

Silkroad Production
presents

WAITING FOR THE CLOUDS

a film by
Yesim Ustaoglu

31 août 11h30 *Cinéma Impérial* 31.2
31 août 21h30 *Théâtre Maisonneuve* 31.2
1 sept. 14h00 *Cinéma Impérial* 01.3

SYNOPSIS

Ayshe feels lost and alone when her older sister dies. The elderly woman begins to act distant and aloof with everyone in the village.

The neighbors' boy Mehmet is worried about Ayshe. He likes hearing her stories. He also likes running around with his young vagabond friend Chengiz. The boys are always on the lookout for the return of Chengiz's father, even if everyone says he was executed for being a Soviet spy.

Ayshe and the other villagers make the long hike up into the highlands for a wedding. Mehmet is disappointed when she doesn't participate in the celebration, and even more so when she refuses to go back down to the village. Ayshe withdraws in her tiny wood cabin and remains isolated high among the clouds.

Ayshe's odd behavior starts rumors among the villagers. Suspicions also arise with the arrival of stranger Tanasis. Convinced he's a spy, Mehmet and Chengiz follow his every move. The boys discover that Tanasis is somehow connected to Ayshe.

Tanasis and Ayshe share the same ethnic background. Actually adopted, Ayshe was born Eleni, the child of an Orthodox Pontus Greek family. For over 50 years, Ayshe has lived in fear, protecting her true identity.

Ayshe confesses she has been burdened with guilt for abandoning her younger brother when they were children. Instead of following him when he was deported to Greece, she chose to remain in the safety of her adoptive family. Determined to regain her past, Ayshe decides to travel to Greece to search for her long lost brother.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

In *WAITING FOR THE CLOUDS*, the character Ayshe would not have had to keep her ethnic identity a secret for 50 years if she had lived in a tolerant environment. When I first heard the stories of people like Ayshe in northeastern Turkey, I felt this was a part of history which had remained in the dark for too long. I hope the film will have meaning for citizens of any multicultural country with identity issues. I have always been interested in the patchwork that actually makes up Turkish history and culture. I think it's a pity that the idea of one nation means that elements of some cultures must be thrown away. The Turkish government has always been very sensitive about the unofficial part of our history, meaning anything about ethnic minorities. Regarding the Pontus Greek issue, it has long been taboo.

COMMENTS FROM DIRECTOR YESIM USTAOGU

TURKEY IN THE 1970S

WAITING FOR THE CLOUDS takes place in 1975. I based the experiences of the boy Mehmet on my own experiences, since I was a girl in the early 70s. I learned the same nationalistic chants as shown in the grade school scenes. I remember Turkey was going through a tumultuous period politically. The government was a coalition between central Right and Islamic parties. Nationalism rallied against the leftist Socialist movement, which had found its strength within universities and unions. The Right had the support of the military and police forces. It seemed like everyday there were strikes, riots or demonstrations. Many students and workers were killed or arrested and tortured. For the people, this was a time of fear. They were forced into silence about what was happening around them.

THE IDEA OF ONE NATION

The new Turkish Republic established after World War I was based on the idea of one nation. However, this meant that life became harder for all minorities. Armenians, Greeks and others were chased out of Turkey, often under the most horrible conditions. Those who managed to survive did so only by converting to Islam and by keeping their true identities secret for the remainder of their lives. Shortly after the establishment of the new Republic, an exchange pact was signed between Greece and Turkey for those who managed to survive. Greeks still living in Turkey went home to Greece and the Turks came back to Turkey. But others, like Ayshe in *WAITING FOR THE CLOUDS*, stayed and never talked about their past again.

HIDING ETHNIC IDENTITY

The character of Ayshe was born Eleni, daughter of indigenous Greeks in the eastern Black Sea region of Northern Turkey, what was once the ancient country of Pontus. After being orphaned in the World War I exodus of the Pontus Greek Orthodox population, she was adopted by a Turkish Muslim family. Fear is the reason that Ayshe never spoke of her ethnic past again. In *WAITING FOR THE CLOUDS*, I wanted to touch on how government paranoia puts pressure on ordinary lives. If there had been tolerance, Ayshe would not have had to keep her ethnic identity a secret for 50 years. But in 1970s Turkey, paranoia and a fear of “others” was on the rise while tolerance toward minority ethnic groups diminished.

AYSHE'S OTHER SECRET

Only Ayshe and her younger brother survived the Winter exodus. While she was adopted by a compassionate Turkish family, he was held in the town orphanage. When he was deported, Ayshe could have gone with him, but, then a young, scared girl, she decided to stay within the safety of her new home and family. Her decision to live as a "true" Turk ends up haunting her for the rest of her life. In *WAITING FOR THE CLOUDS*, Ayshe attempts to exorcize the guilt she has long felt for abandoning her brother.

