

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE

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EXPATRIATE BIRDS (Gurbet Kuslari) 1964

Halit Refiğ

Overview

Expatriate Birds, co-written by novelist Orhan Kemal and Halit Refiğ, is based on Orhan Kemal's novel of the same title. The film touches on the issue of migration, which is one of the common themes of the period in Yeşilçam. It has a similar feature to other films of the period, with a family of six who emigrated from Kahramanmaraş to Istanbul due to a shortage of livelihoods, describing the difficulties faced in the big city and the process of the family's unraveling.

In the film, Refiğ created a design based on the dynamic use of cinematography and layout in terms of style. In addition, an excellent example of analytical editing is exhibited. In the plot, the family's experiences in Istanbul are given from the brothers' perspectives, who are in the narrator's position in different sequences.

Halit Refiğ won the best director award at the Antalya Film Festival in 1964. The film is also known as Cüneyt Arkın's first film, who will become the star of the following years.

People

<i>Tahir</i>	The father. He is a car mechanic and Hatice's husband.
<i>Hatice</i>	The mother. Tahir's wife.
<i>Selim</i>	The eldest son of the family. He works in his father's garage.
<i>Murat</i>	The middle son of the family. He is a driver.
<i>Kemal</i>	He is the youngest son of the family. He goes to the school of medicine.
<i>Fatma</i>	The only daughter in the family. She helps his mother with the housework.
<i>Ayla</i>	Kemal's schoolmate and girlfriend. The daughter of a middle-class urban family.
<i>Haybeci</i>	A penniless, poor man who came to Istanbul on the same train as the family.

Synopsis

The film narrates the story of a family who immigrates to Istanbul with a dream of a better life by selling what they have when their business breaks down in the country, and they start to have a shortage of livelihoods. The family with four young people who have reached adulthood settle in a rented house in Istanbul's old and poor neighborhood. They soon learn that the garage they had previously agreed to take over belonged to someone else and that they had been defrauded. The family opens a smaller workshop with the capital they have left, where the father and his two eldest sons start working. Their younger son Kemal begins to study at medical school.

The middle son Murat quits his family business and starts working as a taxi driver; meanwhile, he falls in love with Seval, who works at a nightclub. Selim has an affair with Despina, who is married. Overwhelmed by her brothers' pressure, Fatma develops her friendship with her neighbor Mualla and falls in love with Orhan by entering a new and different circle of friends. Their father's business does not go well. As a last resort, he closes his garage and starts taxiing by buying an old car.

Kemal falls in love with Ayla, his schoolmate, and engages with her. Selim and Murat's love affairs go wrong, and the women they love reject them. Fatma runs away to marry Orhan. Orhan lets Fatma down. Fatma, who has nowhere to go, cannot return home. Murat and Selim go after Fatma in order to punish her. When Fatma, cornered by her brothers, fails to escape, she panics and commits suicide. The death of Fatma and the economic difficulties push the family to make an important decision. While Kemal continues his education in Istanbul, the others return to their hometowns.

Scenes

Arrival in Istanbul A family of six gets off a train from Anatolia at the station. They watch around with excitement. They talk about their dreams.

A meeting The family meets a poor man who tries to get on the ferry as a stowaway. He came from Anatolia on the same train as they did. They call him Haybeci (free-rider). Family and Haybeci look at Istanbul with great hope.

High Hopes They settle in the old house they keep in one of Istanbul's old and poorest areas. As the family eats their dinner, they joyfully talk about their new work, dreams, and hopes. They become angry that the youngest son, Kemal, has expressed the possibility of a failure.

First day in Istanbul In the morning, Tahir and his sons come to the garage where they had already paid a deposit to take over. Murat is surprised by the scale of the shop. When the garage manager tells them that the business belongs to someone else and they do not have such a deal, they realize they have been scammed.

Breadwinner The father and his sons open a small garage with the last money. Selim fancies the wife of the owner of the shop across the street. Kemal enters the university. The middle son, Murat, starts driving a taxi. Murat encounters Haybeci, whom they met on the ferry when they arrive in Istanbul. He is a porter now. Murat mocks about his condition. Haybeci, on the other hand, has not lost his optimism and hope and is satisfied with his state.

Shopping Fatma meets her neighbor Mualla. They chat on their way back from the grocery store together.

At the dinner Before dinner, Murat is angry that Fatma is not home and shopping. He argues with his brother Kemal. Murat despises Kemal's education and suggests that it is wiser to work in a job and make money. Kemal defends himself. The father criticizes Murat and shuts down the argument. On the other hand, Selim supports Murat and says he also opposes Fatma going to the market.

Homeland Kemal comes out of the theater with his friend Ayla. Ayla complains about migrants from the countryside. She complains that migrants are disrupting the fabric of Istanbul. Kemal timidly lies that his hometown is Istanbul.

