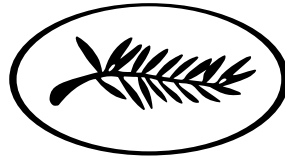


# WINTER SLEEP

(Kış Uykusu)

A film by  
Nuri Bilge Ceylan



**PALME D'OR**  
FESTIVAL DE CANNES

FIPRESCI Prize Cannes 2014

196 min - 1:2.40 - 5.1 - Turkey / Germany / France

**Opens November 21, 2014**

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## Synopsis

The film is set in the hilly landscape of Cappadocia in Central Anatolia, where the local celebrity, a former actor Aydin (Haluk Bilginer), owns a small hotel cut into the hillside. It's now winter and the off-season. Aydin runs the hotel with his younger wife Nihal (Melisa Sözen), writes a column for the local newspaper, and is playing with the idea of producing a book on Turkish theatre.

He has also inherited local properties from his father, but leaves the business of rent collection to his agent. When a local boy, resentful of his father's humiliation at the hands of the agent, throws a stone at a jeep whilst Aydin and his agent are driving in it, Aydin ducks out of any responsibility or involvement.

As the film progresses, the cocoon in which the self-satisfied and insular man has wrapped himself is gradually unravelled. In a series of magnificent set pieces, the film takes a close look at Aydin's interactions with his wife, his recently divorced sister, and the family of the stone-throwing boy.

Aydin is finally brought face-to-face with who and what he truly is.



Further information at: [www.newwavefilms.co.uk](http://www.newwavefilms.co.uk)

Download photos: <http://www.newwavefilms.co.uk/press.html>

## CAST

Aydin

Nihal

Necla

Hidayet

Hamdi

İsmail

Suavi

Levent

Timur

İlyas

Haluk Bilginer

Melisa Sözen

Demet Akbağ

Ayberk Pekcan

Serhat Kılıç

Nejat İşler

Tamer Levent

Nadir Sarıbacak

Mehmet Ali Nuroğlu

Emirhan Doruktutan

## CREW

Director

Script and Dialogue

Producer

Executive Producer

Co-Producer

National Co-Producers

Director of Photography

Editors

Production Designer

Sound Engineer

First Assistant Director

Sound Editor

Dialogue Editor

Sound Recording Mixer

Foley Artist

Colourist

Make-up and Hair

Nuri Bilge Ceylan

Ebru Ceylan , Nuri Bilge Ceylan

Zeynep Özbatur Atakan

Sezgi Üstün

Alexandre Mallet-Guy, Mustafa Dok

Muzaffer Yıldırım, Müge Kolat

Olivier Père, Rémi Burah

Nuri Bilge Ceylan

Gökhan Tiryaki

Nuri Bilge Ceylan, Bora Gökşingöl

Gamze Kuş

Andreas Mücke

Özgür Sevimli

Thomas Robert

Benoit Gargonne

Lars Ginzler

Daniel Gries

Adam Inglis

Monika Münnich, Anke Thot

A Zeynofilm Production

DCP, 196 min - 1:2.40 - 5.1 - Turkey / Germany / France

# INTERVIEW WITH NURI BILGE CEYLAN

by Michel Ciment and Philippe Rouyer

## How did the idea of making a film in the troglodyte cliffs of Cappadocia come about?

I was inspired by three short stories by Chekhov. I've had this project in mind for 15 years. I won't say which narratives I chose, to avoid steering the reading of the film, but for anyone who knows the writer's work well, it wouldn't be hard to find the source material. We changed the story a lot, adding some things. To begin with, we didn't want to film in Cappadocia, because I thought the location was too beautiful for this film. But we couldn't find a hotel anywhere else that was cut off from the world, where I could place my characters away from mainstream life. What's more, I wanted there to be a few tourists in this establishment, which is credible in Cappadocia, where people come even in winter. When we finally found the place where we wanted to locate our story, the story itself had to evolve. In a way, the setting had an influence on this change.

## People have also mentioned *The Cherry Orchard* as a source of inspiration.

I never thought about it. There's no direct connection, but since all of Chekhov's work deals with the same themes, one could of course also evoke *The Cherry Orchard*.

## The name of the hotel, Othello, the posters of *Caligula* by Camus, and of *Antony and Cleopatra* by Shakespeare in Aydin's office might also give some clues?

Not really, but since the main character is a former actor, it's not surprising that there are some theatre posters in his place of work. What's more, they are posters which belong to him and plays in which he appeared. Haluk Bilginer is a well-known actor in Turkey, so it's logical for the character he plays who runs a hotel to have given it the name of Shakespeare's hero.