TANASIS THE RED

There are many popular Greek folk songs written about partisans during the Greek civil war around the time of World War II. It's important to note that the majority of those partisans were Pontus Greeks. In *WAITING FOR THE CLOUDS*, the character of Tanasis is one of those. After many years exiled in the Soviet Union, he can return to Greece. But he makes a stop in his native Turkey. A Pontus Greek, he has been tossed around from country to country. Once again, he must begin again. No family, no job, nothing. His arrival causes suspicion in the village. But he ends up playing an important role in helping Ayshe make her decision to look for her long lost brother.

TURKEY'S MULTICULTURAL BACKGROUND

I first had the idea of *WAITING FOR THE CLOUDS* when, as a university student in Trabzon, I met several women just like Ayshe. Once I heard their stories, I felt this was a part of Turkish history which had remained in the dark for too long. I hope *WAITING FOR THE CLOUDS* will have meaning not only for Turkish viewers, but citizens of any multicultural country where issues of identity are often problematic. I have always been interested in knowing the reality of Turkey's multicultural background. I always wanted to know more about the patchwork that actually makes up Turkish history and culture. I think it's a pity that passing to the idea of one nation means that elements of some cultures must be thrown away. My previous film, *JOURNEY TO THE SUN*, also dealt with the complex issue of identity in Turkey. In it, I focused on Kurdish identity in a contemporary setting.

RESEARCH

The details of the exodus that Ayshe shares in *WAITING FOR THE CLOUDS* are based on real events. Ayshe/Eleni is actually based on a real woman named Tamama,

whose biography was written by a Greek writer, George Andreadis.

My research was partly done in the Ottoman Archives in Sofia. I also read as much as I could find by Pontus historians, and by Turkish historians living outside of Turkey, like Taner Akcam. Besides meeting the women who stayed in Turkey, I've also met with some of the women who were deported to Greece, and I've noticed both sets of women share certain similarities, such as having had difficulty in establishing new lives or starting families.

THE CONTROVERSY

The Greek Parliament, in 1994, adopted May 19 to commemorate "Turkish Genocide against the Pontus Greeks." It has been claimed that from 1916-1923, the Greek Orthodox population of Turkey's eastern Black Sea region became victim of a systematic policy of extermination by Turkish authorities. In the government-organized evacuation in Winter 1916, it is estimated that between 350,000 and 500,000 Pontus Greeks died from cold, hunger and sickness on a weeks-long trek. There is an on-going debate as to the exact number of deaths. For years, various governments have avoided acknowledging these deaths for fear of insulting Turkey. The Turkish government has always been very sensitive about the unofficial part of our history, meaning anything about ethnic minorities. (As shown in *WAITING FOR THE CLOUDS*, Turkey's first census to include all minorities was only in 1975.) Regarding the Pontus Greek issue, it has long been taboo. We aren't taught about any of this in school. But this will hopefully change since Turkey is eager to gain admittance to the European Union.

GEOGRAPHICAL AUTHENTICITY

I shot *WAITING FOR THE CLOUDS* in the exact locations where the story takes place. The town of Trebolu is located on the coast 90 kilometers west of Trabzon in Northern Turkey. Trabzon was occupied in 1916 by the Russians, while Trebolu was not. All the villages west of Trabzon, like Trebolu, were ordered to vacate. That's why I wanted to shoot in that location. The Greek portion of the shoot took place in Thessaloniki in the Kalamaria region, where the exiled Pontus Greeks settled when they arrived in Greece.

THE HIGHLANDS

I tried to find locations that still have the same conditions of life as in 1975 or before. The highlands were a very special location. There was no electricity and no actual road. To reach the highlands requires a 3500-meter uphill hike on a very narrow path. All of our equipment had to be carried up that path without motorized vehicles. Living conditions up there haven't changed for centuries. It was very exciting to find such a location, but the shooting conditions were very difficult. Life up there is very minimalist and rustic. We lived weeks in the same conditions as the villagers. I think this made us feel much closer to them. But it doesn't take long to discover how dependent we are on modern city comforts.

LOCAL PLAYERS

Aside from the main characters, Ayshe, Thanassis, Selma, I cast only local people. All the others were non-professionals from the village where we shot. All of them, including Mehmet, Chengiz and Mehmet's Mother, who have fairly substantial roles. For the wedding scene in the highlands, we actually organized a real wedding. We invited the whole village up into the mountains. They all came and celebrated with us and we shot the sequence.

I made several trips to the Black Sea Coast region before the shoot. During these trips I had the opportunity to live with the local people and get better acquainted with them, their life and traditions, which led me to also make a documentary on this subject.

YESIM USTAOGU

DIRECTOR-WRITER

YESIM USTAOGU received international recognition for her 1999 film, JOURNEY TO THE SUN. In competition at the Berlin Film Festival, JOURNEY TO THE SUN received the Blue Angel Award (Best European Film) and the Peace Prize. The moving story of a courageous friendship undaunted by political cruelty, JOURNEY TO THE SUN swept the Istanbul Festival by winning Best Film, Best Director, the FIPRESCI Prize and the Audience Award.

After making several award-winning shorts, Ustaoglu made her feature film debut with 1994's THE TRACE (IZ). The film was presented at numerous international venues, including Moscow and Gotenburg.