Love and business Selim begins an affair with their neighbor, Panoit's wife, Despina. He meets Despina secretly and neglects his duties.

A new friend Fatma develops her friendship with Mualla. She complains about her family's pressure. Mualla invites Fatma to the cinema, saying she is young and beautiful. She puts makeup on Fatma.

The lie As Kemal and Ayla walk down the road after school, Murat pulls up in his taxi. Ayla meets Murat and learns that Kemal is lying to her, that he is actually from Maraş. Ayla argues with Kemal because he has lied.

An encounter Murat fancies Seval, who works in a nightclub, and they go home together. Seval explains that she has to work there for economic matters.

Forbidden love Selim tells Despina that he loves her. Despina walks away from him, saying she has a child and does not want to leave her husband.

The rent Tahir complains that the garage does not make money and his sons do not help him. Their landlord comes to the house and asks for a raise in rent. Tahir suggests closing the garage and renovating a wrecked car to drive a cab. Therefore, they imagine that they will enrich themselves by increasing their earnings.

Fool around Fatma begins to spend more time outside with Mualla, secretly from her family. Mualla introduces Fatma to her friends.

Party Fatma sneaks up with Mualla again. Mualla introduces her to the party people, but Fatma is disturbed by the men's attention. Men ridicule her timid state. Mualla and her friends make Fatma drink persistently and get her drunk. Orhan drives Fatma home in his car. Murat sees them on the street.

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A lover from Istanbul Murat loves Seval very much. He learns that she is from Maraş, not Istanbul, and she is the daughter of an acquaintance. Murat wishes he had never left his hometown.

Taxi Tahir meets the free rider (Haybeci) outside. They talk to each other about their current situation. Haybeci is now a parking butler and still maintains his dreams and optimism. They joke.

Jealousy Murat is jealous of Seval from other men. Murat wants to leave his job, Istanbul and get married. Seval, on the other hand, does not want to change her life and leave.

Anger Ayla is still mad at Kemal for his lie. Kemal tries to soften her heart.

The free rider This time, Selim meets Haybeci on the way. He has engaged in a more lucrative business that has changed his job. He offers Selim a job with him, who complains about unemployment.

Lovers Orhan takes Fatma to his home. They sleep here together.

Runaway Murat, Selim and his Father warn Fatma to watch her behavior. Fatma flees from the house to Orhan. However, she learns that he has left her. Her brothers go after Fatma, who cannot come home out of fear.

A better life Kemal meets Ayla's family. They chat about their family ties. Kemal describes the death of his youngest brother, who became ill while living in the village, and their arrival in Istanbul for a better life. They discuss different forms of migration with Ayla's father. Her father mentions that Ayla will go abroad when she graduates. Kemal is upset.

Proposal Kemal asks Ayla to marry him. Ayla says they can go to America together. Kemal wants to stay in his country. Ayla and Kemal discuss a better life and what to do for the future.

Fury Because of jealousy, Murat furiously argues with Seval and beats her.

Engagement Ayla and Kemal get engaged. Kemal introduces Ayla to his family. The family's business does not go well, so the cab has sold to the junkyard.

Chase Murat and Selim receive info and raid the apartment Fatma entered. Fatma escapes and goes up to the roof. Terrified, Fatma, trapped by her brothers, jumps off the roof in a panic and kills herself. Kemal and Ayla cannot help him. Selim beats him, blaming Murat for what happened.

Requiem At home, Fatma's parents are in sorrow. Her mother cries. Murat proposes to return to the country and build a modest life there. The family embraces the idea. Kemal will attend school.

Departures and arrivals Ayla and Kemal meet Haybeci again as the rest of the family members farewell at the train station. Haybeci has advanced his business and has started working as a contractor.

Themes

Hope The narrative's central characters left their homelands hoping for a better life and migrated elsewhere. This theme of hope is expressed in various scenes in the film.

When the family arrives in Istanbul, they have fears, but they are hopeful. All four brothers look forward to Istanbul from the house's window without listening to the host's story. On the first evening, they settle in the run-down house, the whole family dreams together. They talk about growing their business, getting rich, and making their home comfortable. Frustration is not long to come.

They suffer the first blow when they find out that the shop to take over is not for sale and that fraudsters have tricked them. With the money left in his hands, Tahir Usta opens a small garage in the neighborhood with his two eldest sons. When the shop fails, they plan to repair an old car with new hope. Like Haybeci at the beginning of the film, Father says, "We will be sultan to this bitchy Istanbul." His son Murat excitedly corrects: "King!"

