music making and the reality of making money.” But this careful equilibrium is hard won because the dynamics of being both a business person collaborating with other filmmakers and a musical artist writing meaningful music are turbulent, to say the least. After working with Mustafa, it became clear that a successful composer was one who could find artistic freedom in the relatively constrained environment of a cash-strapped, freelance economy. Every step involves pulling musical inspiration from mundane conversations about business.
Mustafa’s involvement in a project always begins with a meeting. This meeting is often little more than a job interview organized to determine if he is the right person for the work. Nevertheless, it is always an important conversation because not only does he learn about the scope of the project, he always gets a sense of what the filmmakers, usually just the director, needs out of the production. The director invariably discusses his vision for the film and his expectations for his crew. Mustafa always said that if one of these two things is off, the project would inevitably fail.

When no one has worked together before, these meetings are always a delicate process, and everyone involved is trying to determine if the others are capable of delivering high-quality work. Mustafa prefers to work in groups of close collaborators who are part of a close-knit network of filmmakers, whenever possible. Working with people who are either recommended or old collaborators eliminates the strain of the initial meetings. Being hired into a new network that one does not know can be problematic because the first meetings are more about building trust than they are about the actual project at hand.

The first meeting is usually with the producer and director, or what he jokingly calls “the money and the chief.” He told me that these conversations are quite different in tone and content because they are not about the art of making films. They are more about determining if the “chemistry between the possible collaborators is right” and whether or not the partnership will be a profitable one. Usually the director just wants to know if Mustafa is well suited to the task of producing the score he has in mind. These early conversations are often tense, as there are many reputations and egos at risk. Once everyone is comfortable with the arrangements—usually a few days later—the real work begins.

Because Mustafa was still at the beginning of his career—he was in his late twenties when we began working together—he was collaborating mostly with directors and creative teams that had no money and no hope of any major financing. Consequently, the early
meetings often happened before the film was little more than a rough script. They talked about
the story, the characters, and the director’s overall aesthetic vision. More often than not the
director would say “I want the score to be something like. . .”, and name a film. After I saw this
for the first time, Mustafa told me, “this is pretty typical. They already have an idea in their head.
Because they have no musical background of their own, this is the way they tell me what they
want.” Echoing this several months later, he said, “I used to be offended that they were asking
me to copy another score. Now I know that it is just the culture here in Istanbul. They do want
that score, but they want it cheaper. My role in these early days is to give them something that
is better than what they asked for.”

Mustafa always said the necessary skill here was to know how to interpret the director. These sessions were often the first time that Mustafa had met him—for it is almost always a
man—in person, and he was obliged to not only take notes on what the director and his team
wanted, but also find a way to gather enough information to know how to work with the team as
they moved forward into the next stage of the production process. Mustafa would sit without
saying a word for hours on end, paying attention to every detail about the film and its crew that
he could see. As he explained, often the difference between writing a good score and a failure
depends on his reading of the director’s musical taste. He must constantly balance what he
feels the film needs and what he is being told by the director and his crew.

The only real exception to these two possibilities comes when a scene requires the
actors to interact with a diegetic cue. In these cases, Mustafa must write the music well before
shooting has begun. But because he must ensure that the music not only fits with the scene but
also with the score as a whole, he has to do a great deal of conceptual work well before he has
written the cue. This often forces him to do much of the preparation without the benefit of a
complete script or a complete edit of the film. He must write without the usual guidance from the
filmmakers’ other preparations. He must plunge into the difficult, and often potentially
dangerous, process of interpreting the film and setting the global terms of its aesthetic content before he has much to interpret. The tonal palette of the film, the hierarchy of cues in the film, the semiotics of particular leitmotivs, and even just the instrumentation he will work with are interconnected. Having to write a cue before much else has been done is a delicate task. Often this can go horribly wrong.

To determine if he wants to work on a film, Mustafa spends several days reading the script, regardless of its condition. In addition to using this time to see if he wants to work with the script’s creators and backers, he also needs this time to become acquainted with the story and with the broad strokes of the characters and the flow of the work. Speaking of this process he was always quick to point out, “you have to read the raw material once just to get it into your head. It either works or it doesn’t. Once you know, then the real work can begin.”

This direct access to the production heads is a feature of a decentralized filmmaking industry that depends on gigging professionals. Centralized, studio models would not operate this way. The privileged position Mustafa enjoys is typical for Turkish film productions because they are rarely large-budget affairs. Outside Turkey, few composers would have the kind of access and input that are a hallmark of Mustafa’s process. The lack of money fosters this kind of creative collaboration largely because it is a matter of necessity.

While reading the script, Mustafa takes careful notes about the narrative and emotional content of each scene. He does this to keep track of how characters interact, how they develop, and where the script requires him to include diegetic music or where there are opportunities to push the plot solely through musical sounds. Although he must be deeply concerned with the technicalities of the musical production, when reading the script he is interested in what the script says to him. He reads it looking for those cues that indicate how an audience will understand it. His own reaction is important because he needs to write music that will immediately capture that emotional impression and signal it so that an audience—one often
very distracted by other things—can share in the experience. If, on those rare occasions when he is brought on later in the production, he has actual footage to review, he “spots” the scenes to see how music can fit into them. If no footage has been shot, he will start turning his notes into early ideas, and wait for the film to be shot and edited so he can begin the spotting process.

Spotting is well documented elsewhere and is a universal practice for film composers (Prendegast 1992; Davis 1999). It involves viewing the unfinished or finalized scenes to ensure that the music is organized properly, works well within the visual and spoken events in the scene, and does not create any incongruences or inconsistencies. Prendergast and Davis quickly gloss over this important process by presenting a single spotting. For instance, Prendergast states, “the first thing a composer does before scoring a picture is, of course, to see the picture. He usually does this when the film is in what is known as the final cut (Prednergast 1992, 249). Davis says spotting can only begin once the film is “locked” (Davis 1992, 91). However, in practice, this is an ideal circumstance and is a legacy of the more regimented, factory model of the Hollywood studios. For Turkish composers, spotting a finished film is a luxury, and they are usually obliged to write their music first and spot the film afterwards, or to spot a very rough draft. Very often they are only given one opportunity to trim music to fit the scene length and to ensure that musical events coincide with visual or narrative ones. As a result, what the Turks call spotting incorporates spotting a film and timing the cues. But due to the unstable state of the film, they must work with scripts, conversations, and multiple edits and cannot use the older form of spotting and timing codified in the 1930s by Max Steiner and others (Steiner 2010, 58-60).

Mustafa always spots the filmed scenes eventually, regardless of whether or not he has first only read the script. However, he often has to make do with only a script—something that is increasingly common because as budgets decrease for most productions that do not have the luxury of foreign or private funding. In those cases it sometimes falls to the sound editor to trim
the music to length. This does not always result in a polished score. However, because of the new digital formats and the availability of cloud-based file sharing systems like Dropbox or Box, Mustafa is usually able to begin with his notes from the script and then work directly with unfinished scenes as they become available. Thus, he is continually spotting a film, making sure that his music fits, and that everything is aligned properly. Importantly, this back and forth ensures that his collaboration with the director, editor, and cinematographer is ongoing. But it also means that part of his job is to leave as little work for the next person in the chain as possible.

Mustafa was fond of saying that “creating the score for a film needs to be both personal and collaborative. That is the essence of film. We share something of our soul.” He said this in many circumstances, using the phrase as an ideé fixe while intending to say very different things. Mustafa saw this as his first responsibility; he was there to bring the emotional content of the work into sharper relief so that an audience would connect with it even more. To this end, he makes sure that the director is present for most major decisions. When he was preparing for the production KUBILAY (2010) he worked very closely with the director to spot the film. He also worked very closely with the producer, who was a major creative voice on the project.

This film was troubled from the very beginning. It is a dramatization of the life and death of Mustafa Fehmi KUBILAY, a republican soldier who was killed in a public riot in 1930 by Islamic fundamentalists and anti-republican reactionaries in what became known as the “Menemen” incident. It was a significant event in the development of the early Turkish republic that provided a reason for committed republican politicians and proponents of a secular Turkey to cooperate and push for increased secularization (KADIOĞLU 1996). Mustafa Kubilay was a lieutenant in the unit that was sent to quell the anti-government protests begun by the dervish leader Mehmed Effendi in the Aegean town of Menemen. When the army confronted the religious protesters, violence broke out that resulted in the retreat of the soldiers and in Kubilay’s beheading. This
killing outraged much of the nation and served as an excuse for the government to institute a more proactive and restrictive restructuring of the lines between public and religious life. Mustafa Kubilay is a considered to be a martyr of the republic and a nationalist hero. His death is marked and remembered by the army every year with the great pomp afforded the most important national holidays.

Because the subject matter was of social and political importance, it had several interested backers, and a great deal of funding early on. Some of this money came, albeit circuitously, from the Ministry of Culture. However, during the development of the script, the Ministry pulled the funding saying only that they no longer had faith in the project. Their opinion was that the filmmakers’ treatment of the subject matter was too light or glib for the government’s officials to feel it was “in the best hands.” Later on, Mustafa confided that it was more likely because what they had seen so far was of such poor quality, that they simply lost interest. Somewhat deflated, Mustafa and the rest of the filmmakers pressed on with their production, only now they had very little money. Every aspect of the production was slashed and the quality of the aesthetic presentation suffered greatly. They had to shoot in video rather than on film or in a digital format, and Mustafa was not able to use any musicians for his score. As a consequence, the film’s sound and video quality is more similar to that of a low-budget TV mini-series than a serious film. However, despite the cash-strapped production plan, he and the director collaborated intensively throughout the film’s production. As one of the principal filmmakers on the project, Mustafa was present for many major decisions, including much of the editing process that resulted in the final print. His score is deeply embedded in both the visual and narrative elements of the film—so much so that it is a true collaboration.

As noted above, Mustafa does not often have the luxury to work in the kind of close collaboration with the director that he would prefer. In these cases, the director sends him an edit of the film that is nearing completion. Mustafa spots the nearly finished draft of the film
rather than making notes based on the script. Here his practice more closely mirrors the Hollywood-style studio practice described by Prendergast, Davis, Steiner, and Eisler. This process is both simpler because he is able to take the timings and cues directly from something that is very close to completion. Consequently, he is able to write music tailored to fit the completed scenes rather than writing music that must be edited later on. The only danger is that it may not be quite what the director is hoping for.

The distinction between writing to a script and writing to a finished edit is significant. Spotting and then writing to a script requires meeting the emotional and narrative themes presented in the written narrative. Mustafa prefers to take every opportunity to discuss the kinds of musical sounds that the director will need and begins to mark out how these sounds will interact with the dialogue. Timings and other operational considerations are not discussed because the film needs to be shot, edited, and spotted again before those issues arise. This point is where the aesthetic considerations are the order of the day, and these conversations take on a free-flowing, abstract nature. Mustafa asks questions about the emotional nature of the scene, where this fits in the arc of the film, what kind of actors will be playing the roles, and a host of other conceptual questions. This is important work, because not only are they negotiating the practical terms of what Mustafa will do to prepare for the score, they are also talking about how this script is to be interpreted. This conversation is about what the film will be as an object to be interpreted by an audience. Consequently, much of the conversation is about what the audience needs to know, and how they should be pushed in one direction or another.

Mustafa must gauge the mood of the scene and interpret the narrative so that he can prepare music that will fit regardless of what the director, art director, and cinematographer create in its visual presentation. He must also prepare music that is conceptually aligned with the scene’s thematic, yet open ended enough so that it can be trimmed and edited to literally fit the scene in terms of length. This is where Mustafa’s skill becomes apparent, because writing
music without being able to see its visual construction, which determines the aesthetic import of
the scene and also its timing and narrative flow, is quite difficult. When he is working from a
completed edit of the film, it is easier to manage how a cue fits into a scene in terms of when it
begins, when it ends, how it aligns with events in the scene, and whether or not it will completely
fill the sonic space or sit in the background unnoticed and barely heard. Mustafa must always
trim cues to fit scenes in this way, but the way that he must write the music is largely determined
by whether he is able to spot the script or spot the film itself. He must eventually do both, but the
former allows him more artistic latitude, whereas when he is limited to the latter, he is able to
handle the practical concerns immediately in the composition process.

The notion that there is a correct interpretation awaiting a careful and engaged
interpreter, assumes that the composer encodes a particular meaning and it is the audience’s
task to identify and understand it. For this to happen both the composer and the audience must
have comparable, and indeed compatible, levels of cultural knowledge. But this is often not the
case. In Turkey it often very far from the truth. It is essential to see the implications of Mustafa’s
decisions in terms of the opening of a socio-cultural dialogue that does not assume harmonized
starting positions. Mustafa is a cultural actor with a specific background interpreting an
unfinished film according to his own tastes, while using his background as a source for these
decisions. He is interpreting these scenes for the benefit of an unnamed, unknown audience
that exists in two forms: in his imagination, and in a heterogeneous reality spread across almost
every barrier possible (geographical, socio-economic, linguistic, temporal, etc.). He writes for
the one that exists in his thoughts and hopes that it coincides with the one that will actually
watch and enjoy the film.

This means that Mustafa’s, and indeed any film composer’s work, is anticipatory. He
must anticipate the needs of the audience and provide for them. Thus, he must interpret the film
and anticipate the potential success of various pathways that an audience may use to
understand the work. He has to anticipate not only their interpretive strategies, but also fully understand the horizon of expectations that contextualize them and give them their meaning. Beyond this, he has to provide a point of view that fits within this interpretive framework and is accepted beyond all others. His task here is to decide where to orient them, what to show them, what to reinforce, and how to challenge them. He has to set up a cue that not only presents the correct interpretive information but also signposts this interpretation well enough that they know not to mistake it for any number of other possible solutions. Mustafa uses every semiotic resources he has at his disposal—instrumentation, timbre, genre, form, harmony, melodic structure, lyrics, grain of voice, previously established indexical associations, symbolic forms, etc.—to both carry the meaning and signal the cluster of possible interpretive directions. But as Mustafa, Yildiray, and Tamer all pointed out, because one cannot hope for a correct interpretation, they have to write for many possible outcomes. This means leaving the cue open-ended enough that it can accommodate any number of possible associations. This process begins with the building of a timbral palette.

Everything in a film score can have meaning. Even carelessly chosen features of a cue can be interpreted and over interpreted by an attentive audience. This means that even the most basic choices must be agonized over and carefully addressed. Because Mustafa works with a digital audio workstation and a number of VST instruments or VSTIs (Virtual Studio Technology Instrument) and physical digital and analog synthesizers, he is able to produce a staggering array of possible sounds. He is not limited, as composers were in the past, to the physical constraints of instruments. Nor is he limited by the fact that he may not have access to skilled performers. He is limited only by his skill using the tools he has at hand. And considering much of his training overlaps with the similar work done by sound designers and avant-garde computer music composers, he is quite literally able to create any sound he needs at will. This immediately presents a problem: films do not require an unlimited universe of sounds. Speaking
of his favorite piece of equipment, Mustafa told me, “What’s so great about Omnisphere is the sheer volume of sounds available, and how easy it is to modify them with the bank of onboard effects. But this comes with a problem. There is too much to do. Where do I begin?” The first step is to create the most basic framework for music making.

The first palette of sounds achieves two goals. First, it limits the composer to a set of pre-defined sounds from which to choose. Setting such limits helps Mustafa step away from the dizzying array of possible sounds, that he could design with his synthesizers and sampling gear. Even though most scores are made from nothing more than a symphony orchestra in a box, or a saz and a def that do not exist as actual instruments, Mustafa is still able to make use of constructed sounds, or to design patches himself. He often spends hours sifting through commercial file libraries of recorded and sampled sounds to find something that can be the raw material for a synthesized sound that has no connection to a real or imagined musical instrument. By selecting the tonal palette early, Mustafa, Yildiray, and Tamer set the boundaries of their compositional process, then moving on to other considerations, like form, harmonic factors, and the composition of themes and melodies.

The second purpose of cementing the timbral palette is an interpretive one. By selecting the “instruments” and created sounds, the composer is asking a set of important questions to facilitate an important set of decisions about how he will present the film’s visual and narrative aspects. Does a plot point, or a particular scene, need a large ensemble or a small one? Does it require something instantly recognizable to the audience, or could it support a more novel or even avant-garde approach to the cue? What would a melody mean to an audience if it was performed by a piano sound or something else? This is something that is important because as Cornelia Fales points out, timbre is part of the connection between the composer and their audience, “161 Timbral details in particular, it seems, are often preattentively processed for use in other cognitive operations, but not for direct examination, though it is clear that with deliberate
effort and/or instruction as to how to listen, listeners can be made conscious of qualities of sound (Fales 2005, 161).

These issues generate more questions rather than a set of clear answers. Does the selected ensemble require additional support? Could the score be supplemented with non-traditional electronic instruments for greater effect? Important considerations arise when working with synthesized instruments in a DAW environment that do not arise when writing for live musicians. The thin performances of synthesizers necessitate new techniques for both orchestration and in performance. Because he cannot rely on the acoustic properties of live performance, a composer must solve a host of timbral issues, such as the lack of “depth to the sound,” and the “thinness” that comes from using sounds that are not as harmonically rich as a physical instrument playing into a condenser microphone. Additionally, because the participatory discrepancies between musicians’ performances are missing in a synthesized environment, and the sample patches are often inadequate, Mustafa must solve these problems through techniques that go beyond just orchestration. He must attend to the sound characteristic of every note and every silence. This is effectively a shift in the compositional process because it moves the responsibility from the performers to the composer. He must manage every sound, rather than just encoding how it is to be realized and providing that information to a musician.

The “thinness” of string sounds is a particularly difficult problem. One of Mustafa’s favorite solutions is to score something with a string ensemble and then use synthesized sine wave pads to fill out the sound without adding too much to the orchestration. By pairing each string sound with a heavily processed sine wave set in unison or even an octave above and below, he fills in the overtones of the ensemble, over-emphasizing one particular set of harmonic interactions between the instruments. The effect is a “thickening of the sound” that approximates the subtle differences between a group of instrumentalists playing in unison. He
told me he does this when it becomes obvious that the sounds of the “instruments” are synthesized. By adding the sine waves, he effectively misdirects the listeners away from the shortcomings of the string patches and the lack of a group of instrumentalists playing together. An even simpler solution to the problem of a thin orchestration is to make several overdubbed live recordings of a single line. The small discrepancies between each of the performances cover many of the timbral problems that come with using synthesized instruments exclusively. The sound is fuller than a synthesized patch can produce on its own.

Often it is not just the sounds of the instruments that matter, but also the way in which they are presented rhythmically. Another of Mustafa’s methods involves using a step arpeggiator, a standard feature on synthesizers, both analog and digital, since the 1960s. The arpeggiator allows Mustafa to set the pitches in a single chord and set the rhythmical pattern for how those pitches sound without having to go through the laborious task of writing that pattern out or putting it into the MIDI event roll by hand. He can just outline the chord, set the order and speed at which they will sound and set the duration for that part independently. Then when the computer renders the track, the driving arpeggiated pattern will sound without much of the work. However, he often set an arpeggiator on a single bass line that did not sound any two pitches simultaneously. This quickly added a driving and constant rhythmical component to the line that would not alter it too much, but would add depth and drive. The arpeggiator also saves time because repeated patterns need only be produced once, and the machine takes care of the rest. It is also used for figures that create new textures. It can be used to repeat notes in a way that human musicians cannot. By having it rapidly repeat notes, turning quarter notes into a flurry of motion, he can thicken orchestrations imperceptibly without having to reorchestrate or apply time consuming filters.

These compositional tools are not easily available to a composer who works with live performers. They allow Mustafa to develop and deepen the timbral potential of the sounds he
has selected to be his “ensemble” for the score. Because Mustafa is usually trying to replicate a live symphony orchestra or ensemble of Turkish instruments, he uses these methods to make his facsimile more realistic—despite the fact that this realism is a product of methods alien to orchestral writing. Conceptually, he is limited to the timbral regularities of a standard symphonic ensemble. However, when he is not obliged to render an artificial orchestra, the possibilities become nearly overwhelming. The only limitations on his score, or cues, are a factor of his own tastes and habits as a composer. He has a set of synthesized sounds that he finds useful and pleasing. He uses them whenever he can, and they effectively become a recognizable part of his style as a composer. Every composer has a set of tools that they rely on to produce their “sound.” Yildiray, for example, still uses a 25-year-old rack-mounted Akai synth that he bought before he came to Turkey. It is a fundamental part of every film score he has ever written, and he said, “if this thing ever breaks, I’m done. I can’t do this without this thing.”

Once these concerns have been settled and the content of the timbral palette has been decided, Mustafa creates basic material for each cue. Relying on his notes for guidance, he begins investigating harmonic progressions and sketching out melodic lines. Not expecting to produce anything that is final, he either plays in, or writes out the broad outlines of the cue. Most often, this begins with a melody. Sometimes it begins with an interesting patch (synthesized sound), or it can begin with a set of chords. The idea is to set something in motion that can serve as the basis for each of the successive layers to come. Most often, Mustafa pulls a concept from his notes and tries to actualize it in sound.

This point is perhaps the most personal moment of the entire process. Mustafa’s background, musical skill, temperament, and education are activated. This is the point when the distinction between “design” and “inspiration” becomes legible. Yildiray, Ercuniyet, and Faruk are very instrument-focused. Their process is generally more improvisatorial. They create the music by playing it in, adding layers of instruments or additional layers of complexity using their
ear as a guide. Mustafa and Tamer are able to do this, but choose not to. Because Mustafa has the classical, conservatory training, his process is very similar to the paper-based methods of composers working prior to the advent of computer-aided composition. He writes music in the DAW either by notating it as if it was on paper, or by putting events into a MIDI window that is organized as a grid containing pitches and their position in time. He uses a piano as a guide to work through figures before committing them to the track. He works by considering harmonic structure and melodic development as a simultaneous structure, one supporting the other. However, the DAW environment is resistant to this kind of musical writing. Its UI (user interface) is better suited to the work of a studio engineer. It obliges the user to think in horizontal layers, and not in vertical harmonic construction—something that stands in stark contrast to Western conservatory training.

Mustafa always begins with small ensemble writing, layering bass and simply melodic lines down along with accompanying percussion. Because he is a trained pianist, the piano always plays a part in these early sketches, and allows him to consider the harmonic progression without having to enter it into the system. He usually plays in a skeletal progression that serves as a prototypical structure for the rest of the piece. He then turns to the horizontal, more melodic work, and adds additional layers like guitar parts, synthesized strings, pads, and other effects in preparation for his first important encounter with the film’s director.

As he often pointed out with an almost resigned sigh, directors have very little musical imagination, and need to be able to hear everything almost as it will sound in the final cut to understand how the cue comes together. This is why synthesizers are so useful even if live musicians will do the final recording. The draft cues will sound enough like the final version that directors can understand how the cue will sound without too much trouble. Having a mostly complete draft also allows Mustafa and the director to have more control over the recording sessions. Because the musicians recording the parts have already heard what is expected, they
are able to reproduce Mustafa’s intentions faster, which is ultimately cheaper and easier for everyone involved. However, it does mean that Mustafa has to complete the orchestration in addition to the score. This is something that makes his life much more difficult than that of film composers in the past.

Until the advent of the DAW, film composers often worked very closely with a team of musicians, arrangers, and sub-contracted composers to complete their scores. The collaboration of this team of sound editors, orchestrators, conductors, musicians, and auxiliary composers is typical in the more formal, Hollywood practices described by Prednergast (1992) Davis (1999) and Adorno and Eisler (2007). Very often they finished much of their work once a piano score was finalized and the film was spotted and the cues tailored for the scenes. This score was then given to an arranger who would realize the orchestral version. Then this full score was handed over to a horde of copyists, usually composition students studying under the composer, to write out the parts. Mustafa never uses copyists. But when budgets allow for a larger team, he often gives a roughed out file with the individual cues to an arranger to complete the score in the DAW. Budgets are rarely that generous, however, and he only works with arrangers when he is writing for commercial spots. This means he does the work traditionally executed by two or more people in the past. It always makes hitting his deadlines a very stressful affair. Working with a DAW allows for new compositional and collaborative methods and effectively eliminates a host of individuals and working hours (Hurwitz 2012, 254-257; Prager 2012, 249-253; Westfall 2012, 242-249).

Most films scores require thirty to 120 minutes of music. A dramatic film or something with a lot of narrative or visual unity will require less music with less density, whereas an action film or a film shot with a large number of short shots and short scenes could need over eighty different cues of widely varied music. This means that Mustafa has to take into account how the melodic content and thematic material will play out across a film. For films that need a sparse
score with low sonic density, he can write long cues that can be edited down to fit scenes and then reused throughout the film. For films that require a lot of action and do not have much repetition in the thematics of the narrative or visual content, he needs to plan out the entire film from start to finish, and plot out how the music will evolve and change over this time. He must always think about balancing variety with the requirements of unity. The return of a cue can be an important indication to an audience that something significant has happened. If a scene does not require this kind of directional indication in the score, he must write totally new music for each scene. It is not enough to simply write out music as a concert composer would and cut it up and sprinkle it across the scenes. This is especially true because Mustafa’s scores are full of musical moments and sound events, or “hits” that coincide with specific narrative or visual events. Because directors and editors are constantly refining scenes, he has to be ready to move these cues around or even rewrite them completely to ensure they provide the interpretive direction necessary for the scene to come together as a coherent whole.

Once his score is drafted and synchronized to the rough cut of the film, Mustafa begins to talk with the director and his team about how to refine it to fit their needs and expectations. At this point, both have usually shifted, and the editorial phase of Mustafa’s work begins. When time allows, this discussion is one that takes place in a collaborative atmosphere where he can enlist the director to suggest what changes are needed and what addition interpretive work needs to be done. This rarely happens, and so he is usually left with a set of hastily emailed notes from the director and his team and simply makes judicious edits to the cues. Mustafa rarely had to rewrite cues entirely. One of his many skills was to be able to intuitively set the right mood for the scene. His cues are rarely too “hot” or too “cool” for the director. A hot cue is music that is too big for the scene. It is music that is easily noticed and can often overbalance other elements of the scene. A cool cue, on the other hand, is one that is not that full of
information and sits in the background. The mark of a good film composer is to find a balance for each cue so that it is neither too hot nor too cold.¹

For Mustafa, the role of the composer is to make sure that the audience feels the same emotions about the film that they feel every day. “The music is a key to these emotions,” he would add, noting “if you cannot evoke them so they are identical to the ones they are familiar with, then you have lost them in fake shit and the film will fail.” He explained that he feels the responsibility keenly at this point in the process. With the bulk of the compositional work finished, he becomes more of an editor or mixing engineer trying to ensure that the score does not overstep its bounds or lead the audience astray. He always makes many more changes because he is not satisfied with the end product than he was obliged to. Because he is usually able to return to the score with some separation, he always approaches it with a new set of ideas. He tinkers with the sounds instruments made, changing timbre, changing the processing they underwent. Sometimes he even goes as far as to re-orchestrate sections to ensure that the overall sound of the cues is exactly right. Quite often, he re-watches scenes again and again with the sound turned off to get a new perspective on the meaning and inflection of the action. He always sees these changes as necessary because he has found a new way to look at the scene. He always remarked, “I compose from a point of view. The worst thing that can happen after I’ve completed a score is that I find a new way to understand the film. Then I have to make all of these changes to make sure the music fits this new vision. It is very frustrating, but if I don’t, someone in the audience who sees it in this new way too will not have a good time watching it.”

¹ Given that this metaphor sounds like a reference to Goldilocks and the Three Bears, I asked Mustafa why he used it, and if he knew its origins. He did not, and he said it was just a habitual way to articulate this issue. The closest we came to discovering its origins was the possibility that he picked it up at the University of Toronto and it is an oblique reference to the University of Toronto professor Marshall McLuhan’s article “Media Hot and Cold,” in Understanding Media (McLuhan 1964).
After working through all of the director’s notes, Mustafa’s work changes drastically as he prepares to incorporate parts recorded by live musicians. Here he leaves his role as composer behind in order to take on that of a recording engineer and producer. Live recording adds a great deal to the score, particularly because it makes up for the very real inadequacies of the synthesized approximations Mustafa is often obliged to use. However, working with actual people is a drastically different affair than sitting quietly and working on a computer for hours on end. It requires a completely different skill set and is more time consuming and expensive. For this reason, many Turkish filmmakers have simply dispensed with live musicians altogether. Television scores and most low-budget films are done almost entirely without any live musicians. The only real exceptions are scores requiring a Turkish ensemble or a saz player. There are few software packages that can handle the timbre and subtle inflections of makam-based music. As a consequence, filmmakers always use live musicians for this kind of music.

Recording live musicians also requires a completely different set of practical and conceptual tools and skills (c.f. Bobrow 1974; Diamond 2005; Meintjes 2003, 2005; Wallach 2005; Getter and Balasubrahmaniyan 2008; Bates 2008, 2010, 2012a, 2012b; Katz 2012; Moehn 2012; Solomon 2011c). One needs a studio space, high-quality microphones, and all of the associated equipment like headphones, music stands, and chairs needed to seat a group of musicians. In almost every single case, these are absent from the studios that produce film music in Istanbul. Film music can be produced anywhere, and bedroom studios are just as functional as dedicated studio spaces. Film composition studios are different because they are purpose-built for a single individual. All of the film composers I worked with worked in very cramped quarters that left little room for the populations that occupy recording studio spaces. Nevertheless, a film composer does need to occasionally set up, use, and care for the kinds of technological tools that one would find in a recording studio. While a film music studio does not have to have the dynamism of a live recording studio, it is still a complicated space. Analog and
digital synthesizers and video equipment present a number of logistical challenges. The variety and ubiquity of cables alone requires a great deal of time and dedicated attention. This may seem like a small thing, but all of this is very expensive to maintain and usually requires the composer to also employ one or more assistants to help handle some of the more mundane tasks: setting up speakers, preparing the “bone yard” (the medusa-like tangle of patch cords in the recording booth), and checking that all of the equipment is functioning well. Mustafa had one assistant in a small studio by the time I left Istanbul, but this was a burden on his work because he had to pay a salary. His new overhead costs forced him to take on more work than he wanted. He, like most composers working outside the institutionalized systems that can employ “lyric writers, instrumentalists, music copyists, arrangers, conductors, computer operators, and assistants,” like the Tamil filmmaking system described by Getter and Balasubrahmanian (2008, 128), must make do without any more assistance. Instead, he must be responsible for doing the work of all of these people whenever necessary.

