

SINEMATEK (TURKISH CINEMATHEQUE ASSOCIATION):

CINEMA AND POLITICAL DEBATE

BETWEEN 1965-1980

by

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Title: Sinematek (Turkish Cinémathèque Association):  
Cinema and Political Debate in Turkey Between 1965-1980

This thesis examines Sinematek Association, which was a specific phenomenon among many other cultural and social projects of the 1960s. It was established on August 25, 1965 by passionate cinema followers and lasted till the military coup d'état of 1980. The thesis focuses on the effects of the social and cultural atmosphere of the 1960s and 1970s on the evolution of the Sinematek association, and the impact of the Association on the shaping of the general political atmosphere. This thesis seeks to uncover the decade between 1965 and 1975, which was the heyday of the association, that is considered as a period of transformation in Turkish cinema, just like other transformations in theatre and literature, as artistic activities were diffused in the public life. I argue that an artistic environment took shape in which political discussions were made possible. Interaction with the public sphere and the desire for a utopian new society were the essential characteristics of this generation. In this period, the intellectuals and youth in Turkey defined themselves in relation to the political & socio-economic problems of their country. This critical consciousness naturally found expression in the cultural sphere. Therefore, the main concern of this study will be to map the elements of this intellectual or political movement via an analysis of this institution. To put it differently, my hypothesis is that Sinematek and other cinema circles in the 1960s and in the early 1970s can give us the opportunity to understand the atmosphere of Turkey in that period as they reflected, sustained and expressed generally the significant intellectual and political orientations of their period.

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Başlık: Sinematek (Türk Sinematek Derneği): 1965-1980 Arasında Sinema ve  
Politik Tartışma

Bu tez 1960'lı yılların pek çok diğer sosyal ve kültürel projelerinin yanı sıra kayda değer bir fenomen olan Türk Sinematek derneğini incelemektedir. Bir çok sinema sevdalısı tarafından 25 Ağustos 1965'te kurulan dernek 12 Eylül askeri darbesine kadar varlığını sürdürmüştür. Bu tez 1960 ve 1970'lerin kültürel gelişmelerinin derneğin gelişimi üzerindeki etkilerini ve derneğin genel politik atmosferin biçimlenmesindeki rolünü incelemektedir. Bu tez, derneğinde en üretken dönemi olan 1965-1975 aralığını, Türk sinemasındaki dönüşümlerle birlikte diğer alanlarda da tiyatro ve edebiyat gibi, dönüşümlerin yaşandığı bir dönem olarak değerlendirmekte ve bu dönemde kültürel faaliyetlerin kamusal hayata çok daha fazla mal olduğu tespitini yapmaktadır. Ayrıca tezde bu dönemde politik tartışmaların yapılabildiği bir sanatsal ortamın oluştuğunu iddia edilmektedir. Bunun yanı sıra, o dönemki gençlerin ve entelektüellerin temel karakteristikleri olarak kamusal alanla etkileşim ve yeni, ütopyik bir toplum isteğinin belirleyici olduğu düşünülmektedir. Bu dönemde, entelektüeller ve gençlik, kendilerini ülkenin politik, ekonomik-sosyal problemleriyle ilişkileri içerisinde tanımlamaktaydılar. Bu eleştirel yaklaşımın tabii ki kültürel alanda da yansımaları oluyordu. Dolayısıyla bu tezin temel amacı bu derneğin analizi üzerinden dönemin entelektüel ve politik hareketlerinin özelliklerini saptamak olacaktır. Daha farklı bir şekilde ifade edersek, benim hipotezim, Sinematek derneği ve diğer sinema gruplarının, 1960'ların ve erken 1970'lerin önemli politik ve entelektüel yaklaşımlarını yansıttıkları, ifade ettikleri ve o dönem dair bilgi sağladıkları ölçüde, dönemin genel atmosferinin anlamamı sağladıklarıdır.

