Longing and (Un)belonging: Displacement and Desire in the Cinematic City

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This paper explores the spatial conceptualisation of the themes of diaspora, displacement and desire in cinema, particularly in the work of Nuri Bilge Ceylan (Uzak) , Fatih Akin (Gegen Die Wand) and Michael Winterbottom (Code 46). All three directors explore the imagined cinematic city as a site of multiple (un)belongings and interrogate how notions of identity are displaced and disrupted by geopolitics, by the city and by cinema itself.

Both Ceylan and Akin's visions of Istanbul are haunted by Beyoglu, both as the site of Istanbul's contemporary cultural regeneration and by unspoken histories repressed by the Republic's offical rhetoric of Turkish identity. In contrast Akin and Winterbottom's heterotopias of the hotel and the hospital provide possible metaphors for these dislocated global identities.

This paper will engage with a series of questions. What is the (imagined) place created between the viewer and the screen, or is it a non-place? Do the identities/ memories created there produce a 'third space'? This paper uses Winnicot, Soja and Bhabha to ask what that third space might be and its consequences for a contemporary global Turkish identity. If these films depict a (Freudian) screen memory of dislocated subjectivities then what is being suppressed and sutured?

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This paper explores the spatial conceptualisation of the themes of diaspora, displacement and desire in cinema, particularly in the work of Nuri Bilge Ceylan (*Uzak*), Fatih Akin (*Gegen Die Wand*) and Michael Winterbottom (*Code 46*). All three directors explore the imagined cinematic city as a site of multiple (un)belongings and interrogate how notions of identity are displaced and disrupted by geopolitics, by the city and by cinema itself. All three films conjure up subjectivities marked by longing, loneliness and loss. Beyoglu, both as the site of Istanbul's contemporary cultural regeneration and by unspoken histories repressed by the Republic's official rhetoric of Turkish identity, haunts both Ceylan and Akin's visions of Istanbul. In contrast Akin and Winterbottom's heterotopias of the hotel and the hospital provide possible metaphors for these dislocated global identities. This paper raises a series of questions. What are the lineaments of that loss and can loss be liberation? Can cinema be a lieux de memoire? What is the (imagined) place created between the viewer and the screen, or is it a non-place? Do the identities/ memories created there produce a 'third space'? This paper uses Winnicott, Soja and Bhabha to ask what that third space might be and its consequences for a contemporary global Turkish identity. If these films depict a (Freudian) screen memory of dislocated subjectivities then what is being suppressed and sutured?

This article arises out of a presentation I gave at the ACSIS Cultural Studies conference at the University of Linköping in Nörrkoping, Sweden in June 2007. The paper was accompanied by a DVD of 20 minutes duration. The DVD was a 10-minute collage of moments from the three films, which was repeated. The visual accompaniment to my talk played visually with the (Lacanian) symmetrical economy of the mirror (by doubling) and the (Lefebvrean) trialectics of imageries: from the electric spaces of non-places (Auge) via the crash to broken, bloody, biological bodies and then to the Bosphorous, to the flow of water, the stasis of snow; the narratives fractured and carried away by the currents of my editing into flows of electricity, blood, water. The images take you through internal imagined spaces from the road, through the wall to the water, from the electric city to the breakable body. The element of water becomes the third space beyond the road and the wall, the city and the body, a flowing space that can contain incommensurable difference without homogenising them.

In order to understand what the cinematic city might be I wanted to recreate the praxis of 'reading' the films, their space in my imaginary. My spatial approach employs both Lefebvre 's concept of third space and what Winnicott defines as 'the potential space of play' to understand the relationship between the subject, the screen and the city. I want to explore what the cinematic city might be and how we experience desire and displacement there. I posit that the cinematic city is a place substantiated in the relationship between the represented city (film) and the viewer (and their individual rhetorics, discursive practices, memories). The praxis of my theoretical approach was to implicitly explore how digital editing has made it more possible to employ Barthesian active 'writerly' tactics in our reading of a text and also to evoke my memory of the three films. Refusing the dialectics of text/audience and suggesting that meaning resides in space created between the two, created by the electricity of the encounter.