Because Mustafa is usually working with a “bed” of synthesized tracks—that is, a nearly fully realized version of a particular cue—he only adds live musicians to complete something that could almost do without them. This means he brings in a few musicians at a time and records “overdubs” to replace synthesized parts. Overdubs are small segments of music, usually from ten seconds to four or five minutes, that fill in or replace a synthesized, or pre-recorded part. Overdubs serve to thicken or smooth over the synthesized parts to make their artificial character less apparent. When working on an entirely synthesized score, adding live musicians playing real instruments is a way to suture sections together. There are several instruments that do not sound convincing when synthesized, such as the saz, kanun, clarinet, violin, cello, and trumpet. If there is an exposed part for any of these instruments, Mustafa will often use a live overdub to “smooth out the sound of that cue.” Often all an exposed string part requires is a single live instrument sitting on top. Once mixed properly the effect is that of a
large string section. When doing this kind of work he always commented that “there is something about the sustain of the real thing that just fills in what is missing in the synth beds.”

An overdub session is always an ad hoc affair—so much so that when Mustafa and I worked together on his project for Üç Kadin, Üç Kader (2013), my parts were recorded in an entirely different country. My involvement began when I got a call from Mustafa while I was home in Toronto. My mobile rang, and as I turned it over I noticed that the call was from an unknown number. Mustafa and I always spoke over skype, so to get a call from him was unexpected.

“Hello?” I said with a heavy question mark.

“Paul! It is Mustafa. What are you doing right now? I’m kind of desperate right now and I need your help,” he nervously shouted into his phone. His voice was loud enough that other people at my table began to give me puzzled and mildly annoyed looks.

“I’m just working on a few things here. What do you need? Is everything OK?” I asked, hoping that he wasn’t in any trouble.

“I’m fine, I just need a clarinet part really quickly. Can I send you a file? I need about two minutes of an overdub for this film I’m working on. You know the one about the three women?”

“Sure thing. What do you need done? Do you need me to improvise like the last time, or is it finished?” I asked.

He paused for a second, seeming to gather his thoughts. “It is done. I just need the overdub. The section I’m working on just isn’t coming together. It needs a real person. Turkish people know what a clarinet sounds like and what I’ve got just won’t do. The sample box I’m using is shit. I need a new one.”

“OK. When do you need it?” I asked as he was finishing his thought with, “Gotta make more money, man. Have to buy more gear!”
He paused and then said, “As soon as possible, OK? I just sent you the file. Can you take a listen and see what you think?”

“Sure thing.” I said. “I’ll let you know.” We said our good byes and hung up.

A few minutes later, I checked my email. Mustafa’s message had just arrived with three mp3 files compressed into a large .rar that was attached to the document. There was a little text about the track, but nothing indicating what I should do with it. It was just a pair of files and a note that read “yani,” or, roughly, “this is it, you know what to do” and, “There are 3 subjects on the folder that I’m sending. Full mix-down (full track), clarinet solo (mp3), and clarinet (MIDI file). This track is 80 bpm and 4/4 or you can work with 2/4. Movie poster is attached.” I plugged in my headphones as the .rar file was processing and decompressing. The first track was marked “score mock-up,” and was a rendering of the synthesized clarinet playing a 32-bar melody that repeated once. I was clearly meant to replace the clarinet part on this track. “Easy enough,” I thought as I picked up my phone to call for help.

I contacted a friend to serve as a recording engineer and went home to my apartment listening to the track on my phone so I could memorize the melody. Once I got home, I booted up my recording laptop and downloaded the files there. I put the Nuendo native file into Reaper, the DAW I use, and had it render the clarinet part’s MIDI file into the notation view. Here the DAW takes the MIDI information and transcribes it into musical notation. The process usually creates more headaches than it is worth since MIDI files never contain information that translates well. While containing all of the correct notes, the durations encoded into MIDI files translate too literally, and are usually not adequate for performance. These mechanical transcriptions often feature figures like half notes tied over to thirty-second notes and none of the other markings (slurs, accents, articulation marks) that allow the score to be useable. I printed the music, such as it was, collected my instruments and my recording gear and went to meet my friend who had agreed to spend an hour or so recording me. I walked up to my office
building where I worked at an insights consultancy and met my friend Shane at the door. We went into the office and immediately started looking for a suitable place to do the recording in such a large space.

We decided that one of the partner’s offices would be the most suitable and set up in there because it was the quietest space and free of signal interference. We got to work unpacking my microphones, the audio interface, and the computer. My recording rig is very similar to Mustafa’s portable rig—the one that we used when he was recording some tracks for an American independent cartoon series in his bedroom. It is mostly a software system with a small breakout box to act as a control interface with the instruments and microphones, and two condenser microphones with pop screens.

Once we were set up, we did a quick signal check on the microphones. I did a quick run through of the music Mustafa had written while Shane was preparing the rig. I turned and waved to Shane, and we spent the next half hour doing several takes so Mustafa would have a choice of tracks. This is standard practice in the film industry for both actors and musicians. I had done quite a bit of this kind of work for many filmmakers by this point, and I knew to make subtle and not-so-subtle variations in the way the line was performed so Mustafa would have a wide range of options when he put it into his mix. The only part that is absolutely unchangeable is the tempo and timing of the cue. I recorded all of the tracks while listening to the mix and the click-track, to ensure that my timing was perfect. It took no more than 45 minutes for us to finish the recording from the time we arrived until we were packing up. As Shane boxed up the microphones, I rendered four mp3 files, compressed them and sent them to Mustafa, who was waiting for them.

About thirty minutes later, I was sitting at the same café with Shane. Mustafa called again. “Hey man,” he said, “these tracks are great. I’m going to choose the one with the Turkish ornamentation because, well, it is a Turkish production. Seems appropriate, right?”

“Yeah,” I laughed. “I guess so. I’m glad you like them.”
“Well, thanks for doing it so quickly. I’m going to put you up on imdb.com as soon as this is over. This overdub is the last piece,” he said quickly. “I’ll send you a copy of the film when it gets cut to DVD. Hell, you’ll be able to download the thing from Pirate Bay anyway. I won’t waste my time. Is that ok?” He hung up and that concluded my participation in that film. It was essentially the last day of post-production for Mustafa too.

The melody that I recorded that day in Toronto became a central cue in a melodrama about the lives of three different women. The cue undercut an intense scene between a father and son. The final moment of that scene ends with a feature of my clarinet performance and Mustafa’s synthesized music. He did very little to my recording beyond processing and EQing it for the final mix. He did, however, make an interpretive decision to select which of the tracks that I provided for him to use in the final mix. He decided that the intensity of the moment needed the version of the melody where I had played it with Turkish ornamentation and the tone I use for Turkish music. He chose it out of a cluster of four versions of the cue because it suited the aesthetic sensibilities and the emotional register of the scene. While the other three were in time, in tune, and perfectly fine, he said they lacked the quality he was looking for. He used the cue to underscore the pathos of the moment and found the others too sterile. He also chose the take with Turkish ornamentation because, as he said, “hey, it’s a Turkish film, isn’t it? It just fit better in the end.”

Even though several thousand miles separated us, this process does not differ markedly from the way it would happen in a studio. The only real difference was the absence of direction from the producer and the composer. The kind of budgets that Mustafa works with prevent him from spending a great deal of time with musicians in this way. The *ad hoc* nature of our collaboration and my contributions are more typical for low-budget films like *Üç Kadin, Üç Kader*. One of the reasons why Mustafa asked me to do this work for him was because he finds that I am able to give him what he needs with minimal time and effort. In this instance, the timing
was really short simply because he had only just finished writing the score and wanted to smooth over some rough sections with real musicians before he had to move on to the next step: mixing and mastering the score.

The last step in Mustafa’s process is actually part of his contribution to the post-production phase of the entire filmmaking endeavor. Throughout our time together, Mustafa was always careful to point out that this phase takes much longer than shooting the entire film or writing the score itself. This is because the final mix is only the first step in mastering each cue in preparation for its placement in each scene. There are quite a few steps involved in mixing, editing, rewriting, remixing, and finally mastering the entire soundtrack. Very often this process is quite complicated because there are several teams working on the film simultaneously. The director and editor are usually completing the work of cutting the film into its final shape. The sound designers are finalizing the non-musical components of the film’s soundtrack. The mixing engineer, music producer, composer, and sound editor are working together to mix the dialogue and the score simultaneously to ensure that each element fits within a cohesive whole. For large budget films, a different person executes each of these tasks. Very often, however, Mustafa does this work himself.

First each cue is mixed so that the final track is sonically and musically legible. This is a significant process in itself, and is usually one of the last steps in preparing any musical recording. However, this is only the first step in preparing the musical contributions to the post-production cycle. While the cues have usually been tailored to a draft version of the edited film, the editing process usually continues while Mustafa is preparing each cue. This means that once he receives a final edit, he often has to trim or rearrange many of the cues. This final cut then goes to a sound editor who will incorporate each of them into the mix with the dialogue and the foley work (if the budget allows). Each of these transitions requires further interpretive effort. Even something as seemingly trivial as the volume of a particular cue can have a great impact
on the emotional and narrative qualities of the moment. If one swell in the music attracts too much attention from the visual flow or the scene or the clarity of the dialogue, then the scene can be potentially harmed—often irreparably. The final mixing and mastering process is one where the sound team works together to ensure that everything in the soundtrack is interacting harmoniously. These sessions take quite a bit of time because of the degree of discussion that is required to wrestle everything into place.

**Yildiray Gürgen**

Yildiray’s compositional approach differs from Mustafa’s in many ways, mostly because he received his training as an audio engineer at a time when DAWs did not dominate the industry and because he developed many of the methods he uses as DAWs became more usable and widespread. Also, because Yildiray is not a conservatory-trained composer and works almost entirely in the DAWs digital environment. He rarely works with pencil and paper, and never writes the score down until it is finished. He works entirely in his DAW, spending long hours sitting at his small desk tinkering with filters and adjusting MIDI events. He layers voices more intuitively, working out harmonic relations and voice leading in the DAW or on a guitar or keyboard, rather than shifting to notation early in the process. Also, because Yildiray continues to run a successful popular music production studio he has the resources to employ three to four assistants at any one time. His assistants do everything from setting up his space to taking on some of the orchestration, scoring, mastering, polishing or even recording duties while he concentrates on composition and collaborating with Mahsun and Özcan, the directors of his films.

During my time in Istanbul, Yildiray’s working studio, GEN Music, was tucked away on the fifth floor of a nondescript office building in Şişli, a moderately wealthy suburb in the north-
central part of the European side of Istanbul. This is significant because compared to Mustafa’s workroom and Tamer’s large studio, it is quite a small and modest space. The common room at the front of the studio is lined with the posters of the many films Yildiray has scored and with the publicity images of many of the singers and musicians he has written for, produced, and recorded over the years. Even though only about six or seven people can sit comfortably in this room, the space is actually larger than the studio itself—almost three times as big. This demonstrates the impact of technology on the way contemporary recording studios work, because his actual studio space cannot be larger than 250 square feet and contains only two chairs, a tiny rickety coffee table that would strain under the weight of a tea tray, and a workstation with a single computer—a Macintosh Pro tower with a pair of powerful sound cards and a bank of external hard drives. The back of the room has a tiny door that leads to a recording booth just large enough for one person—although that depends on who the person is. I did not fit into that space when Yildiray forced me to record a ten-second cue for him near the end of my time in Istanbul. Beyond that, there is little more to Yildiray’s studio—something that would be quite surprising to the people who listen to the six to eight albums a year he records and produces while not working on films. Despite its diminutive size, it is one of the hardest working studios in Istanbul. It also produces some of the most widely heard music in Turkey.

One particular example came when he was working on a new cue for the television series Hayat Devam Ediyor (roughly, Life Continues or Life Goes By), a series that has since gone on to become one of the most important mini-series in Turkish television history. He was reworking music used in his and Mahsun’s earlier films to prepare for the show’s preproduction. My involvement in Yildiray’s work on this series began one weekend evening in October, when I visited him in his studio. In fact, it began as I walked up the seven flights of stairs to get to the front door. This walk up the stairs had became part of the visit Yildiray. I made it a habit to walk

2 He has since moved to another, much larger location in the same neighborhood.
up the familiar stairs in the creeping late night darkness without turning on the lights. It was easier to do so because the light switches were hard to find. Making this ascent in the dark made me more aware of the smells and sounds of the building. On this particular ascent, I noticed immediately that the walls were vibrating with a soft, yet surprisingly violent sound. The entire building seemed to be alive with a nervous tension, and as I stood at the bottom of the steps I wondered if construction in the area was making the building seem to shudder with a series of vibrations. However, with each step up the shallow concrete stairs, I noticed that the vibration was getting stronger, and that it had a low pitch. I soon realized this vibration was actually sound and was coming from inside the building. I also found I was walking in time to this dull, low vibration that was pounding out staccato triplets. The closer I got to Yildiray’s studio the louder it became. Walking past the sex shop on the third floor, I noticed that the dull vibration was a very low D. By the time I passed the lawyer’s office on the fourth floor, I heard the faintest hint of a drum pattern that twisted in and out of the thudding triplets. Each stroke of the def was accentuating the mechanical thud of the triplet. Together they made a beat that was rapid, full of energy, and driving forward with a furious intensity. By the time I passed the travel agent’s office on the sixth floor, it was clear that this beat was reverberating from Yildiray’s studio. And once I arrived and pushed open the door to his front room, my head was absolutely throbbing with the sound.

I walked through to his little recording studio and had to tap him on the shoulder to get his attention. “What on earth are you doing?” I asked. “This seems absolutely ridiculous! Are you trying to get thrown out of your building?”

Yildiray turned around and looked at me with the frenzied intensity of someone who was really enjoying themselves. “Paul!” he screamed through the noise, “I’m glad you’ve come. You have to hear what I’ve been doing.”
“Yildiray,” I said calmly, “I think the entire neighborhood can hear what you are doing right now. What the hell is this? What have you been working on?”

He winked, punched me in the shoulder, and sat down indicating that I should do the same. Without another word he took a deep breath, turned to the computer, hit the space bar and brought the entire room into silence. Turning around slowly, he fixed his eyes on me and said, “I’ve been playing with some music that I wrote for New York’ta. I want to find a way to bring the intensity I put in the mosque scene near the beginning. I’m thinking of doing it for a cue that will be part of the standard music for Hayat. Mason [meaning Mahsun Kırmızıgül] liked that cue and wants something really strong for some of the more powerful moments. I’ve been building up the rhythm tracks again to put on a new melody.”

“I heard,” I said, “but what is that triplet figure? That patch sounds ridiculous. Is it just a bass drum?”

“No. That is the beauty of it all. It is actually a helicopter sound that I’ve slowed down. Listen.” And with that, he turned back to the computer, hit the space bar and brought the room into chaos once again. As the beat pounded away, shaking the only window’s glass in its frame, he began to mute the other tracks to isolate the pounding triplets. With his cursor he highlighted the entire section, went into a menu option, and accelerated the sample 300 percent. Set to continue in a continuous loop, the sound played back at its normal speed and the regular, familiar thud-thud-thud-thud sound of a helicopter immediately became clear.

He turned and said, “I started with this sound. I was poking around in some sound effects patches on the new sample DVD I bought and found a whole bunch of noise ones like this. It is simple enough that you can use it for almost anything. I was toying around with slowing it down and speeding it up. When I turned the speed down, it sounded like this.”

With that he turned around again and undid the processes that got it back to a point where it sounded like a helicopter. The now familiar triplet beat resurfaced from the helicopter
noise as he went back to unmuting the tracks. Once all of the other tracks jumped back into life, he pulled out the little keyboard that sat on his computer table just above his keyboard and tweaked a few knobs. He created a new track under the seven that were pounding in our ears and selected a patch from a list of preselected patches he had created for the tonal palette for the composition. He hit the spacebar, stopping the music briefly to engage the recording function, and then hit it again to begin recording. After two bars of click track sounded alone, he played in a short string passage over the triplet beat.

“This is what I’ve been playing around with. It is something similar to the main theme for the series, but the beat adds an urgency that I want,” he said as he played in (keyed in the notes on his small desktop keyboard) the last few bars of the passage. “I think that I’ll be able to just play around with this for awhile until I get it fairly close.” We went on to discuss other things that day, and as I was leaving he told me that he would continue to work on it through the night. He told me to come back in a few days to see what he had developed.

Three days later, I was climbing the stairs again and feeling the familiar pounding shake the building. This time it was slower and more deliberate. The quick *def* strokes that had made the earlier version so nimble had been reduced. In their place was a soaring orchestra playing passages with the distinctive turns and inflections so common in the *arabesk* style—a particular calling card of his scores. The line the strings were playing marked out the rhythm of the original *def* part. The music was thick and lush and evoked the kind of deep drama that is also a marker of Yildiray’s scores. As I pushed open the door, Yildiray raised a hand to stop me without even turning around. He was intently adjusting some values on one of the inner string tracks, trying to get the viola patch to cooperate and perform the nuanced slide that he wanted.

“Sorry, I’m still working. Sit down. You have tea, right?”

“Yes,” I said as I threw myself into the usual chair in the corner and adjusted the hot glass that I had just been handed by his assistant.
I watched Yildiray work. He was spending time carefully adjusting the volume levels of the viola lines by changing the height of the volume control in the track box. To make each volume change, he had to set a marker that broke the line of the volume control, create another marker to delineate the end of the new volume and then adjust the level and pitch of the line in between the markers to set the volume level and strength of the crescendo or decrescendo. Each one would take him several seconds and required a dizzying number of clicks with his mouse. It was careful work, and his hands moved as if he had been at it for some time.

I sat listening to the sound of his mouse clicking away for a while. Eventually it slowed down as he lost his intensity. I took the advantage of the moment and asked him, “So, what have you been up to recently? I’m dying to hear the full track.”

He turned around in his swivel chair, stood up, waved at the screen as he walked out and said, “have a look for yourself.”

I got up, and sat in his chair. It was the kind of chair that feels like it is about to give way underneath you because of overuse. I felt like I would slip out of it because I clearly did not know how one was meant to sit in it. As the music continued to pound away through his gigantic monitors, I grabbed the mouse and began scrolling through the piece. What I saw was evidence of an immense amount of work.

Where there were once seven independent mono tracks, there were now twenty stereo tracks. Some had three to five layers of retakes where Yildiray had put something into the system, and then changed his mind. Logic\(^3\) organizes the retakes by putting shadowed rectangles behind the active track. For a few of the finished tracks there were so many retakes that made the track line look like a deck of cards knocked slightly askew. I clicked on several of his tracks to expand the view so I could see them all. With all of them open simultaneously, I

\(^3\) Logic is the name of the DAW made by Apple that Yildiray uses. It is one of the many professional suites used in filmmaking all over the world.
saw several drastically different takes. Each represented a different idea that had been abandoned in favor of the one that covered it in the stack. Many had the markers of the same kind of careful work that Yildiray had been doing when I arrived. They had several filters and processes assigned to their individual track, and had velocity and volume adjustments throughout. What I saw represented many long hours of effort and creative decision-making.

Yildiray had developed the cue organically, layering complementary and contrapuntal lines around the original helicopter patch that each pushed and stretched the germinal "thud, thud, thud" of the sample. He had spent a great deal of time filtering the original patch so that it lost some of its intensity and presence. He did so to ensure it would sit in the background more easily. He had also mirrored the track with some other percussive sounds so that it would poke through the mix when the pulse needed to cut across the string tracks he had layered on top. What he had done was create a clever play on the ubiquitous maksum (maqsoum) usul (4/4 rhythmic cycle) such that, as you listened to it, your focal awareness would cycle in and out of the duple meter and the triple meter of the helicopter patch. Maksum commonly appears in Turkish cinema in a form adapted to follow the backbeat pattern of western popular music. Composers use it as a kind of perpetual motion machine, driving a great deal of the up-tempo cues, and almost anything set in the current Turkish genres of pop music. The “Turkish” techno and heavily processed, mainstream pop are built entirely on this beat. Yildiray’s new adaptation created a rhythmic pattern that was under strain. Both of the two halves were competing for space and primacy in the mix. The effect was a kind of Cubist impression where as one listened, your ear would hear the beat in triple meter but catch fleeting echoes of its duple meter manifestation. You would suddenly catch the other side and lose track of the triple meter pulse. It was an effect that David Locke once described as an essential feature in Ewe Gahu.

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4 Velocity is a MIDI control feature that determines how “hard” a note is struck or played. The velocity control has a lot to do with the timbre of a particular sound because many patches are velocity sensitive and will change quite drastically in response to the value of the velocity metric.
drumming (Locke 2004, personal communication). However, this beat was ultimately lost under the canopy of sweeping strings he had layered over the mix. The beat was simply a mechanism for pushing the string melody that was set in a half-time duple meter that moved much more slowly than the quicker beat. The string line was longer and slower, so that it seemed as if it was written for an entirely different cue. As I muted the rhythm tracks and listened to the string parts alone, I noticed that the mood was much more somber and muted. When I added the pulsing rhythm tracks again, they seemed to drive the string parts forward, making up for their lack of motion.

The effect of all of this was a single cue that functioned as three cues. The rhythm track was thick enough to stand alone. The string parts were also separable: they presented enough interest that they would be sufficient to underscore anything but the most active scenes. Together, they were a third construction, one that was full of motion and emotional depth.

Yildiray came back in, and I turned and said, “This is huge. I’m flabbergasted.”

Smirking he said, “I know, right? I’m pretty happy with it.” “Do you want to see the scene?” he asked quickly.

“Of course!”

He pushed me out of his chair and signaled that I should return to mine. He then went hunting through a number of file folders on his desktop. This was something I knew would take some time because for someone who works exclusively on a computer; he was not the most organized in his file management. I often had to wait quite some time for him to find the right file and load it up.

“Aha!” he exclaimed after some time, and leaned to turn on the monitor. We turned to the screen and saw the initial scene markers that showed where the rush came from, what take it was selected from, and other details about what we were about to watch. The scene flicked into life and I saw an establishing shot of a mosque—Istanbul’s Suleymaniye to be exact. The
clip was entirely silent because it was a straight rush that had come directly from the editor’s early drafts and had not had any post-production processing whatsoever. The color was off. The framing was not quite right. The cuts were crude and not entirely in the right places for the scene to work properly. We sat and watched it in silence.

The clip began with the establishing shot taken from a helicopter. The shot turns slowly counterclockwise, showing several angles of the mosque’s exterior. Then all of a sudden the clip cuts to an interior shot of the mosque. Yildiray quickly mentioned that this shot was of another mosque—something I had picked up already given that this interior shot showed something that looked nothing like the Suleymaniye. A group of dour looking men sit on the carpeted interior. They are gathered in a circle holding each others shoulders and are slowly swaying back and forth in a manner reminiscent of Bektaşi Sufis. The camera continues to circle around them so that this ring of men appears to continue the same rotation the camera began in the establishing shot of the mosque. The longer shot of this is interrupted by several close-ups of their faces, showing a group of bearded Muslim men locked in an intense experience—something approaching a zikir (Sufi devotional ceremony), but one that has been carefully constructed to not cause offense. Given the fact that the film, New York’ta Beş Minare (2010) features a long sermon about what Islam is and its relation to violence, respect for Islam is clearly one of the central themes of the film. Mahsun would never allow a zikir to be presented in a disrespectful manner. So he and Yildiray made several changes to the ceremony so that it did to cross any lines.

From this first viewing, it was clear the director (Mahsun) and editor’s intent was to suggest these men are not a benign group of devotees, but are rather a dangerous group of zealots. The close-ups begin to come faster and faster, interrupting the circling shot more often and more chaotically. The quick editing presents their faces in a haphazard way that was a
jumble of strangely angled images that evoked a sense of menace. The fact that at this point the scene was totally silent did little to distract me from this message.

After about forty-five seconds of this, the men suddenly stop moving and the villain of the film is revealed, hunched on the floor at the center of the circle. The scene closes with a shot of a wizened old man with a melodramatically sinister look on his face. Yildiray immediately said, “Damn, sorry about that. This scene should start with the helicopters taking off.”

He then pulled up a ten-second clip of three black military helicopters taking off from an airfield and added it to the beginning of the scene we had just scene in Logic. While I had been watching the footage, he had been moving the entire set of clips into the audio software so he could show me how it would fit together in the finished scene. He turned to me, having just set the entire clip into a continuous loop, and said, “Now listen to this. This is what I’m thinking.”

He then unmuted the original helicopter sound and matched it to the helicopters taking off. As they took off on the monitor, he unmuted the first elements of the helicopter-inspired track he had built several days before. The sound effect of the helicopters taking off matched the helicopters as they lifted off the ground. Then, almost imperceptibly the music began to come in from the background, the drum track making a crescendo until it eventually swallowed up the realistic sounds of the helicopters. Then the scene changed to the images of the mosque. At this cut, the strings began to play a simplified version of the melody he had written for the scene. Then, as the men began to sway and chant, the strings reached their fullest volume and thickness. As their faces began to flicker across the screen, he began to push a slider on the screen to make the underlying thud, thud, thud, of the drum patch push through the string sounds. The effect allowed the rhythmic track to break the intensity of the strings and to highlight the quickening tempo of the music and the cuts. Finally, as the villainous imam’s face flashed onto the screen, the strings abruptly dropped out, leaving only the thud, thud, thud, of the fundamental patch to continue. It tapered off, muted and echoing, mimicking how all of this
would sound in the space itself and suggesting that the helicopters had arrived. Yildiray had used the diegetic sound effect of helicopters as the jumping off point for a cue that would take the audience from a point where the heroes have decided to capture the imam and his group, turned it into non-diegetic music that underscored the beginning of this raid, and ended with a fade back into a diegetic sound of helicopters arriving at the mosque. When connected to the visual material, the entire cue appeared to grow organically from the sound of the helicopters. But what it created was a sense of motion that contextualized the menacing movement of the praying men and the jagged intercutting. It did this while also creating a soaring sense that made the appearance of the mosque seem natural and explained the circular motion of the camera. The fact that the underlying rhythmic tracks were constantly competing with the string parts added to the tension of the scene and prefaced the struggle that was about to begin once the helicopters had landed.

Just ten years before, this entire process would have taken weeks and involved tens, if not hundreds of people (given that an orchestra would have been needed to play the cue). Yildiray was able to do all of the work in just a few days and double-check his decisions by bringing all of the parts together in a mock-up of the final scene. Yildiray uses Logic in this way to replace all of the people who would have been involved in this process. While he is not unique in using this software, his facility and virtuosity with the tools at his disposal makes him a formidable musician. Logic allows him to be a composer, musician, editor, sound designer, and recording engineer almost simultaneously. As such it is an essential part of his organic process. He is able to work directly with the visual material in the software, and respond to it in realtime as he builds the soundscape that will bring it to life.
The Computerized Musician – Working in a Technoculture of One

Technologically enhanced composition is now the norm in writing for film around the world. This is having a profound effect on local and global film making practices. The boundaries between once discrete national cinemas are tumbling because of the new norms in globalized technological production. There are considerable gains to be made by transitioning to computerized music production—a fact that is true despite the sometimes staggering cost of the equipment and software. The portability of digital files and the ubiquity of easily downloadable music make almost anything available to anyone with a computer and an internet connection. When we turn to production, we see that the same ease of access and the same transferability fundamentally change the act of making music, or indeed film. The introduction of computerized tools into existing practices has made things much more complicated, albeit faster. However, technology-enhanced production and the consequent digital output allow musicians to transcend economic and geopolitical boundaries (Schloss 2004; Greene 2005; Slobin et al. 2008). The rapid development in computing technologies has served to make the apparatus for distributing high-quality films cheaper and to make them more widely available than before. However, these new tools have had far-reaching effects. Importantly, because it is now much easier to shoot, edit, and process raw footage there have been major shifts in the creative and technical roles on a film crew. The computer has not replaced anyone, or any role as such. Rather it has displaced some and forced the division of labor to be reconfigured. It has also expanded the expectations placed on those who play the key roles of director, editor, and composer, to name a few. Each must now be skilled in not just one role, but in many. For example, composers must now be ready and able to write in almost any genre, using whatever sonic inputs seem reasonable. They have to be masters, or at least very good at approximating, a dizzying array of genres and musical traditions. They also have to be competent recording engineers, producers, and orchestrators—all things not traditionally within their required skill set.
As a consequence, flexibility is key and they need to be able to blend live performance with electronic sounds as needed. It is also a practical thing. All of the music finds its way to a DAW anyway because that is now the industry standard for audio recording. The vast majority of composers have adapted and have become facile and even virtuosic users of this kind of software. It is now imperative to view the DAW not simply as a tool of recording, but as a tool of composition and even performance. This is certainly the case in the wider world of electronic music (both avant-garde and commercial) and with those who are experimenting with melding Western classical music and electronica, such as Owen Pallett, Nico Muhly, Ryan Lott, Shara Warden, Gabriel Prokofiev, and others.

Even though filmmaking and film composition have both become dominated by electronic technologies, the impact these technologies have had has been unequally distributed between them until recently. Filmmaking has always been a heavily technological activity. As I described earlier, in the past it was itself a manifestation of the advancement of cutting edge technology. Cameras, projectors, film stock, editing desks, and the chemical processes for fixing negatives and making prints, were all the result of significant advances in technological development in many areas. In Turkey, the rise of film making as mode of artistic activity was hampered by Turkish filmmakers’ inability to obtain these advanced technologies as they developed their practices as technologicized producers. As the mechanical technologies were gradually replaced by electrical and then electronic variations, filmmaking became easier to do. The advances in electronic systems and video tape made much of the filmmaking process faster because the affordances of these systems were specifically designed to increase ease of use and speed. However, until computerized music production and recording technologies became significantly chapter in the late 1990s, most Turkish film composition was done as it was in the early days of filmmaking. The personal computer and the mature DAW has ushered in a new way of working, and film music composers have only recently entered the entirely
digital world enjoyed by their counterparts in visual departments. What I witnessed in Istanbul is a period at the end of the first ten years of film composition practices entirely organized around the intervention of the computer and the DAW. Thus, it is necessary to consider the impact of this intervention and the rise of a musical technoculture in Turkish film.