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*To Ayşe*

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines the Sinematek Association, which was a specific phenomenon among many other cultural and social projects of the 1960s. It was established on August 25, 1965 in association with the Cinémathèque of Paris, by passionate cinema followers and lasted till the military coup d'état of 1980. The thesis focuses on the effects of the social and cultural atmosphere of the 1960s and 1970s on the evolution of the Sinematek association, and the impact of the Association on the shaping of the general political atmosphere. As will be argued subsequently, the artistic culture, as culture in general, is inextricably intertwined with its social context and each continuously recreates the other in and through the political atmosphere.

This approach to the category of the political which defines it as a relation or link that at once separates and connects the social and the cultural will inform the general outlook of this thesis. Sinematek was one of the central milieus in which artistic culture was reproduced at that time and so it encompassed a social context of its own and it was in turn determined by this social context. To put it more precisely, Sinematek embodied the characteristics of its social basis, and these may be taken as its material constituents, but it necessarily had its own formal aspects as well, its cultural agenda which it aimed to project onto this social basis. It is in this sense that Sinematek will be taken as a political association, and the problems, debates and conflicts that it underwent and produced will be understood as the problems, debates and conflicts arising from this relation of unity and difference between the social and

the cultural, and the political as the name of this relation will be treated as the site of these problems, debates and conflicts.

It should be noted however that, this distinction between the social and the cultural is not meant to be a self-evident one, (a distinction existing in itself) but rather it is produced and enacted by the political, which means politics has this distinction as the condition of its possibility. This is to say, this distinction between the cultural and the social is itself a political distinction. Then, the main issue will be whether a political movement or association places itself firmly within this socio-cultural whole and tries an internal transformation of this whole or denies this and aims at an external modification of it by identifying itself with a social project or a cultural paradigm. Also the different ways of conceiving this whole, for instance whether it will be taken in a national or global extent or perhaps on a more local level, will also be definitive of a political agenda. To put it simply, it will be argued in this thesis that, an emphasis on the social generally corresponds to a more globalist perspective on the part of a political engagement, whereas a more cultural emphasis brings with it a nationalist, nativist, traditionalist perspective, or in more general terms, the former espouses a somewhat more externalist approach whereas the latter prefers a more internalist approach. The positions taken by Sinematek in these dimensions will be the subject of the thesis and whether it managed to overcome these partial outlooks and provided a more coherent ground, or, if not, the possible explanations of its failure will be the subject of the following discussion.

The main characteristics of the political atmosphere that will be explained largely in the first chapter can be described as follows: In the 1960s political debates

were largely determined by two principal axes, there were nationalists<sup>1</sup> and conservatives, on the one hand with their emphasis on the particularities of Turkey, on its internal dynamics thereby focusing on issues of identity, or culture in general and a subsequent will to derive of the social from the cultural, and the modernists on the other hand, with their emphasis on social progress, economic development and the subsequent derivation of the cultural from the social. In tune with these frameworks, modernists sided with universal values, equalized generally with western culture, as the more universally taken the sphere of the cultural be related to further progress, whereas nationalists or traditionalists in general worked with a more determinate set of values unique to the nation's, or the community's context, as the search for identity would necessitate such a delimited cultural understanding. As will be explained below, nationalist or nativist and modernist or universalistic conceptions cannot be considered in isolation, they define themselves to a certain extent in opposition, and in relation to each other.

This old and deep-rooted debate went hand in hand with Turkey's modernization and capitalist development. In the 1960s, the debate over the modernization and national identity intersected with the fact that anti-imperialism was the main theme of the leftist political discourse of the time. This discourse was shaped by the process of decolonization, debates on the Asiatic mode of production, the Non-Aligned Movement of the Third World countries and the Chinese Cultural Revolution which were going on worldwide. Anti-imperialism led to the questioning

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<sup>1</sup> Here nationalist is taken in the sense of the defender of national values, but this "national" is not the political institution defined with its territorial boundaries and by a nation-state of its own, but rather any set of identity claims made by a group of people for defining themselves as a part of cultural whole. So, in this context, both a claim of a unique language and a more broader claim of a unique national territory count as nationalisms. The intricate interconnection between nation states and global capitalist development in the 18th and 19th centuries as the foundation of nation states does not affect or alter the heuristic distinction that is made between the nationalists and modernists.

of western values which were seen as products of the imperialist world system. However, the imperial heritage of the Ottoman past and the Republic's model of modernization can be seen as presenting obstacles for intellectuals in adopting an anti-colonialist discourse which questioned the western cultural and political tradition. Kemalism and its model of civilization grounded itself on the values of Western civilization and bringing them into Turkey was its motivation.

