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An Emerging History of AI Cinema: Generative Short Films and the Search for Meaning, Worldwide and in Turkey

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Abstract

Generative artificial intelligence has entered film production with unusual speed, moving within a decade from experimental AI-written screenplays to short films in which every image and sound is machine-generated. This study maps that trajectory. Drawing on a corpus of AI-assisted and fully AI-generated short fiction films produced between 2016 and 2025 — assembled from festival programmes, online platforms, and the emerging scholarly literature, and including a sustained account of Turkish production — the article reconstructs the formative history of what is here called AI cinema. The analysis proceeds in three moves. First, it periodizes the field into a script-generation era (2016–2018), a generative turn driven by diffusion-based image and video models (2022–2023), and a phase of fully generated shorts and dedicated festival infrastructures (2024–). Second, drawing on Tom Gunning's concept of the cinema of attractions and recent theorizations of algorithmic images, it reads the corpus as a recapitulation of early cinema's movement from technological display towards narrative integration. Third, it situates Turkish productions within this global picture, arguing that, for the first time in the history of a major cinematic technology, Turkish filmmakers have entered the field at the moment of its global emergence rather than belatedly. The article closes by identifying the genre affinities, authorship configurations, and aesthetic tendencies — the dreamlike, the uncanny, the historical — that currently characterize the search for meaning in AI-generated short film, and by outlining directions for future research.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, generative AI, short film, cinema of attractions, AI film festivals, Turkish cinema

Introduction

The arrival of generative artificial intelligence (AI) in film production constitutes one of the most rapid technological transformations in the history of the medium. Within roughly a decade, the field has moved from experimental shorts whose screenplays were written by recurrent neural networks (2016) to films in which every visual and auditory element is generated by diffusion-based models (2024), and to the first feature-length projects produced entirely with generative tools. This transformation has been accompanied by intense debate — about creativity, originality, authorship, labor, and the ontological status of the cinematic image — and by a fast-growing body of scholarship. Yet a basic historiographic task remains largely undone: no study has yet systematically compiled the films themselves, traced how their production methods and narrative strategies have evolved, and asked what this emerging corpus reveals about the direction of the medium. The present article undertakes that task, with particular attention to a national context that has so far been largely absent from the international literature: Turkey.

The study pursues three research questions. First, how has AI-driven short fiction filmmaking evolved between 2016 and 2025, in terms of production methods, tools, and the division of creative labor between humans and machines? Second, what narrative and aesthetic tendencies characterize the films produced so far, and how can these be understood in relation to earlier moments of technological transition in film history? Third, what is the position of Turkish filmmakers and institutions within this global development? The third question deserves a brief justification. Histories of cinematic technology in Turkey — from sound to color to digital production — have typically been histories of delayed adoption. Generative AI presents a different picture: Turkish filmmakers began producing AI-generated shorts in 2024, the very year in which the global corpus of fully generated films took shape, and Turkey hosted one of the world's first dedicated AI film festivals in December 2024. Documenting this synchronicity while it is still observable is one of the contributions this study seeks to make.

Two caveats frame the argument from the outset. The technology under discussion is developing so quickly that any definitive assessment would be premature; the aim here is historiographic and analytical rather than predictive. And the corpus itself is unstable: films appear and disappear from platforms, festival records are incomplete, and promotional self-description often substitutes for documentation. Section 4 describes how the study has attempted to manage these constraints; the conclusion returns to what they imply for future research.

The article is organized as follows. Section 2 reviews the scholarly literature, identifying three research streams and the gap this study addresses. Section 3 develops the conceptual framework, drawing on Tom Gunning's account of early cinema and recent theorizations of algorithmic images. Section 4 describes the method and corpus. Section 5 reconstructs the emerging history of AI short film in three phases, with a dedicated subsection on Turkey. Section 6 discusses the findings in relation to the framework, and Section 7 concludes.

Literature Review

Academic work on AI and cinema has expanded rapidly since 2020, in Turkish as well as international scholarship. Rather than listing this literature chronologically, it is more productive to organize it into three streams — studies of production processes and tools, studies of authorship and creativity, and studies of aesthetics and narrative — and to ask what each stream has and has not accomplished. Türten's (2024b, p. 378) survey offers a compatible tripartite classification, distinguishing research that analyses AI themes in science-fiction films, research on the transformation of visual aesthetics and cinematic narration, and research on AI's impact on production processes; the present review builds on and extends that mapping.