FEATURES

WAITING FOR THE CLOUDS (2004, Turkey/France/Germany/Greece, 87')

JOURNEY TO THE SUN (1999, Turkey/Germany/Netherlands, 104')

THE TRACE (IZ) (1994, Turkey, 100')

SHORTS

HOTEL (1992, 17')

DUET (1990, 15')

MAGNAFANTAGNA (1987, 13')

TO CATCH A MOMENT (1984, 15')

RUCHAN CALISKUR (as Asyhe)

Ruchan Caliskur is a leading actress of the Istanbul State Theater. For her first film role in *WAITING FOR THE CLOUDS*, she received the Best Actress award at the 2004 Istanbul Film Festival.

DIMITRI KABERIDIS (as Tanasis)

Greek actor Dimitri Kaberidis appeared as the priest in John Madden's 2001 film *CAPTAIN CORELLI'S MANDOLIN*, starring Nicholas Cage. His other film credits include Jonathan Nossiter's *SIGNS AND WONDERS* and two films by Theo Angelopoulos, *ULYSSES' GAZE* and *LANDSCAPE IN THE MIST*. A graduate of the National Theatre School, Kaberidis appears regularly in Greek TV films and series, as well as on stage with some of Greece's finest companies.

PETROS MARKARIS (co-screenwriter)

Greek writer Petros Markaris was co-screenwriter of several films by director Theo Angelopoulos: DAYS OF 36, ALEXANDER THE GREAT, THE SUSPENDED STEP OF THE STORK, ULYSSES' GAZE and ETERNITY AND A DAY.

He also wrote the scripts for the long-running Greek TV series, "Anatomy of a Crime". He is also a novelist and literary translator of works by authors such as Goethe, Brecht, Arthur Schnitzler and Thomas Bernhard.

JACEK PETRYCKI (director of photography)

In a career now spanning over 20 years, Jacek Petrycki has shot feature films, documentaries and television films too numerous to mention. In addition to WAITING FOR THE CLOUDS, he was cinematographer on Yesim Ustaoglu's JOURNEY TO THE SUN, for which he received a 1999 European Film Awards nomination for Best Cinematography. Among his feature film credits are JULIE WALKING HOME, EUROPA, EUROPA and PROVINCIAL ACTORS, all for director Agnieszka Holland, NO END and CAMERA BUFF, both for director Krzysztof Kieslowski, and Ryszard Bugajski's INTERROGATION. His photography for British television was cited by BAFTA for 1997's PLEASURES, 1995's THE HOMECOMING, 1995's THE BETRAYED and 1993's THE UNFORGIVING. The Polish national also shot THE VALLEY, a Channel 4 documentary on the war in Kosovo, and Brian Stirner's 1999 feature, A KIND OF HUSH.

MICHAEL GALASSO (composer)

Internationally acclaimed composer, violinist, and musical director Michael Galasso composed the scores for Wong Kar-Wai's IN THE MOOD FOR LOVE and CHUNGKING EXPRESS. His other film credits include Sam Garbarski's LE TANGO DES RASHEVSKI, Asa Mader's LA MALADIE DE LA MORT, Jamshed Usmonov's ANGEL ON THE RIGHT, Babak Payami's SECRET BALLOT and Marion Hansel's CLOUDS. The US-born Galasso has composed music for numerous theater productions by Robert Wilson, including "The Life and Times of Joseph Stalin," "A Letter for Queen Victoria" (for which he received a Tony nomination for Best Musical Score), "The \$ Value of Man," "Ouverture," "Lady from the Sea," "A Dream Play" and "Three Sisters." Galasso's music has also been used by numerous choreographers, including Andy DeGroat, Lucinda Childs, and Karole Armitage. Whether composing for theater, film, dance or creating sound installations, Galasso continues to explore the melodic and rhythmical synthesis of Eastern and Western music.

CAST

Ayshe/Eleni	Rüchan Caliskur
Mehmet	Ridvan Yagci
Chengiz	Ismail Baysan
Tanasis Dimitris	Kaberidis
Feride	Feride Karaman
Selma	Suna Selen
Muharrem	Oktar Durukan
Nikos	Jannis Georgiadis
Zoe	Irene Tachmatzidou
Damoklia	Damoklia Mustakidou
Fatma	Fatma Parlagi

CREW

Director	Yesim Ustaoglu
Screenplay	Yesim Ustaoglu, Petros Markaris
Inspired by	George Andreadis' "Tamama"
Director of Photography	Jacek Petrycki, P.S.C.
Music	Michael Galasso
Editors	Timo Linnasalo, Nicolas Gaster
Art Director	Selda Ulkenciler
Sound Engineer	Bernd von Bassewitz
Sound Editor	Christophe Winding
Mixer	Bruno Tarrière
Co-Producers	Helge Albers, Fenia Cossovitsa, Murat Çelikkan
Producers	Setareh Farsi, Behrooz Hashemian

a co-production

Silkroad Production (France)
Flying Moon Filmproduktion (Germany)
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