

Shadows and Faces:

The little sparks of the upcoming war

This is a movie which can prove that a war scene between two brigades would probably not be more influential than seeing the beginning of war between two next-door neighbours.

Shadows and Faces (2010)

Original Title: Gölgeler ve Suretler

Director: Dervis Zaim

Starring: Osman Alkas, Popi Avraam, Mustafa Bolukbasi,

Hazar Erguclu, Settar Tanriogen, Konstantionos Gavriel, Bugra Gulsoy

Language: Turkish and partly Greek

Dews reports about the Cyprus issue make me yawning. The vicious circle of the dispute does not bring something new to the agenda and the media usually evaluate the topic by today's discussions and miss the historical context. Indisputably, books and documentaries covering the issue present detailed political and historical discussions. However, most people's visual memory is most likely not more than the black and white photos showing the ethnic violence on the island in 1960s. Now there is a movie that can add new images to your mind about the Cyprus issue.

The Second Movie in Cypriot Turkish Dialect in the History

Shadows and Faces (Gölgeler ve Suretler) is the third movie of Dervis Zaim's trilogy. It is the second feature-length movie in Turkish cinema history, which was made in Cypriot Turkish dialects and performed by Cypriot actors and

actresses. The film invites the audience to make a micro level analysis of the war by witnessing a story which is based completely on Cypriot individuals' daily life. Hence, no Turkish or Greek politicians can spoil your mood while following the film. In brief, *Shadows and Faces* is the story of a young girl who lost her father, a shadow puppet play (Karagoz) master, and started to live with her uncle in a small village. Her uncle is one of the leader men of the small Turkish community and he wants to keep the village peaceful by motivating the village's youngsters to be calm and stay away from the conflict.

Clearly, *Shadows and Faces* is not a propaganda movie. However, I had two question marks in my mind before watching the film. Can a story based on a very tense historical issue be represented without the traps of nationalism? And can this limited time of the script successfully narrate the issue even though it lacks of *intertextuality*? It is obvious that the movie sounds a bit biased at the

beginning by giving some historical notes about how the dispute started. However, we should keep in mind that the story is actually the story of a Turkish-Cypriot family more than the Cyprus issue *per se*. Regarding my second question, I assume that Dervis Zaim wanted to show us only one part, or the start of the dispute in 1963 within the borders of a small village. Thus, we do not necessarily need to know the preceding and following events happened on the island. This aspect of the story makes the movie ready to watch for anyone who even does not know anything about the conflict on the island.

Some aspects of the Cyprus issue of course exceed the borders of this story but the film triggers you off to think about what could unsettle the lives of these people in a small Mediterranean village. Can we understand the whole issue by an inductive approach if we take this village as a starting point? Or can we say that

the overt or covert political goals of Ankara and Athens ruined these people's peaceful life?

I personally believe that history can ideally be learnt from unbiased academic studies. However, the movies narrating historical events are definitely very crucial in piquing someone's interest in history. In an interview[1] about his movie, Dervis Zaim says: "Academic research about these kinds of issues targets people's intelligence while artistic works such as this movie target people's heart".

Being Killed by your Own Neighbours

The audience's heart was definitely targeted in the most influential scene of the movie where the actual start of the conflict between Turkish and Greek Cypriot villagers took the stage. It reminds us the things happened in the Bosnian War recently. None of us would like to be killed by fighter aircrafts but it would be much more painful to be shot by your own neighbours. Dramatisation of this sequence was successfully carried out. Even though it was setup by few people and few bullets, the director created a dazzling narration and the dramatic effect of war appeared without showing so much blood or thousands of soldiers.

Cinema history is full of big, expensive war scenes. Dervis Zaim did not need them to tell you what war is. That is why *Shadows and Faces* is a must watch movie.

Notes:

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1. An interview with Dervis Zaim by H. Salih Zengin, <http://www.zaman.com.tr/haber.do?haberno=1046617&title=son-filmlerimin-temelinde-vidan-var-goruntulu-roportaj&haberSayfa=0>

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