The production-process stream is the largest, in both Turkish and international scholarship. Zengin (2020) provided an early framework for how AI technologies enter the film industry through data science, from pre-production analytics to post-production tools. Türten (2024a) catalogued thirty AI tools across text, image, editing, and sound production, concluding that they offer filmmakers advantages of speed, cost, and labor; a companion study (Türten, 2024b) extended the analysis to distribution and exhibition networks. Aslanyürek and Aycan (2024) examined the implications for cinematography specifically, while Coşkuner (2023) traced the earliest films to incorporate AI across the production pipeline, and Berk (2023) analyzed the deep-learning architectures underlying these tools. Kılınç (2023) surveyed the industry-wide picture, observing that AI-based tools now operate across pre-production, production, and post-production. Internationally, Azzarelli, Anantrasirichai and Bull (2025) reviewed "intelligent cinematography" research — AI for scene capture, camera automation, virtual production, and aerial filming — while Anantrasirichai and Bull (2022), in a widely cited review of AI in the creative industries, classified applications into content creation, information analysis, enhancement, extraction, and compression, concluding that AI's greatest benefit arises where it is designed to augment rather than replace human creativity. Nassar (2024) and Sun (2024) examined applications in marketing, casting, and production efficiency, respectively; Karpouzis (2025) offered a balanced assessment of opportunities and ethical concerns, focusing on AI's implications for cinematic realism. Most recently, Huang, Hitchen and Dogan (2025) proposed a conceptual framework for generative AI across the screen and live performance industries, noting that the technology "challenges traditional photographic ontology" and forces a reconsideration of authorship and authenticity — a formulation that connects this stream to the second.

The authorship-and-creativity stream addresses precisely those questions. Gürsoy and Şavk (2024), drawing on Barthes, Derrida, and Foucault, argue that writing has always been a form of co-authorship and propose the figure of the prompter — the one who commands generated content — as the successor to the traditional screenwriter. Dayo, Memon and Dharejo (2023) frame AI-assisted storytelling as a new phase in the construction of narrative and investigate its ethical and creative implications for the screenwriting profession. The edited volume assembled by Kılınç (2024) gathers international perspectives across these debates.

The aesthetics-and-narrative stream is the youngest and thinnest — and the one to which this study contributes. Anadolu (2019) offered the first close analysis of AI-written films in Turkish scholarship, reading *Sunspring* and *It's No Game* as avant-garde-experimental narratives largely devoid of cause-and-effect relationships. In international scholarship, Somaini (2023) has provided a foundational theoretical account of what he terms algorithmic images: images generated from the latent spaces of machine-learning models trained on vast visual archives, whose aesthetic, epistemological, and ontological implications, he argues, demand both theoretical and media-archaeological analysis. Caballero, Sora-Domenjó and Codina (2025), analyzing entries to the OpenDocs and +RAIN film festivals, offer one of the first empirical studies of generative AI's implications for cinematic narrative and aesthetics based on an actual festival corpus.

Zhang, Yu, Min et al. (2025), surveying recent AI filmmaking practice from a technical standpoint, document artists' strategies for character consistency and stylistic coherence, and note the affinity of generative tools for "dreamlike diffusion-based morphing effects, abstract visuals, and unworldly objects."

Reading the three streams together, the gap this study addresses becomes visible. The production-process stream has catalogued tools but not films; the authorship stream has theorized the prompter but rarely examined what prompters have actually made; and the aesthetics stream has begun close analysis but on narrow corpora, without historical periodization, and without any attention to production outside North America and Western Europe. What is missing is a historiography of the works themselves: a systematic compilation of AI-generated short fiction films, an account of how their production configurations and narrative strategies have changed over time, and an integration of peripheral national contexts — here, Turkey — into that history. Such a compilation is also a precondition for the aesthetic stream's further development: theories of algorithmic cinema need a corpus to theorize.

Conceptual Framework: Attractions, Latent Spaces, and the Recapitulation Thesis

Comparisons between the current moment and the birth of cinema have become commonplace in commentary on AI film, but they are usually left as rhetorical gestures. This study takes the comparison seriously as an analytical instrument, by way of Tom Gunning's (1986) influential account of the cinema of attractions. Gunning demonstrated that cinema before circa 1906 was not a primitive form of later narrative film but a different configuration of the medium altogether: an exhibitionist cinema that solicited spectator attention through the display of the apparatus and its capacity to show — the arriving train, the transforming body, the trick cut — rather than through absorption in a story. Narrative integration came later, and the attraction did not disappear but was folded into narrative form, resurfacing in genres such as the musical and, one might add, the effects-driven blockbuster.

The analytical value of this concept for AI cinema is considerable. It predicts, first, that the earliest generative films will function primarily as attractions — as demonstrations of what the new apparatus can do, in which the fact of machine generation is the spectacle — and second, that a movement towards narrative integration should become observable as the technology matures and novelty wears off. It also supplies evaluative caution: to fault a 2016 AI film for incoherent storytelling is analogous to faulting Lumière actualities for lacking plot; the appropriate question is not whether early works achieve narrative closure but how the relation between display and narration shifts across the corpus. Section 5 tests this recapitulation thesis against the historical material, and Section 6 assesses how far it holds and where it breaks down.