What the third space created between these two might be, and the nature of third space itself was something I strove to explore through the talk I gave and the film collage of sequences from Nuri Bilge Ceylan's *Uzak*, Fatih Akin's *Gegen Die Wand* and Michael Winterbottom's *Code 46*. All three directors explore the imagined cinematic city as a site of multiple (un) belongings and subjectivities marked by longing, loneliness and loss. The ghost of one cinematic city, an imagined Istanbul lies somewhere in a third space between the images and my words. The talk intended to be praxis in that my method of presentation

invited the audience to see the meaning of the presentation as lying not in the words (my voice) or the images but in a third space created between the audience, the experience and myself. This third space resists synthesis, allowing the constituents to remain separate but also to become something else in the space of interrelation. Thus this democratic third space, one that calls on reverie, chance and context, rather than hierarchy. Thus it is a utopian space, and one that this format of presentation militates against. The visual dimension of my presentation is missing here but I invite the reader to call on their own remembered films to create the third spaces of the cinematic city as they read my paper. Perhaps an active readership of cinema, its reappropriation through sampling, can become a new kind of Third Cinema, of actively engaged viewing.

The Cutting Kino Eye

Cinema changed the way we see. According to Benjamin "magician and surgeon compare to painter and cameraman. The painter maintains in his work a natural distance from reality, the cameraman penetrates deeply into its web. There is a tremendous difference between the pictures they obtain. That of the painter is a total one, that of the cameraman consists of multiple fragments which are assembled under a new law." The camera's inquisitive eye revealed previously hidden spaces. "Our taverns and our metropolitan streets, our offices and furnished rooms, our railroad stations and our factories appeared to have us locked up hopelessly. Then came the film and burst this prison-world asunder by the dynamite of the tenth of a second, so that now, in the midst of its far-flung ruins and debris, we calmly and adventurously go travelling." Cinema creates another kind of space; a space that disrupts defined distance between the viewer and the work. With the close-up space expands, with slow motion time expands, and movement, the camera presents not only familiar qualities of movement but reveals entirely unknown gestures, "the camera introduces us to unconscious optics as does psychoanalysis to unconscious impulses."

This unconscious optics creates a trialectics of the technology, the editor and the viewer. The editor has always been a surgeon, and many theorists, like Mulvey, have contended that the cinematic gaze is a castrating gaze. From Vertov's Kino-eye onwards, the fragmentary and cutting nature of filmmaking has been formally and thematically important for Third Cinema. The filmmaker can call upon both the visual economy of the landscape painter and the close scrutiny of the surgeon. In Ceylan's visualisation of Istanbul the auratic distance of the traditional artist, of Melling's paintings of Istanbul for instance, are reproduced in the long shots in *Uzak* but are disturbed by what Virilio calls the 'big optics' of film, by the close up, the fast edit. The aura of the painterly and the auratic intimacies created by the camera eye meet in the same imaginary space. The digital city as lived environment also shifts between large-scale projections designed to be viewed from a distance and the small screen. "The manifestations of the digital city oscillate between the dominating corporate image-screens which exist to announce its ownership and the miniscule ones which operate in intimate proximity to the body and the eye" (Barber p.156)

When Foucault speaks of the spaces of our private and collective imaginary his words evoke the Cinema. "The space of our primary perception, the space of our dreams and that of our passions hold within themselves qualities that seem intrinsic: there is a light, ethereal, transparent space, or again a dark, rough, encumbered space; a space from above, of summits, or on the contrary a space from below of mud; or again a space that can be flowing like sparkling water, or space that is fixed, congealed, like stone or crystal." Cinema, has served even in its most hierarchical and traditional mode of viewing as cinematic apparatus, offered dark, covert spaces for reimagining and thus changing the world.