They all have different dreams and ways of achieving them. Kemal dreams of becoming a doctor and manages to enter medical school at the university. He tries to achieve his dreams by studying hard. Selim, mocking Kemal's constant reading at home, finds Kemal's dreams empty and considers own's more rational. Kemal opposes, "Who knows, maybe I will be a scholar to this world."

When Kemal talks to his girlfriend Ayla, he says, "When we came to Istanbul, we were all dreaming. We thought that everything we held would be gold in our hands effortlessly." Ayla expresses, "it is everyone's right to live comfortably, to hope for a better life."

Dismay The family's life in Istanbul is filled with dismay. First, they cannot build the business they want, and they are in trouble for a living. The eldest sons, Selim and Murat, are thrown from place to place and try their luck in other affairs. Fatma is deceived while dreaming of a beautiful life and a beautiful future with the man she loves and falls into a situation she never wanted. She loses her dreams and her family, and ultimately, her life. As mothers, fathers, and children, every family member experiences this frustration in various ways. The only person among them who can succeed in achieving his dreams is the youngest son Kemal. He attends medical school and is engaged to Ayla.

Migration This popular theme of the 1960s and 1970s cinema in Turkey is also centrally located here. As seen in the work of other directors, Refiğ also discussed the story of a family who emigrated from the village to the city with high hopes but was torn apart by not being able to find what they were looking for here. Besides the disintegration of the family, there is also a character like Haybeci who is successful and rising.

From time to time, the characters discuss the problems with migration and migration within themselves. In the scene where Kemal meets his girlfriend, Ayla's family, he tells the story of his own family's migration. He argues that migration is a very current and universal issue. Kemal claims that the primary motivation for migration is the imposition of conditions such as unemployment and poverty. He cites Turkish workers who immigrated to Germany as doctors who immigrated to America because they could not find work in Turkey. Ayla's father, on the other hand, disagrees with him. He believes that migration is not solely related to economic issues; it is also an attempt to advance a career.

Oppressed women Fatma, who works all day in housework, is constantly reprimanded and humiliated by the men in her family. His brothers and father do not let him express her opinion. The men in the family interfere with Fatma's behavior, clothing, friends, even when to go where. Under pressure, Fatma is not respected and accepted, and her behavior is harshly criticized. Only Kemal respects Fatma and does not try to govern her.

The mother, the other eldest in the family, is also passive. Her thoughts are not valued or respected by her husband and sons. Her sons and her husband often reprimand her. The mother, who loves her daughter Fatma very much and wants her happiness, has to hide her communication with her daughter from time to time. When her husband's business does not work out, she invests her savings of years for her husband's new business plan.

Success The film reflects those who immigrated to Istanbul with high hopes but failed within the framework of the family they dealt with, but on the other hand, Haybeci represents the successful ones. The measure of success is embodied as holding on to the city by making money and skipping classes. They refer to it as being a "king," "shah," or "sultan". Istanbul is a fortress to conquer, an enemy land. Early in the film, on the deck of a ferry, when they look from the sea towards the city, Haybeci pulls up to the handrail and takes a look at Istanbul: "I'm gonna be king to Istanbul; king!" Others laugh at him.

Moral issues The narrative also reveals moral contradictions. In particular, the contradictions and hypocrisy of male characters are revealed. In a conservative and traditional provincial family environment that emphasizes decency and morality at every turn, men control their sister under the pretext of protecting her integrity. However, they do not see these moral rules binding for themselves. Selim enters into an affair with the owner of the opposite shop by seducing his wife.

The woman Murat met in the club becomes his girlfriend. He later realizes that she was the girl his family had mentioned before and stigmatized. Ironically, Murat, who cites all kinds of rumors about her before he met, unwittingly fell in love with this woman.

The two brothers, Selim and Murat, express that Istanbul is a seductive place full of depravity and try to keep their sister under pressure and control. At the same time, they participate very eagerly in the way of life and relations that the big city brings. They have no problem exempting themselves from the rules they set for their sister. The film also stands out for these moral arguments based on hypocrisy.

Character Analysis

Murat He is quick-tempered, ambitious, opportunistic, adventurous, disrespectful, and bigoted. He considers himself superior to those around him.

Greedy Murat aims to rise by making money quickly. He leaves his father's garage, which does not meet his expectations, and starts driving. As Selim described it, he becomes a cunning taxi driver.

Rude and oppressive Murat is rude to those around him, does not care about their feelings and thoughts. He dislikes and criticizes their attitude in various situations in his disagreements with his mother, father, siblings Kemal and Fatma. Murat comes across his sister Fatma and her boyfriend on the street and beats Fatma later to punish her.

Conservative Murat, like his older brother Selim, is a conservative personality. He tries to keep his sister Fatma under control by restricting her. When Fatma runs away from home, he goes after her with Selim. At every opportunity, he refers to concepts such as tradition and morality.