The second conceptual resource concerns the specificity of the generated image. Somaini (2023) characterizes algorithmic images as renderings from latent space — the compressed statistical representation of the enormous image archives on which generative models are trained. Such images are not recordings of a profilmic world but visualizations of statistical regularities; their frequent drift towards the generic, the dreamlike, and the subtly wrong ("uncanny") is not an accidental defect but a structural property of their mode of production. Practitioner testimony converges on this point: the makers of *The Frost* (2023) describe abandoning the pursuit of photographic accuracy and instead "leaning into the weirdness" of the model's output, which they adopted as the film's visual signature (Heaven, 2023). Manovich (2018) had anticipated this problem space in his early account of AI aesthetics, asking how cultural production changes when pattern-extraction from existing archives becomes a generative principle. Together, these accounts ground an expectation examined below: that AI-generated film will show systematic genre affinities — towards science fiction, fantasy, dream sequences, and reconstructions of the past — because these are precisely the modes in which statistical rendering's departure from photographic indexicality reads as a feature rather than a flaw.

Finally, the authorship question is operationalised rather than merely invoked. Following Gürsoy and Şavk's (2024) figure of the prompter, each film in the corpus is described in terms of its human-machine configuration: which functions (concept, script, image, sound, voice, editing) were performed by humans, which by generative systems, and which through iterative negotiation between the two. This descriptive grid makes it possible to track, empirically, how the division of creative labour has shifted across the three phases of the history reconstructed below.

Method And Corpus

This is a qualitative, historiographic review study. Its object is the short fiction film made with substantial use of AI — either AI-assisted (AI performing at least one core creative function such as scriptwriting or shot design) or fully AI-generated (all image and sound machine-generated, with humans providing

concept, prompting, curation, and editing). The corpus was assembled and updated between 2024 and 2026 from four source types: (i) the program and award lists of dedicated AI film festivals (Runway AIFF, AIFF Dubai, Reply AI Film Festival, Larissa Lumina, Busan International AI Film Festival, T-AIFF, among others); (ii) films documented in the scholarly literature reviewed in Section 2; (iii) films documented in technology and film-industry journalism (MIT Technology Review, TNW, No Film School); and (iv) systematic searching of video platforms, principally YouTube, where most of the corpus is exhibited.

Four inclusion criteria were applied. Films had to (1) be short-form (under approximately 25 minutes); (2) advance a fictional narrative, however minimal; (3) involve AI in at least one core creative function, documented either in the film's credits, its maker's public statements, or secondary coverage; and (4) be viewable by the author, or, in a small number of historically significant cases, be documented in sufficient detail in reliable secondary sources. Three exclusions follow from criterion (2): animation in the traditional sense (whose production logics differ fundamentally from the live-action-like image generation at issue here), music videos and advertisements, and purely abstract visual experiments. Two boundary cases require comment. Mockumentary (*Where is My Sock?*) is included, since the mock-documentary is a fiction form; and hybrid films combining photographed and generated footage (*The Abyss*, *Memories of an Eternal Flower*) are included precisely because their hybridity illuminates the integration question at the center of the framework. One feature-length project (Bilge 3071) is discussed, not as a corpus member, but as an indicator of the field's expansion beyond the short form.

The study's limitations must be stated plainly. The corpus cannot claim exhaustiveness: it is bounded by platform availability, by the linguistic competence of the author (Turkish and English), and by the sheer velocity of production in 2024–2025. One geographic consequence of these constraints must be stated explicitly. East and South Asian production certainly exists — the founding of the Busan International AI Film Festival attests to it, and the entanglement runs deeper: one of the generative video models used across this very corpus (Kling, by Kuaishou) and several of its emerging peers (Hailuo, Vidu) are Chinese — yet Asian-language films are represented here only insofar as they surface in English-language festival circuits and coverage. No documented short-film case involving, for instance, DeepSeek-based script generation surfaced in the present sources; whether that reflects absence or under-documentation cannot be determined from here, and a dedicated mapping of Asian-language AI short film is accordingly identified in the conclusion as a priority for future research. Documentation of individual films relies heavily on makers' self-descriptions, which are promotional in character; where possible these have been triangulated with festival records and independent coverage, and they are treated throughout as claims rather than established facts. Award citations, similarly, must be read against the background of a rapidly proliferating festival economy in which the evidentiary weight of a laurel varies enormously. These constraints are not incidental; they are themselves findings about the documentary condition of a field whose history is being written on unstable platforms, and they define an agenda for the archival work the field will soon require.

TABLE 1. THE CORE CORPUS: AI-ASSISTED AND AI-GENERATED SHORT FICTION FILMS, 2016–2025.