The problems of Turkish modernization were heatedly debated in those years in many political and intellectual milieus. Intellectuals who were affected by the developmentalist and modernist tendencies, however, did not place themselves against the Kemalist and republican ideals of the early Republican period. Turkish intellectuals believed that Kemalism was the foundation for Turkish modernization; thus, they tried to transcend Kemalist ideology with an utopian vision of a more egalitarian and free society and with the economic independence from the imperialist powers for the benefits of Turkish society. These intellectual debates should be seen as a product of socio-cultural developments, as already noted, political positions taken by political actors are necessarily expressions of the socio-cultural whole through which they exist. In Turkey, the emerging working class, the movements of trade unions, the influence of the Workers' Party, which was newly established and had become a center of attraction for intellectuals, are relevant in this context. Then, although, there was the great influence of the anti-modernist or nationalist axis which emphasized identity problems, this thesis considers these decades as a new phase in the Turkish modernization project, and accordingly the political struggle in this period is mainly seen in terms of this modernist movement, that is to say, the nationalist opposition reflected in the intellectual circles is also taken to be an

expression of an opposition in the social and cultural sphere which took various forms.

The modernist attempt of the 1960s and the early 1970s can be considered as a phase of the Turkish modernization movement and was reproduced as a relatively democratic, participatory historical time, although state oppression was consistently applied to hinder these attempts. The repression was institutionalized for the reestablishment of the social order after the coup d'état regimes of 1971 and 1980. The military intervention made on 12 March 1971 did not suffice to impede the political struggles that were directed against this repression exercised through state institutions.

However, in the late 1970s, the radical student and worker movements of the late 1960s were transformed into a deeper polarization throughout the country, which led to a civil war between the extreme nationalist political powers and leftist groups, these leftist groups being the militants of modernization. (At least as considered in terms of this opposition they may be treated as such.) The effects of such a polarization were reflected in all areas including art and culture, and cultural institutions were negatively affected by this polarization. Turkish intellectuals and the Turkish "left" were influential in the socio-cultural atmosphere of the country, as a result of their will to a total transformation in the everyday lives of the Turkish people, that is to say a transformation of the socio-cultural whole, by aiming to create a socialist culture with an egalitarian and solidarist approach. It was only in the 1980s that this struggle lost its effect after the blow of the military coup of 12 September 1980 and the beginning of the neoliberal period.

The subjects of this work are Turkish intellectuals who were educated in the early Republican institutions and became politically engaged during university education, in the social events of the 1960s. In the 1960s the growth of political radicalism could be related to increasingly higher levels of university education that produced far more graduates that could be absorbed by the professional market.<sup>2</sup> The result of this transformation in the role of the universities, their becoming more and more organized around the needs of the market, was a reaction in the university in the form of anti-capitalist student movements. This sharp political radicalism in the university had connections with other social, cultural developments too but its essential character as a student movement was necessarily shaped by the problems and conflicts produced by this transformation in the university. This represents a moment of a wider transformation in the society already determined these other dynamics. As a result, intellectuals and the youth engaged themselves in political activity against the existing social order.

However, it was important for the youth of the period to obtain an identity as well, a search for subjectivity or means for personal emancipation, which is to say, the basically economic or social motives of their revolt also required a cultural agenda to provide a sense of integration. I would argue that cinema served as a very adequate means to satisfy these needs. It is my contention that members of this association, intellectuals and students, were going through a period of individualization. Those individuals found ways to construct themselves by exploring new films, new books, and meeting new people in this environment. One should note that it was the Sinematek which firstly showed the foreign art films in

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<sup>2</sup> Eric J. Hobsbawn, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914-1991* (London: Abacus, 1995).