The concept of a technoculture, coming as it does from communications and media theory, is necessarily concerned with communication. Most consumer technologies we use today are more-or-less devoted to communication of some kind. And this is important, because for most people the concept of technology is focused on the consumer tools they carry around in their back pockets. However, this grounding in communication and community formation comes from the development of these technologies and the productive decisions made by the producers and the scholar’s that follow their efforts. In their introduction to *Times of the Technoculture: From the Information Society to the Virtual Life* (1999) Kevin Robins and Frank Webster make it clear that the trajectory of technological development has shaped how we understand how technologically-enabled cultural activity.

The discourse of technological revolution has taken a rapid succession of forms. At the end of the 1970s, the principal concern was with the silicon chips that made the new technologies possible, and the talk was of the ‘microelectronics revolution’. A little later, the concern shifted to the capacity of the new technologies to process and store information, and we heard about the ‘IT revolution’. Then, through the 1980s, interest turned to the communications function of the new technologies, and the revolution was said to be one in both information and communications technologies (ICTs). There was growing interest, into the 1990s, in the Internet, with plans to inaugurate the ‘information superhighway’, and with projected scenarios for the global ‘network society’. Now, at the end of the 1990s, the agenda is commonly defined in terms of ‘cyberrevolution’ and the advent of the ‘virtual society’. We may regard these changing discourses on technological revolution as reflecting the changing technoscape of the last twenty years (1).

Expanding on this, I argue that what fascinates us now is the technological intervention itself. Consumers of this technology and scholars alike are fascinated with the impact that technological advances have in our daily lives. This fact has not been lost on the technology
industry who stands to profit from this fascination, and the idea that technology drives social change is now as basic feature of marketing and internal discussions (Hartley, 2017). Musicians and musical scholars are not immune either, and this fascination is present in our discussions of musical technoculture (or should that be techno-music-culture?). As Louise Meintjes notes,

Trade press authors and scholars writing about studio-sound engineering have of course been captivated by the innovative and distinctive features of the subject under study, namely the technological gear and electronic advances that seem to make creative processes in the studio different from those on the stage or street. Thus writers have largely focused on professionals working in European or American metropoles, major centres for the consumption of high-tech equipment. State-of-the-art design and fully integrated use of electronics is assume in the discussions (26).

This fascination with gear has its problems. Very often we focus on the technology itself and see it as a transformative, rather than as a mediating influence that guides existing activities in new directions. In part, this is because it is all too easy to believe in a technological revolution that transforms society in the way the industrial revolution swept over a non-industrialized agrarian England and to believe that this revolution is repeatable (Williams, 2016; Verbeek 2011). This is what I call a technology-first perspective, and it is growing in importance in contemporary discussions about technology because it is in the technology industries best interest to keep it there. However, I argue that this apparent revolution is not as revolutionary as it seems, and the changes it seems to bring are still social and cultural changes driven by human beings. Technology serves more as an addendum or accelerant to existing practices and behaviors. This is because electronically-enabled technology can only do a few things when it interacts with human users. It affords users changes in scale, speed, and repeatability to pre-existing tasks while shrinking distances and including more people. Technically, every task we use electronic technologies to accomplish can be done without it. It just takes longer, or requires more people to do it. Following a conversation I had in 2017 with roboticist Kim Jin Oh, it is most
appropriate to see technology as a mediator between a human being as a task. It modifies the relationship of the accomplishment of the task through an intervention.

To understand the potential of the technological intervention, it is best to examine the user/musician and the tool in relationship with each other, since they are essentially working towards the completion of a single task. The technological intervention into this relationship and its mediation becomes clearer as you investigate how the tool’s affordances and designed features change what could be an unmediated application of effort towards completion of task. This view preserves considerations of human agency in the relationship and allows for social considerations to be examined alongside the user experience (UX) and affordances of the technological intervention. This follows Lysloff and Gay’s statement, “new technologies, on the other hand, are volatile. Their social meaning is not established” a new technological device might be known to only a few people or be economically unfeasible, its social affects debate, its intended use subverted. Thus, we argue that the technological device, whether it is a quill pen or a personal computer, gains meaning through human agency (2003, 10). However, because the relationship is important, the social life of the technology is important too. Lysloff and Gay’s comment helps illuminate this as well, “That is, a device like the piano takes on meaning not only because it is part of a “cultural activity” but also as a result of its own history, both as an idea and a concrete object” (8). Taken together, their combined agency, social histories, and capacities create a new explanatory platform for why the relationship tackles the task in a new way. The mediation of user and task provides these features into that task:

1. **Novelty** – The user is able to do something they otherwise could not without the tool. The tool and user work in conjunction to achieve either a new task or to do it in a novel way. This is the rarest of the alterations.
2. **Extension** – The user is able to expand their own abilities beyond what they could accomplish alone. The tool can be seen as an adaptation of their body, knowledge, or information processing abilities. The tool and the user work together to accomplish the task and the relationship expands what is possible.
3. Displacement – The tool displaces some of the capacities or responsibilities of the user and assumes them itself. The user is either relieved of unwanted responsibilities, or must cede some of their own.

4. Transference – The tool transfers capacities or responsibilities between users or other tools. The tool allows for the sharing or exchange of roles or responsibilities. It can often be a platform for the redistribution of user’s roles.

5. Combination – The tool combines, collapses, or eliminates roles or responsibilities. The tool allows users to accomplish tasks that might require multiple users, or to eliminate entire sub-tasks entirely, thus eliminating roles.

In the context of wired sound, all of these are important. However, displacement, transference, and combination are perhaps the most relevant because together they encapsulate the effects that a DAW had on the music composition process in my experience. This is important because the creative activity I saw in my friend’s studios is distinctly different from what I experienced being a session musician in recording studios and from the descriptions of wired sound in the ethnographic examinations of recording studios by Austin (1993), Diamond (2005), Katz (2102), Meintjes (1997, 2003, 2005), Moehn (2012), Porcello (1996), Wallach (2005), Théberge (1997), and Zak (2001). I will go into more detail below, but this is because the film composition studios I saw were what I call production studios that have more in common with the spaces devoted to producer activities described by Joseph Schloss (2001) and René Lysloff (2003), than to spaces that are devoted to documenting sound, i.e. recording studios. While many of the technologies are similar in both of these spaces, they are used to different ends. Additionally, DAWs are used in a different way, and their capacities are prioritized so differently so that they are almost different tools altogether. The mediating role of the technology is defined by displacement and combination so much so that the musicians and their productive dialogue is all but eliminated in favor of a single composer/musician who fills all the roles and makes all the decisions. Thomas Porcello references the need to consider these in different ways when he says,
First, sound recording technologies and practices converge to create a frequently complex relationship between the documentation of musical or sonic events and performances, and their creation in the act of recording. The distinction between documentation and creation has, of course, been important for decades: the earliest day of electronic recording, when mixing could alter the balance of instruments in an ensemble, or the advent of multitracking, which first allowed for overdubbing, both led to criticism that technology could “dupe” listeners into thinking that they were hearing and ensemble performance that, in fact, had never taken place. . . But I wish to point to something more nuanced here, namely that for most recorded musics (purely electronic music may be the sole exception) the relationship between documentation and creation is always present in some configuration and is an empirical fact that necessitates close scholarly attention to its configuration on a case-by-case basis (2005,272-273).

Thomas Turino expands on this with the distinction between high fidelity recording and studio audio art (Turino 2008, 2009). He makes the distinction this way,

High fidelity refers to the making of recordings that are intended to index or represent live performance. High fidelity recordings involve genre-specific discourses of authenticity judged in terms of "liveness," i.e., that the music has been or could be performed by real people in real time. Regardless of whether such recordings are initially made at a festival as field recordings, or in a concert, or one musician and track at a time in a studio, high fidelity requires special recording techniques, selection, mixing, and editing practices necessary to represent liveness in the sound of the recording, and to meet the expectations of reception framed by the medium of recording itself. Additional artistic roles for making recorded music - including the recordist, producer, and engineer - also help delineate high fidelity as a separate field of artistic practice (2009, 102-103).

. . . studio audio art involves the creation and/or manipulation of sounds with synthesizers, computers, and other techniques in a studio to make an art object (a "sound sculpture") in the form of a recording that is specifically and purposely not intended to represent or be related to real-time performance. This field is not defined by the use of electronic sound sources and tools, per se. By now computers and synthesizers are also commonly used in the other three fields. Electroacoustic music is a prime example of studio audio art (2009, 104).

The DAW, and other software or hardware digital technologies are facilitators of both of these fields of musical practice. I argue they are fundamentally different in each. The technology is the same, but the relationship is quite different, which results in a profoundly different use-case and outcome. This is made clear in the role of the DAW in the production studio space where a film, composer writes, encodes, and performs their score without the help of anyone else—even
without musicians. Their production studio uses the DAW as a tool to extend, combine and displace, whereas the recording studio DAW is a tool for transference and displacement both organized around collaboration. The structure of musical production itself is altered because the differences in the kind of technological intervention alters what is actually going on, who is involved, and where and when it happens.

A model for the actions involved in high fidelity production is as follows:

2. Encoding – The notating, arranging, and/or orchestrating process.
3. Sounding – The performance of the music by musicians
4. Documenting – The recording of the performances.
5. Processing – Post-production audio manipulation.
6. Mediating – Rendering the recording it its distribution medium.
7. Resounding – Playing the recording through audio equipment.
8. Receiving – Listening to the music and its reception by an audience.

Whereas, the model for computer-centric film composition is quite different.

1. Generation/Encoding – The combined writing, notating, arranging, and orchestration process.
2. Processing – Post-production audio manipulation.
3. Secondary Processing – Putting the musical audio in the mix of the film.
4. Mediating – Rendering the recording as a track embedded in a film.
5. Sounding – Playing the music through audio/visual equipment.

It is important to notice that the first sounding phase, the performance that is recorded, is missing in the computer-centric process. This lack also eliminates the documenting process, which is not needed as there is nothing to record. The loss of these two phases have a profound effect on the resources needed to complete this music. Spaces can be different. People can be eliminated. Dialogue is silenced. And the composer becomes the arbiter of choices that are normally the work of many. And this means that the technology is different, despite being common to both spaces. While this point is paradoxical, it is essential because, as Lysloff and Gay sate, “Indeed, our definition of technology encompasses not only the technological artifact
but the ways in which technologies are used and conceived (2003, 7). I would even go as far as
to extend this to the product as well. Recording studios house a different practice that results in
a different product than their production counterparts. Film music production studios are even
more different, and the technologies they employ are only comparable in passing.

Perhaps most striking is the DAWs influence on the population and activity within a
recording studio. Louise Meintjes’s book *Sound of Africa!* provides the basis for a drastic
comparison that demonstrates how the DAW depopulates a studio, changing it from a social
space, to a workspace (2003). In her description, a recording studio is a fertile ground for
sociability and dialogue. The music is produced through collaboration and through a continuous,
iterative process of development and refinement. While she notes that digital technologies had
influenced the sound and efficiency of recording by her time in field, the studio experience she
describes is more similar to live recording studios or studios of earlier decades (Meintjes 2003,
78-79). The DAW’s depopulating effects are most clearly seen in their tendency to eliminate
people, equipment, and conversation. that working film music studios in Turkey have very few
people. One composer and at most two assistants are all anyone needs to have a successful
studio. In fact, one need not have any help at all. This is in stark contrast to the bustling,
populated space of Downtown studios, Meintjes field site and the descriptions in other accounts
of recording studio activities (Austin 1993; Diamond 2005; Meintjes 1997, 2003, 2005; Moehn
2012; Procello 1996; Théberge 1997; Wallach 2005; Zak 2001). Meintjes, Diamond, Moehn,
and Wallach especially describe studios filled with gear, musicians, engineers, assistants, and
hangers-on, and their descriptions provide snapshots similar to the many working studios I have
played in during my time as a performer. The reason for this is “with superb studios, an array of
everse excellent analog and digital equipment, and fine engineers, Downtown Studios is able to
accommodate a wide range of recording and production projects” (Meintjes 2003, 82). Here, I
believe, she reveals the reason why Downtown Studios is so populated with people and equipment: it is a studio that accommodates music of all kinds and is a recording studio devoted to the documentation of sound produced by musicians.

The studios I saw in Turkey were dedicated to film music production alone using a production practice that replaces human beings with synthesizers and samples. They are streamlined affairs almost devoid of the activity and accoutrements of a recording studio. Gone are the musicians, microphones, cables, monitors, large mixing boards and racks of breakout boxes (analogue and digital synthesizers, filters, amplifiers and the like). In their place, the studio has three or four computer monitors, a 61 key midi controller, surround sound speakers, computer towers, and a lone composer hunched over the desk. In fact, they more closely resemble the home studio Deborah Wong describes while talking about the musical activities of Vietnamese musicians in Orange County—that is, a space organized around a single user filled with gear and devoid of much else (Wong 2005, 136-138).

What is significant is that the simplicity of these studio spaces compliments their relative silence. Because the film composers work alone, often the only sounds one can hear are the sounds of keyboard and mouse clicks, punctuated by brief moments of loud music. The DAW has become the center of the experience, and it is not a tool that fosters communication or sociability. There are few conversations and very little talking as a score takes shape. The composer is able to replace all of the other decision makers. As a result, the DAW has compressed the experience, the space, and all of the roles within it. By replacing much of the equipment and musicians, it has also eliminated the need for conversation and creative dialogue. The DAW becomes the tool for recording sound and making music, and becomes the focus of all the composer’s attention. It removes any need conversation in the studio, displacing it to the meetings with the other filmmakers at a later time. It was not present in Meintjes’
experience, and used as a recording tool in the other’s descriptions. Their studios are much more social spaces than studios that are built around this more computerized experience.

It is the DAW that facilitates changes to the very nature of studio labor, shifting the practice from recording practice to computerized performance practice in the extreme. The computer, and its user, elide boundaries, and blur distinctions between basic categories that denote process. This means while it is enough to refer to a film music composer as a composer, it may be more accurate to call them a performer who creates musical sound using an instrument—in this case a DAW. This feature of computerized music making was first noticed by René Lysloff in his article *Musical Life in Softcity: An Internet Ethnography* (2003), where he noted that, [Mod music writing] “is a highly creative and skillful activity that perhaps involves a much closer contact with musical sound than conventional composition, because every aspect of each sonic event is coded, from pitch duration to exact volume panning, and laying in numerous effects (such as echo, tremolo, fades, and so forth). One might say that mod musicians are, at the same time, the composers and the performers of their music (33-34).

This may seem like a simple twist of the meanings of these terms, but like Lysloff I am trying to suggest that it is more appropriate to see their activities through the mediation of a DAW as a musical performance where the timeframe for the performance is stretched to its very limits, but still retains the characteristics of an improvisation or a carefully organized musical performance. This is certainly true for a composer working on low to middle-budget films in Turkey. As Aykut, Mustafa, Yildiray, Tamer, Faruk, Ercüniyet, and others used it, the term composer refers to one who writes, or creates music. It is a term that refers to the creation of musical ideas that are new. But this concept comes with a limitation. Used in this way it assumes that a composer works without fully realizing the music in sound. In most cases it is true; composers do not create musical sound at the moment of composition. They encode it for realization by someone who will play, or perform, it later. Although a composer may use a
keyboard or other instrument to work out their composition in sound, or indeed already hear it fully formed in their head, their primary job is to build a composition as an abstraction and to encode the rules for its realization in notation.⁵

Within this processural framework, a composer is not the performer at the time of composition. This is, of course, true only if we exclude improvisation as a kind of composition. In the western and Turkish traditions, a composer is individual involved in creating an organized set of sounds and encoding the instructions necessary to perform a piece of music in a written format. The written format is necessary because musicians are needed to perform the work and they need information on how to realize the musical sounds. Both the pop musicians and the western trained musicians work with these basic assumptions.

In computer-aided composition this is not necessarily how it works. The distinctions between composer and performer made by my friends actually collapse as they work. This is because the film composer is responsible for executing both the work of a composer and sharing the performing duties with a computer. Because contemporary film composers use DAWs to create their scores, they conceptualize musical structures and concepts, and then encode them in information understandable to a computer. It is the computer that renders the sounds—along with the occasional live musician. As a consequence, the division of labor is different. It could even be argued that the computer has simply replaced the musicians and the composer simply organizes the sounds and encodes them in the instructions to the computer. And while this is an acceptable possibility, I argue, with Lysloff, that because the computer does not yet entirely do what musicians do—that is, create nuanced interpretations of the musical notation according to their training and musical traditions—that the computer is not capable of

⁵ This is necessarily an ethno-centric definition because it assumes the labor of a composer is that of a composer in the Western milieu. While there are a number of compositional methods, in this instance it is enough to use this definition as it was the one employed by my friends in Istanbul. It is also the definition that is part of the institutional structure that contextualizes the work of a film composer. It is the task they are expected to perform.
replacing a musician without a great deal of help. It needs instructions well beyond what a musician needs to play a particular part of a musical score.

When a composer writes the word *klarnet* (clarinet) or *keman* (violin) at the top of a piece of staff paper, that simple act immediately encodes a vast amount of information. It determines the tonal palette of the line to be played. It immediately places the line within a finite number of distinct performance traditions—all of which are provided by the performing musician. It serves to distinguish how that part will sound in relation to others in the score. Most importantly, it relieves the composer of having to make a vast number of musical decisions. The nuances that create a musical performance are not captured in the notation. Rather they are executed by the performer. A computer does not work this way. It cannot execute nuanced performances by simply rendering notation. The composer must put in all of the nuance and inflection that is normally left to the musician. This work is very different from composing music with a pen and paper. Mediated by the DAW it is half composing, half performing. Most importantly, it is a point in the process where the composer is working in *sound* and not in abstract notation. They are altering the very sounds that an audience will hear. Lyslof sees this as a fundamental aspect of computerized music production. He went as far as to say,

Instead of writing for certain music instruments, as in past Western musical practice, mod composers create music with instruments. In other words, mod composers work directly with sound rather than writing instructions (i.e. musical notation) for musicians specializing in particular instruments. . . When music is produced in the simulated environment of computer technology, it forces us to reconsider the Cartesian mind-body divide. . . In electronic music such as produced in digital modules, the mind and body divisions are blurred: the composer determines all aspects of the music, including how it is to be executed down to the most minute detail. In this way, the composer both creates and interprets music with the computer (2003, 45-46).

I argue that for this, and other reasons, when a film composer does this with a DAW, their work is more closely related to performing on a musical instrument than it is to composition. In fact,
they are doing both of these actions simultaneously. This is another demonstration of the combinatorial effect of computerized technology.

In this context, a DAW is more than a tool for music production. It is not just a tool for music recording—an actuary of the documenting process. Instead, it is actually a technology employed to make musical sound, to be paper, pen, musician, and instrument simultaneously. In the opinion of Frederik Moehn’s interlocutor Chico Neves “the theme emerged that was the subordination of the industrial tools of music—technologies such as the ProTools digital recording and postproduction system—to his agency as a creative artist who carefully chooses which projects he will produce. In his view, the sampler and all technologies should be approached as the tools of a craftsman rather than as devices of mass production (Moehn 2005, 71). When the DAW provides a working environment for software synthesizers and samplers (VSTis), it is more an instrument than it is a recording platform. Consequently, its utility as a vessel for recorded sound is not a sufficient evaluation of what it has become and how it is used by practitioners who have the same virtuosic command of this software as any skilled concert soloist. The full-featured DAWs like Logic, ProTools, Nuendo, Digital Performer, Acid, Ableton Live, Sequoia, and CuBase, to name a few, are the current manifestations of over a hundred years of collected recording technologies and practices. They are expandable and customizable, and as a consequence can be extraordinarily complicated. Over the years, they have incorporated the mixing, routing, recording, filtering, distorting, and processing capacities of a host of electronic boxes and expensive recording equipment. All of this comes before one even considers the possibilities that arise when we take synthesizers, sequencers, and recorded instruments into consideration. It is important to note that all of these platforms are quite different in what Yildiray called their “flavors.” They roughly do the same thing, but the way they are structured to do these things reveal their histories and the priorities of their designers. ProTools is still predominantly a recording platform. Ableton Live is for live performance and for
controlling a number of on-board, and off-board sound generating tools. Logic is ideal because while it is not great at a lot of these things, it is very good with managing video as Apple specifically developed it to coordinate with their video suite Final Cut Pro.

Suffice it to say, a DAW now combines the roles and functions of the dozen or so electronic boxes and the handful of people needed to run a basic recording studio. It is not a tool for the uninitiated. However, in the hands of a seasoned, and knowledgeable practitioner—like Yildiray, Mustafa, and Tamer—these software packages are musical instruments and fully functioning recording studios. For now, I want to focus more on the DAW’s role as a musical instrument and as both a tool and as the facilitator for a new kind of musical production. Because Yildiray’s work exemplifies the skilled work performed by many film composers working in Turkey, and can serve as a proxy for their efforts also. Thus, a closer examination of Yildiray’s efforts to perfect his triplet pattern from the previous chapter is an excellent place to start.

Importantly, this role as a musical instrument is different that examples that can be found elsewhere. Electronic technologies are not equivalent, and a turntable or a synthesizer with a keyboard are not musical instruments in the same way that a DAW can be. The approach to performance is immediate with the others because they have been organized, or in the case of turntables, reorganized into a generator of sound that is manipulated live by a performer. The turntable here is analogous to a clarinet and the record the reed. The turntable was adapted to this role through practice and the development of new technological tools to facilitate live performance (Schloss 2001; Katz 2012). But it was the act of playing the turntable that turned it into an instrument. As Katz clearly states, “Like any instrumentalist, they were creating and manipulating sounds in realtime. . . He was creating something new and creating it in the moment. . . It is because of this real-time manipulation that the turn table became an instrument. . . The techniques of performative DJing create a distinctive sound that further helps the turn
table as a musical instrument” (Katz 2012, 61-62). The non-sounding quality of the manipulation of a DAW as a whole makes it a different kind of performance. The DAW is holistically an instrument, but it is not one that generates a live performance. The technological mediation is different. The DAW is the host for musical instruments like samplers and synthesizers. It is the organization tool. The act of performance is different because it requires the user to work in sound in a different way than any other technological device. So, the DAW is not an instrument like a violin, clarinet, synthesizer, or turntable may be. It is an instrument that changes the very relationship between composer and sound. It also changes the time-scale in which a performance is realized through action into sound, stretching it beyond anything that was possible before.

Hours and Hours in the Studio

Waiting for Yildiray to finish his work was always a painful affair. Hunched over his console, he would fiddle, adjust, and curse his way through hours of extraordinarily detailed work. Once he had a set of initial tracks laid down, he would spend even more hours altering each of them to get them sound “right.” These changes always fell into seven categories: changes to timbre, EQ (as a further enhancement of timbre), doubling (subtle layering of multiple parts to increase size of sound rather than volume), timing, velocity (volume and accent nuance), envelope (note beginnings, endings), and figuration (ornamentation and pitch). All of these, often subtle, alterations create the musical nuance that is normally encoded with conventional written notation (slurs, accents, etc.) and executed by a performing musician according to a set of conscious and unconscious decisions—the musician’s performance habitus. Yildiray manually performs this work himself because few synthesizers adequately execute the kind of nuance that is required to have a score sound, as Yildiray put it, “like it is an organic product of a group of musicians moving, breathing, and playing together.” He would
often have to alter every note in the initial draft so that it would sound like a human being had performed it. While some or all of these operations were necessary no matter where he began, if the track came from a recorded source (was a sample) the process for adjusting the part would differ from the process of altering a synthesized instrument. Each needed adjustments; they just need very different kinds of alterations.

As I discussed previously, the driving triplet pattern he built began as a recording of a helicopter flying past on a sample DVD of sound effects. Samples are recordings of music, sounds, or even single notes from an instrument that have been conditioned in a recording studio for use with a digital instrument called a sampler. In contemporary studios, samplers are MIDI controlled digital instruments that do not generate (synthesize) sound themselves, but replay these prerecorded samples according to a set of rules articulated by the user. They are ways of organizing the use of the pre-recorded sounds. Most samplers are VSTIs, or virtual instruments that are software running in the DAW environment. But while the technology is the same, Yildiray does not use a sampler in the way producers or hip-hop artists do. Ss Schloss states, “The practice of creating hip-hop music by using digital sampling to create sonic collages evolved from the practice of hip-hop deejaying (2001, 21). This use of the sampler has a history and a purpose, neither of which are part of Yilidray’s process. Instead, Yildiray’s use of the sampler is more inline with the original intetions of the sampler’s developers, because “in its earliest incarnation, sampling as seen as a strategy for expanding the tonal palette of the keyboard-based synthesizer (34). The helicopter sample Yildiray used was from a DVD of “real world” noises compiled specifically for use with the Kontakt Player, the VSTI sampler he used at the time. This particular DVD had a dizzying collection of industrial noises and vehicle noises organized in a series of folders with labels like “gun shots,” “jet engines,” “turbines,” and “helicopters.” The helicopter folder had a wide variety of sounds to choose from. Some were recordings of helicopters lifting off with their engines straining. Others were of helicopters in
flight and flying past at different speeds. The beating of the blades would at first be barely audible, then crescendo to a high point, and finally decrescendo to nothing—all at different rates. Yildiray based his sample on one of the slowest samples. He selected it so that he could trim it to a short section that had exactly the sound quality and intensity he wanted. He found the section by first slowing the entire sample down so that the beating of the blades was clear and individuated and then listening to it repeatedly while cutting out unwanted material. Out of this thirty-second long sample, he picked the six “thuds” that he liked best and finally trimmed away the rest.

With the seed-sample selected, he created the MIDI event information that would “play” the sound ten times. This created a continuous beat lasting about twenty seconds. He then placed it under the scratch melody he had played in earlier that day. The melody track was the product of a few minutes of work where he sketched out the structure of the cue and developed how the melody would flow through the abrupt changes where the camera cut away from the helicopters to focus on the mullah and his men. Each time the camera cut away, the cue had to change and the helicopter triplets had to move into the background. He laid the repeated triplets beneath this melody and aligned it to the click track grid by breaking it up in to smaller segments, placing the first attack of the triplet segment at the beginning of each beat and then rendering the little segments as a single .wav track. With that small step completed, he had copied and pasted the entire track several times more, layering each segment so it began seamlessly as the last one faded away. Once this was done, however, he had clearly not entirely liked what he had done because these first takes were hidden by a layer of processed tracks where he had added layer after layer of additional processing.

No matter how they are used, tracks that begin as a sample need to be processed before they can work within a mix. A synthesizer generates sounds that approach musical sound because they have been carefully developed as musical instruments. Found sounds,
such as samples, are often not suitable for inclusion in a mix and have to have fundamental timbral and musical qualities added to them. For instance, a simple handclap in a dry room cannot work within an orchestral mix that has space in the sound and headroom in the mix. It needs to be “pushed” into the mix using effects and filters so that it sonically matches the other layers. This handclap will need to be “placed in a room” by having reverb, chorus, or delay added as a digital effect. It will need to be EQed so that it does not interfere with other instruments that sound with the same basic frequencies. The volume, pan (left to right orientation), depth, and presence of the sound need to be adjusted as well. And all of this processing necessarily sits outside all musical considerations, such as what kind of handclap or drum stroke should be used, where it should be placed in the mix, and how long it should linger.

As Yildiray worked through the process of turning the helicopter thuds into musical sounds, he had to address each of these issues in turn because each require different software and hardware tools to create. Putting a sampled sound into a musical mix involves making decisions about each one of these issues sequentially. For most composers, like Yildiray, many of these decisions are not explicitly conscious. They are done by ear, or even visually as an abstract waveform diagram, and guided by the application of years of experience. Yildiray remarked that they “happen because I have done it so many times before. I know what to look at, what to listen for, and what to do in any situation.” I once asked him how he manages to produce such a clean mix considering much of what he is using is heavily layered noise. His only reply came with a wink: “I just make everything really quiet in the mix. It is the only way to get the sound that I want.” While this was not all he did, this was all he could say about it without being pressed to talk for a very long time. He could have given a very technical explanation, but like Mustafa, he always admitted that such considerations are not part of the conscious effort. Experience guides everything and is often applied in reaction to purely auditory and tactile
inputs, as evidenced by Elliot Bates’ account of an audio engineer using his right arm pressed against the mixing desk to evaluate his bass mixes (Bates 2009).

Each of these processes involves a large amount of effort for what could be considered small gain. The sonic implications of this are experienced but not understood by most audiences. Nevertheless, a composer’s “sound” is the result of how they accomplish each step. First, the composer has to correct any volume discrepancies in the sample that will make it stand out in the mix. Then it is “placed” in the mix so that it appears to have been sounded in the same kind of space as the rest of the tracks. This is not as simple as recording everything flat—the sound of a dry room with no reverb or room noise whatsoever—and then applying reverb to the entire mix. One can do this when one has complete control over the recording process. When working with samples, each track has a different origin and a different set of spatial values. It is simply impossible to guarantee quality by processing the entire mix. One has to attend to each layer and sound individually.

In the case of Yildiray’s helicopter percussion effect, he had to place each element into the mix individually by adjusting its EQ profile, reverb, and pan. Reverb and pan work together to place a sound in an approximation of three-dimensional space. Pan moves the sound from left to right in a stereo mix and reverb is a way to gain the sense of depth and distance, moving the sound forwards or backwards. Delay and chorus are also ways to add depth to the mix and are often used as effects to give the individual tracks some texture. The problem with reverb, chorus, and delay is that they elongate the time that a particular sound lingers in the track, and thus reduce the overhead in the mix—they begin to interfere with the other tracks and take up too much space. As Yildiray added the reverb to the helicopter sound, he had to constantly listen for the telltale distortions that this may cause by playing the track by itself and then together with the other tracks in a continuous loop.
Once the basic track had been placed in the mix, he then had to start working on “ducking.” Ducking is a standard process when recording. It is an adjustment in the volume of a single track so that its volume and gain is turned down when its may interfere with the other tracks and cause distortions. Additionally, this work considers the overall nature of the mix at a more macro level, and is done to remove certain frequencies that are overloading the mix. A track has to be conditioned so it fits within the mix, and is a good neighbor to the other tracks as well. These two tasks are not necessarily the same thing.

Composers must cycle between the macro-level of the overall mix and the more micro-level of individual tracks continuously. Because synthesizers do not interact in the same way that acoustic instruments do—it is very difficult to manage more than two simultaneously—every orchestration decision is accompanied by several phases of “checking” to make sure that the sound will fit into the mix at both levels. They cycle between these different levels is an essential part of managing sounds together and individually. And once each track has been placed and made to interact well with the others, the finer work continues.