Film	Year	Maker(s)	Duration	AI role / principal tools
<i>Do You Love Me?</i>	2016	—	~3 min.	Script elements (Cleverbot)
<i>Sunspring</i>	2016	Oscar Sharp & Ross Goodwin	9 min.	Script (Benjamin, LSTM RNN); human direction, actors
<i>It's No Game</i>	2017	Oscar Sharp & Ross Goodwin	~8 min.	Script (LSTM ensembles); human direction, actors
<i>Zone Out</i>	2018	Oscar Sharp & Ross Goodwin	~7min.	Script, face replacement (RNN, deepfake); archival footage
<i>The Crow</i>	2022	Glenn Marshall	~4 min.	Full image generation (CLIP-guided video style transfer)
<i>The Safe Zone</i>	2022	Aaron Kemmer et al.	~4 min.	Script, direction, storyboard (ChatGPT, DALL-E 2); human crew
<i>The Frost</i>	2023	Waymark (dir. Josh Rubin)	12 min.	Full image generation (DALL-E 2 + D-ID animation); human script
<i>Air Head</i>	2024	shy kids	~1.5 min.	Full image generation (Sora); human script, voice, edit
<i>Dear Human</i>	2024	LionKloud	8:31	Full image/sound generation (Midjourney, Pika, ElevenLabs)

Film	Year	Maker(s)	Duration	AI role / principal tools
Robort	2024	Nobody & The Robot	9:55	Full image/sound generation; human concept and script
Where is My Sock?	2024	Nobody & The Robot (S. Maccia)	10:10	Full image/sound generation; human concept, edit
The Perfume	2024	Mojo Cat	4:48	Full image generation (Midjourney, Runway Gen-3, Kling, Luma)
The Floating Men	2024	Artarchist	2:34	Full image, music, SFX generation
The Abyss	2024	Andreas Aloï	9:57	Hybrid: photographed + generated scenes
Memories of an Eternal Flower	2024	G. Cardona Walther & S. Valdez Sanchez	9 min.	Hybrid: recorded testimony + generated past (Midjourney, Luma, Kling, Runway)
Ouroboros	2024	Solofilms Studio	5:19	Full image generation; human narrative design
William or The Fragile Harmony of Latent Spaces	2024	Luc Leclerc	8:09	Full image generation
Gece Vardiyası (Night Shift)	2024	Ozan Sihay	2:52	Script, shot list, title (ChatGPT); human shoot and edit
Bir Dostluk (A Companionship)	2024	Gürkan Yücel	10	Full image generation, AI voiceover; literary adaptation
Karanlığın Gölgesi (Shadow of Darkness)	2025	Ozan Takış	6:25	Full image generation; human narrative, voiceover

Note. Durations and tool attributions follow makers' published statements and festival records (see Filmography); em-dashes indicate information unavailable at the time of writing.

AN EMERGING HISTORY OF AI SHORT FILM, 2016–2025

The Script-Generation Era (2016–2018)

The prehistory of AI cinema lies in language, not images. The earliest works used neural networks to generate screenplays that were then realised through entirely conventional means: human directors, human actors, physical cameras, human editors. The films of this phase are therefore best described as AI-written rather than AI-generated, and their human-machine configuration inverts the one that would later become standard — the machine supplied the words, humans supplied everything visible.

The literature most often cites *Sunspring* (2016) as the first AI film, though Türten (2024a, p. 403) and Coşkuner (2023) note that *Do You Love Me?*, released the same year, also involved machine authorship at the screenplay stage: the chatbot Cleverbot produced character names, dialogue, part of the script, and the film's title for a three-minute production. *Sunspring* itself — a nine-minute experimental science-fiction short directed by Oscar Sharp, produced for the Sci-Fi London 48-Hour Film Challenge — was written by "Benjamin," a character-level recurrent neural network with long short-term memory (LSTM) architecture developed by AI researcher and artist Ross Goodwin and trained on a corpus of science-fiction screenplays including *Blade Runner*, *Alien*, and *Brazil*, alongside deliberately incongruous material such as *Airplane II: The Sequel* (Kılınç, 2023, p. 101; W2). It bears emphasis, against a persistent error in secondary accounts, that Benjamin predates the transformer-based language models with which AI screenwriting is now associated; the technological distance between *Sunspring*'s LSTM and the ChatGPT-scripted films of 2022–2024 is itself a datum of this history. As Berk (2023, p. 78) describes the process, Goodwin seeded the network with a single sentence, from which it generated text by predicting probable continuations from its training data.

The same team's *It's No Game* (2017), a post-apocalyptic thriller whose subject is, reflexively, the replacement of screenwriters by AI, expanded the technical apparatus: four new LSTM networks trained on corpora ranging from David Hasselhoff's 1980s television work to Shakespeare, Golden Age Hollywood, and Aaron Sorkin dialogue, together with a context-free grammar loaded with ballet vocabulary for a choreography generator (W1). Their third collaboration, *Zone Out* (2018), attempted a further step — generating the image track by compositing contemporary actors' faces onto public-domain footage via early face-swapping techniques, with an RNN-written script — but the visual integration failed conspicuously, and the result, as contemporary coverage noted, remained an experiment that did not cohere into film

narrative (W3).