Whereas when Mulvey formulated her Lacanian reading of the economy of the cinematic gaze the two kinds of cutting operated on different metaphorical and literal spheres with the

growth of accessible editing packages the viewer can also choose to be an editor too. Oudart's suture as absence becomes an act of reparation, of Winnicottian play, of Barthesian active reader-authorship, just as Balzac's' *Sarrasine* becomes Barthes' *S/Z*, these three films became my *Code/Distant/Crash*. One can, in the context of the democratisation of downloading and editing software propose that re-editing as viewing creates a not only a Barthesian viewing experience but also an Irigarian haptic visuality. The 'cutting' and displacement collapses optical distance and some of the boundaries between touch and vision, subject and object, viewer and film. The fact that I cannot include my DVD with my article indicates how even (or perhaps especially) imaginative space is regulated and mediated by legal frameworks and power structures. The laws of copyright make the enterprise illegal. Questions around this third space of active reading/meaning making and its relation to Open Source arguments are evoked but will not be directly addressed here.

The Gesture Life of the Cinematic City: Towards and Away

These three films are marked by movement, by the flickering play of projected light and by the theme of movement. Both *Uzak* and *Gegen Die Wand* narrativise movements towards, and away from, Istanbul. From West to East, from Berlin on the way to Mersin and Zonguldak, for Cahit and Sibel in *Gegen Die Wand*, from East to West for Yusuf in *Uzak*. The city is a destination of transformative possibility. Whereas the populated landscapes of the Impressionist painters visualised the world of the flaneur Cinema memorialises the wanderer. Both move aimlessly, in a dreamy fog, but the flaneur is contemplative, free of Weber's 'iron cage of rationalisation' whereas the wanderer is vulnerable, too naïve or feral to submit to the rules of the city. Sibel and Yusuf are outsiders, wanderers in the city. Yusuf cannot even begin to understand how he might find work; Sibel cannot bear the drudgery of being a chambermaid in a hotel. The camera follows them both through the hotels, nightclubs, cinemas, shops and fast-food joints of Beyoglu, alternating the aerial gaze of the cartographer and architect with the tourist and consumer gaze, none of them ways of seeing either character can comfortably claim. Their unbelonging is contrasted not with the naturalised belonging of native Istanbullus but with the cultural competences (and sense of alienation and loneliness) of the assimilated. Mahmut, Yusuf's photographer cousin and Selma, Sibel's fiercely ambitious hotel manager cousin both understand and submit to the economic 'rules' of modernity. Both have an eye for detail. Selma worries over the font of the menu, Mahmut deliberates between his photographs of the veins in marble, yet their creative energies are sharply focussed on their careers. They are both self-improvers – Selma fills her upmarket flat with expensive gym equipment, Mahmut holds rather irritable intellectual gathering. Though Mahmut is shifty about his cultural tastes. He is determinedly highbrow, disdaining Sezen Aksu in favour of Bach, choosing Tarkovsky over an old Yesilcam comedy; but he prefers porn to Tarkovsky in private.

Both Sibel and Yusuf have trouble with submission to the economic rules though Yusuf is more passive, Sibel more combative in her rejection. The city is more welcoming to the Western returnee – the German Turkish taxi driver in *Gegen Die Wand* for instance, the Eastern peasant is much more of a stranger culturally. The cultural competences these outsiders bring from elsewhere have very different exchange rates. Yusuf's loving concern for his mother's dental problems, his covert calls to her, the mechanical soldier toy he buys his nephew – his loyalty and strong sense of kinship, his naïve appetite for romance, all are qualities have no conversion rate, are a defunct currency in the city. There is a tension between the assimilated and the non-assimilated who are not so welcome – theirs is the contingent space of the guest bedroom, their only safety net the decaying bonds of familial obligation. Sibel and Cahit's urban culturally hyphenated capital does have a conversion rate; Berlin is closer than the East to the regenerated urban melange of Beyoglu. Istanbul is a site

of displacement, hybridity and cultural eclecticism. Beyoglu, now the site of cultural regeneration and tourism, was a principally Armenian then a Greek neighbourhood. Beyoglu and Taksim Square serve as lieux de memoire of Istanbul's minorities and also of mass demonstrations and political resistance. A trialectics of Displacement, Substitution, and Representation seems at work here between the Beyoglu of the minorities, commodification, and counter-cultural activity.