At this point, filters of various types (hi-pass, low-pass, compression, etc.) are applied to change the frequency palette and the relationship between softer and louder sounds. This, along with frequency EQing, can drastically change the timbre of the original sound. Changes made to ensure that the overall sound of the mix is of the highest quality can often greatly impact the small-scale work of getting a patch or sample to “sound right.” Thus, as Yildray, or indeed any composer working this way, moves his attention from the tracks to the entire mix, he must consider how his actions affect the sound at both strata.

This work is where composers must follow their ears and their instincts. Each of these filters must be applied to the dry sound and layered together. As Yildiray worked on his helicopter sound, he was constantly applying and deactivating the other effects to hear how his tweaks were affecting the sound. Because most of these tracks are synthesized, this work often
involves less actual engineering than what is described by Bates, Wallach, Meintjes, Moehn and Diamond (Bates 2012a; Wallach 2005; Meintjes 2003, 2005; Moehn 2012). While the DAW is a constant in audio recording and film composition studios, the practicalities of processing synthesized or sampled sounds are actually quite different. Much of this delicate processing involves finding a happy balance between the software settings on the virtual instrument and the DAW itself, elements that often do not work well together.

As Yildiary was closely listening to his creation, he realized that the sound was ultimately too mechanical, so he called up a filter and washed out some of its low frequencies before adding a synthesized bass to add in a new low end. He added this part by hand twice using “double tracking” so that the subtle timing discrepancies between the two performances would thicken the sound in the same way that an orchestral string section is thickened through multiple simultaneous performances that are not exactly identical. Double, or even quadruple, tracking creates a form of “participatory discrepancies” similar to those described by Charles Keil (1987, 1995a, 1995b). While these particular discrepancies are not intended to create the “groove” Keil details, they are intended to make the track sound more “human.” In fact, double and quadruple tracking are one method that film composers and DAW users use to add that more naturalistic sound to an entirely computerized mix. Digital delay and chorus effects are ways of producing this sound more quickly, but everyone I worked with said that only double or quadruple tracking had the sonic quality that the ear identifies as “human.” Their point was that there always has to be a human element. And this is exemplified by the fact that Yildiray played these parts himself rather than programming a sequencer to play them and then simply copying and pasting.

With all of this work completed, the initial helicopter sample was rendered as the pounding percussive bass line that set the foundation for the most dramatic cue in the score and shook the entire building on the day I arrived. It began as a sample and ended as a massively complicated sound that paired a synthesized instrument with a processed sample, a task that
took Yildiray nearly four hours to rough out. Each one of the steps required a host of decisions and detailed knowledge about not only the DAW software package, but the function and purpose of six digital tools (effects and filters), and knowledge of how to seat a single part in a growing mix as well. All of this work takes training and experience. It resembles the work done by a recording engineer, but it is more akin to playing a musical instrument. And while Yildiray had an idea for how this individual part would fit into his score, he was making small musical decisions about timbre, articulation, and duration, so that it would fit in with the rest of the music he had planned. Four hours were spent working on twenty seconds of a single part, but it was only a single step in composing an entire score. He had to play in parts, make detailed alterations, and adjust many of the musical details that are often simply left up to a performer, all while thinking about form, melodic flow, and harmonic structure. In these moments, composition and performance flow together into a seamless whole. The distinction falls away, and this has profound implications for how we understand a DAW, a film composer who uses it, and even the nature of performance in the film itself.

Because the composer is responsible for all of the nuance and detail normally ceded to a performer, the composer’s role expands to take on more of the performative responsibilities. When Yildiray is processing sounds in this manner, he is no longer encoding information to create musical sounds, he is actually actively involved in making those sounds himself. Yildiray was composing and enacting the first steps of performance simultaneously. His compositional method actually involved the activities of a performer. It could even be argued that what he is doing is improvising very slowly. This conceptualization speaks to the fact that he is more aligned with the “melody makers” and approaches his music in a more constructivist manner. It also demonstrates that what he does is more akin to performance than to the work of a composer as traditionally conceived. His work subsumes the complete process.
Yildiray’s position as a performer reorganizes how we should understand each element of his creative circumstances. In this new framework, the DAW is a musical instrument. His technical skill is better seen as virtuosity. The work he does is the realization of a musical concept in sound—i.e., performance. The score—such as it exists as digital information—is both his composition and his performance. The nuance he encodes through his efforts expands beyond the compositional process to being an enacted performance. Ultimately, this also means that the screening of the film is more than just a viewing of a film; it is now the consummation of the performance, where the sounds he has created are finally heard as a musical composition. Until the score is joined with the visual and narrative components of the film, it has not fulfilled its purpose. And because the score is almost entirely synthesized, the actual moment of its sounding is only consummated in the theater with an audience present to experience it.

The DAW blurs the boundaries between two musical-social roles—composer and performer—that were once functionally separated. Its combinatorial and transferring capacities are felt in the confusing of the two roles in the studio. Composers like Yildiray occupy both roles in practice. They inhabit both roles simultaneously and move between composer and performer as they realize the score. In the case of the composers who take a more orthodox “designer” role, as Aykut suggested earlier, the compositional work precedes the work of the performer. However, it can also be argued that the composer/performer role is collapsed in the case of musicians of the “melody-maker” variety. Composers like Yildiray deal with sound directly and make many final decisions as a part of the early design and organization process. The fact that he began a cue after being inspired by a sampled sound was born out of the fact that it was the timbre that caught his ear.

Yildiray is an excellent example of the computerized musician because he uses the mediation of the device as a way to work directly in the sounds that the audience will hear. His working method removes the level of abstraction that pen-and-paper composition brings.
Composer/performers of his variety are well suited to the cash-strapped, time-crunched Turkish film industry. Because they work in the finer details of a final musical work at the very beginning of their creative process, they spend less time going from a blank screen to a functional track sitting in an early mix. They are also more flexible and able to make the necessary changes as the film’s master edit moves towards its final iteration. But because they are so focused on musical phenomena that were often assumed to be separated by the boundaries that divided composers from performer (figuration, ornamentation, dynamics, timbre, intensity, and all of the musical discrepancies that make music compelling), the key to many of the larger interpretive decisions can be found by examining this seemingly local, and micro-scale work.

The decision to transform a sample of a helicopter and then the hours spent working on conditioning the initial patch into musical sound are essential to Turkification and the development of a cosmopolitan ethos in film music in Turkey. Yilidray, Mustafa, Tamer, and Faruk, among others, eschew the broad political statements and the explicit self-alignment with a particular identity. Instead, they choose to talk about these small moments where they are involved in making sound. It is here, and not in the broader frame of a composer’s life, that they see their important work residing. This means if Turkification, or its alternatively complementary or opposing force—which we could perhaps call “cosmopolification”—happens at all, it happens first in the choice of patch to establish a timbral palette for a cue, in the conditioning of a drum track, or in the cue’s initial orchestration. The finer end of the work of a film music composer is then an act of creation with the potential for transformation. This means that because they are cosmopolitans, conduits for outside influences, and embodied loci of transformation, the decisions film composers make as computerized musicians should be understood as significant performances of a particular socio-cultural ethos.

I argue against the understanding of the impact of technology as a revolution caused or initiated by the technology itself. This all too common argument asserts that the computer brings
something new into a circumstance, and that on the basis of this newness alone people alter their behavior. According to this perspective, the computer’s impact lies in an imagined ability to force people to align with its internal coherence, with its mode of organizing information and action. But the example here suggests that the introduction of computer technology should not be understood as a major agent of change, but rather that of a resource with particular qualities. Composers are the creators of their working processes and the computer affords them something that they did not have before its introduction.

I want to simultaneously highlight the implications of computer-mediated musicianship and to integrate a human element into how we view these efforts. It is necessary to expose the true nature of the relationship between person and machine and recast this pairing as something much more human and productive than the terms “computer music” or “digital audio workstation” imply. I also want to write against the possibility of viewing this partnership as one that separates the musician (or composer) from the audience, and to populate the apparent spaces that the concept of mediation implies. I see this as one of ethnomusicology’s major tasks as music making is, in part, increasingly computerized. Here, I am aligned with Michael Fischer when he says,

A corollary feature of anthropology’s ethnographic sensibility is its call for attention to the multileveled peopling of technologies and infrastructures that show them not to be smooth-working machines, but in fact humanly fraught endeavors, full of what Kant called the unsociable sociabilities, antagonisms, value differentials, and competitions of humankind (Fischer 2009, xiii).

In his discussion, Fischer also employs Kant’s notion of “confederated constructions,” which speak of a kind of structuring allowing individuals to apply universal force and meaning to collective actions. These confederated structures are the organizing frameworks that allow individuals to come to some order of agreement while overcoming the heterogeneity that could divide them, or make agreement impossible (Kant 1983).
Technologies, like the computer and the DAW, are symptomatic features of these confederating structures. They are the result of collective effort and are part of the organization of actions that occur around them. In their current consumable forms, they are the product of an unspoken social agreement amongst people to use, guide, and be guided by technological change in their social and individual practices. That is, people are first guided by the agreement to use technology in what they do. Only then does the technology begin to forge much finer connections. This is beyond the construction of a technoscape because many people are not solely connected through technologically mediated communication, or through the media it produces, but through the application of technology itself (Appadurai 1996). Technologies enabling computerized music-making do not connect through communicative process but by musicians’ use of it and the necessity that they adapt their practices to it. The technology itself disappears as the point of focus but its spirit remains as a non-human social actor in dialogue with the way composers develop and practice their music making. In this way, just using a DAW can be a cosmopolitan act. It is an instantiation of a technoscape in that it can force the user to conform to use a particular language, most often English. For the most part, the Turkish language is not supported by the major software packages like Logic, CuBase, and Sound Designer, which means that all of the menu items and control interface labels are in English. Turkish users are obliged to navigate the software in a language that is not their own. As Jeremy Wallach discovered, this is a common problem beyond the English speaking world. He described his friend’s problems this way, “all of this technology is not neutral, and the origin of most of the equipment in the “developed” world is of some consequence as well. Raymond, the head engineer of the second-floor digital studio at the time of my first visit, told me of his struggles to learn English so that he could understand the technical manuals for the studio’s equipment” (2005, 141). This struggle is significant because it demands the user adapt to the technology. And given its complexity, it means that practitioners may not be able to use every
feature or navigate the difficult menu structures that are daunting and alienating for those of us who do speak one of the software's native languages.

For Yildiray, Mustafa, and Tamer this was not an issue because they spoke English or German, both of which are supported by their chosen DAWs. For Faruk, however, this was sometimes a challenge, and he told me he avoids some functions simply because the words in the extensive menus were difficult to manage. But because much of this terminology is highly technical, terms like “transport,” “stem,” and “low-pass filter” are just learned without regard to the language they are in. Monolingual speakers just learn them in context and treat them as borrowed technical terms in Turkish. Yildiray did point out that this still presented a problem for the assistants he trains in his studio because the software’s inflexibility in this regard is a considerable barrier to learning the software quickly. He once told me that it was sometimes hard to train his apprentices, many of whom only speak Turkish. He said, “it is still a fairly English space around here, but that might be my fault. I spoke really shitty Turkish when I was learning this stuff in Australia. . . I didn’t even consider this would be a problem until I started teaching.”

Beyond the language, using a DAW itself is a confederating structure shaping music-making activity. Just using the software organizes the action of music making so that there is a great deal of shared, comparable action undertaken by a wide range of different kinds of musicians and sound engineers. Using it well requires a film composer to share basic practices with beat makers, remixing DJs, backing track producers, electronic musicians, and even studio engineers solely focused on the act of recording musical sound and not making it themselves. The DAW is an embodiment of this shared practice in that its function is the product of decades of processual development. In its early development in the 1980s and 1990s, computers were not powerful enough to run applications that were universal tools. Instead, each function was separated: audio recording had its own suite, midi sequencing was a separate function.
Gradually, they all came together as computing power increased. As a result, DAWs are a heterogeneous influence. Their current flexibility allows different kinds of musicians to tailor the program to their own needs. Nevertheless, their creative practices are also defined by it as the older methods decline. Yildiray teaches a method of music making that is entirely centered around the DAW despite having initially developed his own practice without it. His reliance on twenty-year-old legacy gear is evidence enough of his past working life. The DAW’s utility is so totalizing that everyone uses it now, albeit to different ends. Because it is now a common tool, it is also a major agent in the development of musical labor. As an organizing tool, it is now also a major organizing principle. Its imprint on musical praxis extends beyond individual composer’s experiences and serves as a unifying factor that joins musicians. It is a glocal actor that speaks across a praxisscape and unites industries across experiential and practical boundaries. As such, it can also serve as an amplifier for other commonalities. It can also serve as a resource for bringing creative intent and audience reception together. As such, it is the perfect tool for a first interpreter.
What is theoretically innovative, and politically crucial, is the need to think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences (Bhabha 1994).

Because of the sheer velocity of wired sound, global musical synergies have accelerated and become more complex. Musics now travel faster and farther than was possible before, and the feedback loops of sound communication and musical influence back and forth from music’s production centers to local settings of reception have accelerated dramatically (Greene 2005, 1-2).

Making the strange, foreign, or unfamiliar legible to an audience is a process of emotional and intellectual creation, creative destruction, and reformation. A composer must be both seductive and manipulative while being obvious and pedantic, to convince an audience to feel and think as she, or he, wishes them to. This work is fraught with difficulties because it is not enough to simply make musical signs to tell people what to thing or feel, nor is it not enough to leave them to their own imaginations entirely. It is, nonetheless, work that involves making musical sounds to evoke thought and feeling in others. To this end, Yildiray, Mustafa, and Tamer believe that a film composer’s job is to focus on both the music and the audience, using the former to influence the latter. For a film score to serve as an aural sign system that guides an audience through their viewing experience, it must reference things they already understand and are willing to accept as guidance. This puts film composers looking to use new musical material in a bind, because they must set this new material in terms that an audience can immediately understand so it does not fail to do its job. They must carefully balance novelty and variety with old, readily understandable gestures. The selection of every musical detail must be accomplished with the audience in mind. And because different filmmaking processes and
directors present visual and narrative content in different ways, there is no one solution to overcoming the many obstacles preventing film composers from connecting with their audience.

Film composers are the first interpreters of the visual and narrative content of a film, and as such are an essential bridge between the filmmakers and the audience. They are among the first to watch the rough versions, and the first to add new content—rather than edit it away—with the explicit intent of polishing and creating a coherent, cohesive final product. They are the first to approach the film in a way that is not visually focused, and they are the last of the principal creative team (writer, director, actors, cinematographer, art director, costume designer, composer) to add their work to the film. The composer is the link between production and post-production. Importantly, despite being so structurally important as filmmaker, producer, and interpreter, composers are usually the entire orchestra as well. They are only one person, and after completing their primary role as the composer must be all of the project’s musicians as well.

The role of first interpreters is important because through this work composers initiate a larger social dialogue centering on a film’s content. Their interpretive work crafts the story while also opining on it. They provide essential links to enable the work project a particular perspective on Turkey and Turkishness. As a consequence, they are able to remark on the aesthetic, and narrative elements in such a way that an audience reacts and, when it is done well, comprehend the interpretation. In this way, a composer is able to have a very large voice in how hundreds, thousands, even millions of people understand the film. Because many of these films have such a wide audience and popularity, they become part of the public imaginary. Thus, the filmmaker’s vision of a particular Turkish reality—one that includes the composer’s interpretation—has a voice in how Turks come to understand their country, their compatriots, and themselves. Composing for mass-audience films and television shows provides a composer with a very loud voice in the public sphere and in the course of social discourse. This chapter
explores the work of interpretation, the role of the composer as a film’s initial interpreter, and the contexts of where and how this work is accomplished. Throughout this exploration, I show how this work centers around creating meaningful juxtapositions that speak beyond the “text” of the film.

**First Interpreters: The Composer as Cosmopolitan Conduit**

The act of composing for films is an act of suturing many experiences into a single, coherent narrative that is at once instructive and enjoyable. As Yildiray put it, "we have to please everyone and the director, who do not have to agree at first." This position problematically necessitates being able to provide linkages that will be suitable and acceptable to the most impossible of divided audiences. Because Mustafa, Yildiray, Tamer, and the rest live in several social contexts simultaneously, they bring each of them into their work to accomplish this difficult task. They stitch all of these differing contexts, horizons of expectations, and resources together as they do their work. They must suture a cinematic Turkey and a lived reality together so that both can be legible through this created interconnectedness. Borrowed from post-Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytics, and common in cinematic theory, “suture” describes the way in which the disparate opposites are left unresolved yet are nonetheless brought together. It is an emergent property of cinematic production practices that combine narrative, visual, aural elements that are often under threat of flying apart. As a concept, its common usage was developed first by Jean-Pierre Oudart. He stated that suture was the solution to, and even emergent property of, the fragmentation inherent in the process of editing or *montage* (Oudart 1977/78).

However, because they partake of a world well beyond Turkey, composers’ own habits, tastes, and proclivities become part of the patchwork. They become the source for novelty as they experiment with borrowed, inspired, or outright stolen material. Film composers like
Yildiray, Tamer, and Mustafa are omnivorous in their musical tastes and listening habits and in their cinematic preferences. And while they have the subtlety and flexibility necessary to create what Mustafa calls “the appropriate music for the appropriate moment,” their own tastes inform the way they spot a film, sketch a score, and polish a cue. The media they enjoy find their way into their films, regardless of how they attempt to keep them separate. The impact of this mix of influences is immediately accessible in Yildray’s reasons for why he built the cue derived from a helicopter sample.

Yildray is obsessed with Batman. His obsession began when he saw Tim Burton’s Batman (1989) as a young man. But it was not just the film that captured his interest; it was also the Danny Elfman score and its strong, affected character. Elfman’s music is marked by the same driving rhythms and off-kilter melodic development that Yildiray favors in his own music, and so it is easy to hear the impact of his fascination. His longstanding Batman obsession was intensified by Christopher Nolan’s three Batman films (Batman Begins, 2005; The Dark Knight, 2008; and The Dark Knight Rises, 2012) and their Zimmer studio scores. And this is not surprising, because while he loves the films and the character, Yildiray is even more attracted to Zimmer’s work than he is to Elfman’s. The Zimmer and Newton score in Batman Begins has all of Yildiray’s favorite devices: a polymodal harmonic development centering around D, an audible blending of electronics with live orchestral performances, heavy filters and processing, and a number of cues where the music is organized around a driving, or pulsing repeated figure. It is the pulsing rhythm of the largest cues that captured Yildiray’s interest, and Zimmer’s liberal use of this driving rhythmical undercurrent that led him to the experiments that resulted in the track I described earlier. I would like to explore this track further, because while I used it to describe compositional process earlier, it is also an excellent place to being exploring how Yildiray incorporates other influences into his work.
The Batman score is a collaborative effort composed by James Newton Howard, Hans Zimmer, and Ramin Djawadi. This collaboration is typical of the Zimmer studio and the score shares a great deal with many of Zimmer’s other blockbusters. Even though this score was a collective effort, Zimmer and Howard each wrote drastically different music to reference the two-faced nature of the main character (Graydon 2005). Zimmer composed the action sequences and Howard composed the dramatic cues. But Yildiray was attracted to the Zimmer cues that bear his signature driving rhythmic engine, and not to Howard’s contributions. Yildiray’s experiment was both a way to personalize it while also capitalizing on Turkish audiences’ exposure to Zimmer’s music. Yildiray’s innovation was to turn this inspiration into something that works within the context of his films, as well as within the Turkish idiom.

Importantly, while Yildiray’s experiments were small-scale investigations of a personal interest, they became one of the first introductions of Zimmer’s influence into Turkish film scores. Yildiray is not producing music that has a minimal presence in Turkish public life. He is not working by himself in relative obscurity. In appropriating this musical conceit, he created music for a film that has since become one of the largest and best-known blockbuster films in the entire country. Besides New York’ta Beş Minare, he also composed the scores for Romantik Komedi and Romantik Komedi 2, two of the largest and highest-grossing films in recent years. He is also the music director behind the mini series Hayat Devam Ediyor, which became one of the most popular television programs in Turkey this decade. From this position, many of his small decisions enter one of many Turkish mediascapes and possibly even the Turkish public sphere if enough people see it after it has been distributed and screened. Yildiray’s position as a well-placed composer has, albeit not solely, allowed him to make marked contributions to the

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1 Yildiray’s music is necessarily aligned with the overt political themes that his filmmaking partner Mahsun Kırmızigül embeds into his works. Yildiray positions his work so his music is in aid of Mahsun’s cinematic moments, and is political in these instances. However, his reticence to identify his music as political by itself creates a tension as it enters the public sphere and begs the question of whether or not intention is a necessary quality for effective political statements.
incorporation and normalization of what Mustafa called “the dreaded Zimmer effect” into recent Turkish films. The basic features of Zimmer’s sound described above have already become an identifiable part of one aspect of Yildiray’s sound, which has in turn gained enough popularity that others are starting to copy it. However, in this instance, Yildiray’s innovation was using Zimmer’s rhythmic approach to undercut a cue with a Turkish melody. He used the polytonal center as a way to organize the melody and to ground the two-terachord construction of a basic makam pitch collection, and integrated the helicopter figure with identifiably Turkish percussion as the cue came to a close. These actions are necessary processes of Turkification as they are the operational acts transforming the inspirational material’s core features into something that will not be rejected once it has entered the public stage. But they are unconsummated acts of Turkification because the audience, the final arbiters of the viability of the music, have not yet become involved.

While Yildiray’s adaptation of this aspect of Zimmer studio’s music is an example of how Turkification works, is also offers an opportunity to see this process in a different way. We can just as easily say that Yildiray has cosmopolitanized the Turkish musical material by bringing it together with music from an outside source. Especially since he does not recognize the sentiment captured in Meintjes’ point, “Overseas” is constructed as a value-laden discursive category through talk amongst engineers about their own work in foreign studios, as well as through stories circulated about the studio experiences of others (2005, 23-24). He does not see a distinction, nor does he work as if it matters, and thus his work could be seen through either perspective. While his view is technically correct, the reversal exposes the fact that this action is not one of explicit transformation. Yildiray has put an element inspired by Hans Zimmer’s usual practice together with music of his own. He is not trying to imbue either element with a Turkish or cosmopolitan quality—at least not explicitly. Yildiray was thinking of his audience and of his

2 It could be argued that Zimmer’s compositional signature is now widely copied and not Yildiray’s.
own work. The concept of Turkification or cosmoplification is something created by the scholarly or critical audience viewing this musical moment and the desire to read it as such. Yildiray’s decisions and actions have brought sounds together that are not commonly found together. We can choose to see this as fusion, Turkification, cosmoplification, or the like, but ultimately it is just an act of combination for very small goals. For him, this process was a private experiment that succeeded. It eventually found its way into his music and became part of the way he composes. And while it is the audiences’ decision to read it as something else, the fact that Yildiray’s musical decisions are very personal complicates any reading of them beyond the context of their genesis. This problem lies at the very core of how we, as audience members with various agendas, understand musical events in film. Is the objective reading, legible only through speaking with Yildiray, the only one? Or are other readings just as valid? Is this an act of Turkification or cosmopolification, or is it just Yildiray writing music that makes sense to him. Is it both? Is this Turkish music or is it not?

Bringing together once disparate phenomena creates a tension between them that is usually eliminated through synthesis, thus creating a third thing. However, I argue this tension need not be resolved and that the original pieces can remain intact. They can never truly be fused or reconciled to each other, or the effect of their combination is lost entirely. Their combination will never be fully sensible or understood. The space needed for an audience to read the difference and to understand the attempt to synthesize them is actually what is necessary for the process of Turkification to be rendered. If two musical elements, like a Zimmer rhythm and a Turkish melody constructed according to contemporary makam practice, are fused too completely, then there is nothing to hear as out of the ordinary. For something to be heard as fusion or identified as the product of Turkification the pairing must be obvious; it must be audible in much the same way that the dirty/clean and recorded/live distinctions must be audible in Indonesian Dangut, Powwow recordings, or in carnival practices throughout the world.
(Wallach, 2005, Diamond 2005, Moehn 2012, Porcello 2005, Hartley 2005). Thus, for Yilidray or Mustafa this audible creates the musical interest captured in a film score. Like the urban and rural distinctions that they undergird, the Turkish/non-Turkish blending must always be incomplete. This is evidenced by the preference for highlighting Turkish instruments or clearly indicating the combination of musical qualities by allowing them to announce their origins before the combination is affected. Most important amongst these strategies is when Yildiray or Mustafa purposefully activates the Turkish qualities in the palette of the score, while building it using cosmopolitan techniques and musical foundations. Next is signaling the tension by undergirding narrative or visual components in the film with music tuned to emphasize the obvious combination of Turkish and (perceived) non-Turkish music. Of these, activating the urban/rural, traditional/contemporary, Occidental/Oriental, and the realistic/melodramatic axes are the most common. For these at least, the impetus for the combination and fusing of elements comes from a source initially external to the music. It often only enters the music when the composer is obliged to support these features. However, ultimately the strategies are similar: an obvious combination of timbres or formal elements that index their origins.

Because the filmmakers telling these stories and the audiences consuming them are largely Turkish people, these stories are Turkish. They exist within a Turkish socio-cultural context. Consequently, the production-reception complex can also be called Turkish. Much of the admixture and careful borrowing of elements comes when elements sourced from outside the limits of the Turkish socio-cultural frame are brought into it. But Turkish sounds are not inherently Turkish, and therefore can only be classed as such when they are produced with an intention to make them recognizably so. Similarly, sounds that are not Turkish must be obviously foreign. The Turkish and non-Turkish elements must be distinct, and when this happens in a sonic realm, accessible to the audience. They cannot be fused too much or woven together with subtlety. The formal components must co-exist under tension. Finding an
appropriate balance for this tension is the principal work of the rooted cosmopolitan as first interpreter. And this work is among the most legible articulations of what scholars and non-scholars identify as the new Turkish cinema.

The melodramatic stands apart from the experimental modernity referenced in cinematic soundscapes crafted through admixture and adaptation, because music that bears the signs of Turkification, or outright adaptation, cannot be, and is not included in the melodramatic modality. It offers a different aural index of Turkey than those musics employed elsewhere—a sound that the composers maintain is quickly recognized by audiences. One major statement about what constitutes Turkish music lies in the implicit classification composers create as they build a score. The exnomination of music with non-Turkish features (whatever this may mean) creates a functional divide between those musical cues considered to be appropriate for the melodramatic modality and those that are not—between musics that can be inherently Turkish and those that cannot be. In moments such as these, the composer’s choice to leave out important musical markers, structural forms, or ornamentations, can often produce a stronger definition than including something. This, of course, only arises in comparing the end results, the scores themselves being artifacts of a particular decision process. While it is right to look for the markers of these efforts in the films, it is also possible to understand these decisions and their impact by examining the technologies and mechanisms that contextualize them. For this, one must look to the studio space itself as the container for this discretionary labor.

While not exhaustively discussed in his work, Eliot Bates exposes the fact that studio engineers spend most of their time bringing disparate tracks together into a single, cohesive whole (Bates 2008, 2009, 2010, 2012a, 2013). He describes cases where engineers handle mixes that have “24-140 track arrangements” and put an “entire album’s worth of 36-60 track mixes. . . conceived, arranged, tracked, edited, mixed and mastered within a five-day period of time” (Bates 2010, 2012a). In a practical sense this means that the work of the studio engineer
is to bring a host of disparate and competing parts into something that is a tight, transparent, coherent whole. Once the principal performances have been tracked, the hard work of creating a single recording has to be done carefully, slowly, and apparently intuitively. Bates and others describe this work as part sensory experience and part technical mastery. In all cases, the engineer becomes a suture that reconciles all of the separate parts and creates a synthetic object that is paradoxically, simultaneously dialectic or hybrid in its structure—the sounds are wrenched from their origins and sutured together in a new way through forced connection. This was also recognized by Jeremey Wallach, “the intricate layering of sonically diverse materials found in Dangut remixes emphasizes copresence without synthesis. Such an aesthetic of additive layering, to which multitrack technology is extremely well suited, bears a striking resemblance to the syncretic, resilient, and cacophonous texture of everyday life in contemporary urban Indonesia, where Hindu-Javanese mysticism exists side by side with orthodox Muslim piety” (Wallach 2005, 147). This blending or merging is something studio engineers share with film composers in contemporary film production. However, the film composer must also suture together a host of non-musical phenomena and make a coherent patchwork out of narrative events, visual components of a scene, gestural and emotional features in actor’s performances, and the distinct fictional world of CGI animation. Additionally, once the music has been recorded, film composers have to synthesize their scores with the cinematic reality encapsulated in the film and the frame of the audience. They have to suture two Turkeys and accommodate the different aesthetic and social norms between them. Their work goes even beyond the combinatorial outcomes of the new model for recording studios, and provides another example of the new model encapsulated in the production studio setting.

As a brief aside, it is important to note that the studio itself is a technology developed specifically to activate exactly this kind of connective and transformative labor. The compressing
of roles and tasks, facilitated by the technology, are now a feature of all studio spaces. The compression facilitates creative control, as Meintjes suggests,

Engineers have increasingly assumed the creative authority once reserved for producers in the control room. Producers, once principally talent scouts, then artists and repertoire personnel, evolved into dominating—if not dictatorial—figures running production houses, ruling recording sessions, and becoming celebrities. Nowadays, in bids to maintain that level of creative control in composition, arrangement, recording and mixing processes, a number of producers have migrated to the seat of the sound engineer.

Additionally, recording studios and production studios have to be a space that is neutral and protected from the social worlds that surround them. Again, following Eliot Bates, it is possible to see Turkish studios of all stripes as spaces explicitly designed by their inhabitants to be separated from the cities and spaces they exist within. This can even extend to a separation from a socio-cultural frame (Bates 2012). In the scholarly literature, recording studios have alternatively been called a “laboratory,” a “non-place,” an “artist's workshop,” and a “container,” all of which are terms referencing their other-worldliness (Kealy 1982; Hennion 1989; Bates 2012). This extends to production studios. Mustafa always saw his studio as an oasis, somewhere to escape real life and “just sit and work forever.” Yildiray used his as an alternative to his bachelor life (something that was directly in keeping with Bates’ point that studios are also gendered spaces in Turkey) (Bates 2012). Tamer even constructed his studio in such a way that it was essentially the same time of day no matter when he was in the studio. There were no clocks and no natural light. It was figuratively another world—one positioned very far from his life at home.