Image 1. Sunspring (Oscar Sharp, 2016).

Viewed through the framework of Section 3, this phase conforms closely to the attraction model. Anadolu (2019, p. 53), in the first Turkish-language analysis of these films, describes *Sunspring* as “largely devoid of cause-and-effect relationships, ambiguous in terms of time and space,” while noting that *It’s No Game* deploys AI dialogue within an opposite, more situationally coherent narrative mode. The absurdity that every commentator registers in these films is precisely the display of the apparatus: what the spectator comes to see is not a story but the spectacle of a machine attempting one. That the attempt fails narratively is, in Gunning’s terms, beside the point — the failure is the attraction.

The Safe Zone (2022) marks the transition out of this phase, and the arrival of large language models in the director’s chair. Entrepreneur Aaron Kemmer’s team used ChatGPT to generate not only the four-minute screenplay but the shot list, lens choices, camera movements, lighting instructions, and costume suggestions, with DALL-E 2 producing a full storyboard; the production was promoted with the claim of having used AI to “write and direct” a film in a weekend (Deruvo, 2022; W4). The team reported generating over one hundred ideas in under an hour and developing fifty candidate scripts before selecting one (W4, W5). Here the machine’s role expands from writing to something like direction, while image capture remains human — a configuration that would be almost immediately superseded.

The Generative Turn (2022–2023)

What changed between 2018 and 2024 was not gradual improvement but a discontinuity in the underlying technology: the emergence of diffusion-based image synthesis (DALL-E 2, Midjourney, and Stable Diffusion all reached the public in 2022), followed by commercial video generation (Runway’s Gen-1 and Gen-2 in 2023, alongside Pika Labs and others) and culminating in OpenAI’s February 2024 announcement of Sora, a text-to-video model whose public demonstrations reset expectations for the field. Any history of AI cinema that omits this technological substrate — as much of the existing literature does — cannot explain why fully generated films were marginal curiosities in 2022 and a festival category by 2024. The generative turn is what converts the promptor from a theoretical figure into a practical job description.

Two films of this transitional period deserve the canonical status the literature has so far largely failed to accord them. Glenn Marshall’s *The Crow* (2022) — absent from the literature reviewed above — won the Jury Award at the 2022 Cannes Short Film Festival (an independent competition distinct from the Festival de Cannes) and became the first widely recognised festival success for a fully generated work. Marshall fed the frames of *Painted*, an existing dance film, into a CLIP-guided generation system prompted with “a painting of a crow in a desolate landscape,” producing a continuously mutating painterly image of a dancer-becoming-crow (Macaulay, 2022). The film is significant on three counts: it demonstrated that generation could carry an entire work’s visual register; its derivation from an underlying copyrighted film crystallised, earlier than any litigation, the archival-appropriation question that now dominates policy debate; and its aesthetic — abstraction, metamorphosis, painterliness — showed generative cinema succeeding precisely where photographic fidelity was not the goal.

The Frost (2023), a twelve-minute post-apocalyptic narrative produced by the Detroit company Waymark and premiered by MIT Technology Review, extended generation to a sustained story world: every shot was produced with DALL-E 2 from a human-written script and animated with the still-image animation tool D-ID (Heaven, 2023). The production is exceptionally well documented, and its makers’ testimony — quoted in Section 3 — articulates what may be the central aesthetic decision of the period: the deliberate embrace of the model’s “weirdness” as style. The uncanny half-life of the film’s faces, lips not quite synchronised to speech, became not an obstacle to meaning but its vehicle, sustaining the story’s atmosphere of wrongness. *The Frost* thus stands as an early, self-aware answer to the question this article’s title poses: meaning was

found not despite the artefacts of generation but through them.

Fully Generated Shorts and the Festival Infrastructure (2024–)

By 2024 the configuration pioneered by these transitional works had become a recognisable production model: human concept and (usually) script; generated images, voices, music, and effects; human curation of outputs and human editing, since no system yet performs autonomous assembly of a finished film. The year's emblematic work was *Air Head* (2024) by the Toronto collective shy kids, one of the first shorts made with Sora under OpenAI's early-access artist programme: a melancholy comic monologue of a man whose head is a yellow balloon, whose maintenance of a consistent impossible character across shots demonstrated the new model's capacities while its manifest artifice sidestepped the uncanny-valley problem altogether (Heaven, 2024). That the most celebrated Sora film chose an anti-photorealist premise is consistent with the pattern *The Crow* and *The Frost* had already established.