Turkey and thus helped all of its members to look and think beyond the national scale and this new search in artistic or cultural sphere was to accompany the new social demands, desires they claimed for. That is to say, their political ideals demanded a new conception of the socio-cultural whole, of society and in terms of their selves a new sense of subjectivity, individuality.

I will argue that, in the 1960s and 1970s, the domination of the state in the artistic field was replaced by such new institutions and thus independent intellectuals, mainly influenced by the social movements of the period, transformed the relation between society and the intellectual field to a certain extent. It was also in the 1960s that cinema appeared as a notable domain of popular culture. Intellectual debates, which always attracted intellectuals in the areas of literature, theatre and music, found a new interesting and fertile arena.

The 1960s were both a turning and a transition period for the cinema. In these years cinema was changing throughout the world; the social movements and problems of countries were reflected in their national cinemas. The 1960s were the happy years of Turkish cinema, as described by many cinema historians as the golden years. In these years, Yeşilçam movies<sup>3</sup> were increasingly popular among people and they constituted a considerable commercial market. As an alternative to the Yeşilçam cinema, the “universal art of cinema,” mainly the European art cinema defended and presented by the Sinematek, attracted intellectuals and educated youth. Throughout these years, Sinematek was one of the most active organizations providing a lively atmosphere for the educated middle classes, intellectuals and university students.

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<sup>3</sup> “Yeşilçam” is the name of the street in Beyoğlu where cinema companies and “extras” coffehouses are located.

The decade between 1965 and 1975, which was the heyday of the association, is considered as a period of transformation in Turkish cinema, just like other transformations in theatre and literature, as artistic activities were diffused in the public life. I argue that intellectual specialization was very limited in these years. Metropoles such as Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir were the main centers for the emanation of intellectual common space and discourse. Additionally, the intellectuals were not specialists of an isolated and determined intellectual or artistic field; they were sharing a more common agenda. In their debates and meetings they talked about issues from the vast area of intellectual culture. These topics were closely connected with their everyday lives and actual political circumstances.

Thus an artistic environment took shape in which political discussions were made possible. Interaction with the public sphere and the desire for a utopian new society were the essential characteristics of this generation. The intellectuals and youth in Turkey defined themselves in relation to the political & socio- economic problems of their country. This critical consciousness naturally found expression in the cultural sphere. Therefore, the main concern of this study will be to map the elements of this intellectual or political movement via an analysis of this institution. To put it differently, my hypothesis is that Sinematek and other cinema circles in the 1960s and in the early 1970s can give us the opportunity to understand the atmosphere of Turkey in that period as they reflected, sustained and expressed generally the significant intellectual and political orientations of their period.

One should consider that this “forum of culture” besides other cinema circles and other cultural institutions in theatre, music, literature and painting, contributed to the production of a locus of political opposition to the regime. In the thesis, the

political and ideological struggles of the period will be discussed from the more general perspective of a struggle over meanings in the cultural life. Tomas E. Crow, in his book *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth Century Paris* argues that, “The role of new public space in the history of eighteenth century French painting will be bound up with a struggle over representation, over meaning, over symbols and who had the right to use them.”<sup>4</sup> A similar struggle over representations, meanings and who had the right to use them was reflected in cultural instruments, like films, magazines, books and other activities, in the cultural milieu of the Sinematek Association. To take this struggle mainly as a cultural struggle may seem to be counter to what have been said so far, but this emphasis on culture is not meant to ignore the social or economic basis. All these political struggles were essentially related to the social developments and movements of the period as have been claimed above. However, as the subject is an association that takes cinema, a principally cultural phenomenon though with social, material conditions of its own, as its actuality, its fundamental way of self-realization, as its manner of self-expression, a discussion in these terms will be employed, without thereby neglecting the social side. To the contrary this approach will be taken as a possible way of revealing the inner difficulties, problems of the Association, as a way of discussing whether it managed to develop a political framework that meets the requirement of integrating the social and the cultural or whether its cultural base prevented Sinematek from such an integral outlook and led to a mainly intellectualist program.