No matter the metaphor, composers’ studio spaces were places apart from reality, and it was this quality that made them places of experimentation and transformation. They are effectively liminal spaces, able to transform the activities they house and allow the composers to do work that is novel. This is an important point that can be added to Bates’ helpful list of other qualities inherent in recording studios:
1. They affect/effect sound during both tracking and mixing, and may become the focus of audition or the subject of critical listening.
2. They isolate studio workers from the outside world, and the world from studio work, while possessing a visual and audible difference from other work environments.
3. They constrain lines of sight and focus visual attention on key places or object within the studio.
4. They constrain paths of audibility and precipitate the need for monitoring, talkback, and other technologies of audition.
5. They cultivate new practices and shape social interactions.
6. They may become pilgrimage sites or even become synonymous with an entire local musical scene (Bates 102, 2012).

Every production studio I saw exhibited these qualities as well. However, I found that these physical and experiential factors do not often translate into sound in the same way. The quality of the sound of the music is determined more by the composer’s tools and their aesthetic decisions than the acoustic environment. The depopulated production studio is also devoid of the discourse facilitated by these somewhat liminal spaces. Nevertheless, the conceptual impact that these ‘othered’ spaces have on the music made in them is profound. It may even exceed the circumstances described in Bates’ work because the interpretive labor of the film composer requires these spaces to be simultaneously set apart from life outside and yet highly porous.

First and foremost, the cosmopolitan impact of musical interpretation is aided by the fact that there are basic similarities between production studios all over the world. As an essential tool of the trade, the film music studio is an essentially a crossroads, occupied by people connected through the commonality of music making—through media production. This is a reframing of the concept of a mediascape because the physical space itself is a medium in this mediascape. Consequently, the work that goes on is a set of actions that are facilitated by this media and the media that the composers work on is partly affected/effect by their surroundings. By this I mean to argue that studio spaces are deterministic in that they, along with the other tools of the trade (DAW, VSTis, control consoles, speakers, video displays, etc.)
and even the basic practices go function as a single unit and shape the music and the musicians that use them. They shape the way that film composers’ do their work at a very basic level. Because these elements are present in these spaces all over the world, the work is similar. As Beverly Diamond notes, “many Native American singer-songwriters are quite comfortable with the standard pop practices of recording: the laying down of bed tracks, the multi-tracking of individual parts, the mixing, and often further layering of sonic elements. Of course, these practices assume that the music consists of isolatable parts and that social interaction among musicians is not a structural requirement of the performance (Diamond 2005, 124). And this is true for music and musicians of all kinds. The basic format has been harmonized globally. They may be separated from the local realities but are deeply connected to the mediascapes and technoscapes that they are a major feature in engendering. But they must be porous too, and let the outside world in. If they are not, then film composers cannot be the conduit for admixture that they are.

In my experience, film music studios are constantly filled with recorded or amplified music. Even when there was nothing going on, the radio or the television was intrusively loud. Yildiray’s assistants enjoyed watching old films in the studio when he was not there, and I saw a great majority of the Turkish films I know sitting on the couches in Gen Müsik with a seemingly ever-changing cast of studio assistants, none of whom came into the workspace when I was there. They seemed to just be waiting for something. Some of the media pouring into the studio eventually becomes incorporated. The TV was always changed upon Yildiray’s arrival so that the space was set to his preferences. He preferred American movies, and his assistants were very careful to make sure his wishes were followed to the letter. Many of our conversations were punctuated by films that were on the video monitors. Yildiray would stop to consider his words, watch the monitor for a while, and then incorporate the scene into his answer. As I came to understand, this was a typical working method for many of the composers and not just a
conversational affectation. The influence of a wide range of media was always keenly felt in the bunker-like spaces of the studio. Everyone, Yilidray, Mustafa, Faruk, Tamer, etc. always had some major inspiration pushing them as they worked. Often this inspiration came from someone else’s work. Sometimes it was an explicit instruction from a director to copy the musical style of another film. In either case, the omnipresence of other films, music, television, even video games in the studios made them spaces that were not closed to the world outside. Instead, they became a kind of camera obscura that allowed the composers to focus on the other media more closely and more analytically and produce the dualistic fusions that are continually under tension.

The Work of the First Interpreter

Film composers work within a set of design constraints that impact every level of their decision-making process. Their decisions, and ultimately the music they write, represent solutions to these problems when one considers the filmmaking process from a design perspective. Turkification, and indeed any musical decision, is partly the result of problem solving. Many of the signature features of a composer’s “sound” result from the application of problem solving techniques learned through experience or from borrowing another’s solution. In the case I described above, it is possible to see Yilidray’s adaptations of the Zimmer sound as a way to solve particular filmmaking problems and to navigate the host of musical and non-musical constraints in a new way. I will give three additional examples of this.

\[3\] It is this point that makes the scholarly approach to reading a film score from the final work alone a dangerous activity. Much of the final state of the score is not often the product of musical decisions alone, but the consequence of a series of solutions to problems. In a practical sense, without full knowledge of the production history of a specific moment that afford a complete understanding of why the score is seated in the way it appears there can be little said that cannot be undone by reconsidering the moment as a designed experience with a host of inputs and problems.
“Designed music is different from emotional music” – Gönül Yarası

When one considers production practices and their impact on basic aesthetic and practical components of films, the new Turkish cinema seems to be only experimenting with only some of the recent Hollywood or European cinematic constructions. Most, if not all Turkish films, lack the extremely heavy emphasis on montage and lightening-fast shot lengths that are the hallmark of commercial global filmmaking. For instance, the shot lengths in most successful Turkish films are not yet at the point described by David Bordwell in his examination of the concept of “intensified continuity”—that is, constructions with increasingly short shot lengths that are often just a second and a half in duration—and often exceed two to three seconds (Bordwell 2002). Additionally, Turkish directors do not employ the tight close-up or extreme differences in focal length that are also a hallmark of this increasingly global style. Most filmmakers are also either unable or unwilling to incorporate much color correction or computer generated graphics (CGI). Mahsun used color correction extensively, but told me that he does not really want to use CGI in his film because of the headaches it involves. Notable exceptions are films like Cem Yılmaz’s G.0.R.A and A.R.O.G. space comedies that use CGI heavily, but not in the integrated way common in big-budget commercial films.

The practical result is that the score’s musical underpinnings has more space in which the composer can create cues providing a more continuous counterpoint to the dialog and shot structure of scenes. The film composer does not have to work to suture together from ten to fifty shots in a scene, and does not need to thin out the texture quite as much to avoid overloading a scene that already has a great deal of visual complexity and texture. The music can “breathe” a little bit more, as Tamer put it.

This is especially true when a director employs the melodramatic modality, which relies on long lingering shots, more silence between longer moments of dialog, and fewer shot/counter-shot constructions. The simpler texture and slower pace of the melodramatic
modality allows film composers to write longer cues that have more musical direction. They can use more antecedent and consequent phrase pairings and more complicated musical forms with thicker texture simply because the visual content provides the space for these to evolve. Melody can flourish more completely, as it would outside the strictures of a film score. As a consequence, scenes constructed within the melodramatic modality are more conducive to Turkish musical forms requiring the space to make a complete musical statement melodically rather than harmonically or with simple ‘hits’ (interjections, or points where the sound is brought to the viewer’s attention) of instrumental sound. Songs with lyrics are also possible in these moments because the slower dialog allows for verbal content that otherwise might compete with it. The music Aykut described as “designed music” works well in these cinematic moments, but composers like Yildiray, Mustafa, and Tamer leave it out in favor of the more emotionally charged melodic writing.

Tamer and I discussed this when he talked me through how he wrote his music for Gönlü Yarası. The director Yavuz Turgul had built a film with a lot of space. There are long shots lasting over fifteen seconds and scenes where the cutting and dialogue do not present difficult obstacles for a composer. There are scenes where the music is an essential suture holding the scene together and the shots actually work to heighten the pathos of the cue, rather than the other way around. All of this provided Tamer a chance to write longer cues with more structural complexity. He worked with Turgul to build a score around four powerful moments in which Dünya (Meltem Cumbul), a woman who is estranged from an abusive husband and works as a singer in a seedy Türkü bar, and the Kurdish vocalist Aynur Doğan, in a cameo performance, sing complete songs. Ultimately, Dünya’s singing becomes an important plot point because when she sings a song to Nazim (Sener Sen) the protagonist, the act precipitates her murder at the hands of her enraged ex-husband. These songs constitute the melodic music in the film. And while Tamer did not write them, he was the music supervisor who selected the
cues and placed them in the score. Tamer’s music contrasts these melodic and melodramatic moments with “designed” music that contextualizes them in the urban setting. Tamer uses the designed and melodic musics as a way to tell an aural story about the internal emotional journeys of the characters. He employs the contrast to key and cue the melodramatic frame and organize people’s reactions. This distinction is subtle, but the way he organized his cues and the silence between them makes the songs emerge from the texture of the rest of the film, giving these moments a great deal of emotional import. The movement between a “realistic” modality and the melodramatic modality is difficult to solve. Tamer’s solution was to take full advantage of the space provided by the visual construction of the film and to make a strong contrast in musical style. He accomplished this in collaborative conversation with Turgul; what appears in the film is largely what they intended. This is not always the case, however.

**The Hard Realities – Beyaz Melek**

During an empty day when Yildiray and I were sitting in his studio, he told a story about how many cues come together as if by accident. We were discussing the scholarly and critical response to his music and to the political themes that Masun likes to weave into his work. Considered by many to be an explicit attempt to address the effects of Westernization in Turkey, *Beyaz Melek* (2007) bears many of the strongly affected cinematic gestures that epitomize Mahsun and Yildiray’s filmmaking (Hazar 2007). It is the story of a family that has been pulled into familial chaos when the patriarch falls gravely ill. After running away from a cancer ward in an Istanbul hospital, the father (Ahmet) hides in a nearby nursing home to convalesce and avoid being a burden to his family. His sons, Ali and Reşat, find him there and spend time with him and the other residents, trying to convince him to continue his treatment. They become unsettled by the conditions and the staff’s treatment of the home’s residents. The three
eventually agree to take all of them back to their home in Diyarbakır, a major city in Eastern Turkey, to live out the rest of their lives in comfort.

To make the most of this move from the evils of Istanbul into the relative comfort of the Kurdish east, Yildiray scored their arrival squarely in the melodramatic modality using a *mey* (a double reed instrument commonly associated with the Kurdish region and the pastoral east of Turkey). The transitional sequence begins in Istanbul as the residents prepare to leave. Yildiray supports the emotional energy of this moment with a lush treatment, featuring a full orchestra and chorus (the Prague Symphony and chorus), that reaches higher and higher as the final moment of parting nears. A quick cut shows the mini bus on the road well into the trip supported by a brief cut of a westernized pop song with voices, acoustic guitar, strings, and a *tabla*. Yildiray said he put the *tabla* in because he did not want to overburden the cue with a western drum kit, and he could not put “too many Turkish noises in it just yet.”

After a brief comic, scatological interlude at a gas station where the residents line up to use the toilet and discuss their various problems, the van continues on its way. As they move into the eastern regions of Turkey the music shifts. As we see the travelers enjoying their trip, we hear a diegetic *şarkı* in the *fasıl* style—a cue that introduces the first sounds of the Turkish aesthetic (a voice singing in a Turkish pop/fasıl style, violin, *darbuka*, and *kanun*). Intercutting begins to show the dilapidated buildings that indicate they are entering the much poorer eastern villages. Here Mahsun had non-diegetic sounds of police announcements placed into the scene to indicate the danger of the area and to hint at the political difficulties that face the Kurdish residents. These announcements are not connected to any actual plot point, but are there as “ghost sounds,” or what Yildiray called “non-musical bits and bobs to set the scene to come.”

The final statement comes at a visually significant moment. The minibus passes by a building that is being torn down, and Mahsun uses the moment to show the audience the passengers’ inner turmoil about being so far from home. Yildiray underscores this moment with
a major musical transition. As the camera scrutinizes the passenger’s faces, the şarkı is gradually overpowered by a single note played on a mey with minimal saz accompaniment. We see a large section of the building being pulled down in slow motion as we hear this mey cue reach its zenith. One of the passengers, Ilhan, begins to have a panic attack watching the building come down. He begins screaming out for his lost children and his wife as if remembering a trauma where he lost them as their house was destroyed. The cue falls silent as they rush him to a local official to try to find his family. Upon learning of their deaths, they take Ilhan to the cemetery to visit their graves. He collapses upon seeing their names on the monument to people lost in an earthquake. As the camera moves down the column revealing tens of names with Ilhan’s last name Hakimoğlu, the mey and the orchestra come together in a final hit indicating the emotional impact of his loss and pushing the sequence into its final heights. Despite the two elements being brought together in the final moment, the orchestra’s melody does not resemble the cue that began the sequence. Here makam reigns and the orchestra plays a sweeping melody that devolves into a ney phrase ending the scene. The Turkish/Kurdish soundscape is fully established and the return to home—of a sort—is finalized.

On the surface, the entire sequence is an orthodox statement of a cinematic construction I term “the return to home trope,” a common cinematic conceit that contrasts urban spaces and rural spaces with a transition from western to Turkish music. This particular instance of the trope demonstrates the way that Yildiray and Mahsun employ the melodramatic modality. The music follows the transition between the more Westernized, cosmopolitan spaces of Istanbul and the loose morals that this space represents in the film. The sequence effectively provides a transition into the ‘traditional’ world that Mahsun values above the urban world of Istanbul—a world where the proper order still exists and elders are treated with respect. The cue with the mey sounding Ilhan’s loss and his excruciating pain references both the ancient nature of his wound and the transition into a world that is older and more emotionally complete than that of
Istanbul. However, Yildiray pointed out that the way the *mey* cue appears in the film was a bit of an accident. He had intended to use a more westernized cue as the building falls apart while Ilhan panics, but when he got to the recording session with the *mey* player, the gentleman (who he declined to identify) could not read music, and could not play anything in a western tuning. Yildiray had already paid for the session and for his services so he instructed the man to play whatever he wanted as long “as it was long, slow, and emotional.” Yildiray then took that recording and wrote new music to accompany it. Yildiray’s original cue was intended to be more “comfortably between the first orchestral cue [of this sequence] . . . and all the Turkish stuff.” Yildiray’s intention was to have the cue signal the modernization of this world. For this he needed a westernized cue bearing the aesthetic markers that he called into action earlier in the film. The performer was unable to play the cue Yildiray had written, and as is very common in the contemporary context in Turkey, they just made do. He managed to make the transition smoother in the end, but he felt that it ended up being a bit heavy handed. With a big sigh, he leaned in and said, “of course Mason [Mahsun] loved it.”

While this demonstrates the “figure it out somehow” approach to filmmaking that typifies the contemporary Turkish filmmaking world, the *mey* cue is less of an issue in this sequence. The fully Westernized cue Yildiray placed at the beginning of the sequence sticks out because it is different from every other cue in the film. It is one of three that are neither orchestral nor heavily grounded by the formal and timbral markers of Turkish music. It also delineates the alternative sound world normally occupied by a narrator because it is immediately countered by the diegetic music that replaces it. The cue is lighter in texture and tone than the heavily emotional cue underscoring the residents leaving their Istanbul home. It has instruments that do not appear in the rest of the film: the acoustic guitar and the * tabla*. And it is so short lived, that it seems like a throwaway cue that is just filling space.
As with the previous cue, it is easy to assume that Yildiray and Mahsun decided to use it to signal the transition between the cosmopolitan world of Istanbul and the increasingly traditional world of the east.\(^4\) It could also be understood as introducing an idea of the West that stands in opposition to the narrative and sonic worlds that follow. But this is not the case. Yildiray put this cue there to “cut through the intensity of the previous cue.” It was something that he threw together when he realized that the comic scene at the gas station—where the male residents stand in line in front of a toilet desperate to relieve themselves—was sticking out of the texture too much for comfort. The cue was a late addition designed to provide a release from the melodrama and give the comedic moment some space. Yildiray did not necessarily place it to signal some deep meaning.

Yildiray, therefore, chose this music to fit a filmmaking purpose and not a deeply symbolic one. The fact that he chose a westernized pop music cue over an orchestral one or a Turkish one was made on the basis that both of those kinds of cues would overburden the scene. In this particular instance, only the westernized cue was light enough to suit its purpose. According to Yildiray, “Turkish music would have been too serious.” To support this, he insisted that a Turkish audience would react to the emotional content of the music over the nature of the cue. The fact that it was reminiscent of travelling scenes in many Hollywood films was less interesting to him. When I pointed this out, he dismissed it, saying, “eh, it fit. That is enough.” And this speaks volumes about the nature of Turkification. From a scholarly perspective, when we read this scene the cue is significant because of its structural position and its relation to the other music. We would assume that it was placed so that its formal content, its timbre, its instrumentation, and its nature as an index of other things, could speak loudly. However, for Yildiray, it was just another possibility amongst many. It was chosen for purely functional

\(^4\) This can be understood as either the east, meaning the part of Turkey that is east of Istanbul, or the East, the conceptual world that stands apart from the Western world indexed by the urban spaces of Istanbul—or both.
reasons and performed by Yildiray himself to fill space and work for the film’s content. Its westernized nature is largely immaterial in the face of what it is doing in the scene. This suggests that Turkification is primarily symptomatic of the large number of possibilities available to the filmmaker. He was sure the audience would understand the music and respond appropriately despite its strikingly othered nature in the context. For Yildiray, the Turkish nature of the cue featuring the mey was much more striking in that it differs from what preceded it.

Ultimately, the interpretive work of building a cue or a score made of a sequence of cues is about reading the film and helping the audience understand that interpretation. Yildiray, or indeed any other composer, cannot choose music that breaks the flow of the film or pushes an audience member out of its thrall. The fact that a westernized cue can be an unquestioned possibility demonstrates that when considering the narrative and emotional flow of a film, particularly a film with a contemporary subject, Western music and Turkish music sit as nearly equal possibilities. It is assumed that the audience can handle the textures of either milieu and thus they are both just possibilities on the composer’s palette. That they cannot be used interchangeably demonstrates that Turkification involves the incorporation of musics that offer something Turkish composers see as unavailable with other musics.

The Scope and Scale of Musical Sound – An Unfinished Score

My final example is unfortunately not a story of success, but one of failure. It arose as I spent an interesting day sitting with Faruk in his home deep in the Asian side of Istanbul. It had taken me about an hour and a half on a single bus to get to his area, and I had almost no idea of where I actually was. The journey’s length meant that I was not leaving anytime soon, so we had settled in for a marathon session of recording and writing. We had made plans earlier for me to overdub a few clarinet parts on a score he was working on for an independent film that was going to play at the Cannes festival the next year. I was also going to help him record some
new material for a project he was working on so he could promote his work in Turkey. The work on the commission was not going well because he was struggling to find the right tone for the film. He had a long list of notes from the director, who was an American and seemingly unafraid of asserting his opinion in a way that somewhat cowed Faruk and prevented him from offering his full opinion. Faruk was a little distraught because he found the work difficult—not because the writing was hard, but because he struggled to understand what the director had meant from what were curt and rather guileless, unsophisticated comments.

The film was an artsy fiction-short about a soldier who had returned from the fighting in Iraq and was rapidly falling apart at the seams. It was shot in a way that suggested that some mid-century French new-wave films had inspired much of the camera work. The emphasis on montage, the affected approach to camera movement, and the asymmetrical framing made the film’s visual content difficult to follow and a nightmare to spot. There was simply too much visual information to assimilate quickly. As a consequence, Faruk was struggling to identify a coherent visual voice to connect with and support with his music. The fact that the film was also relatively maudlin and badly acted did not help matters at all. Faruk had taken an early conversation with the director to heart and was scoring the film as big as possible, with thick orchestral textures and driving rhythmical ostinatos reminiscent of mid-1920s Prokofiev. Judging from the new notes from the director, this approach was too much, and he was not entirely convinced of the quality of Faurk’s work. Faruk was afraid he was going to lose the commission and was working through the week in a feverish attempt to salvage his score and try to please the director. The continuing conversation between the two was clearly not going well.

Such conversations between composers and directors are fundamental productive acts in the creation of a film. Consequently, the relationship between the director and the composer determines a lot of what happens in the score. If the two do not get along or do not share a common visual, musical, and aesthetic taste, then it will not be an easy relationship. The
director must be the unifying voice for the film. This means, first and foremost, the composer must make sure the music meets the director’s expectations. The composer has to be a good listener and an adept translator of instructions that can often be cryptic, non-musical, and distracted. They must also always listen to the dialog and try to match the narrative and emotional requirements of the scene. This is a very difficult position because it means they are often caught between the director’s wishes and what they sense the edit of the film is telling them. These things do not have to be in close harmony. Talking over the tone and structure of a scene, a sequence, or even a complete film is the only way to overcome the problems lurking in the disjuncture between two people’s visions. Talking is the only way to establish consensus on the two essential qualities of a film: tone and scope. Tone is a slippery component in that everything that is seen or heard in the film contributes to it. Even the minutest details like shot length and focal length have a significant impact on a film’s tone. Unfortunately, some directors are seemingly incapable of communicating their wishes regarding the tone of their work.

Scope is something that also directly impacts the tone of a film. It is another of the ineffable qualities that set the emotional mood and establish many of the subtle iconic and indexical cues that guide an audience. The scope of a scene determines whether or not it is a melodramatic moment, a comedic moment, a satirical moment, or a failed moment. As Davis points out, this is a major concern confronting a film composer, “psychologically, if the music does not fit like a glove in the way the costumes, lighting, and sets do, the audience gets distracted consciously or subconsciously” (Davis 1999, 89). He continues, “this cannot be overemphasized. . . If the composer is clear on why the music is there and what it is trying to accomplish, then . . . the music becomes a whole organic piece. . .” (ibid.,90). Doing this well is a skill. It is also a musical consideration that is difficult to communicate but very easy to hear. Consequently, directors often have a sense of what they want, fail to explain it properly, and are then quick to reject anything that does not meet their expectations. If a musical score is too “big”
for a scene, it destroys the tone of the event and undoes the narrative and emotional intent behind its creation. This was Faruk’s problem, he had scored the film too “big.” The result was that the entire film seemed to be fighting with itself. The scope of Faruk’s long phrases and enormous orchestra was overpowering the soldier’s intimate moment. The score seemed to have been forced onto the scenes in such a way that the final product felt disjointed and comical. I realized after seeing a few clips that I had not come to add to the score, but to help Faruk cut most of it away.

Faruk and I spent the day re-spotting the film and stripping away the layers of orchestration. I counseled him to try to find a way to condense his ideas so that the thematic material he had developed was able to breathe. He had seen the score as an opportunity to showcase his abilities as an orchestral composer—something that Yildiray had prized when he hired Faruk to do some filler for another of Yildiray’s projects. He was unable to get past his own desires for the score and was fighting to keep the density of the full orchestra. While the film showed the soldier walking the streets of the city, it was essentially about his internal turmoil. Faruk’s musical efforts were pushing the audience to consider these struggles as universal. They made the film more of an epic tale than as a fraught snapshot of a man’s mind.

The director’s notes instructed him to “bring it down,” and to “lose the heat.” We experimented with reducing the string writing down to individual string parts so that the sound was more string quintet than full orchestra. We decided to leave out the woodwinds and to change the winds and brass parts to single lines of a single electronic instrument (in this case, a stock sound from the Waldorf Largo soft-synth package). We also started to cut out the length of the cues and to add more silence into the whole score. The very idea of adding silence may seem odd, but silence must be an intentional component of a score. It is added in just the way a sound is added to the mix of a cue. Nothing can be left to chance and silence is just as significant as sound. Our work resulted in a complete rewrite of Faruk’s score, which in the end
was a smaller, quieter, and more constrained interpretation of Faruk’s original ideas. Unfortunately, our efforts were in vain. Faruk was removed from the production and replaced with a composer who wrote a score that featured a single electronic sound that produced an inexorable, low throbbing permeating the entire film. The failure was not Faruk’s alone. Much of the problem was that the director did not find a good way to explain just how thin he wanted the score to be. In the end, it is entirely possible that the final score was more of an extreme reaction to the out-of-scope density of Faruk’s initial attempts.

It is clear that film composition is not composing alone. It is work that requires its practitioners to be everything from a new kind of musician to a cultural critic. And while film composers in Turkey fill these roles well, they do so without a great deal of thought to the political and social work they are doing. While they were aware of the role they played on a larger stage, Mustafa, Tamer, Yildiray, and Faruk were largely uninterested in considering themselves anything other than hardworking musicians. They all agreed with Mustafa when he said, “I've got enough to worry about here in front of me. I can't go around worrying about how I'm bringing American culture to the people of Turkey.” They are satisfied with being good at what they do and finding fulfillment in the work itself. All of the things that we as scholars see as significant at a social level originate as localized decisions. The impact of their work can be called Turkification, but it can also just as easily be seen as muddling through and making do in difficult circumstances. However, this alterative view becomes all the more prescient when we consider that this is often how audiences read the products of these decisions. An audience or a newspaper critic—or even a film scholar—may not know the circumstances around Yildiray’s last minute adjustment. They will read the sequence in terms of what is presented and will see his musical decisions as being much more profound and significant than intended. To understand this shift, however, it is necessary to conduct a reception study. My purpose here has been to indicate how the work of film composition is experienced at a scaled down and
more private level than many of these more universalizing analytical readings assume. Making a film is hard work, and writing a film score requires a number of different kinds of decisions, a host of problem-solving techniques, and skill as an excellent communicator and translator. These factors define the film composer’s role as first interpreter.

Of all of the films made in the last few years, those employing the melodramatic modality are the most marked by a tension between Turkish and external elements. Turkish melodramas rely on broad, often coarse, narrative gestures and liberal applications of musical cues. These tendencies provide the most fertile ground to create and develop a strong tension between Turkish and non-Turkish musical material. As a genre, they are defined by this tension both as a narrative device and as a context for music making. Mustafa explained this by referencing the state of the practical necessities of filmmaking, “Turkish films have to have the complete experience. They need to provide all of the extreme highs allows that an audience can experience. If they do not, then they do not feel they got their money’s worth.” He continued by pointing out that Turkish films are enjoyed by a large cross-section of Turkey, many of whom are quite poor and watch films and television as their principal form of relaxing entertainment. Films must deliver a full, and complete, evening’s entertainment.

They must also reference several decades of filmmaking that relied on the melodramatic modality as a central conceit. Interestingly, Egyptian film seems to share this trait with Turkish film—and Mexican film, Brazilian film, Bollywood films. While all of these have a similar structure and emotional palette, each differs substantially in the cultural material they rely on and address with in their construction. Of all of them, it is Lila Abu Lughod’s account of melodrama in Egypt that provides the most direct analog—albeit one found in another cultural milieu altogether (Abu Lughod, 2005). Like the melodramas described in Egyptian cinematic practice, Turkish melodrama has several basic characteristics: a lack of naturalism, heightened negative emotional content, hyper-real circumstances in the narrative, and a sentimentalism that pushes
each of the film’s constituent elements into a mode of expression that transcends the local
details.

Importantly, while melodrama is deliberately marked to sit outside the realm of real life, it
encompasses many of the Turkish aesthetic norms. When the composers and filmmakers I
worked with employ the melodramatic modality they do so by activating a more Turkish
aesthetic frame. This is most obvious in the musical content of the scene because those
moments set in the melodramatic modality are scored with Turkish music—music that has shed
the experimentation of Turkification or cosmopolification. As I will demonstrate more fully in the
in the next chapter, these moments employ folk songs like türkü, and the quasi-popular music
derived from fasıl genre or the various transformations of Anatolian music that share the
standard kanun, ud, saz, darabuka core ensemble. This music is a vivid artifact of the kind of
sentiment that the composer is trying to engage. That relatively unmediated Turkish music is
used at these moments suggests that this music is present to index a particular kind of
emotional state: the heightened emotional empathy of melodrama. The musical artifact is an
index of this emotional state and is used in an unaltered form to cue the frame that allows that
internal disposition to flourish.

According to Tamer and Mustafa, these moments must be musically articulated in the
common language of emotion. They hold the belief that only Turkish music can gain these
emotional heights, and it is here that one can discern a notable absence. When composers are
trying to engage the melodramatic modality, they are trying to capture something that is
essentially Turkish, to access something they all saw as core to the experience of being a Turk.⁵

⁵ This core aspect is a contentious construction caught between many views of Turkey’s national and
emotional identity. It can be expressed in a cosmopolitan republicanism seeking to further the liberal view
of a modern Turkey, in the nostalgic republicanism identified by Esra Özyürek, or even in the neo-
conservative neo-Ottoman Islamist vision espoused by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and the adherents of the
current view held by the followers of the AKP. It can also find expression in perspectives offering other
alternatives. Importantly, the nostalgia that is a core component of the melodramatic modality can index a
And despite the hyper-real, or unrealistic cast of melodrama, it is unable to accommodate influences from the outside. They rarely attempt to use music that obviously exhibit Turkification, and instead offer a purified musical presentation. Only instruments commonly understood as Turkish are employed. Only the melodic, monophonic approach to composition is used. Above all, they return to music that is widely known, especially folk songs.

The production practices, particularly the choice of music is part of a larger production/reception complex, involves a vernacular theory of reception. The composers are trying to anticipate what their audiences want—this is a complex audience beginning with the director and ending with the consumer of the work. Often these consumers are foreign audiences or deeply separated from the production contexts. This means that the reception of the works are of a primary concern. The act of listening is the fundamental goal. The intention of the producers is to have an effect of a certain kind and to guarantee that this effect is complete and universal.

Yildiray makes this very clear when he said he is trying to change things. Much of what he is trying to do is deliberate, and we have to see his music as being prepared for this purpose. Largely, this is because he and Mahsun create films that are politically and socially motivated at their core. For instance, Beyaz Melek was a statement about how the loss of traditional lifeways has damaged the way a very young Turkish population is treating older generations and vulnerable elderly people. New York'ta Beş Minare is a statement against extremist Islam and a statement about what kind of ethical, moral, and theological mistakes lead people into misunderstanding the meaning of jihad and the fundamental tenants of Islam. Because they are trying to connect the narrative content within their films to the social realities beyond the fourth wall, Yildiray’s approach to scoring these films must be much more focused on conveying cinematic past and engage an idealized Turkey that has even less basis in reality than the fictional, nostalgic past.
meaning. It means he has to try to interpret the film, position himself, and try to anticipate how his rendition of these moments will push people to act beyond responding to the film. Social evangelism is therefore another sub-topic for discussion. The desire to promote Western music, Hollywood film composition, and to actively change the tastes of the Turkish public is an important thought with implications for how the music is interpreted and how it is composed. Pulled apart it suggests the Turkish public have different tastes from trained musicians, that the Turkish public does not like Western classical music, or really care one way or the other. It means audiences may not have the musical experience or taste to favorably interpret the music produced by contemporary composers. Thus even the music that is designed to evangelize has to be similar to earlier scores or inline with the scores of imported films that are popular.