The wider 2024 corpus, compiled in Table 1, diversifies this model across genres. *Dear Human* (LionKloud, 2024), an 8:31-minute science-fiction short, assembled its pipeline from Midjourney (image), Pika Labs (animation), ElevenLabs (voice), Blender (effects), and DaVinci Resolve (editing) — a toolchain enumeration typical of the period's paratexts, in which the credits function as a technology showcase (W6). Mojo Cat's dialogue-free *The Perfume* (2024) sets its fable of a scent-drowned eighteenth-century French city in a chain of image-generation and image-to-video tools (Midjourney, Leonardo, Runway Gen-3, Kling, Luma Dream Machine) (W7). The maker working as *Nobody & The Robot* (Sebastian Maccia) produced two of the year's more narratively ambitious works. *Robort* (2024) inverts the automation anxiety of *It's No Game*: its human protagonist, displaced by robots from work, love, and music, disguises himself as a robot singer to regain an audience. Its maker's account of the process is a precise self-description of the prompter configuration: "The concept of the film was entirely human," the maker states, adding that AI was deliberately excluded from the idea phase on the grounds that it cannot independently generate strong story ideas (W8). The same maker's *Where is My Sock?* (2024), a 10:10-minute mock-investigative documentary on the phenomenon of missing socks, is among the corpus's most formally intelligent works: the mockumentary's constitutive play with fabricated evidence is doubled by the fabricated status of every image, so that the generative artifice formally underwrites the genre's own logic of artifice (W9).



Image 2. *Where is My Sock?* (Nobody & The Robot [Sebastian Maccia], 2024).

Other award-circuit works confirm the genre affinities predicted in Section 3. Artarchist's *The Floating Men* (2024), a 2:34-minute fantasy in which people drift skyward in pursuit of smiling floating figures while the city below collapses, accumulated laurels across the new festival circuit, from Larissa Lumina's AI Storytelling Award to an honourable mention at Turkey AIFF (W10).



Image 3. *The Floating Men* (Artarchist, 2024).

Ouroboros (Solofilms Studio, 2024), an award-winner at the AI Film Awards in Dubai, continues its maker's dream-cycle of dystopian fantasy (W12), and Luc Leclerc's William or The Fragile Harmony of Latent Spaces (2024), a Reply festival finalist, narrativises the technology's own vocabulary — its title names the mathematical space from which its images come — in a therapy-and-dreams story of a man descending into his subconscious (W13, W17). Meanwhile the hybrid strand demonstrates integration of another kind: Andreas Aloï's *The Abyss* (2024) embeds generated dream sequences within a photographed frame narrative of a wheelchair-using protagonist testing a mind-controlling dream device, and Gabriela Cardona Walther and Sergio Valdez Sanchez's *Memories of an Eternal Flower* (*Memorias de una flor eterna*, 2024), a nine-minute Mexican film built from recordings the directors made with Cardona Walther's grandmother María Luisa before her death at one hundred, combines that documentary material with AI-generated reconstructions of her remembered youth — an exact mapping of the photographed onto the present and the generated onto memory, put in the service of grief and generational transmission (W11).



Image 4. *Ouroboros* (Solofilms Studio, 2024).

This production boom generated its own institutional infrastructure with remarkable speed. Runway launched the first dedicated AI Film Festival in New York and San Francisco in 2023; within two years the circuit included AIFF Montpellier (2023), the AI Film Festival Milan, AIFF Dubai, AI Film Fest Amsterdam and the Reply AI Film Festival (all 2024), Larissa Lumina in Greece and the Busan International AI Film Festival in South Korea (late 2024), and AI Film Fest Berlin (2025), while established festivals began adding AI categories. Festivalisation matters historiographically: it converts scattered uploads into a corpus with selection, canonisation, and archival mechanisms — however unstable — and it is the clearest institutional evidence that AI film has become a category of practice rather than a scattering of experiments.

AI-Generated Short Film in Turkey

Turkish production enters this history not in a belated phase of adoption but within the generative turn itself. Among the earliest documented experiments, Ozan Sihay's *Gece Vardiyası* (*Night Shift*, 2024) belongs to the ChatGPT-direction configuration of *The Safe Zone*: Sihay's team prompted the model for a single-location, single-actor thriller script, fed it photographs of the office location and the performer, and had it generate the shot list, camera angles, and title, while shooting, lighting, and editing remained human (W14). The resulting 2:52-minute film — a woman alone on a night shift, an escalating series of sounds and shadows, the on-screen message "I'm watching you" — is modest, but its production process, broadcast as a YouTube programme, functioned as a public demonstration of method: the attraction, again, was the apparatus.

Gürkan Yücel's *Bir Dostluk* (*A Companionship*, 2024) represents a qualitative step, and arguably the most artistically significant Turkish work of the corpus. Adapting Sabahattin Kudret Aksal's short story of a man and a woman withdrawing from the crushing loneliness of the city into a shared room, the film builds a painterly visual register from generated still images set in motion — closer to animated photography or stop-motion than to synthetic live action — with AI-generated inner-voice narration whose intonational naturalness is notable for the period. Its festival recognition rested not on technological display but on the coherence of adaptation, image, and voice: an early Turkish instance of the passage from attraction to narrative integration. That the source is a canonical Turkish literary text also signals a distinctive strategy — grounding the placeless imagery of latent space in national literary tradition — that has no direct equivalent in the international corpus surveyed above.