In love Murat falls in love with Seval, who works in a nightclub. At odds with the moral code adopted by him and his family, he has been attracted to the kind of woman he had previously described as "bad." He looks to leave town and ways to find another life with Seval. He is willing to give up his dreams of getting rich in Istanbul for the woman he loves. He tries to convince her to get married and start a simple life together.

Selim He is the eldest son in the family and his father's right arm. He works for his father in the garage. Selim, who usually remains silent and determines his behavior according to his father, is bigoted and oppressive like the others, but on the other hand, he seeks flirtation.

Hypocritical Selim begins a secret affair with a man's wife who owns the opposite shop. When he tries to isolate his sister from all kinds of social life and male-female relationships and imposes all kinds of so-called moral rules at every opportunity, he does not avoid establishing a relationship with a married woman.

Kemal He is a hardworking, honest, rational, persuasive, intelligent man. The most noticeable feature is that he is brighter than the others.

Clever While other family members think it is effortless to succeed in Istanbul, Kemal is the only one who is skeptical. Kemal anticipates that this adventure will bring great difficulties. In his first days in the city, when he went to the shop with his father and brothers where they were supposed to take over, he understands that they could not buy such a good place with the money they had. Others do not care about his reasoning. Kemal makes more rational and accurate determinations on various issues than others. Compared to the imagination of other family members, this is his most notable feature.

Civilized Despite the rudeness of his brothers, Kemal is civilized and measured in his relationships with his friends, girlfriend, and family. Despite the brutality of others towards women, Kemal is kind and understanding towards both his girlfriend Ayla and his sister Fatma. He also cares about those around him.

Fatma Fatma, the only daughter of the family, is a timid, passive young girl who is oppressed by traditional rules and suffering, but on the other hand, loves life and wants to live it as much as she can.

Lively Fatma is a person who likes to live, wants to enjoy her youth and life, is open to new experiences and people. She goes to the movies, sightseeing, and parties with her neighbor befriended. She is afraid of her conservative family, but she is looking for ways to live her life.

Agonized Constantly oppressed, reprimanded, and beaten by her father and brothers, Fatma is in agony mentally and physically. Fatma is the most victimized and oppressed character in the film, forced to live within the boundaries drawn to her and the men in the family see fit. In particular, Murat and Selim forbid Fatma to live the life they want to live freely and without accountability.

Fatma is a kind of prisoner in her family and her own home. Despite her brother Murat's aggressive behavior, other family members do not protect her. Even her educated brother Kemal, who shows her affection, advises her to endure Murat's behavior while calming her down. Unable to know enough of the man she secretly met and believed in her love due to pressures, Fatma is deceived, and her dreams of marriage fail. This blow forces Fatma to live a life she does not want. On the other hand, Fatma's suffering extends to her destruction due to his brothers' attitude.

Tahir Tahir, who is the head of the family, is a hardworking, hopeful, but on the other hand, a traditionalist and authoritarian person.

Hardworking Tahir works long hours in his garage. Although he practices a job he knows very well, he cannot succeed in Istanbul without his sons' support due to the changing conditions. When he has to close the garage, he repairs an old vehicle and starts driving in it despite his old age.

Authoritarian Tahir, the head of the family with a traditional family structure, expects obedience and support from family members when making decisions himself. When his sons and daughter undermine

his authority, he warns them. When Selim and Murat attempt to punish Fatma, he tells them to mind their behavior first, saying that only he is allowed to do that. His concern is not mainly to protect his daughter but to prevent undermining his own authority. Likewise, when his daughter Fatma runs away from home towards the finale, he instructs his sons that he will punish her, so they shall not harm him.

Haybeci He is the one who came to the city penniless. However, he is a cunning, resourceful, and determined man who rises by taking advantage of opportunities. They name this lonely stowaway Haybeci (free rider), who comes to Istanbul without a penny in his pocket.

Ambitious Murat encounters Haybeci while he is a taxi driver. When he sees him as a porter, he mocks and reminds him of his dream of becoming king of Istanbul. He explains that he will climb the steps patiently, one by one. Murat does not seem to believe it. However, Haybeci still seems satisfied with the conditions. Later, when Tahir comes across him, he works as a parking steward; Tahir mocks his situation too. However, Haybeci tells him, "I have climbed up from being a porter to parking butler, but I haven't gone down from being a mechanic to a full-time driver like you."

Throughout the narrative, Haybeci takes his social and economic position upwards. He is in continuous progress every time he encounters the family members. He is the character who comes closest to his dreams –with Kemal- since his arrival to the big city.



The family arrives Istanbul, at central train station.



Main characters watch the big town with high hopes.



Fatma is with her lover



Fatma tries to escape from his elder brothers.



Selim is at his father's garage