The connection is made by suturing the fictional and the real in a way that fits the new into the horizon of expectations, a concept developed by Hans Robert Jauss in his development of an aesthetics of reception (Jauss 1982). Jauss’s point is that reception of artistic works are made within an established set of criteria that contextualizes and frames the work and guides how an audience understands it. The film scholar Rick Altman expanded on this by pointing out that most often producers and receivers share this framework, and thus the productive act can be seen as an expansion of this received framework (Altman 1980, 1-20). However, at its most effective, this production/reception complex must only include phenomena that are legible to both. If, as in the case of contemporary Turkish film composition, or global cinematic production, the producers do not share the same socio-cultural context as their audiences, there are two or more horizons of expectations. This can be overcome through creative associations and through the interpretive work of Turkification. As a consequence, the legible traces of adaptation become the suture that joins producers to audiences, brings differing horizons of expectations into resolution, and allows a score to speak beyond the limits of its cinematic context. The markers of adaptation must be legible to the point that they can become understandable and
cue and key a frame for creating new indexes. Thus, Turkification is not about alteration entirely, but about creating new associations. Turkification is an act of generating novelty. It requires outside influences and a production/reception complex where the expectation is that this act of generating new connections is the core of what is being done. Far from easing an audience into accepting new ideas, it is about creating an unconsummated synthetic index where all elements are visible and rendering them acceptable through the connection.

Ultimately, film music needs to be understood as an act of production that allows for greater engagement and a sense of play. Film music is one of many conduits through which cultural formations do the work of expanding beyond the limits of the cinematic world, and their own local structures of meaning to engage a wider world. A view of this as a practice allows us to see the act of filmmaking as a performative act on par with Turkey’s musical, cultural, and political engagement in the Eurovision contest. But it cannot, and should not be understood as inherently Turkish, because it is not a “Turkish” practice, but a global practice that is giving shape to statements about Turkey. Turkish filmmaking is a global practice of engagement that produces a heteroglossic work that both Turkifies and cosmopolitanizes simultaneously. To see the impact of this, it is necessary to mount a reception study that understands how the product of film composer’s work fulfills its promise and inspires a larger social conversation about the construction of a Turkish selfhood.
Chapter 7

The Interpretive Labor that Creates a Cinematic Turkey:
Or, Scoring the “Return to Home”

The new Turkish cinema often tells us stories of uncanny houses haunted by the ghosts of the past—houses associated with trauma, violence, and horror (Suner, 1).

One of the most striking things about contemporary Turkish media production is the frequency with which directors, screenwriters, and composers set presentations of urban contemporary life against depictions of the past, rural spaces, or traditional lifeways. It is impossible to watch television in Turkey, or go to the cinema, without encountering this juxtaposition, or feeling the impact of their intentions. Cinematic media of all kinds—television dramas, comedies, and commercials—make direct or oblique reference to the differences between rural and urban spaces and contemporary Turkish life. They trace real and fictional habits, behaviors, and manners of contemporary life and even the Ottoman past. These treatments are so common that the distinctions they present demonstrate their significance for both Turkish filmmakers and audiences alike. And if their ubiquity was not symptomatic of an already deeply held meaning, the constant repetition would ensure that they become meaningful. The power of these filmed distinctions is ultimately found in their repetition and in the consistency of the presentation within and across different productions. The visual, narrative, and musical fields are all enlisted to create a uniform construction recognizable across individual iterations. Yet, their conformity suggests there may also be some ideal or a standard format or formula for comparing contemporary urban lifeways to those connected to the past and rural spaces. While this is not really the case, the repetition of this distinction, and the consistency with which it is presented, allows it to evoke a host of additional meaningful distinctions, as a kind of socio-cultural short hand, or trope.
In the following discussion, I will explain the importance of this cinematic trope as it appears in its most common iteration: a presentation of a return to home where the urban space is abandoned in favor of a rural space and the past is accessed through the shift. I will demonstrate how music serves as the most significant feature of this trope in how it both cements the validity of the distinctions made between the two spaces, and also how it undercuts them. The scores of these moments point to a significant set of socio-cultural assumptions, including, but not limited to, the notion of an authentic Turkishness, the place of history and its appropriate mode of presentation, as well as its aesthetic sensibilities.

But in light of my earlier comments, it is difficult to locate the source of this Turkishness. Cosmopolitan composers are not of Turkey, in as much as they do not need to be, and that they themselves are not trying to ground themselves in a discourse about Turkish identity. Instead, they are rooted in simultaneities that preclude a singular perspective, and are thus more closely tied to what Raymond Williams calls the “metropolopolitan” condition (Williams 1973). For him, metropolitan, is a key word that signifies what could otherwise be called cosmopolitan. “The major industrial societies are often described as ‘metropolitan’. . . This model of city and country, in economic and political relationships, has gone beyond the boundaries of the nation-state, and is seen but also challenged as a model of the world” (Ibid., 401). I use his concept of metropolitan to further scrutinize what it means to be a cosmopolitan. Because the relationship these composers have with Turkisness, follows the form of what Williams identifies in the relationship between the city and the country. They scrutinize the country from the perspective of the metropolitan, and deal in many of the pastoral, historicizing, and reductionist tropes that render the Anatolian interior an object of alterity and the focus of a cloudy nostalgia. In fact, it does more than follow this tendency, they make heavy use of the distinction between the city and the country as way to outline the limits and content of Turkishness. But, as I will demonstrate, this is further clouded by the fact that the cinematic Turkey is caught in this
framing as well. They make the distinction between the city and the country in order to make the most of the transition. The cinematic Turkey resides not in the goal, or in the country itself, but on the road to it. It is the transition away from the city that captures much of their interest, and becomes a central figure in the musical development of this distinction. Once again, the cinematic Turkey is located in between two opposites; it is continually recrafted through repetition as a pluralistic place that encompasses the real, the unreal, and the act of creating it at the same time. Musically, this is accomplished by using a cue to suture two locations and concepts together while they resist each other—affirming the assumed opposition of the country and the city.

**Anatomy of a Trope and its Horizon of Expectations**

Usually, we speak about film music in terms of what it means in the context of the film itself—its impact as an additional commentator on the diegetic world—and it is difficult to deny that music adds an extra dimension to the film's scenes where it is used effectively. We recognize a score’s, or a cue’s, ability to marshal the emotional threads of a cinematic moment, to focus our attention towards necessary features in the visual or narrative presentation, or to even shade a scene so that we come to understand it differently than we might otherwise have done. We also expect filmmakers are purposely doing these things as we watch their film. Moreover, we usually assume we are interpreting what we hear and see as the filmmaker intends us to understand it.

We often forget that all of the features of the score speak to us not just according to the film’s internal logic, but with the full weight of those sociocultural norms and expectations that we bring to it as an audience. We understand the music in a certain way because we already know how to interpret it. This is not altogether remarkable, since we do this when interpreting anything. Nevertheless, it is important to remember we come to a film as social actors, and our
interpretive faculties are honed in everyday life and not contingent on the film’s presentation alone. Thus, the meaningful potential of a musical score within a film is a function of how it participates in the symbolic economy of daily life. By “symbolic economy” I mean to describe the sphere of activity enabling, and comprising, the distribution and exchange of meaning and the influence and impact of a sign passed between the producer and receiver resulting in the production of consensus. I use it in a way that is halfway between Bourdieu’s concept articulated in his “The Market of Symbolic Goods,” and the centrality of exchange in the development of a national sentiment as outlined by Benedict Anderson (Bourdieu 1984, 3-34; Anderson 1991, 37-46, 67-111). Paraphrasing them, I see it as the discursive space where meaning is established socially through exchange and intentional use.

In his introduction to the book Sound Theory, Sound Practice, Rick Altman describes a conceptual model for a cinematic moment or event. Speaking against the static model of a film as an autonomous text open to non-contextualized hermeneutic analysis, Altman outlines a strangely named “doughnut-shaped spaceship” model that seeks to understand a film within its socio-cultural context. That is, a film is both of its context and also a mechanism for creating or altering it. Unlike an autonomous text, a film sits within conditions that effect both production and reception (Altman 1992). In this way, Altman places the film as a singular point within a network of socio-cultural forces and effects. The producers, the audience, and the film are all part of the same socio-cultural fabric, and the film is part of the way they make sense of it and each other. He describes the hourglass shape that constitutes the “hole” of the doughnut as the point where the socio-cultural context is interpreted, turned into a film, and then interpreted by an audience. The film exists at the point of the greatest constriction of detail—at the center of an hourglass formed by the increasing specificity of the production details and the decreasing specificity of the reception.
This model allows us to see the production and reception details as phenomena influenced by the same socio-cultural forces. It leads us to contend with the film as a reflection of a specific distillation of socio-cultural realities that are in turn used as the basis for interpretation. More specifically, this means a film, as a singular cinematic event, is a presentation of socio-cultural norms only constrained and distilled by the details of its production. This means a film is—to the degree allowed by its production history—symptomatic of the socio-cultural context impacting its production. But it presents a very localized and specific interpretation. Therefore, a film can be seen as an ethnographic object that yields details of the socio-cultural world around it.1 Within the fields of the film, one can see an intense distillation of socio-cultural detail, much of which is left unquestioned and natural to filmmakers and audiences alike. In many ways, this is exactly how audiences see a film. They understand the nature of its various elements, the visual features, narrative features, and the aural elements, including the score, as presenting a reality they are able to understand in a format they are familiar with. Any film that does not meet these expectations is rejected as being unintelligible.

This opens the possibility for a film, or a body of work, to take on social force—not a new idea, but one worth restating. Thus, films should be seen as playing a large role in the contemporary social discourse that defines and redefines the socio-cultural context in which they are produced and received. Films are not limited to merely being symptomatic of this context, or merely as reflections of some larger truth. They can take an active role in changing it or changing the audience—especially when one considers how much of an individual’s social contact comes through visual media. More importantly, they can formulate new phenomena and interpretive possibilities. This capacity is part of a feedback loop whereby films created with certain expectations, aesthetic sensibilities, and ideological frameworks in mind, change these

1 Here I agree with Rey Chow’s assessment of cinema as a site of deprofessionalized ethnography that she outlines in Primitive Passions (Chow 1995).
very conceptual structures by presenting competing, critical, or alternative examples of lifeways and practices. It is not to say these films actually change mores directly; rather, they have a critical weight that can change the minds of those who believe these presentations to be true. Music’s role in this cinematic symbolic economy is twofold. It acts as an additional symbolic layer that can either supplement the truth of the sociocultural presentation or undermine it, and it creates or cements new connections and associations. Film music’s power to both denote and connote allows for the fluidity and openness upon which this depends. Film music is thus both symptomatic of a shared set of socio-cultural truths and an important engine in the mechanism that creates new sociocultural meaning though creative connections.

How then are we to understand music’s role within the films of a place with omnivorous musical tastes and histories? It is difficult to say just what constitutes Turkish music for contemporary Turks. Most of my contacts were loath to assert a strong opinion on what “Turkish” music is beyond it being “music for Turkish people,” as Yildiray said with a sigh. Mustafa usually deflected the question with another statement: “well, I grew up listening to Beethoven and Michael Jackson.” These comments are both symptomatic of a true lack of interest in the idea of using “Turkish” as a qualifier and as evidence for a class-based tendency to use Western cultural markers as a signal of social and economic status. Turks can make, and listen to, whatever music they want and see it however they like. As one said, “Beethoven and Iron Maiden are Turkish music now.”

Music in today’s Turkey draws from Ottoman, Persian, and Arab musical practices (which are themselves the result of adaptation and cross-pollination), a number of folk traditions from Anatolia, Romani musical traditions, Western musics of all kinds, and displays the influence of music from India, Africa, Europe, and beyond (Signell 1976; Stokes 1992a, 1992b; Tekelioğlu 1996; O’Connell 2000; Seeman 2002; Buchanan 2007). Although many of these musics are distinct musical idioms and practices with their own historical and cultural origins,
most are used liberally by contemporary Turkish filmmakers, and are thus largely understood by
audiences in some fashion. Add to this the fact that music, and its attendant symbolic and
communicative potential, has been the focus of a long-standing nationalist project designed to
transform Turkey’s musical culture to denote the modern and Western world.

For example, as one of the Kemalist programs aimed at creating a modern Turkish
republic from the remains of the Ottoman Empire, the reform of Turkish music began in earnest
in the late 1920s and went as far as to ban the performance of Ottoman court music on the
radio. Additionally, reform-minded politicians and academics developed a program with the
express purpose of assembling a corpus of folk music found within the borders of the new
country-state. Authenticated by ethnographic researchers, musicologists, and musicians, the
purpose was to establish the true Turkish music suitable for the newly created Turkish people.
These ideological projects have affected musical life in Turkey, and their longstanding
assertions about appropriate taste and interpretation greatly impacted how music is used and
understood in the Turkish-language cinema.

The films made within Turkey reflect this rollicking and multifarious musical world not
only because film producers must conform to market demands, but also because they are also
embedded within the larger world of transnational film production. Because Turkey is one of the
original participants in the Council of Europe’s Eurimages transnational film funding scheme,
film producers have benefited from a close relationship with Europe and European funding
(Lange and Westcott 2004). This has impacted Turkish cinematic aesthetics because many
producers intend to bring their films to European markets, particularly the festival circuit
culminating in Cannes and Berlin.

Turkish films reflect all of these varied influences. But do audiences recognize and
accept them? Or do the films actively educate audiences in the cosmopolitan aesthetics and
interpretations of a larger transnational cinema? Rather than seeing these as opposing options,
I argue they are, in fact, two sides of a single process, a feedback loop that completes the flow within Altman’s production/reception conceptual space. Beyond just being symptomatic of this broad set of influences, they are the engines for manifesting them and creating novel interconnections. Understood this way, the films are not just representative, productive, and symptomatic of this larger socio-cultural context but the incubators of its constant renewal, or dissolution. The immediate questions then become, what amongst these features are heard as Turkish and how are they employed to construct nostalgic, revisionist, or realistic depictions of rural Turkey and the recent past? My purpose, then, is to show how several musical tropes common to a large number of films of many different genres demonstrate how the essential cultural and historical narratives are written and rewritten through the fabric of films. I will demonstrate that music, in particular, plays an important role in establishing these tropes and asserting their validity. I will explore how music is used in several scenes from four recent Turkish films and to examine how it speaks outside their limits as part of a larger discourse redefining and renegotiating national identity in Turkey. The music presents a paradox set deeply in Turkish cinema, and Turkish life more broadly, in that it evokes discursively constructed ideals for present and past realities. As such, this music reflects the problematic socio-cultural transformation of Turkey into a first-world country.

Contemporary Turkish filmmakers use music from the Western and Turkish traditions within a larger symbolic economy surrounding the process of self-definition and redefinition that has dominated public, private, and political life in Turkey since the founding of the republic in 1923. Within this symbolic framework, Turkish music is often set against Western idioms, and can stand as a marker of the past, accessing tropes of tradition, home, and family. The effects of this opposition are not dissimilar from the nationalistic ideology surrounding folk music developed in nineteenth-century Europe. Folk songs in particular are narrative devices pointing to a nostalgic past. In the case of Turkish films, the paradox manifests as a view of the past,
encapsulated in these purposely poignant musical moments, uses real music and emotion to reference an artificial past constructed entirely in the film. These moments are nostalgic for a past that did not happen referenced through music created in the image of a Turkish national ideal developed during the socio-cultural reforms begun in the 1920s. As such, this music is a projection of a particular vision of a singular Turkish people, which is accepted, or tolerated, by most Turks. Far from merely using conventional traditional settings, filmmakers produce cues embodying this paradox as heteroglossic musical objects displaying both Western and Turkish features. These dualistic objects bring together many of the oppositional pairings that provide the basis for the distinctions made by reformers to distinguish the Ottoman past from the Turkish future. In this way, the music of these films presents an articulation of Turkish nationalism that is often overlooked by audiences accustomed to these scores.

But it is more than that. Because a cinematic presentation of this Turkisness has more to do with an invented homeland than it does with the real one. The cinematic Turkey is made real through a cinematic presentation that merely suggests, or hits and the real. It does this by creating a new context for the details of daily life. Filmmakers manage this by presenting the real and the cinematic Turkey, and their nostalgic connections, simultaneously. Svetlana Boym captures this when she says, “the cinematic image of nostalgia is a double exposure, or a superimposition of two images—of home and past and present, dream and every day life. The moment we try to focus it into a single image, it breaks the frame or burns the surface (Boym 2001, xiii-xiv). This simultaneity is produced not through explicit production, but through gaps, and aporia that allow for the pain of separation or confusion to flow into the space and dominate the image. This is made all the easier given that Turkish film’s past is replete with arabesk, the genre of film and music that is almost entirely devoted to the pain of loss. Arabesk is still the suture that connects the distant past with the present. Except now it is also self-referential. It is also evoking its own cinematic past. It is a genre that can engender two kinds of nostalgia
simultaneously. As such, it is now the folk music of this nostalgia. *Arabesk* is not the folk music of the Turkish nationalist project or part of an attempt to recapture a lost homeland that was forcibly taken (Stokes 1997, Sugarman 1999, Präger 2011, 2014). It is the music of the cinematic Turkey that took hold of the imagination of real Turks. It is a folk music of a recent past, and contemporary Turkish films rely its symbolic, aesthetic, and structural conventions.

Today, folk music of this kind, with all of its associated connotations, has become a widely accepted sign for a nostalgic past and the real Turkey. Many major films, such as Çagan İrmak’s *Babam ve Oğlum* (*My Father, My Son*, 2005), Tunç Basaran and Memduh Ün’s *Sinema Bir Muizedir* (*Cinema is a Miracle*, 2005), Ulaş Ak’s *Dün Gece Bir Rüya Gördüm* (*Last Night I Saw an Angel*, 2005), and Derviş Zaim’s *Cenneti Beklerken* (*Waiting for Heaven*, 2005), use this music to signify longing, connection to home and familial origins, and even a sanitized Ottoman past, despite the fact that the modern settings and arrangements often contradict the historical or traditional references. But more than anything else, this music evokes the pain of separation—a focus on the *algia* rather than on the *nostos*. This sense of loss is one for many pasts, and as a consequence the music is used to refer to an Ottoman past, a rural past, a republican past, and even a personal past. What filmmakers and musicians evoke with this cinematic construction is not a pain not for a homeland, because it is not a *Heimweh* of the kind felt by Sudeten Germans trying to relive their homeland (Präger 2011, 3-5; 2014, 317-320). It is more of a *Weltschmerz*, and captures the image and pathos of a young Turk, adrift in Istanbul, smoking a cigarette next to a half-empty glass of rakı and pining for a lost love—the central visual trope of an *arabesk* film. These films can evoke this through mere gestures, because the filmmakers are manipulating the boundary lines between the global and the local, between the universal and the particular. The cinematic Turkey becomes a suture bringing these divisions together through what Boym references as “a new understanding of time and place that [make] the division into “local” and “universal” possible (Boym xvi). And these films do this by also
obliterating the past, in much the same way that the Russians obliterated their past in days following the fall of the Soviet Union (Ibid. 105-107). The collective past is ignored in favor of an individual past, a central theme in the experience of modern nostalgia in Turkey highlighted by Ezra Özyürek (2006, 36-41). This cinematic nostalgia is activated through music because music can be both specific and universal at the same time. The manipulation of this trope allows filmmakers to access any past they want and yet still evoke a deep nostalgia in a multifaceted audience.

The “Origins” Trope and the “Return to home” Cine-musical Moment

Many of these issues appear within a single, pervasive trope of what I call a “return to home,” which is so common that its presence in films and television programs is received without much question by a majority of audiences. This return most often involves a trip from the urban spaces, usually Istanbul, to a rural space deep in the interior of Anatolia—making the distinction unmistakable. It is usually undertaken by characters who are returning to their roots, e.g. their family home, their past. The return to this space is also one in which traditions are rediscovered, where contentious relationships with estranged parents are resolved, and where the characters can escape from the chaotic, and often dangerous, modern world. The basic visual and musical architecture of the trope makes clear distinctions between urbanity and rurality—indexed by representations of the spaces themselves—between modern and traditional lifeways, and between characters’ current predicaments and their origins. In doing so, it also conflates the various oppositions so that rural, traditional, and origin become a single monolithic phenomenon which requires, and receives, a specific cinematic treatment in visual, aural, and narrative constructions.

2 Even the wildly popular television comedy Turk Mali has some variation of this “return” trope. In a recurring segment, we see the main characters back in primary school, and the details of their early lives always informs whatever farcical problem they are trying to solve in the main plot thread.
A perfect example of the “return to home” trope comes from Çagan Irmak’s 2005 film *Babam ve Oğlum* (My Father, My Son). Controversial for its depictions of torture during the opening credit sequence, and for its relatively graphic and frank depiction of the 1980 coup, *Babam ve Oğlum* makes heavy use of the aforementioned dichotomies. The film follows Sadik’s (Fikret Kuskan) return to his family home after years of working as a politically active journalist in Istanbul. He is dying from complications caused by the torture he suffered while a political prisoner following the coup. He is returning home to bring his son Deniz (Ege Tanman) to meet his estranged family. Because Deniz’s mother died giving birth in the opening sequence, Sadik is forced to return to his family’s home in a rural village to ensure Deniz will be cared for after his own life ends. While the explicit political content of this film makes it remarkable within contemporary Turkish production, Irmak’s heavy use of the melodramatic modality places it firmly within current commercial practice.

The “return to home” sequence begins with Sadik and Deniz, father and son, in their small apartment in the city. True to the melodramatic form of the film, much is made of the endearing innocence of Deniz and his father’s contrasting gloominess. Their life together appears happy enough, but clearly something is wrong. Sadik tells Deniz they are going to meet his grandfather. We soon follow them onto a train where they spend some pleasant time together before finally arriving in the unnamed Aegean village where Sadik grew up. A jump cut replaces the train’s interior with a wide establishing shot of fields, groves of trees, and a house in the distance. The quick shift marks the stark contrast between the urban space of their home and the interstitial space of the train. At this time, a cue of melodic music, unmistakably “Turkish” in its instrumentation, surface stylistic features, and monophonic construction, breaks the silence and deepens the visual richness of the moment. It is set so that it complements and remarks on the quintessentially Turkish landscape of the Anatolian interior.
Before this point in the film, the music has been couched in an orchestral setting that would be recognized and largely accepted by film audiences around the world. This cue is remarkable because it cuts against the score we have heard so far. It is the first one with an unmistakably Turkish sound, and its introduction marks a change in the sonic narrative of the film. The cue is called “Trip Around the Aegean,” and it is written by Evanthia Reboutsika, a Greek musician and composer who won the World Soundtrack Award for the score in 2006. Like Tamer, Yildiray, and Mustafa, Reboutsika was educated as a musician and composer outside of Turkey, mostly in Greece and Paris. She stands now an important composer in contemporary Turkish cinema because she has prepared the scores for two of Çagan Irmak’s films, Babam ve Oğlum (2005) and Ulak (2008), and Irmak is one of the most successful and well-known directors in Turkey today. Her work is yet another example of the global nature of Turkish film music production.

Newly composed for the film, Reboutsika’s cue features violins, kanun, daire, and a darabuka. The sound of this ensemble is unmistakable and easily appreciated by a Turkish audience. This instrumentation is a typical variant of Turkish light classical music and the urban Roma fasıl, a genre closely related to the more patrician light classical Ottoman ensembles but with a slightly different repertoire and socio-cultural connotations. The theme is set in buselik makamı, a mode that has a pitch-content identical to that of a natural minor scale. It is consequently both recognizable as stylistically Turkish and also malleable enough that it can be reset in a western idiom—which occurs later on in the film. It is a significant moment, both in terms of the narrative and because the cue is the first to be coded Turkish, through its stylistic components: i.e., melodic content, instrumentation, and performance practice. The placement of the cue immediately makes a connection to the rural space. The simultaneous disjuncture in the score and in the visual presentation cements the relationship. Musically, the moment is made all
the more significant because it is the first statement of a theme that becomes a leitmotif permeating the rest of the film.

This music continues to play as Sadik and Deniz walk down the dirt, tree-lined road leading to Sadik’s family home. Sadik is apprehensive about returning and he walks down the path with fear clearly marking his face. The music is the only sound we hear until Deniz complains that his father is squeezing his hand too hard. Close-up shots show the trepidation on Sadik’s face as the theme repeats with a thicker, intensified instrumentation. This return is not a happy one because Sadik knows he is dying and because he has been estranged from his father, Deniz’s grandfather, for many years. The disjunction between the urban and rural locales outlined in the musical and visual construction is mirrored in Sadik’s obvious alienation from his rural origin. The pathos in the music is clearly designed to emphasize the heavy emotionality of the moment.

Here, Irmak and Reboutsika construct the most typical version of the return home, where the urban cityscape of Istanbul is immediately compared to a green and earthy-brown rural countryside filled with simple homes and signs of agricultural work. Importantly, the cue for this moment is in the simple song style of a türkü, a folk song genre, or a şarkı, a flexible genre that crosses the boundary lines between folk and light classical performance styles. The paradox of this moment lies in the fact that this music is an urbanized setting of a Turkish folksong. The song and its setting work against each other in this context and exist as a troubled antagonistic pairing. For the film-going audience, the türkü references the emotional expression of pain and one’s connection to the past. All fields of the film—narrative, visual, and musical—work together to establish the validity of the connection and the diegetic impact of this return. However, they also speak outside the diegetic world of the film in that these cinematic truths impact how viewers consider the actual distinction between the urban and rural spaces. Outside the film, urban spaces and rural spaces are similarly coded with musical associations. The normality of
this cinematic moment is possible exactly because it is also true in daily life. Thus, Rebouštika’s cue has an internal paradox, disrupting the authenticity of the past. It is, perhaps, an accidental consummation of the carefully created musical history envisioned by nationalist thinkers, in that it establishes an “origin” that urbanized Turks can rely on, and even literally return to.

It was the nationalist writer and agitator Ziya Gökalp who most clearly articulated these oppositions and their impact in cultural production (Cf. Gökalp 1959). First, his preference for the modernizing influence of the West made him entirely antagonistic to the influence of the East, which for him meant anything that was not native to the Turkish people and was cultivated by the Ottomans. This includes but is not limited to, Persian, Byzantine, and even Arab society and culture. His intention to remove foreign influences was not necessarily born of xenophobia, but from an intense desire to find the original and authentic Turkish culture from the past that could serve as a model for a completely Turkish culture in the near future. In the case of music, East meant the Ottoman court practices, which Gökalp believed were derived from Byzantine culture and Persian, and therefore too old, irrational, or foreign to be of consequence. He saw the West as being modern, systematic, logical, and entirely an improvement on the Ottoman models. Eastern music was by contrast illogical, backward, regressive, and alien. He hoped his reforms could effect a synthesis that would bring the modern, Western influence together with the origins of the Turkish people found in their folk culture.

According to Orhan Tekelioglu, Gökalp’s “three-pronged classification” of West/Origin/East is the nexus defining a Turkish musical object and Turkish musical practices (Tekelioglu 1996, 195). The West was “considered the domain of modernity and was therefore taken as a model,” whereas the East “was considered as standing for backwardness itself” (ibid.) This constitutes the typical opposition that is ultimately synthesized in some way in musical sound or through musical practice. Yet, it does not address its origins. In fact, after Tekelioglu establishes this idea, he never touches on it again, except to note that Ziya Gökalp
considered the origin of the Turkish people to lie in the vague, yet politically suggestive, “traditional culture of the Turkish folk” (Gökalp 1959; Tekelioğlu 1996, 195). It seems, then, to omit the origin after setting it as a core element of his argument is a meaningful oversight. His comments set it as the opposite to “West,” in favor of the more geographically and culturally oppositional “East,” and yet he then leaves it alone, conflating “East” and “Origin” throughout the text by referring only to “East.” This can be easily explained: the origins of the Turkish people are indeed both physically and geographically east of a domineering, and putatively normative, “West.” On this basis, the conflation is apt. However, it is unsatisfactory in light of the larger problem of music as a cultural process, which draws on both of the conceptual spheres analogized by the terms West and East in sound and practice. One must consider that the very processes designed to effect this synthesis within cultural spheres were also simultaneously creating and recreating the very histories and popular conceptions of the past that defined the “Origin” of the Turkish people. Tekelioglu comes tantalizingly close to this when he posits this three-part ground, since only such a division can accommodate the actual past, the artificial past, and the various concepts, perspectives, and assumptions subsumed by the East-West (alaturka-alafaranga) dichotomy.