Image 5. *Bir Dostluk* (Gürkan Yücel, 2024).

Ozan Taşı's *Karanlığın Gölgesi* (Shadow of Darkness, February 2025), a 6:25-minute film whose crowd scenes and medieval settings are entirely generated, extends Turkish production into the historical register that Section 6 identifies as one of generative cinema's structural affinities, with a voiceover-driven, classically structured narrative. Institutionally, the first Turkey International AI Film Festival (T-AIFF), founded under the direction of Ferhat Zengin — also one of the field's first Turkish scholars — and Bahadır Kapır, was held in December 2024, within months of its counterparts in Dubai, Amsterdam, and Busan; its first edition premiered and awarded young Turkish filmmakers' work, including Berkay Elek's *Beyaz Güvercin* and Emir Ziyalar and Emre Tapan's *The Crimson Crown*, alongside international selections.

Beyond the short form, two feature-length projects signal the field's expansion in Turkey. The AI artist Alkan Avcıoğlu's *Gerçek Ötesi* (Post Truth) — billed by its distributor as the first fully AI-generated feature documentary to receive wide theatrical release anywhere — a "fake film about the real world" interrogating a post-truth media condition, assembled from a reported pool of over fifty-five hours of generated footage, was released in Turkish cinemas by Başka Sinema in summer 2025 (W18); as a documentary it falls outside the present corpus, but it gives Turkey a claim to a global first in feature-length generative production, and its maker's trajectory — from the international AI-art circuit to national theatrical distribution — exemplifies the localisation dynamic discussed below. Within fiction, the Mersin-based project *Bilge 3071* (dir. Onur Kaygın and Yasin Korkmaz) was announced in 2024 as the first Turkish feature produced entirely with generative tools. Its premise — a future war between a malevolent AI, "Dark Mind," and a benevolent Turkish AI, "Bilge," fought with the aid of regenerated historical leaders from Mete Han to Atatürk, reportedly seeded by asking ChatGPT which Turkish heroes a world on the brink of catastrophe would need — was presented through trailers from August 2024 (W15), with a theatrical release scheduled for 29 August 2025 (W16). Whatever the project's eventual reception, its self-presentation is historiographically telling on two counts: the explicit framing of AI filmmaking as national-technological representation on a world stage, and the choice of national-historical resurrection as subject matter — a choice that instantiates, in the most literal form in the entire corpus, generative AI's affinity for reanimating the past. A critical assessment of the completed film, including the considerable ethical questions raised by the synthetic resurrection of real historical figures, is a task for subsequent research.

The overall picture warrants the synchronicity claim made in the introduction, with appropriate caution. Turkish AI filmmaking in 2024–2025 is small in volume and, like the global field, uneven in quality; but structurally — in production configurations, genre choices, festival infrastructure, and even the timing of its scholarly literature (Zengin, 2020, predates most international equivalents) — it is a participant in the field's formation rather than a later adopter of its results. For a national cinema whose technological history has been written largely in the past tense of catching up, this is a genuinely new situation, and one worth documenting while the evidence is still accessible.

Discussion: The Search For Meaning

The historical reconstruction permits an assessment of the three questions with which the study began, read through the framework of Section 3.

From attraction to narrative integration — partially. The recapitulation thesis is confirmed in its broad outline and instructively complicated in its detail. The 2016–2018 films are attractions in almost pure form: their incoherence is constitutive, their spectacle is the generating machine itself, and their exhibition contexts (a 48-hour challenge, technology-press coverage) match the fairground logic Gunning describes.

The 2024 corpus visibly moves towards integration: Where is My Sock? subordinates generation to genre logic, Bir Dostluk to literary adaptation, The Abyss and Memories of an Eternal Flower to a division of narrative labor in which generation is assigned the marked segments — dream, memory, the past — while photography holds the diegetic present. This last configuration deserves emphasis, for it suggests that integration is proceeding not by generated images replacing photographed ones but by the two acquiring distinct narrative values: the photographed as actual, the generated as virtual. Yet the attraction has not been superseded, and the festival circuit's continued organization around the technology itself — AI festivals, tool-list credits, “made entirely with AI” as a headline claim — shows the field still deriving a large share of its cultural energy from display. In Gunning's history, attractions went underground into narrative; in AI cinema, as of 2025, they remain on the surface, and the two economies coexist.

