Tepenin Ardı [Beyond the Hill]. Dir. Emin Alper. Perf. Tamer Levent, Mehmet Özgür, Reza Özcan, Furkan Berk Kiran, Berk Hakman. Bulut Film, 2012. Film.

In *Beyond the Hill (Tepenin Ardı)*, a Turkish production, director Emin Alper invites the viewers to a cinematic ride, which begins and ends in a sunny wilderness of Ermenek - a town and district of Karaman province in the Mediterranean region of Turkey. The film is the first full-length feature film of the director. Although this mostly acclaimed unconventional thriller has won numerous awards throughout the world, it has been distributed in quite a few film theatres in its homeland.

Technically speaking, the action sequences of the film are simply superb. Instead of presenting a thunderstorm of rapid cuts, Emin Alper, similar to Nuri Bilge Ceylan, prefers long and uncut sequences and the occasional use of slow motion. The action itself is the result of the same kind of careful choreography that has turned the film into an outstanding aesthetic achievement. Alper within the frame of stream-of-consciousness technique makes use of long takes and constant shots most often in a natural environment, along with intense silences. Moreover, Alper films his characters from behind, which directs his viewers to concentrate on the psychology of his characters. Romanian-born cinematographer George Chiper Lillemark contributes to this psychological drama by imbuing the landscape with many contrasts. The sound of the film also creates an uneasy atmosphere.

After retiring from the Regional Directorate of Forestry, Faik (Tamer Levent) begins to breed a herd of goats in his inherited land with his sharecropper Mehmet (Mehmet Özgür). For their summer vocation, Faik's son Nusret (Reza Özcan) and two grandsons Caner (Furkan Berk Kiran) and Zafer (Berk Hakman) visit Faik's summerhouse. Meanwhile, Faik is in a constant and relentless fight with nomads (never seen) from beyond the hill who are (according to him), intentionally devastating his poplar trees. Since he is so angry with them for grazing their goats in his land, he detains a goat in revenge, which will be served at the family reunion feast. It is this reunion that triggers the crisis; the countdown is on to a full-fledged blood feud.

The title of the film points to the problem of masculine identity that is central to the film. These men are shadow-boxing through life, struggling

all alone in a competition against something in their imagination. Doubting their own masculinity, these men want to whittle down the masculinity of the men they see as their antagonist. Apparently, masculinity is a group activity. As Emin Alper's characters develop and practice their masculinity, they are assisted and observed by an invisible group of nomads, presumably all male, who force them to ignore their concerns for humanity in behalf of their masculinity, and mock them when they resist not doing so. This invisible group comprises their comrades and rivals, their friends and bosses and above all, their father.

It should not be forgotten that not all Turkish men are alike. In fact, what it means to be a man in Turkey depends mainly on one's class, age, sexuality and region of the county. In that respect, all the male characters in the film experience different kinds of masculinity. Caner practices his masculinity, trying to develop it. He tries to learn how to show off his masculinity, and tries to imitate the men he admires. A gun becomes the foreground to prove his masculinity to his brother and father. Zafer, on the other hand, is suffering from shellshock. Like many people who complete their military service in a traumatized way, Zafer severs ties with life. His hallucinatory flashbacks to his military experiences in the southern region of Turkey cause his fatal shooting by the nomads. Nusret's masculinity crisis is his incapability to pursue a "normal" life with his family. He believes that he will never be a man that his father desires, because he cares only about leisure and he is never approved by his father. He never feels that he has satisfied his father who could never satisfy his grandfather. Mehmet's construction of masculinity is more troublesome and confining than the other men in general. When considering himself in relation to the hegemonic masculinity, he feels left out because economic empowerment as the basic evidence of a man's masculinity deprives Mehmet of being able to fulfill requirements of being a man. He believes that he will never buy a farm similar to Faik's and never be a man in the eyes of his wife and others. As a grandfather and/or former breadwinner, Faik's masculinity is defined by side-by-side masculine companionship activities with grandsons and his son. Representing the authority, Faik is a typical patriarch. He feels that it is his ultimate task to protect the unity and well-being of the community. He wishes to maintain hegemonic masculinity that guarantees his position and subordinates any threat against it.

All in all, what makes the film significant is its treatment of Turkish masculinity, how masculinity is experienced among Turkish males. It indicates that gender can no longer be seen as the problematic domain exclusively to female subjectivity: masculinity is equally in need of attention in Turkey. The crisis is a condition of masculinity itself. Alper's characters are suffering from "troubled manhood." They incline to mask their problematic manhood behind family, war and competition. That is why, in order to gain self-determination, they perform masculinity. The film shows that masculine identity is never fixed; its terms are always being re-negotiated, redefined and the masculine performance constantly being re-staged. Certain themes and tropes inevitable reappear with regularity, but each era experiences itself in different ways.

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