This struggle, based on nationalistic, populist and internationalist tones that can be sought in different approaches, was based on a common political and, in a

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<sup>4</sup> Tomas E. Crow, *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth Century Paris* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

broad sense, socialist agenda & political views was shared by most of the cinema groups.<sup>5</sup> These were the key political concepts which were being redefined in different ways throughout this era. As mentioned, in the 1960s anti-imperialism was the main political discourse of the time. The slow development and dependency of Turkish cinema and Turkey in general, were the main motives behind national feelings and thus the populist discourse of the time was grounded on this fact. This nationalist tendency had its followers in the cinema circles, for instance, the Sinematek circle was criticized by the National Cinema circle<sup>6</sup> for underestimating national values and for adopting the western heritage; moreover for avoiding the popular, authentic values of the people. The response of the members of the Sinematek was that the production of national films necessitated adopting the values of universal cinema and an independent and alternative position to the current capitalist system. The National Cinema circle and the debate will be examined below. After 1968, a political and revolutionary radicalization on the part of students affected the Association's inner dynamics and led to a split with these students who criticized the elitist atmosphere of the association by an emphasis of populism. In the third chapter, this transformation and its effects will be defined.

In addition, Sinematek had to do with the art of cinema itself. So we need to look at the relation between Sinematek as an institution and the nature of cinema. Cinema itself is both the reflection and the product of human social activity. As one

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<sup>5</sup> Except Milli Cinema circle that will be explained below. Milli Cinema and Ulusal Cinema circle were using the same translations of the word National as a name, but milli was a conservative or Islamist connotation as it was an old Ottoman word. After the vernacularization of Turkish, many Arabic and Persian words were replaced by the new Turkish words. In the thesis, The National cinema circle was Ulusal Cinema Circle as the vernacular translation of the National.

<sup>6</sup> National cinema circle and other cinema circles will be discussed at length in the third chapter. National cinema was defended by Halit Refiğ, and Metin Erksan against the Sinematek with an emphasis on the possibilities of producing cinema in an alternative way in the actual cinema industry.

cinema historian argues: “I offer a methodological road map for those concerned with a materialist-driven approach to film studies: one that sees movies as an art form that stands on its own but also, like the chair in Marx’s *Das Capital*, as an object whose creation reflects a wide range of human practices.”<sup>7</sup> Therefore, cinema can neither be conceived in pure aesthetic terms, nor can it be reduced to its economic, material milieu. Intellectuals oscillate between these two poles of cinema. This leads to a diversification of the perception and meaning that cinema assumes for the different people involved: on the one hand, a popular, commercial cinema and/or “people’s cinema” and on the other, an artistic field or an element of high culture.

The gap between these two perceptions of cinema represented two opposite poles. A tension between these two poles provided fertile ground to continue the political debate among the people who wanted to define cinema in a closer relation with one of these poles- one of these poles representing the more social framework and the other the more cultural. The Sinematek Association that served as a ground for an intellectual line with its intellectual production by publishing cinema journals and hosting activities can give the opportunity to see the different sides of this tension. The Sinematek was a complex organization which provided fertile ground to observe a synthesis of elements of high culture along with popular intentions. Reflecting upon the complex realities of Sinematek helps to transcend these basic polarizations in the understanding of cinema as a cultural form, though a theory of cinema is not the central concern of this thesis.

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<sup>7</sup> Steven J. Ross, “Jargon and the Crisis of Readability: Methodology, Language, and the Future of Film History,” *Cinema Journal*, 44, no. 1 (Fall 2004).

Cinema in the 1960s and 1970s was defined in line with revolutionary upheaval, and as a device to represent social realities of the country where it was produced. In the thesis, this experiment for a revolutionary cinema throughout the world istekan into consideration. For instance, Auteur cinema as a search for an artistic cinema after 1968, turned into a more political cinema under the leadership of the famous French filmmaker Jean Luc Godard. On the other hand, Latin American “third cinema” pursued a militant, activist and revolutionary cinema. In the light of these examples, and in line with our focus on the Sinematek, I will try to define Turkish political or art cinema during these decades.

