

## Parallel Tracks

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Very often, when discussing European cinema, some of its more controversial issues are attributed to its being excessively rooted in its "national features". But, when it attempts to reach a wider audience – that is, when it searches for markets outside the nation – it is accused of following the unspecified path of cultural globalization. Happily, every now and then, films like *İki Çizgi* appear able to leave such criticism behind.

*İki Çizgi*, a significant result of the renewed need for auteurism in Turkish cinema (the omnipresent clear testimony of it), is first and foremost a film divided as never before between the cultural burdens of its past and the modern need for pluralism (at this very moment the Turkish constitutional court is deciding whether the current ruling party is legal, that is, whether it respects the laicity of the state since it was accused of trying to islamize the country). The couple on which the film focuses is no longer bound to the old Islamic conceptions and is part of the cultural modernization of Istanbul, but the two characters find themselves completely out at sea, without any reference point is their own freedom while the world around them is proceeding faster and faster and in a mechanical direction. Such changes radically subvert traditional roles; we have men as guides and that of women as instruments, creating a sense of metaphysical disorientation that is somehow vaguely reminiscent of Antonioni, even if described in brighter colors and with a clear-cut photography; as if the film could be the Pop Art-like transposition of his cinema. Not by chance the most embarrassed figure in the couple is the man, having lived off 'social profits' for centuries. His 'leadership' must nowadays be proved – if he really wants to – by a relationship on equal footing, no longer focused on gender but on the couple as whole. The woman, on the contrary, is more at ease at uncovering the mutual unspoken, capable of a rational analysis and benefiting from that emotional freedom which was hidden and guarded for ages, but never intimately rejected. Both features are seen by the man as a threat, so that the brighter colors of the film enlighten the female character, from her hat to her clothes rather than for the man.

Such a contextualization of *İki Çizgi* is needed because without any specific spatial-temporal collocation, the film might almost appear as an attempt to re-describe a revolution in tradition that most of Europe has already witnessed during the '70s. *İki Çizgi* rather accomplishes to describe Turkey today – in that it is a positive 'global product' – through the vicissitudes of a young couple living together. Even if they could not be seen as the average couple being quite well-off and part of certain cultural circles (he is a photographer, she is an actress), their story is a universal story that can be understood and shared by any audience, no matter their social and cultural status. In fact, *İki Çizgi* describes the lack of communication of any couple, often scared to confess their intimacy / desires / impulses despite the supposed liberation from traditions in 1968. Just like two lines that – as suggested by the title of the film – continue along two parallel tracks, apparently going the same direction, but never actually meet- neither sharing their experiences nor the truth. Of the two tracks, the director seems to pay more attention to the male character since what is mostly unspoken is his, pointing out that even in new environment, culturally speaking, traces of male chauvinism can be found.

The apparent, unwavering attitude of this couple recalls some of the atmosphere crated by Bergman and reminds us of the most recent episode of *Amores perros* by Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu in which mice are found out under the wooden floor of a beautiful bourgeois house. Just as that was a metaphor for the unconscious that inevitably brings all kinds of displacement to the surface, the initial scene of *İki Çizgi* provides the same meaning when the two protagonists hear a thief breaking in.

Neither they nor we will discover who it really was/what he did/whether he was caught

(and if he actually existed) because the intruder a portrayal of unspoken that is about irreversibly undermine their apparent harmony as a couple. The first possible solution is o install a burglar alarm in the house...

And, perhaps, that is what will go off during their symbolic journey of growth. Will anything change afterwards? *İki Çizgi* doesn't offer any answers, leaving us to ideally continue the path of the two protagonists – either in the film narrative, or life.