## You worked on the screenplay with your wife, Ebru. How do you work together?

We have been writing together ever since *Climates*. First, we concentrate on the construction of the narrative, then we write the dialogue. In fact, we each work alone, then we talk about it. When it comes to making a decision about this or that line of dialogue, there are lots of arguments, sometimes quite violent, but this helps us decide between several options. The time spent writing is quite short, but the time spent arguing is ... longer! Since I'm the director, I want to have the final word, but Ebru always finds a way to convince me that it's not the right dialogue. These discussions continue even after the film has been released. If a journalist criticizes an aspect of the film which she didn't agree with, she tells me she was right after all. So I then have to find another article which espouses my point of view!

## What qualities does Ebru bring to your joint writing?

She's particularly good at crafting the plotline. When we worked on *Once Upon a Time in Anatolia*, it was she who came up with most of the solutions to the problems. I think she's also even more merciless than me when it comes to judging our work. She's a very realistic person. Sometimes I

feel like Aydin, my protagonist, when he's faced with his sister Necla, who's a very intransigent person. Faced with her onslaughts, I sometimes want to tell her to let me land on my feet. I think Ebru's realism helps the film: she is anchored in the present and in reality.

**Did the fact that your film has more dialogue than usual change anything in the writing?**

We actually had some doubts whilst writing the screenplay and we wondered whether the audience would accept this very literary dialogue, which does not pose a problem in the theatre.

***Winter Sleep* bears some similarities with *Climates*, which painted the portrait of a couple, and which came after two films that might be called noir thrillers, *Three Monkeys* and *Once Upon a Time in Anatolia*. But compared to *Climates*, it's a much broader work, like a great novel. From the start, did you plan to direct a 196-minute film, a sort of epic?**

When we'd finished writing the script, we already realized what was going to happen, because it had 163 pages, compared to 96 for *Once Upon a Time in Anatolia*! But that wasn't very important to me. I think I need the same freedom as a novelist who, when writing, doesn't wonder how many pages his or her novel should have. These are merely commercial concerns which constrain directors to making films with a runtime of 90 or 100 minutes. I never gave a thought to this kind of consideration, and we embarked on the adventure.

**Did all the characters exist in the synopsis, or did some of them emerge along the way?**

We started with the man and the woman, then came the sister, then those around them, and lastly the imam, his brother, and the child. That's why the first scene we wrote wasn't that of the child breaking the windshield with a stone. Our first sequence had the husband confronting his wife Nihal. Then we thought we had to establish a link between this couple and the small town they've moved to, and so we created the family. In fact, I remembered something which happened to me in childhood. We were with my father in a small town and he had brought back a car from the United States which was, I think, the only one there, and a kid threw a stone at the window. My uncle got out of the car, went to fetch the kid, and brought him back like in the film.

**There is one sequence which is out of step with the overall tone of the film, in which Nihal comes to offer some money to Ismail, the child's alcoholic father, who then burns the bundle of banknotes like in a famous chapter of Dostoyevsky's *The Idiot*. The scene is inserted in the middle of a long drinking sequence.**

To me, the character of Ismail is not very realistic. I see him as more utopian. We wanted him to be like that, living in another world, and we thought that this sequence was necessary to teach Nihal a lesson. I really like that scene steeped in utopianism, to better bring out the realism of the whole. In Dostoyevsky, you also find this kind of counterpoint.

**How do you see the female characters in relation to Aydin? They seem more solid to us, entertaining fewer illusions than him, living less on false appearances.**

When I wrote those strong female roles, I drew inspiration from my childhood, because I lived with my aunt and her two daughters who were in that mould. The men were not often at home. They

would come and go, and these women would give them a piece of their mind. That inspired me a lot.

**Fitzgerald wrote that life is a process of breaking down. In the drinking scene, one has the feeling that Aydin is falling apart after a long process which sees his mask falling.**

That's true, but I'd add that Aydin really had to be destroyed so that he could start over and do something. I think in life, this is often how it happens: one has to go all the way with a process of destruction to be able to continue one's existence in a different way. That's why we came up with this scene in which they drown themselves in booze. Aydin must then find a little pride to have the strength to return home and finally write his *History of Turkish Theatre*. At the end, there's the possibility of making things up with Nihal, but we can't be certain he really utters those words. Yet at the same time, with those words he puts the burden on his wife's shoulders.

**At what point did you decide on the music, in particular the sonata N° 20 by Schubert that can also be heard in Robert Bresson's *Au Hasard Balthazar*?**

We tried several pieces of music and I wanted to use this piece because Schubert uses the same theme but with slight changes, infinitesimal variations. It's a very well-known piece, and in doing some research I discovered that Bresson had already used it, but I didn't think that mattered.

**From the donkey in *Balthazar* to the horse in *Winter Sleep*?**

In Turkish, Cappadocia means "the land of fine horses". There are many magnificent wild horses in that region, so I would have found it impossible to not include them in my story. They have no contact with humans, and as soon as they are caught, they start to fight for their freedom. I thought this suited the film.