Sinematek can be seen neither as a simple cinema salon, nor as an artistic atelier (or workshop). It was a social environment that brought together individuals’ utopias and desires that were created collectively. These utopias were imagined by choosing more specific styles in the heterogeneous set of politic and artistic identities. It provided ground for an artistic collective culture by the mediation of cinema and its power to represent the social reality. Therefore, the collective identity of the Sinematek Association was based upon a voluntary togetherness; put simply, a place which made all of the participants able to express themselves voluntarily in a non-hierarchical collective environment. As Henri Lefebvre argues; “Modernity leads to a fundamental degrading of social existence.”<sup>8</sup> The capacity of the counter-hegemonic reaction of human beings is related to their creativity to maintain social utopist alternatives to the actual social relations in their societies.

I argue that Sinematek set out with a political motive that was promising in its attempt to provide a unity of a cultural agenda and a social project but eventually

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<sup>8</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *Key Writings*, ed. Stuart Elden, Elizabeth Lebas, and Eleonore Kofman, (New York: Continuum, 2003).

regressed to a more intellectualist position, putting more and more emphasis on the side of the culture. This regression was due to a change in the composition of its structure. Sinematek started as a relatively small community of intellectuals and cinema critics and to this extent its political standpoint was able to accommodate a social basis to its cultural agenda. But as it flourished and attracted a greater number of people from different social backgrounds, especially students, there gradually arose a fragmentation within the association. This led to an homogenous cultural agenda shared by different members of the association, which based on a populist demand for a more inclusive approach towards cinema, a demand for a more socially oriented political program. As a result, the general atmosphere in the association underwent a considerable change and this has produced polarizations which led some members of the association to develop a more elitist approach whereas other members similarly found themselves driven into a more populist position. This general shift towards intellectualism on the side of some of its prominent members undermined the coherence and integrity of the association and ultimately Sinematek became a mere artistic, intellectual community that could not defend to great extent its political project of transformation of the Turkish cinema and the Turkish society.

Moreover, the tension that led to its political shortcomings also prevented Sinematek from continuing as a productive cultural force and brought its eventual resolution. This is not to say that, these developments in the association were unconnected and independent of external factors or developments. To the contrary, one of the central questions of this thesis is the effect of the discussions and debates that Sinematek entered into with other cinema circles and also the general social and cultural background of the period and the problems and difficulties it presented for

the association is a continuous theme for the thesis. However, all these developments were already reflected more or less within the association, being the reasons and dynamics of the growing heterogeneity and the ensuing efforts for a restitution of the coherence, of the homogeneity on the part of the association. Therefore, an analysis of the evolution of Sinematek through an exploration of its internal dynamics will be taken as a way of taking these relatively external circumstances into consideration as well. In this sense, this distinction of internal and external dynamics itself is questioned and a more inclusive approach to these factors upheld.

In the second chapter, the approaches to cinema in its historical evolution are discussed. Walter Benjamin's "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction"<sup>9</sup> was significant for my work. In this chapter, I also briefly represent Turkish cinema history before the 1960s, by describing the cultural atmosphere of Turkey before 1960. In this section, the special features of the 1960s are examined to understand the particular conditions for the proliferation of this association, and the artistic culture.

The third chapter serves as a monograph of the association in its historical evolution. Its activities, its publications, its inner relations, and the social background of its members are discussed.

In the fourth chapter, cinema and the debates over the role of the cinema during the 1960s are presented. The question "what kind of cinema?" for defining different approaches to the matter is elaborated. The debate focuses on how a Turkish national cinema can be constructed and, the searches for alternative modes of production to the existing cinema industry.

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<sup>9</sup> Benjamin, Walter, 1936, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction, In *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, and trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969).