This origin was an important concept within the nationalist thinking reshaping the cultural institutions and cultural production in republican Turkey. Yet, the notion of origin within this nationalist mode of thought is a constructed one. It is a new fiction set against cultural elements from the West and from the East designed to claim the past entirely. It is a constructed tradition that reshapes the present and the future (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). And despite its constructed nature, the “origin” myth in contemporary Turkish life is present in many public debates and private conversations. Films realize this myth and also serve as the site where its various forms can be consolidated and interwoven. The “return to home” trope combines several aspects of the larger origin myth that, once established, speaks beyond the immediate
confines of the film. Most importantly, it creates a connection between the idea that the Turkish folk reside in rural Anatolia and the sound of “Turkishness” constructed from sanitized folk music. The connection asserts and references the validity of a particularly family-oriented view of Turkish life and personal identification. When repeatedly used in these cinematic moments, the music comes to signal an individual’s connection with home, one’s past, and that participation in the modern world that separates one from one’s origins. Instead of offering a synthetic conceptualization of contemporary Turkish life—where the old and new, rural and urban, are joined into a single unit—it offers a parallax view, where westernized modern ideals are evident and distinct from the Turkish. The two never join, but coexist. Importantly, this coexistence captures two important divides that are part of a cosmopolitan construction. The first is the disjuncture between the city and the country, carefully outlined by Raymond Williams and Lewis Mumford (Williams 1974, Mumford 2001). Williams finds the roots of this relationship in the literature of a nineteenth-century England working through the upheaval of the industrial revolution and locates its meaning in the alienation that arises in the construction of the concept of the country. In his view, the country is a development that serves as a container for what was lost as the industrial city takes hold of the culture and landscape and as a foil for the disjunctures that are concomitant with industrialization. But despite this, they do not present a realistic presentation. Speaking of the city at least, he states,

Dickens’ ultimate vision of London is then not to be illustrated by topography or local instance. It lies in the form of his novels: in their kind of narrative, in their method of characterization, in their genius for typification. It does not matter which way we put it: the experience of the city is the fictional method; or the fictional method is the experience of the city. What matters is that the vision—no single vision either, but a continual dramatization—is the form of the writing (224-225)

While Mumford is in agreement, he sees the city as a lived unreal that is built through social action away from a more natural state. For him, the city is itself inherently alienating and the very engine for the kinds of loss that the return to home attempts to alleviate. For Mumford,
The very traits that have made the metropolis always seem at once alien and hostile to the folk in the hinterland are an essential part of the big city's function: it has brought together, within relatively narrow compass, the diversity and variety of special cultures: at least in token quantities. . . Unconsciously, the great capitals have been preparing mankind for the wider associations and unifications which the modern conquest of time and space has made probable, if not inevitable (Mumford 2001, 561).

Both of these accounts, however, are tales of disjuncture and loss. The return to home trope is a journey that peels away these losses while making the most of the fictions. The characters travel through a topography of loss, moving away from a fictional city towards a fictional origin, and as they do so, they try to recapture some of what existed before. The journey, grounded by the musical presentation, is a way of coming to terms with the loss through a process of reversal. The music provides a way to overcome the disjunctions while bringing the two realities into close proximity. The music is evocative of the loss, and as such adds a nostalgic cast over the scene that is legible to the audience. I will now demonstrate how the “return to home” trope is used to create a cine-musical event which can evoke nostalgia for a real Turkish history and a constructed one simultaneously, while bringing an additional parallel construction of reality into play.

Nostalgia, Anachronism, and Disjuncture: Scoring Real and Cinematic Pasts

When far-reaching cultural and social reforms change, or even destroy, past sociocultural constructs, some nostalgia for what is lost or altered will inevitably arise. Only through the comparison does the loss, whether real or apparent, become evident. In Turkey, the cinematic presentation of this loss is articulated within a larger economy of cultural difference, where the conflated pair of Western and modern stands against the rural and traditional dyad. This distinction pits the contemporary world against an idealized cultural essence (or many) that is just vague enough to be open to any number of interpretations. This means it is not specific enough to be seen as incorrect or controversial while being specific enough to be meaningful to
a large number of people. This erasure of the past involves a deliberate attempt to forge a new social and cultural future for the Turkish people, the idealization of the past involves the production of an authentic cultural past dependent on distinguishing the past culture from the new one. This necessarily means there must be some debate over what the “authentic” past is. Homi Bhabha identifies this tendency when he says, “the problematic enunciation of cultural difference, becomes, in the discourse of relativism, the perspective problem of temporal and spatial distance. The threatened ‘loss’ of meaningfulness in cross-cultural interpretation, which is as much a problem of the structure of the signifier as it is a question of cultural codes (the experience of other cultures), then becomes a hermeneutic project for the restoration of cultural ‘essence’ or authenticity” (Bhabha 1994, 179).

The “return to home” trope is a deliberate expression of nostalgia dependent on distance and disjuncture. It is a typical feature in what Asuman Suner calls “popular nostalgia films,” which “can be seen as part of [a] new culture of memory in Turkey. Drawing upon regional cultures and local communities, these films enable the audience to revisit their own past and consider new ways of representing their cultural identity” (Suner 2010, 40). This personal and communal revising of the past is part of a larger attempt to recoup what was lost in some way. Yearning for a past that was lost to traumatic change and the effects of modernity, it asserts the present is quite separated from the past. In doing so, it presents the two alternatives—past and present—as dichotomous opposites that are separated by time or distance. It does this by activating a cultural memory of this faded past. But as Boym notes, “collective memory will be understood here as the common landmarks of everyday life,” and that it is “not the same as national memory, even when they share images and quotations” (Boym 2001, 53). The films activate this past through references to the very real and banal present. These scenes are not made up of flashbacks, but of what the characters, and the audience experience every day.
Capturing something of what Williams describes in the forging of a new notion of the country, a central argument of this trope is that the past, or rural space standing for the past, will then always be cast as the authentic reality and preferable option. Images of the chaos of the city are always followed by the relative tranquility of the country. The colors of the country are always warmer, and the sun always shines there. The only variable in this comparison is the nature and length of the trip between them. Often images of the road, trains, or the interiors of cars are the only elements separating these visual worlds that stand for social and cultural difference. The conceptual distance between the two is indicated by the length of the road montages that separate them. The music attempts to resolve these points of difference, either by establishing the new space, or by deepening the disjunction. Thus, music contributes to the element of nostalgia by contextualizing the change between spaces. The rural space has a diffuse meaning until it is described and delineated by the change in the score.

This “mickey mouseing” (an industry term indicating the explicit connection of musical “hits” and on screen events) may be somewhat crude, but it is immediately intelligible to audiences. That it is so common speaks of the legibility of these techniques and the acceptance of the validity of the assertions. This means that the connections established between stylistic or formal components of the music and elements within mise-en-scene occur within an aesthetic of verisimilitude or mimesis whose limits are acceptable to the audience and filmmakers alike. To put it simply, it presents the past as people choose to see it, or at least accept it as real. It mimics the past in a way that refers to it without being entirely of it.

An excellent example of the impact of competing multiple nostalgias and their resultant aesthetics can be found in the 2006 film Sinema Bir Muzezidir, by Tunç Basaran and Memduh Ün, which directly concerns the rise of Turkish cinema in rural areas amidst the political turmoil of the early republic. Set in the 1950s, the film is a historical-nostalgic view of life in a small rural town during the first open elections, and focuses on some of the problems characterizing this
politically tense time. The score works both to bolster nostalgia and to romanticize the processes of modernization. However, the nostalgia for both rural life in Anatolia in the 1950s and the newness of cinematic glitz and glamour are kept relatively separate from the film’s political overtones.

The plot develops from the point of view of Ümit (Batuhan Levent), the nephew of the local cinema owner Nakip Ali (Kadir Inanir). Ümit’s life is filled with children’s games, the films he watches at his uncle’s cinema, and a budding young romance with a local girl. Nakip Ali, however, is embroiled with the politics of the town and the greater political upheaval that came with the first change of party in the new Republic’s history. The events surrounding both characters and their implications are separated through the visual, narrative, and musical systems of the film. By keeping these elements separate until the finale, the film is both a historical treatment of a significant time in Turkey’s history and also a nostalgic view of life in 1950s Anatolia. As such, this film is a perfect example of the kind of mythmaking that is an essential part of the construction of a national imaginary sufficient to remember the past through the lens of the present. In this way, this film follows a conceptual model set out by countless nation building programs (cf. Anderson 1991; Diehl 2002; Maira 2002; Herzfeld 2005; Buchanan 2006, 2009; Özürek 2006; Hobsbawm and Ranger, 2012). However, this film presents a literal iteration of multiple nostalgias. It is a film remembering both a republican past and a cinematic past—and does so with two competing nostalgias: one focused on the personal experience of national history, the other focused on film history. It presents a reality that conflates the two and allows the audience to remember real and fictional pasts without making it clear which is which.

Director Basaran Ün constructs a naturalistic vision of life in the 1950s. Much of the film is shot on location among buildings and public spaces dressed to be conspicuously true to the period. However, while Basaran’s visual presentation is painstakingly realistic, composer Cahit Berkay constantly sets the musical score against the realism of the visual presentation and
historically grounded narrative. Many cues are recognizably anachronistic, or join disparate elements that do not fit within the symbolic range of the film. Like so many other films, they deal, either indirectly or directly, with the rural/urban, traditional/modern, past/present dichotomies, but do so in a way that deliberately sutures the pairs together. In the case of the “return to home” trope, music can act as a suture resolving gaps in narrative presentation, anachronistic presences, or disjuncture caused by breaks in the realism of the presentation. However, as I will describe, music can also cause many of these problems, and in such cases the visual presentation and narrative serve to suture the disjuncture. Resolution through suture is one of the important mechanisms bringing the unresolved pairings together and making a singularity out of competing pasts.

*Sinema bir Mucizedir* captures cinema history in Turkey by presenting relatively accurate depictions of theater going in 1950s Anatolia, but also by referring to the aesthetic principles of early Turkish films. Importantly, it breaks the diegetic boundaries by including anachronistic instrumentations, and musical cues that break out from the diegetic world of the film to refer—with a wink—to the less-than-realistic aesthetic norms of the *Yeşilçam* melodramas. The resulting film uses the nostalgic trope of the return to origins to evoke both a nostalgic republican past, but also a cinematic past—a past that exists only within the realm of the film or within the fictional frame of the cinematic experience. Thus, Berkay’s score is part of a greater set of associations linking various musical cues to these different pasts: the actual, and the cinematic.

The first example of this comes early in the film. The scene begins, set in the bustling streets of the town, and pans across a host of people out for an evening’s entertainment one summer evening. In this clip, the camera captures an entire street’s worth of activity. There are food vendors, families, and people of all kinds excitedly going about their business. The cue begins just before the camera stops in front of the town cinema to scrutinize candy vendors and
tea sellers who are serving the audience before they enter the building. These street sellers are examples of older forms of life that have been marginalized or eliminated in contemporary urban settings. They stand here as evidence of the time period and the older lifeways.

The cue consists of a davul and zurna ensemble playing a quickly paced melody. These instruments are also associated with Anatolian folk practices. However, the melody is so insubstantial in its construction that the cue stands as a vehicle for what the sonic elements connote, rather than as a true melody. It is the sound of the interior that matters here. The davul (large double headed drum) and zurna (a very loud, blown double reed instrument) are widely recognized as sonic signs of outdoor festivals, weddings, circumcisions, Romani musicians, and traditional Turkish folkways. However, as the shot tightens on the poster advertising the Rita Hayworth film Saytanın Kızı (literally, the devil’s woman), the Turkish title for her 1946 film Gilda, composer Cahit Berkay thickens the texture by adding a synthesizer and a saz to the mix; a juxtaposition between traditional and modern arises as the music continues. The saz is a quiet, strummed instrument and is normally never set alongside a zurna and davul duo. It is essentially out of place here; especially since much effort has been put into establishing the saz as the instrument of the Turkish people, its addition is perhaps a further statement of traditional folkways (Markoff 1991; Stokes 1992b). The saz brings credence to the “folk” connotations but pushes the boundaries of realism.

As with the example from Babam ve Oğlum, the very sound of these instruments disrupts the symphonic score, and the resulting contrast is itself an important sign. By breaking the homogeneity of the score, the very sound of the instruments comes to reference the exceptionalism of the moment. This cue is clearly not part of the usual background of a film, but rather stands to convey something new: it self-consciously references the past. The synthesizer’s presence further muddles the mix, as it breaks the spell and lets the contemporary world into the historicized setting. As the cue begins, the arrangement meets expectations since
the zurna and davul pair play a monophonic theme with a rhythmic accompaniment, just as one would expect. However, once the other instruments enter, the theme is set in polyphony according to Western rules of harmony, further complicating the denotations and connotations of the cue’s formal content. The contemporary world enters the presentation of an idealized past and bends the sign to its own ends—much in the way that Adorno identifies the Fair as an idyllic construct that is itself incorporated into a different agenda.\footnote{“Fairs continue to exist apocryphally in the midst of cultural order, recalling a vagrant way of life—not a fixed, stationary form of existence, but rather a pre-bourgeois state, the rudiments of which now serve economic exchange” (Adorno 2003).} Again, music is used to suture the opposites of the modern and the traditional, and the rural and urban, and the result is a past cast in the image of the present.

In this example, the anachronistic mixing of musical features and elements of the visual and narrative presentations does not push the realism of the moment to the breaking point. However, it is an exemplary clip from Sinema bir Mucizedir that effectively breaks the realism established within the works of the New Turkish Cinema with anachronistic music, pushing the film into an aesthetic sensibility recalling the light comedies of the Şaban era. The scene refers to a cinematic rather than historical past, and is evidence for what Nezih Erdoğan and Deniz Göktürk describe as a self-reflexive turn in New Turkish Cinema, where filmmakers turned their focus to cinematic history and modes of representation (Erdoğan and Göktürk 2001). The cue here would not be out of place in a modern nightclub in Istanbul, and its jarring presence breaks the historical accuracy maintained throughout the rest of the film. While it is not old, it is still a marker of nostalgia. It follows the fantastic, and non-realistic, aesthetics of the Yeşilçam melodramas, and consequently references a cinematic past—essentially a past that everyone remembers despite the fact that it never happened.

The scene begins with a cutaway to a ruined stone building somewhere in the town. Following an intense conversation between Ümit and his uncle, Nakip Ali, in his uncle’s office
the cut to this new location breaks the narrative thread entirely and begins a new act in the film. The music begins, set over the establishing shot of the ruin. Instead of referencing a more traditional past, it destroys the historicism of the narrative entirely because the cue is a short clip of electronic pop music. It features an analog synthesizer accompanied by a *darabuka* with a beat very common in Turkish pop music. It continues over a scene of Ümit and other boys from the town playing a game of cowboys and Indians amidst the rubble. Each of the boys enters their game by announcing the name of the character they are playing. Once “Ceronimo,” “Con Vayne,” “Al Kapon,” and “Zorro” have announced themselves, we realize all of these characters are from films the boys have seen—the first clue that this moment is a largely cinematic reference. The boys are carrying homemade bows, guns, and swords—a fact that does not escape another group of boys watching from the top of one of the ruin’s walls. When “Al Kapon” arrives, they laugh and tell him he is not carrying a real gun. He shrugs off this criticism without a word, but their comments puncture the realism of the game. While clearly humorous, this scene stands apart from the rest of the film because it is scored anachronistically with an obviously synthesized track. This departure at once heightens the sense of fun; the sharp change in tone highlights the filmmaker’s play with the referential qualities of realism and the reality of the moment. These comments break the realism of the game in much the same way that the music effaces the realism of the scene.

The moment is especially jarring because it is the only one of its kind in the film. As such, it disrupts the sonic flow of the film and brings the already anachronistic influence of the synthesizer to the audience’s attention. The break in the historicity of the film’s presentation allows us to see this score as a self-referential introduction of a cinematic past that directly

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4 This beat, used widely in Turkish pop and electronica, is set in 4/4 and accommodates a back beat while maintaining the beat pattern of a four or eight rhythmic cycle common to many Turkish folk and light classical musics. It has features of both and yet is entirely neither, and therefore is a true synthesis.

5 These names are the Turkish spellings for Geronimo, John Wayne, Al Capone etc. The ‘ç’ character has the ‘j’ sound in the Turkish alphabet.
contrasts with the nostalgic past of other scenes. The boys’ game is itself a reference to the films of the 1950s and the cinematic tastes of the Turkey of that era. The intrusion of this music brings the score in line with the purpose of the moment. But instead of recalling films from the 1950s, the electronic cue references the music of the cheap melodramas and comedies of the 1970s and 1980s, particularly the Şaban films, which relied on electronic music as a cost cutting measure. The cinematic reference is therefore densely layered and driven by disjuncture and difference.

The writings of Turkish musicologist Cem Behar encourage views of Turkish music that push against this nostalgia for these various pasts (Bahar 2002). While his efforts reflect a particular trend among scholars, the connection between musical forms and various nostalgic pasts strengthens every day through the unceasing repetition of these tropes in commercial television programs and commercials. In fact, these formats may be the most important conduits for legitimizing the connections made in these cinematic moments. For those with a television these nostalgic connections are inescapable. But these tropes do not appear in the same form every time. While they are loosely classifiable into related groups, they are the result of different strategies and agendas that greatly affect their presentation and reception.

Music is therefore a powerful operator within an economy of nostalgia. Its ability to point to any number of publicly shared and private origins makes it a particularly powerful tool for filmmakers hoping to elicit visions of the past. However, when Martin Stokes says, “musicians lie at the heart of a process of constant and restless questioning which the guardians of Turkish official culture have been unable to acknowledge, and have had a vital role in generating the furious pace of social, cultural, and political change now that the hegemony of official culture has come to an end,” it is important to remember that this process is shaped by them, not caused or completed (Stokes 1997, 675). Musicians are the catalyst for this form of social discourse. Their is a powerful way to recapture what was lost before this disjuncture. Ulrike
Präger’s work with Sudeten Germans is an explicit example of how music can be an important facilitator of recapture, and connects displaced individuals to childhood memories of a homeland (Präger, 2011, 2014). Her descriptions of displaced Sudeten Germans use of music to establish this connection makes it clear the power music has to accomplish this task, and to make discursive progress in understanding the reality of the displacement. But as she says “these musical ensembles created opportunities for the mixing of Germans and Sudeten Germans. . . seeding the merging of the hosts’ and immigrants’ highly compatible musical practices and facilitated the reciprocal influence of both populations’ musical styles” (2014, 324). This score is an example of how musical mixing, catalyzed by the labor of a film composer, accomplishes something similar. The conclusion, if there can be one, comes with the completion of the debate regarding meaning, use, and interpretation. Musicians’ involvement in this nostalgic economy is, then, correctly seen as the opening of discussion or corrective commentary. The effectiveness of this cue from Sinema bir Mucizedir depends on a productive management of disjuncture that creates an opportunity for the recapture of a lost childhood and collective cultural memory. The cue breaks the field of the score, and in doing so brings additional meaning or symbolic associations to repair the hole. While all of the music featured in these films can be considered Turkish—since it is acceptable to a Turkish audience—the use of cues bearing the signs of folk culture or of a real or alternative past in these intrusions highlights the content of these moments.

Combining the West and the East and the Past and the Present

Synthesis is another technique used by Turkish filmmakers to deal with the presentation of the oppositional binaries established by the “return to home” trope. In the previous examples, the musical cues displayed elements of what Turks consider “Western” and Turkish music, or modern and traditional musical forms, effectively bringing them together. However, this
synthesis was not total, and the formal characteristics of both idioms were clearly apparent and distinct. The meaning of these musical moments would be damaged if the salient musical details were not immediately apparent. But because the cultural signifier of Turkish modernity depends on a Turkish origin that cannot be fully combined with the contemporary modern/Western reality, these moments take on a dialectical nature that has no resolution. The dialectical nature of this cultural signifier is similar in form to Bhabha’s colonial signifier, as it turns the dialectic “between” of culture’s disciplinary structure—between unconscious and conscious motives, between little indigenous categories and conscious rationalizations, between little acts and grand traditions . . . into something closer to Derrida’s ‘entre,’ that sows confusion between opposites and stands between the oppositions at once. The colonial signifier—neither one nor other—is, however, an act of ambivalent signification, literally splitting the difference between the binary oppositions or polarities through which we think cultural difference (Bhabha 1994).

The opposition must be resolved in a different way. This is where film excels, because the very aesthetic of cinematic presentation is built on the assumption that disparate elements can be brought together to make a seamless whole. Music is often used to smooth the gaps, and in doing so acts as one of the principal ways to suture the disjunctures.

Until now, I have outlined strategies involving music that do not avoid the signs of this cultural struggle. There are, however, musical cues used in iterations of the “return to home” trope that attempt to make a synthetic music from formal elements signifying each side of the modern/traditional, rural/urban dichotomies. Ulaş Ak’s film Dün Gece Bir Rüya Gördüm, or Last Night I Saw an Angel (2006), is a romantic drama about the upstanding Deniz and the troubles that begin when he falls hopelessly in love with Lale, a woman who is involved in a world of gangsters and drugs. The film follows the two through the beginnings of their troubled love affair, and focuses on his attempts to redeem her. There are two homecomings in the film. The first comes when Deniz takes Lale to his family home in rural Anatolia to try to get her away from the danger of the city. The second happens when Lale seeks refuge by returning to her father’s
apartment in the city. Each of these moments is scored with music distinct from the rest of the soundtrack that evokes a nostalgia for the past and the myth of origin. The two homecomings are set apart musically because one makes use of a contemporary setting of a simple Turkish melody, whereas the other sets “You are my Sunshine” in an arrangement using Turkish folk instruments.

Following the same template as that found in Babam ve Oglum, Deniz’s return home begins in the city. The plot follows the two as they travel between the city and the rural space, and ends as they arrive in a clearly rural landscape. We see the two in a car and the highway literally dissolves into a tree-lined rural lane in the country. The cue begins in the car as Deniz is driving Lale through the streets of Istanbul. It is a simple melody supported by a sparsely scored rhythm section. Yet the instruments are difficult to place. The harmonic and rhythmic support is provided by a synthesizer. The melody, set in a simple style not unlike a türkü is performed on an instrument of indeterminate origin. It might be synthesized or at least might be a heavily processed live performance. In either case, the indeterminate timbre of the music yields few details as to how the audience is to classify and understand it. The sound of the instrument itself can be read as speaking directly to the tension experienced by Deniz and Lale. Its indeterminate timbre stands between the rural and urban and between the traditional and the modern in the same way that they do. Both the cue and their situation are conditional and transitory. The cue’s opaque source forces the listener to concentrate only on its formal qualities: structure, mode, figuration. Its ambivalent nature is only achieved by adapting one aspect and leaving the other fully formed and recognizable. The two are left to battle it out, with no easy synthesis at hand. The cue comes to an end as we see Deniz in the driver's seat, Lale in the passenger seat. A quick cut away from their faces to the road outside suggests the music might be on the radio. But when the road dissolves and the city with it, the track continues without break, establishing it as non-diegetic.
A second example from *Dün Gece bir Rüya Gördüm* demonstrates how the “return to home” trope changes and yet remains the same when scored with a selection of *aranjman*—a genre of melodies adapted from Western sources and subjected to a process of Turkification that does not entirely pull them into the Turkish fold.

The *aranjman* is an artefact of the cinematic past and is proof that the impact of the *Yeşilçam* and post-*Yeşilcam* eras reached beyond cinematic spheres in cultural production. Musical melodramas from the 1960s-1980s gave rise to a new genre functionally labeled *aranjman*, or arrangements. These were songs adapted from western pop songs. They were mostly popular melodies that were inflected with superficial Turkish formal and stylistic features such as Turkish instrumental arrangements, Turkish ornamental figuration, and translated lyrics. The *aranjman* genre presents another strategy in combining the Turkish and Western musical idioms. It is part of a long history of adaptations, many of which were forced by political and social restrictions. As Orhan Tekelioğlu points out, “meanwhile, another interesting media development took place, effecting the development of music history in modern Turkey” (Tekelioğlu 1996, 209). By 1948, when Arab films were banned because of their possible political impact, some 150 of them (mostly from Egypt) had already been shown in theatres around Turkey. These films, and their music, had become very popular—disturbingly as far as the authorities were concerned—so that in 1948 the import of Arab films as well as the playing of original Arab lyrics were banned (Dönmez-Colin 2008). This triggered a novel phase in the East-West synthesis of music, the practice of *adaptation*, in which the songs from Arab films were reworked: either the music remained unchanged and the Turkish lyrics were dubbed in over it, or the whole song was redone with only a faint hint of the original themes that had served as the source of inspiration” (Tekelioğlu 1996, 209).

Like the *Arabesk* music described in detail by Martin Stokes and Murat Ergin, *aranjman* became a popular form of pop music outside the films from which it came (Stokes 1989, 1992,
Ergin 2000). The *aranjman* genre’s popularity, distinct history, and cinematic origins make it a powerful and complex sign when used to score a “return to home” scene. Like the musical examples from *Sinema bir Mucezidir*, this music can evoke an artificial cinematic past rather than a sense of nostalgia for a historical past.

In a key scene in *Dün Gece bir Rüya Gördüm*, Lale has returned to the relative safety of her father’s apartment somewhere in the city. While hiding there, she has a few calm moments to herself. She finds herself in her childhood bedroom sorting through objects from her past. She finds items that belonged to her mother, and we see she is still grieving for a person who has died long ago. A simple melody plays to emphasize her grief. The setting of this melody features a synthesized cello and what is most likely a *ney*, the end-blown cane flute most commonly associated with the Mevlevi dervishes and Ottoman musical forms. However, the melody is not Turkish at all. Rather it is the American folk song “You Are My Sunshine,” first recorded in the United States in 1939.6

The sweet and somewhat plaintive quality of the arrangement speaks to how the loss affects Lale, and perhaps explains many of her troubles. The poignancy of the song and its setting are entirely appropriate for the emotional moment, and would fulfill the symbolic and aesthetic expectations of international film audiences. That the director Ulas Ak and composers and music directors Bora Ebeoğlu and Cengiz Onural would choose to use this particular song at this moment suggests they intend to bring the text’s meaning to the scene—which would assume some degree of recognition on the part of the audience. The nostalgia of the moment, part of the trope of returning to home, is deepened by the implications of the song’s lines, “you are my sunshine/ my only sunshine/ you make me happy/ when skies are grey.” It is a moment that follows the form of the earlier homecomings but employs a different strategy to enlist a folk melody to evoke the emotion of the homecoming. Although this is an American folk song, it is

part of the Turkish musical vernacular because it an example of the *aranjman* genre, and recognizable as such. However, the filmmaker’s use of it to complete a “return to home” sequence demonstrates flexibility in the formal construction of this trope. The music adds to the poignancy of the parent-child relationship, which Suner identifies as a definitional feature of many nostalgia films, and indeed new Turkish cinema in general (Suner 35).

With this example and the others in mind, we can now build an outline of the necessary formal elements which define the complete cine-musical event presented by the “return to home” trope. First of all, the visual and narrative content must make a clear distinction between urban and rural spaces. The urban space must be cast as dangerous or chaotic. Alternatively the rural space must be presented as stable, eternal, and connected with family or any number of possible pasts. This connection allows for a nostalgic conflation of the notion of origin and family with the rural space. The music that scores these scenes must bear easily identifiable sonic signs of either a real or an artificial folk culture. The artificial folk culture can be the product of governmental reforms or cinematic constructions. In either case, the musical content relies on understandable sonic signs that evoke unreconstructed Turkish life in rural Anatolia.

Because these signs are not structural musical features, such as pitch content, rhythmic structure, or song forms, this music usually this involves only superficial signals. Specific instruments, such as the *saz*, are already established signs of this rural cultural sphere and are consequently most commonly enlisted to evoke the correct interpretation. Because the conflation of the past and rural sphere is widely accepted by Turkish audiences, even instruments like the *ney*, an instrument once associated with the urbane and cosmopolitan Mevlevi dervishes, can serve to score homecomings to a rural home. That this is now true suggests that the repetition of this trope is actually a site where the validity of these connections is created and cemented.
My final example makes heavy use of the semiotic potential of these artificial combinations. Derviş Zaim’s 2006 film *Cenneti Beklerken* was critically acclaimed and won many film awards in Turkey.⁷ Renowned for its attention to historical detail, it features an award-winning score by the well-known composer Rahman Altin.⁸ It is a loose adaptation of Orhan Pamuk’s book *My Name is Red*, and therefore the film’s narrative themes deal with the aesthetic and epistemological differences between Ottoman visual art and Western modes of representation.⁹ It follows a miniature painter, Eflatun (Serhat Tutumluler), who is caught experimenting with realistic European painting styles and his unwilling involvement in the events surrounding a coup attempt organized by forces loyal to the crown prince. Eflatun is enlisted by the Grand Vizir to record the execution of a rebel prince who is a pretender to the throne. After traveling with the vizir’s men, Eflatun is eventually captured by Prince Danyal, who forces him to alter a copy of Velasquez’s *Las Meninas*. The portrait features the prince himself in the foreground, replacing the Infanta, and the twelfth Imam in the mirror at the back of the room. The alterations are intended to show the prince has divine license for the rebellion. Eflatun’s discomfort with both tasks sets the tone of the entire film and brings the differences between Islamic/Ottoman and European representation to the center of the audience’s attention.

Much of the formal construction of the film is heavily wrought, with a clear intention to make the narrative, visual, and sonic fields parallel the others directly. It is therefore important to pay attention to how scenes are constructed and how the various fields of the film interact. The film begins with the first of many animation sequences that contributed to its popularity. In these

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⁹ Some of my contacts went further, and said that this film is actually “theft” because of its heavy, and unaccredited use of Pamuk’s work. It is not an adaptation of the book, but it has lifted many of the core details of the narrative. While this is a matter of debate, its reliance on *My Name is Red’s* constituent parts is, at least, a good example of the continued reliance on borrowing and adapting that has marked Turkish filmmaking since its beginning.
sequences, computer renderings of paintings in the Ottoman miniature style common in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries are made to come alive. The camera moves between two-dimensional buildings and lands on a picture of four men speaking on the banks of the Bosphorus with Topkapı palace and Haiğa Sofia visible behind them. The painting dissolves, giving way to a live-action version of the same scene. This is the first indication that the relationship between visual representation and reality is a central theme of the film. Immediately, the sequence cuts to an establishing shot of Eflatun’s house. This shot is part of a bracket that figuratively frames the film in a manner analogous to the literal frame that surrounds the sequence. The return to this shot at the end of the film completes the arc of the story, and as I will show, creates a new beginning.

The film begins in earnest when we see Eflatun, the miniature painter, and his assistant, Gazal (Bülent İnal), grieving over the body of Eflatun’s son. In his sorrow, Eflatun is painting an image of his son in a style contrasting to that of the miniatures we have just seen: a European representational style considered anathema within Islam. Drawing attention to this fact, his assistant lays his hand on Eflatun’s shoulder and says, “drawing in the style of the infidels only heightens your suffering. If only the work of European artists reflected the truth.” Eflatun consents to give up the image and covers his son’s face with a shroud.

At this moment, the silence of the scene is broken by a single cello playing a melody that is at once both possibly set in a makam, and yet not. That it is a cello and not some other instrument already establishes the cue as at least Western music-inflected—an interesting fact considering the tenor of Gazal’s comments not two seconds before. The construction of this moment is entirely within the stylistic limits of Hollywood, European, or Turkish cinema. But the anachronistic and stylistically ambiguous music is an indication that there is more going on than a mere historically accurate presentation. Next comes a cut to the shot of the outside of Eflatun’s house and the gravestones along the path leading up to it. A young boy, the ghost of
Eflatun’s son, walks down between the stones and sits on the closest grave, dropping out of frame as he does so. He is in effect taking his place in his grave. As he sinks into the ground, the cello melody falls into step with a plodding accompanying theme played by a cello and bass orchestra. It continues to play over Eflatun’s visit to his son’s grave, a moment that yields to the film’s titles.