Authorship: the prompter configuration stabilizes. Across the corpus the division of labor converges on a stable pattern that empirically substantiates Gürsoy and Şavk's (2024) theoretical figure: human concept and narrative design; machine generation of audiovisual material; human curation, selection, and assembly. The pattern's most striking feature is the persistence of human editing — no film in the corpus was assembled by a machine — which suggests that montage, the operation classical theory placed at the heart of cinematic meaning, is for now the least automatable of the medium's functions. Makers' own statements consistently claim the conceptual layer for the human (“the concept of the film was entirely human”), a rhetoric of retained authorship that should be read both as description and as position-taking within the ongoing legitimacy dispute around AI art. The configuration is unlikely to be permanent; but its current stability is itself a finding, and a baseline against which future redistributions of creative labor can be measured.

Genre affinity and the aesthetics of the statistical image. The corpus's generic distribution is heavily skewed towards science fiction, dystopia, fantasy, dream narrative, and historical reconstruction, confirming the structural expectation derived from Somaini (2023): statistical rendering succeeds where deviation from photographic indexicality signifies rather than fails. Dreams and imagined futures have no referent against which the image can be found wanting; the past has referents, but ones the audience knows only through images — paintings, photographs, films — which is to say, through exactly the archives from which latent space is compressed. Generative reconstruction of the past is thus not a marginal application but something like the technology showing its own foundations: images made from archives, depicting what only archives preserve. The corpus's two most self-aware works make this legible in opposite registers — The Frost by converting statistical wrongness into atmosphere, Where is My Sock? by rhyming fabricated images with a genre of fabricated evidence — while Karanlığın Gölgesi and Bilge 3071 exemplify the historical affinity in the Turkish context, the latter extending it to the ethically fraught terrain of resurrecting real persons. Alongside these generic affinities runs a discursive one: a striking share of the corpus is about its own condition of production. Screenwriter replacement is the subject of It's No Game, labour displacement by machines of Robort, latent space itself of William or The Fragile Harmony of Latent Spaces, competing artificial intelligences of Bilge 3071; and the mock-documentary form of Where is My Sock? turns the status of the generated image itself into its running joke. The films of the emerging corpus thus collectively constitute an early self-commentary of the technology upon itself — a recurring discourse whose systematic content analysis, as the corpus grows, is a natural extension of the mapping offered here. Whether these affinities are transitional artefacts of current model limitations or durable properties of the form is among the most consequential open questions for the field's next phase.

Turkey: synchronicity and its conditions. The Turkish case adds a peripheral-cinema dimension largely absent from existing scholarship. The conditions of synchronicity are worth naming, because they are general: generative tools collapsed the capital and infrastructure requirements that historically produced technological lag between centre and periphery. When production requires subscriptions and prompting skill rather than studios and equipment chains, the periphery's structural disadvantage narrows — though it does not vanish, since compute access, platform governance, and the training-data dominance of Anglophone visual culture all reintroduce asymmetries at another level. The distinctive strategies visible in the Turkish corpus — literary adaptation in Bir Dostluk, national-historical subject matter in Karanlığın Gölgesi and Bilge 3071 — suggest that what peripheral production contributes to the global field is precisely localization: the grounding of a placeless image technology in particular literary, historical, and cultural archives. Comparative study of other non-central national corpora would test whether this pattern generalizes.

Conclusion

This study set out to compile and periodize the emerging corpus of AI-generated short fiction film, to interpret its development through the lens of early-cinema historiography and theories of the algorithmic image, and to situate Turkish production within the global field. Its findings can be summarized in four propositions. First, the history of AI short film divides into a script-generation era (2016–2018), a generative turn grounded in diffusion-based synthesis (2022–2023), and a phase of fully generated production with dedicated festival infrastructure (2024–). Second, this history partially recapitulates early cinema's movement from attraction to narrative integration, with the significant difference that the attraction economy remains active on the field's surface, and with integration proceeding through a division of narrative values between photographed and generated images. Third, creative labor has stabilized, for now, in a prompter configuration in which concept and montage remain human while audiovisual generation is delegated — making editing, on present evidence, the most resistant of cinema's operations to automation. Fourth, Turkish filmmakers and institutions have participated in this field's formation synchronously with its global emergence, developing localization strategies whose comparative study the article proposes as a research direction.

The limitations stated in Section 4 bear repeating as conditions on these claims: the corpus is bounded, its documentation is largely promotional in origin, and the field's velocity guarantees that any snapshot ages quickly. Precisely for these reasons, three tasks seem most urgent for subsequent research. The first is archival: the systematic preservation of films, paratexts, and festival records that currently exist only on commercial platforms. The second is analytical: close readings of individual works — the present study's survey scale necessarily traded depth for coverage — and reception studies of how audiences actually construe generated images. The third is comparative and critical: the extension of this mapping to other national contexts, and sustained ethical analysis of the practices the corpus already contains in embryo, from the archival appropriation underlying *The Crow* to the synthetic resurrection of historical persons in *Bilge 3071*. The search for meaning in AI cinema, this study has argued, is already yielding results on screen; the search for its adequate historiography has only begun.

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