Implicit in Mahmut's disdain for Yusuf in *Uzak* is not only the rejection of the peasant by the urbanite but speaks of uneasiness about different and perhaps problematic Turkishnesses. The screen memory, in the Freudian sense, of these representations of Istanbul both omit, and through that omission allude to the repressed aspects of official Turkish national identity. The Armenian Genocide, Kurdish, Alevi and other minority identities and regional differences, are sensitive and strongly contested topics for discussion in Turkey today. Many writers, journalists and publishers have been prosecuted under Article 301 ' for denigrating Turkishness' under a new (EU approved) Penal Code. The murder of the Turkish Armenian journalist Hrant Dink by a fascist youth led to mass demonstrations mourning his death and proclaiming that "we are all Hrant Dink".

Imagining Cinematic Space

The cinematic city represents and creates 'real' cities, which in are after all only made real through the accretions of its citizens' and denizens' dreams. The cinematic city can be seen as a heterotopia and is drawn to the representation of them. The hotel, the hospital, bar; prison, funfair, airport, seaport; all are marked as spaces with 'precise and determined functions', some punitive, all regulatory, none offering permanent sanctuary. Domestic space does not fulfil any cosy function for the inhabitants of these films. For the wanderer all space is contingent. Sibel's attempts to make Cahit's Berlin flat homely end in its extravagant destruction. Yusuf is an unwelcome guest in the photographer Mahmut's house. In *Code 46* Maria's flat is more like a hotel. The hotel and the spare room in another's house replace domestic space, a transitive resting place, and one where we attempt to enact an active forgetting. Although as the taxi driver tells Cahit, "the hotel is haunted".

Actually the city is haunted too. It is haunted by its screen memories, histories that the films forget, Berlin by its final solution, Istanbul by the expulsion of its minorities. It is also haunted by what Said calls 'the imaginative geographies of Orientalism'; of the Istanbul imagined by 'outsiders' like Melling, Flaubert and Loti. And by the imaginaries of its inhabitants, a city built in the poetry of Yahya Kemal, the novels of Tanpinar and more recently Pamuk, the melancholy photographs of Ara Guler. Like Zoebide in Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities*, this imaginary Istanbul is built according to the routes dreamers remember from their dream. Calvino's dreamers dream of chasing the elusive fugitive figure of a naked woman, Zoebide through an imaginary city. They meet and build a city. Each builds a tangled skein of streets according to their remembered route in their dream in order to trap their quarry. Subsequent waves of immigrants arrive. Men who have dreamed the same dream of Zoebide keep coming to the 'white city, well exposed to the moon'. "The first to arrive could not understand what drew these people to Zoebide, this ugly city, this trap."

The imagined cinematic city is not necessarily beautiful but it is not a place that can be reduced merely to Lacanian lack, the absence of the fugitive dream. It can be a politically transformative space, one created by the flow of intense and variable experiences: flows and currents created by the experience of interrelationship with people and cultural artefacts. These energies, the palpable 'electricity' generated between two people in love for instance, are generated in what Winnicott calls 'the potential space' of play between the individual (both viewer and screen figure) and the environment (the film as subject-object, the viewing

experience and the history you bring to it). For Winnicott, play is the place where cultural experience is located.

Play is not simply a question of leisure but the potential space for the individual self's creative interaction. By play Winnicott means a space of potential and actual interaction, playing the satisfying experience itself. If there is no space for negotiation or interaction and we are forced into compliance we are 'against the wall' we crash into the Reality Principle. Play here does not denote a distinction between work and leisure but between creativity and compliance, the commodified spaces of leisure in. *Gegen Die wand* shows the drudgery of the work of leisure in bars and hotels. Commodified leisure is not a potential space for play, but the wall where we literally hit the reality principle. The club leads to the wall in *Gegen Die Wand* to the desert (of the real) in *Code 46*, when there is not an adequate arena for play: for a creative interaction with the environment.