This slow, deliberate theme becomes a leitmotif throughout the film. It often connects Eflatun with his lost family and the geographical space around his home. Its instrumentation, clear use of functional harmony, and contrapuntal setting mark its setting as belonging to the Western idiom. However, the solo cello melody is realized with sufficient references to non-Western performance practices such that it is clearly a combinatorial setting; the Turkish style is obvious enough. In this way, the setting parallels the treatment of the Western/Ottoman dichotomy that forms such an important part of the narrative. Both are present and competing with neither gaining the upper hand.

Like the visual and narrative fields, other returning cues in the score make use of features of the Ottoman classical idiom, such as melodic figuration, monophonic settings, and key Ottoman instruments like the long-necked lute, or tanbur, and the kemençe, a bowed spike fiddle. The latter are immediate sonic signs for Ottoman court music, as they are seldom used in any other Turkish musical practice. Throughout the work, Altın pits the Ottoman-inflected Western setting and the Western-inflected cues against each other, making use of their formal and stylistic differences. Significantly, both cues present different strategies for synthesizing the two idioms. The tension between them is not resolved until the last scene and thus dominates the score in the same way that the Western and Eastern modes of pictorial presentation dominate the other fields. While it certainly parallels the rhetorical thrust and form of the other

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10 This instrument choice is significant because neither the cello or the bass have been featured instruments in Turkish cinematic history. The violin has always played a prominent role, first as a replacement for the kemençe and then as the principal instrument in arabesk orchestras.
fields throughout the film, much of Altın’s score often undercuts the realism of the painstakingly detailed, historically correct presentation. It supports the narrative thrust of the work more than it speaks to the historical accuracy of the visual presentation.

Consequently, this music conducts its own dialog with the visual and narrative features. It references both real and artificial pasts, and plays with the permutations of the two. It does this by carefully offering two possible readings of the past, using two competing leitmotifs to offer different synthetic strategies. Because neither reference any identifiable “original” material, the score speaks directly to several different interpretations of the past. It is not referring to the cinematic past found in Sinema bir Mucizedir. However, by relying on stylistic disjuncture to refer to a Turkish past as Remboustika’s score does in Babam ve Odlum, the score is actively articulating an ideal for Turkey that finds its sources in the pre-Kemalist and Kemalist Turkish nationalist ideologies through an attempt at seamlessly combining the idoms. Turkey’s past and present are both meant to be seen as combining Western and Eastern features and origins with the present. The legitimacy of this ideal is articulated by the miniature painter Eflatun, the hero of the film in the last scene. Eflatun (grasping the shoulders of his assistant):

To return to the past means embarking on a new journey. We’ll paint new European pictures. Sometimes we will use the style of miniatures. And sometimes we’ll merge the two styles. Then perhaps I can start drawing miniatures again. We’ll make mistakes. Like you, I hope to return to the very beginning. We’ll look forward to recovering.11

Eflatun’s words are immediately followed by a restatement of the initial moments of the film. The cello theme begins again over an only slightly altered repetition of the visitation of his son’s ghost. The film ends as Eflatun returns to visit the grave—a return home to his family.

Eflatun’s emotional speech over his son’s grave is the closing of the thematic bracket framing the entire film. These bracketing scenes enclose a new variation of the “return to home” trope. Most of the common architecture is immediately apparent. The visual and narrative fields

11 My own translation.
focus on loss of the past, nostalgia for what was lost, an emphasis on family, and anxiety regarding the encroaching Westernization that is part of the future. The musical cue emphasizes the emotional impact of these unspoken issues while silently undercutting their validity. Eflatun’s speech articulates the aesthetic and narrative conceit behind the entire film, and its score, making manifest what was only suggested by the sign system constructed in the visual, narrative, and musical fields.

Eflatun’s comments express a desire for a system that effectively combines the past and the future to create something new or better. This is essentially an almost orthodox expression of the reformist designs of Gökalp and the republican leaders. Altin’s score actually partially fulfills this ideal in the last moments of the film. However, while Eflatun is extolling the virtues of this synthetic production as a way of overcoming the past and creating a new and brighter future, he is compounding the paradox of the film’s relationship with its score. He makes explicit what is implicit, even banal, in other films, by stating how art is to be used. His hope is actually a quasi-historicization of the contemporary notion of synthetic Turkishness represented by art made according to republican ideals. By making the synthesis explicit, he is pulling contemporary concepts back into a cinematic past standing for the Ottoman past. In this way, his speech is an example of how film continues to both reflect and reinforce the importance of these ideas in the contemporary political and public spheres. By placing this desire in the past, even a cinematic depiction of the real past, it becomes easier to manifest it in the future, and for audiences to accept.

These four examples display different strategies of realizing the central sociocultural statement that lies at the heart of the “return to home” trope. They are unified by their status as statements in a cultural discourse encapsulated within their musical material and its treatment. Ultimately, what they say is what is important. They are the very sites where the associations between music combining the West and the East and presentations of the past and present are
constructed. They are the very mechanism where filmmakers, as social actors, establish these connections. The repetition of this particular trope asserts its importance within contemporary sociocultural discourse and cements the validity of the connections. To a certain extent, the prevalence of these attempts answers the questions raised by Bülent Aksoy in his critical examination of the very question of the origin of Turkish music (Aksoy 1989). These cinematic moments are the origin of “Turkish” music, in that they present contemporary musical constructions into the past and into the present. They are, in effect, the generators of the myth that everyone believes. It is for this reason that examining a complete cinematic presentation can yield a significant insight into cultural processes. It is also why we should not forget to include the score in these analyses.

The musical objects presented in these films are the products of a process of creative association, linking several meaningful musical signs in such a way that the apparent (and themselves culturally contingent) origins of the West and the East are immediately recognizable within the semiotic fields and musical texture. The contingent nature or actual truth of these origins is lost or ignored in favor of what they can mean in a more immediate context. They are similar in their construction to the (re)construction of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior, detailed by Svetlana Boym (Boym 2001, 100-108). Boym notes that this cathedral was demolished by Soviet authorities to demolish part of the Tsarist and then reconstructed in the early 1990s to explicitly recapture it. However, its reconstruction “while commemorating the glory of the Russian past, the new cathedral strives to obliterate Soviet history and restore the continuity between prerevolutionary and post-Soviet Russia” (106). It does this by eliding the reality of the past, evoking a past-present complex made of the details of the present. Yes, it is a building that restores a destroyed cathedral, but its parking garage and concrete construction references a new Russia. So too, the music speaks of present formations of the past, rather than the actual
details. In this way, the loss of the past is mirrored in the way the intention behind the original musical work is effaced, thus allowing new contexts and interpretations to arise.

Jonathan Miller suggests, “there comes a point in the life of any cultural artifact, whether a play or a painting, when the continued existence of the physical token that represents it does not necessarily mean that the original identity of the work survives” (Miller 1989). Speaking of the dilapidated state of many ancient Greek sculptures, he continues, “in this form, the works in question bear witness to their own antiquity, and this is valued for its own sake” (ibid.). A necessary element of Miller’s observation is the absolute requirement that both the apparent age of the artwork and its status as meaningful art be recognizable and accessible. If an antique is cleaned too thoroughly, its value as an antique is lost. This is also true for “synthetic” music: the features of the parent forms, the Western elements and the Eastern elements, must be recognizable as such for the music to be valuable and appropriate.

The truth, then, is that these musical objects are not synthetic, but rather present an unresolved dialectical pair captured in uneasy partnership. While this partnership is under constant strain, it has to endure if the object is to properly reflect the “origins” of the music. If one overtook the other, or the synthesis became too complete, then the effect would be lost and the paradoxically non-synthetic “synthetic” sound pushed beyond acceptable limits. The effect would be effaced and the aura destroyed. Ultimately, this means the “return to home” trope is not something filmmakers use to resolve the tension between this conceptual dialectic. It is the protrusion of a cultural reality that holds this unresolved dialectical pair as a constructive feature of contemporary Turkish life. As many of my Turkish informants explained, it is not that one has to choose between being rural or urban, or Western or Eastern, but that Turks manage to do both at the same time.

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12 Incidentally, this is the pattern for the formation of myth in Barthes Mythologies (Barthes 1972, 111-136).
But this comes with a paradox. The city and the home are representations of the global and the local, of particular realities and universal themes. But it is the city that is preferred. The city is always more real, despite being a manifestation of a global cosmopolitan reality that is troublesome enough to flee. The rural locals are only connected to a vague universal of Turkishness that is alien to the city yet part of it. The return to home trope is about leaving lived a globalized reality, and entering into an idealized past. It is a move away from what the audience knows into something that they share only through discourse and memory. Again, it is not the goal that matters, it is the productive act of making the journey that speaks to people the most. This trope presents something that is the not a liminal state, but the point of the journey.

Speaking of the distinction between the city and the country as a discursive construction, Raymond Williams says,

> Clearly the contrast of country and city is one of the major forms in which we become conscious of a central part of our experience and of the crises of our society. But when this is so, the temptation is to reduce the historical variety of the forms of interpretation to what are loosely called symbols or archetypes: to abstract even these most evidently social forms and to give them a primarily psychological or metaphysical status. This reduction often happens when we find certain major forms and images and ideas persisting through periods of great change. Yet if we can see that the persistence depends on the forms and images and ideas being changed though often subtly, internally and at times unconsciously, we can also see that the persistence indicates some permanent or effectively permanent needs, to which the changing interpretations speak (Williams 1974, 415-416).

The return to home trope is an archetype that minimizes the city while maintaining it as the center of daily life. It does this by rendering the rural setting—the location of one’s origins or home—as a goal that is rooted in the universal, and not as a locality. But it needs a cosmopolitan perspective to do this because the transition is a journey away from a perspective that is rooted in a particularized Istanbul looking out at an alternative. The music facilitates the transition by breaking the cosmopolitan frame slightly. It offers a productive disjuncture that pushes the characters out of the particularities of daily life and into a frame where the idea of Turkishness can be explored. But the return to the city is always looming, as it is dictated by the
plot. The filmmakers use this second return, physical or conceptual though it may be, to confront what was learned while dealing with the paradoxical rural origins of Turkishness—origins that are universal and yet cast as more localized than the cosmopolitan urban spaces. It is a way of understanding these origins by exploring the details of the transition. This transition is the true bridge between east and west—it is not the ones that cross the Bosphorous. The return to home transition provides the topography of the land to which the rooted-cosmopolitan is connected. As Williams points out, “the country and the city are changing historical realities, both in themselves and in their interrelations. Moreover, in our own world, hey represent only two kinds of settlement. Our real social experience is not only of the country and the city, in their most singular forms, but of many kinds of intermediate and new kinds of social and physical organization” (415). In this we can see that these composers are facilitators of the entry to this inbetweenness, they provide the only way that the simultaneity can be activated. As the city fades, the goal is already present. The two exist together outlining not the boundaries of an identity, but the nature of the interconnectedness of several possible identities.
Chapter 8

Epilogue

In his novel *Kara Kitap* (The Black Book), Orhan Pamuk repeatedly interrupts his narrative with transcripts of magical-realist columns written by Celâl Salık, a famous journalist and central, yet absent, character (Pamuk 1990).¹ The book has a cult following partially because of the way in which Pamuk speaks through Celâl to cut directly to the core of contemporary life in Istanbul. Celâl’s columns offer carefully wrought, albeit slightly disturbing, views of the city cast within essays providing perspectives on Turkey’s history. Pamuk’s conceit is to expose how its inhabitants create surprising ways to engage with Turkey’s past and present and come to terms with how they “should become their true self” (Pamuk, 194). In what has become a hallmark of Pamuk’s style, he makes ample reference to the popular entertainments of mid-century Turkey, providing Turkish films a supporting role as the metaphorical ground for his sepia-toned prose.

Each of Celâl’s columns obliquely describes one aspect of Turkish life by highlighting the identity crisis that unites the Turkish people. For example, one identifies a paradox at the core of representing “real Turkish people” by telling the story of a mannequin maker who failed as a businessman because his creations looked too much like actual Turks. His clients refused to use his wares because people did not want to see real Turks modeling aspirational purchases. In the book, these columns appear as interludes either prefacing a new topic or drawing together a cluster of ideas set out through other means earlier in the book. As such, each presents a single view of a city that defies definition. Each demonstrates that Istanbul is caught between identities and that Turks are constantly seeking to define their indefinable selves.

¹ *Kara Kitap* was originally published in 1990 and translated into English in 1994. A new English edition was published in 2006.
Another particularly evocative column speaks of what would happen if the water suddenly disappeared from the Bosphorous. In his description, Pamuk, speaking through Celâl, describes the detritus of history that has collected on the bottom of the waterway dividing Istanbul into its iconic Eastern and Western sides.

Amid the doomsday chaos, among toppled wrecks of old city line ferries, will stretch vast fields of bottle caps and seaweed. Adorning the mossy masts of American transatlantic liners that ran aground when the last of the water receded overnight, we shall find skeletons of Celts and Ligurians, their mouths gaping open in deference to the unknown gods of prehistory. As this new civilization grows up amid mussel-encrusted Byzantine treasures, tin and silver knives and forks, thousand-year-old wine corks and soda bottles, and the sharp-nosed wrecks of galleons, I can also imagine its denizens drawing fuel for their lamps and stoves from a dilapidated Romanian oil tanker whose propeller has become lodged in the mud. But that is not the worst of it, for in this accursed cesspool watered by the dark green spray of every sewage pipe in Istanbul, we can be sure that new epidemics will break out among the armies of rats as they explore their new haven, this drying seabed strewn with turbot and swordfish skeletons and polluted with the mysterious gases that have been bubbling beneath the surface since long before the birth of history (Pamuk 1994, 17).

This hidden rubbish heap of history speaks allegorical volumes about Turkey and its people’s historical and socio-cultural make-up. Pamuk’s intent in having Celâl write so evocatively about the things found stuck in the muddy bottom of the now empty channel is to reframe how we think about the barrier between the literal and figurative east and west. As the waters recede, what is exposed is the history of the relationship between the two sides, between Asia and Europe along with the idea that the Turks themselves have been the connective tissue. The act of crossing the divide has defined the people. In building it this way, Pamuk has at once recrafted this now well-worn trope of Istanbul’s, and by extension Turkey’s, role as the bridge between the East and the West while also presenting a delightfully subversive view of it. Except that Turkey does not bridge the two; it is what happens as one crosses.

The jumble at the bottom of the Bosphorous is not just detritus lying between the two sides. It is the inevitable result of the relationship between the two, and is actually the manifest history of the place and the people. My reading of this suggests that Turks themselves are less the bridge between two discrete spheres of being and are more the inevitable result of their
connection. They may in fact be the flotsam and jetsam at the bottom of the Bosporous, or at least born of it. The Bosporous, then, is something that need not be a barrier, keeping the east from the west. It does not need to be bridged because it is a super-highway that connects the two. The rest of the book explores the implications of this idea.

This Pamukian parable points, again, at the fact that I have made clear in my previous discussion. Turkey is not of the East. It is not of the West either. Nor is Turkey some amalgam of the two. It is not a fusion. It is not built of two sides that need to be bridged. Turkey, its people, and their culture are the result of a history that involves both and created both. Turkey is Turkey. Turks are Turks and yet are also not Turks at all. Turkish culture cannot be explained in the rigid and essentialist terms of the East vs. West debate in any of its forms, as articulated by Edward Said in *Orientalism* (Said 1994), by Angela Merkel on the floor of the European Parliament, by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, or by Mehmet the shopkeeper of the Umut Gida near where I lived. This is a fact that is borne out in Turks’ expression of themselves. It can be found in the media created by filmmakers, musicians, artists, and actors. It is in the literature and on the stage. It is in the streets. It is there if we just choose to see it.

Throughout the history of Turkey and Turkish film, two major obstacles to this process of admixture have been Turkey’s continual political instability and its attendant social engineering. Each coup has had a deleterious effect on cultural production and advancement. It stands to reason that the recent coup on July 15, 2016 will have a similar effect. It is certainly already having an impact on just what topics Turkey filmmakers are emphasizing as they prepare their new projects.

On the day in question, I was conducting fieldwork for a different project. About midday, my normally quiet smartphone began making more noise than usual. I ignored it because I was in the middle of an interview. But once I was able to look at my phone properly, I realized that something was very off: something of significance was happening in Turkey. I had nearly fifty
text messages, WhatsApp, and Twitter direct messages telling me that a coup had begun. The later messages began suggesting that things were not that bad, and that I did not have to worry about the wellbeing of their senders. A few hours later, I began to get many messages from people telling me that they were safe and sound, and not to worry at all. By the next morning, I had nearly eighty new messages telling me that it was over and that the whole event was a set-up. Most of my friends were very angry. Many were convinced that Erdoğan had staged the entire thing to gain greater control over the country. Everyone said they were bracing for the inevitable consequences. What was clear was that although the coup had failed, the Turkish cultural landscape was digging in for a protracted period of change. The backlash might be a coup in its own right. All that was left was to await the inevitable changes that would come.

As of this writing, the coup’s lasting effects are not yet fully apparent. However, the site chosen by the army to begin the coup speaks directly to Turkey’s relationship with its past and its cultural location. In their first open act of aggression, the army occupied and closed the bridges in Istanbul. It was strategy that is almost more symbolic than anything else. By occupying the bridges, the coup plotters had not only commandeered major traffic arteries, they had also occupied a conceptual Turkey. They sat squarely on the bridge that both literally and metaphorically joins the East and the West. But as I’ve argued throughout this dissertation, it is the bridge itself, the “in between” that matters. By occupying the middle of the bridge, the troops were occupying the true nature of Turkey and controlling any movement between. AK party supporters and loyal governmental police eventually replaced them, but new forces are still metaphorically occupying these conceptual spaces, even though they are no longer physically there.

The failed coup has indeed changed the landscape of cultural production already; the occupation of this conceptual space is keenly felt, if not yet fully understood. The roles of many undercurrents of Turkish life are in flux. Even the places of sound and music in Turkish life have
come into question. The large-scale changes in Turkish political and social life will undoubtedly impact my friend’s lives. However, it is the smaller shifts that will change the way they manage their professional lives. They will have to alter the way they write, and change the way they approach their audience.

One significant feature of these shifts is the recasting of musical sign systems to engage listeners in a new way. Denise Gil has identified one such change in a recent piece discussing the way the ezan and sela, the call for prayer and incantation said to beg God’s forgiveness for the Muslim dead (Gil 2016). She reports that shortly after the beginning of the coup, muzzeinler, the clerics who sing the call to prayer, began singing the ezan outside its normal, regular times and added the sela as they did so. According to Gil, the sela is a prayer sung in forgiveness for the death of Muslims. She points the significance of this moment, “few Turks had ever heard the ezan outside official times. . . . The last two times that the ezan and the sela were incanted outside of ritual time occurred before the Republic of Turkey’s boundaries were established in 1923. . . . In both cases, the ezan and sela were used to marshal Ottoman Muslims to defend their communities (ibid.). She says that this caused some confusion, as this recitation could be interpreted as a new call for the Turkish people to rise up and protect themselves, stating, “reciting the call to prayer outside of normalized Islamic ritual time rendered this July coup a kind of war against Turkey itself.” This moment is significant because it suggests an intention to enlist the boundary lines between the east/west, Muslim/secular, and old/new dyads. This is a different enactment of the meaning of these pairings, and if people find these acceptable, it is possible that the horizon of expectations has changed. Now they are also politically charged, which means using them in the future might mean falling to one side or another. This certainly seems the case given Erdoğan’s use of the coup to demarcate boundaries between Turkey and the west (Fraser and Becatoros 2016).
Importantly, public social criticism is already muted, to say the least. The aftermath of Erdoğan’s reaction to the coup has created a new political social and political landscape. His purge of educated and powerful elites has created a prevailing sense of surveillance (McKinnon 2016). Consequently, few are willing to talk about the situation. I began having long conversations with as many people as I could in August and September to understand what the early impact of the coup might be on film production. Immediately, I realized that the coup and its backlash have quashed open conversation. No one I spoke to was willing to go on record talking about it. No one wanted their name added to their comments. Few were willing to speak openly over Skype and text messages. Everyone seems to feel that they are under direct scrutiny, and this has made them worry about their livelihoods and even their safety. Those whose livelihoods involve making public statements, be they in newspaper articles or films, are living with a fear of the unknown that has changed them already.

Of all of my contacts in Turkey, film directors are under the most scrutiny. While they are not persecuted like journalists, they are weary about discussing what happened and what it means None of my director friends would speak to me about these subjects, preferring to limit themselves to talking about their families and telling me not to worry. I heard about their situation by speaking to mutual friends. Film composers have avoided any direct action so far, but this does not mean that it will not happen. Their situation is fascinating because they now feel that they are caught between technology and the government, and this is changing the way they have to work. I will limit my comments here out of respect for their desire to remain anonymous. I will also paraphrase their comments rather than quote them directly. This an inelegant, but necessary, precaution.

I spoke with eight individuals at length about the climate in the industry in late 2016. My overall impression was that film composers do not feel that their work will be directly impacted, but are preparing for the worst anyway. While they believe that they will not suffer any direct
consequences because of their music, they are nevertheless changing how they write to better suit the political climate. These considerations have little to do with their role as a composer, and more to do with their role as a member of the creative team that produces a film. This is largely because they must respond to the work the other filmmakers are doing, but must also anticipate what their audience wants and needs. So, while they are not worrying about the political ramifications of their music making, they are acutely aware of the fact that they have to make different films.

One significant political consideration appears in their plans for the historical films that are now entering production. While composers and filmmakers were working on contemporary films when I was in Turkey last, now they are exploring the Ottoman past. Many filmmakers are finding it prudent to explore topics that are less directly problematic. Unwilling to make films that might be seen as direct commentary on the current political situation, most have decided to attach themselves to projects set in a fanciful Ottoman era. Additionally, many have also decided to work on comedies, avoiding any dramatic subjects. They are unwilling to criticize or make strong comments about any topic. They told me that comedies are safer, even when I pointed out that satire is often a means of critiquing the government.

Their preference for Ottoman topics is not neutral or coincidental. They have chosen these theme, or stories, deliberately to keep out of trouble, or at least avoid perceived problems in the future. They believe that because Ottoman topics are separated from current events, they are likely to be received well by the government. This seems to be a reasonable inference, because Erdoğan and his government have cultivated a form of neo-Ottomanism that casts the former Empire as a kind of Islamic-Turkish golden age. Ottoman topics fit within this revisionist version of the near past. And because the government’s funding policies have helped this new vision of Turkey's past flourish, filmmakers can expect to be well funded in the years to come as well. Erdoğan’s new presidential palace in Ankara is perhaps the most obvious testament to
how he wants his aesthetic and political preferences to be manifested. It is a contemporary juxtaposition of Ottoman architecture and the monumental buildings of the Turkish republic. It manages to combine decorative elements of the 1920-1930s with Ottoman houses of the nineteenth century, sanitizing both by casting them in concrete, glass, and steel. The gilt interiors reference a kind of imagined glory that combines both power and revisionist history. It was even suggested that the *mise-en-scene* for a proposed project will look just like Erdoğan’s bedroom.

Filmmakers are betting on the idea that Ottoman topics will be innocuous enough to avoid interference and dangerous questions. And it seems that they may be right. One filmmaker had already secured government funding that was followed shortly thereafter by offers of more work. Interestingly, however the scope and scale of the Ottomanesque films differs from earlier models. Most people told me about projects focusing on people’s foibles and follies; the scripts are farces that explore the small-scale nature of human relationships. They do not touch on larger topics or address larger social frameworks. This change in focus from the past five years seems to be significant. It suggests that the coup has already redirected cinematic production so that the social critiques of urban/rural, old/new, and East/West are outmoded—at least for the time being. It remains to be seen how, or if, these once emblematic features will be manifested in post-coup productions. It also means that Gil’s statement that “Refusing to be silent is to take up sound as power. But this coup’s most lasting change will not be found in raised voices, nor in the making of noise. Rather, the coup and its aftermath have engendered new, conflicting forms of listening,” is only half right (Gil 2016). The aftermath is creating a new landscape for listening, but the producers are not choosing to use their voice to rebel. For now, they are choosing to lay low until the heat is off.

The preference for a smaller scale in visual and narrative presentations is regrettable, because this means that the accompanying music will also have to be smaller and more
intimate. In the intervening years, the industry has matured to the point that there are now local options for music production beyond what was available before. There is now a strong recording orchestra of young conservatory players who are able to play both western and eastern music of high quality. This means composers now have resources in Istanbul that allow them to avoid the cost and trouble of hiring orchestras in Europe, Canada, or the U.S. Such resources might have allowed composers to turn away from synthesized scores, but the coup has constrained budgets, too. Only composers like Tamer or Yildiray will be able to make use of this orchestra in the future. This means electronic performance is still needed and necessary, and that the orchestral turn Yildiray predicted will likely be limited to his productions.

The people who agreed to speak to me about this also identified a shift in the audience who are paying to watch films. They saw the shift in aesthetics and plot lines as responsible because they are attracting a different audience—supporters of the government and Erdoğan. Their tastes are guiding the composer’s musical choices. Several composers told me that they are now incorporating many more eastern sounds into their scores to accommodate this shift. They feel obliged to write more Turkish music and to avoid the more western-sounding cues. In part, this is because the Ottoman topics, combined with a necessity for greater realism, require music appropriate for the period. But it is also because they would like to incorporate more live musicians and they cannot afford an orchestra. They are therefore turning to smaller ensembles and small-scale live performance, which helps them economize and reduce their musical responsibilities. Importantly, with the reduction of the scale and scope of scores, and the turn to Turkish music, the tasks and responsibilities involved in realizing sound that I outlined earlier are diminishing. DAWs still largely resist the encoding of the nuance needed to realize a Turkish score. Composers have to rely on musicians trained on Turkish instruments like the saz and kanun. Their work is beginning to more closely resemble older, traditional film composition practices.
The coup is not the only significant change since I began my work in 2010. The technological interventions presented by video streaming, online piracy, and the contexts of video consumption have had a noticeable impact on audiences and their expectations. When I lived in Turkey, global streaming platforms like YouTube and then Twitter had been banned. While most people had found hacks and technological solutions to circumvent the ban, it meant that these platforms had not achieved wide enough use to have a deep impact on viewership or audience communication. The government lifted the ban on YouTube and Twitter in 2015, which meant that people were free to use the platforms without resorting to clandestine solutions. This effectively brought these platforms into the open and solidified digital communication’s role in the center of public discourse. Erdoğan’s use of FaceTime to denounce the coup and quash rumors of his capture or death demonstrated how official attitudes towards new media channels have changed. It is difficult to measure whether or not this ban had a major impact on the way people consumed digital content, because it seemed that almost everyone ignored it. However, its lifting, and the government’s subsequent acceptance of social media, allowed Turkish production houses and cable channels to move into using these platforms as a fundamental part of their audience engagement and dissemination plans. The free new legal circumstances have contributed the evolution of the economic circumstances of film production and the kinds of audiences that are developed, and is already changing the way composers must work.

One of my friends noted that she has sensed a change in audiences as a result. She told me that filmmakers and composers have effectively lost their audience because people no longer watch TV or go to the movies. She said this is deeply problematic because her imagined audiences are the kind of people who used to do this. She says that her preferred listener/viewer is no longer her paying audience member. For her, the remaining paying audience is a group of people who prefer what she called a lower form of entertainment. She told me that filmmakers and composers have had to adapt their habits to ensure that what
paying public they have left is happy with their work. They are no longer able to serve as the kind of first interpreter they would prefer to be because they feel more limited than ever before. They feel obliged to write music that is more explicitly eastern, and that they have to keep the scale and the scope of their scores smaller than they would like. Functionally, their music is now more Turkish than Turkified. Their cosmopolitan sensibilities have to be curbed in order to address an audience that is less tolerant.

Perhaps most surprisingly, audiences seem to no longer find the melodramatic modality acceptable. They are ignoring film productions that make heavy use of its central tropes and its broad dramatic sensibility. The only explanation many of my friends were able to offer was that people are no longer interested in crying. They want to be entertained. They want to laugh. As a result, they avoid the opportunities to cry and are focusing on lighter fare. It seems that the melodramatic modality may bring them uncomfortably close to reality. The need to feel safe and distracted is overriding previous preferences. I argue that this further demonstrates the centrality of the melodramatic modality in Turkish productions. It is still the way that people connect with some essential issues and emotions. That they are pushing it away seems to be an indication of just how unstable the current circumstances are and how disjointed life in Turkey may be.

Ultimately, each of Turkey’s past coups changed the country profoundly. What is significant about this recent coup is that its failure has allowed all of the existing structures to continue without the major disruption. The film industry, such as it is, is able to continue just as it did when I was in Turkey. It will continue to adapt to the current situation. But significantly, the coup did not disrupt the available resources. In fact, it can be argued that the structural resources available to composers and filmmakers alike are more plentiful and in better shape than when I came to Turkey in 2010. What has actually changed is the people making and watching the films, and their viewing preferences. This suggests that the coup may have brought a close to the developments of the New Turkish Cinema—or at least the variant of it
that I experienced. It is likely that, in time, the coup will serve as the marker for a new period of filmmaking in Turkey.

The time between the beginning of this project and its end has afforded me a longitudinal view of the development of Turkish film from 2009 to 2016. At first, it was difficult to locate and define the musical characteristics of New Turkish Cinema. But now it seems that the global perspective, the preference for musics of many kinds, and the melodramatic presentations of urban/rural and old/new that I identified earlier are in fact the key features of that period of film music making. But they may no longer serve in the new context. This change is only legible now because it seems that composers are already moving away from them and are creating a new sensibility by responding to a new social frame. That audiences have turned away from the films of recent years, even if only temporarily, means that a new kind of film must emerge. The composers are already recalibrating and will respond with new approaches to satisfy their audiences. They will continue as first interpreters, but the films that they will interpret through their music will be different. This means they will create a new kind of music. It seems that their process of Turkification will now focus more on modernizing the past rather than pacifying influences from abroad.
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