**In the two big central scenes, between Aydin and his sister, then between Aydin and his wife, filmed in shot/counter-shot, one finds the same intensity as in Bergman's films. He seems to be more of an influence here than Chekhov.**

It's true, in the history of cinema, he is the master when it comes to conflicts within couples and the settling of scores, and he is one of my favourite directors. I didn't want to seek a different form for those two sequences: I went for the simplest style possible to bring out this confrontation between the two characters. Any other approach would have undermined the emotion of these duels. I filmed with a single camera, but I did a lot of takes.

**How did you work with your actors?**

I can't say that I left them a great deal of liberty. I wanted them to deliver the dialogue as we had written it. But once the take was done, I let them improvise to see if they could give anything else. I noticed that although they added some details to make their performance more natural, they didn't drift far away from the text. We spent a lot of time filming rehearsals on set so that I could get what I was after. Then I looked to see if we could do any better.

**This was the first time you have worked with the main actors.**

Haluk Bilginer (Aydin) lived for a long time in England, where he was director of a theatre, then he returned to Turkey where he created a company. He's very well known. When I began writing the script, I thought of him right away, because I needed a stage actor, since his lines were very literary. Melisa Sözen (Nihal) has a face and a voice that I really love, and she mainly appears in TV series. Demet Akbağ (Necla) is the one who is most famous in Turkey. She's a star and she mainly acts in comedies. I thought of her because I wanted an actress who talks quickly, one who is quick at repartee. Serhat Kılıç, who plays the imam Hamdi, stood out for me because he was very good in some series in which the actors, in general, are not of a very high standard. I have for a long time wanted to cast Nejat İşler, who plays his brother Ismail, because he has a magnetic charisma. For the child, we carried out a casting in the region, going to the local schools, and very early on, I noticed this boy, Emirhan Doruktutan, who had a very insolent look and who asked us some quite tough questions. He was perfect for the role.

\* Interviewed in Cannes, 20 May 2014.

Extract from an interview published in *Positif* (641/642 - July/August 2014)



## NURI BILGE CEYLAN

Nuri Bilge Ceylan was born in Istanbul on January 26th, 1959. In 1976, he began studying chemical engineering at Istanbul Technical University, in a context of strong student unrest, boycotts and political polarization. In 1978, he switched courses to Electrical Engineering at Boğaziçi University. There, he developed a strong interest in image, entering the university's photography club. This is also where he fed his taste for visual arts and classical music, by means of the vast resources of the faculty libraries. He also began to take film classes and attend screenings at the Film Society, which reinforced his love of cinema, born years earlier in the dark rooms of the Istanbul Cinematheque.

After his 1985 Graduation, he travelled to London and Kathmandu, which allowed him to take the opportunity to reflect upon his future. He returned to Turkey for his 18 months military service and at that moment decided to dedicate his life to cinema.

Thereafter, he studied film at the University Mimar Sinan, and worked as a professional photographer to make a living. After two years, he decided to abandon his studies to practice. He started with acting, in a short film directed by his friend Mehmet Eryilmaz, while helping with the technical production process.

In late 1993, he began shooting his first short film, *Koza*. The film was screened in Cannes in 1995, the first Turkish short film to be selected in competition.

Three full-length feature films followed: the 'provincial trilogy' with *Kasaba* (1997), *Clouds of May* (1999) and *Uzak* (2002). In all of these films, Ceylan took on just about every technical role himself: from cinematography to sound design, production, editing, writing and direction.

*Uzak* won the Grand Prix and Best Actor (for the two main actors) in Cannes in 2003, making Ceylan an internationally recognized director. Continuing his tour of festivals after Cannes, *Uzak* won no less than 47 awards, including 23 international prizes, and thus became the most awarded film in the history of Turkish cinema.

His subsequent films all received awards in Cannes : *Climates* won the FIPRESCI award in 2006, *Three Monkeys* won Best Director in 2008 and *Once Upon a Time in Anatolia* won the Grand Prix in 2011.

His seventh feature film, *Winter Sleep*, won the Palme d'Or as well as the FIPRESCI award.





## **FILMOGRAPHY**

### **1995 KOZA (COCOON)**

Cannes 1995 - 20 min.

### **1997 KASABA (THE SMALL TOWN)**

Berlin 1998

### **1999 THE CLOUDS OF MAY (MAYIS SIKINTISI)**

Berlin 2000 - Competition

### **2003 UZAK (DISTANT)**

Cannes 2003 – Grand Prix and Two Best Actor Prizes

### **2006 CLIMATES (IKLIMLER)**

Cannes 2006 – Competition

### **2008 THREE MONKEYS (ÜÇ MAYMUN)**

Cannes 2008 – Best Director Prize

### **2011 ONCE UPON A TIME IN ANATOLIA (BİR ZAMANLAR ANADOLU'DA)**

Cannes 2011- Grand Prix

### **2014 WINTER SLEEP (KIŞ UYKUSU)**

Cannes 2014- Palme d'Or