To map the cinematic city as a potential space of Winnicottian play is to metaphorise it as a mother, since Winnicott contends "in order to study the play and then the cultural life of the individual one must study the fate of the potential space between any one baby and human (therefore fallible) mother-figure who is essentially adaptive because of love." (Winnicott p.) The space of play is not a utopia, but it is a place of transition to a connected but separate sense of self, a place of reparation that can only exist if there is trust. For Winnicott trust is the location of cultural experience. Without trust there is only evasion, aggression and compliance. Trust is an ethical, and political imperative. This question of trust is a tricky one. For if the space of culture is to be a space of play, of intimate haptic visuality it must a space of trust. Yet is it not too utopian to seek to 'play' with ideologically coded mass forms of transmission like Cinema, which seek our compliance as passive consumers? How are we to create a cinematic third space?

Returning to Lefebvre's concept of Third Space is useful here. Lefebvre's trialectics spatialises the temporal framework of Hegelian/Marxist dialectics. Thus there is no inherent privileging of the three spaces. The First Space of spatial practice, 'a realite quotidienne' and the Second Space of conceived space (architecture, film) exist within and simultaneously with the Third Space of lived situations, this space "may be directional, situational or relational, because it is essentially qualitative, fluid and dynamic." (Lefebvre p.42). Lefebvre's Third Space offers a 'rapprochement' between the different spaces that exist, such as physical space, mental space and social space and in its potential for agency and transformation relates closely to Winnicott's haptic space of play.

For Bhabha it is the incommensurability of difference in Hybridity as a third space which gives rise to something new and unrecognisable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation. Located in the margins, the in-between space,

> "our existence today is marked by a tenebrous sense of survival, living on the borderlines of the 'present'…we find ourselves in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion. For there is a sense of disorientation, a disturbance of direction, in the 'beyond': an exploratory, restless movement caught so well in the French rendition of the words au-dela, here and there, and fort/da back and forth…. Being in the "beyond" then is to inhabit an intervening space…to touch the future on the hither side …a space of intervention in the here and now." (Bhabha p.7)

The Water Not the Bridge

Ceylan's *Uzak* invites us to experience the Bosphorous as the key conceptual space of hybridity in Istanbul, rather than the conventional symbolisation of the bridge between Orient and Occident, and of Istanbul itself as that bridge. This fast flowing polluted waterway, the

busiest, most congested shipping lane that runs through the city is not a utopian space in film or as a lived experience. This powerful flow contains all manners of vessels from fishermen's tiny, rickety boats, the commuter ferries, and pleasure boats to huge hulking tankers. Whilst the Bosphorous contains all of them, it is a dangerous space of exclusions, conflagrations, spectacular accidents and collisions as well as a conduit for the flow of human, economic and cultural capital. This is an aesthetic of liquidity, of freeze and flow. The desert/electric binarism of *Code 46* becomes transubstantiation from solid to liquid, from the snows of the east to the city and the sea. The spectacular beauty of the beached ship highlights how the Bosphorous, Bogaz (the throat) in Turkish is viscerally as well as metaphorically powerful. It speaks of the different values and scales which meet in and are borne upon or swallowed up in the same space. Rather than synthesising and coagulating elements the water contains them all at the same time. The Bosphorous acts here as a metaphor for and an actual third space for the cinematic experience and for a contemporary global Turkish identity: a third space of rapprochement and agency, of play where film making and viewing are creative acts which sometimes obliterate but never simply replace the past and speak of the possibility of reparation and trust.

"In civilizations without boats, dreams dry up, espionage takes the place of adventure, and the police take the place of pirates." (Foucault)

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