In the fifth chapter, the dualities of the modernization process, universality and nativity, populism and individualism, and development and underdevelopment are debated in a theoretical perspective, along with articles by cinema writers of the period under discussion. Theoretical works of Walter Benjamin, Theodor Adorno, Stephen Vlastos along with these key concepts are considered.

In the sixth chapter, the transformation of cinema throughout the world and its effects on the Turkish cinema, and relevant concepts like auteur cinema, third cinema, will be examined. In this chapter, postcolonial debates, in the cases of postcolonial countries are compared with the peculiarities of Turkish society.

Primary oral sources like in-depth interviews with cinema writers and Sinematek Association members form the bases of this study. I preferred to conduct interviews without a voice recorder to create an intimate atmosphere. One of the interviews was made via internet.<sup>10</sup> Secondary sources, like the publications of the association, *Yeni Sinema* (New Cinema) and *Filim* (Film) magazines, cinema magazines, especially *Ulusal Sinema* (National Cinema), political journals, namely *Ant*, (Oath) *Yön* (Direction), newspapers, were also used.

The intention of this study is to make a contribution to Turkish cinema history, in which Sinematek association has not been sufficiently analyzed. Another intention of this study is to develop some insights into the social and intellectual history of Turkey via this cultural association. In the literature, I believe that there was a major gap. But this survey can only cover a very minor portion of this map.

In the literature of Turkish Cinema, works of Giovanni Scognomillo, Nijat Özon, Savaş Arslan and Nezih Erdoğan were especially put into consideration

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<sup>10</sup> I conducted 5 interviews, with Jak Şalom via internet, Hülya Uçansu, Rekin Teksoy, Giovanni Scognamillo, and Zahit Atam, in the spring of the 2007.

throughout this work. For the cultural atmosphere of the 1960s and 1970s, academic works are very limited, but biographies, essays and my observations of the secondary sources were used to grasp the particularities of the decades.

Finally, Onat Kutlar, in his book *Sinema bir Şenliktir* (Cinema as a Festival), says that he desires to narrate the whole history of this society in which a kind of sincerity and sharing prevailed. I tried to narrate this story, and as Onat Kutlar unfortunately is no longer alive, I also intend this thesis to be a contribution to his efforts and dedicate this to his memory.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE EFFECTS OF THE POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE ON THE CULTURAL AND ARTISTIC AGENDA: 1960 -1970 CINEMA AND ITS BACKGROUND

In this chapter, the general political atmosphere and the debates that proceeded with this process, after the coup d'état of May 27, 1960, and how these debates affected the artistic leitmotives of the 1960s will be discussed. My main concern is to make sense of how these themes were changed over time and endured and to what extent they affected the artistic subjects. During this decade on 25 August 1965, the Sinematek Association was established. After 1968, the student movements which escalated in Turkey and throughout the world affected the total atmosphere of the country. The special conditions of the 1960s are important for understanding the evolution of a simple cinema club as a center for intellectual and political debates. I will attempt to map the basic elements of the political and intellectual life in this decade.

First of all, it is necessary to take into consideration the institutionalization and the basic characteristics of cinema from its beginning as an industrial and artistic field, and the developments of cinema in its global context. The Sinematek was established in 1965. To what extent cinema was grounded in the artistic tradition among intellectuals and the youth in this period, and to what extent the kind of cinema as an artistic form was available for the Turkish audience should be examined. First, a study of cinema in Turkey before the establishment of the

association, in the 1940s, 1950s, and in the first half of 1960s will be attempted. The films that were produced in the field of the commercial cinema (whose existence and professionalization as an independent industrial or commercial field was then under question) will be discussed, and an examination will be made of the essays of the circles who desired improvement of the cinema as an artistic field, inside or outside of the industry. In addition, how intellectuals perceived the relation of art and politics; and their relations with the state; and the revolutionary, avant-garde, and innovatory attempts before the 1960s will be examined.

#### A Brief Study in the Field of Cinema as an Artistic Form

The production of cinema, the meanings ascribed to it by its producers, audience and generally what kind of meanings are created by cinematographic signs in relation to the perception of reality and the role of social and historical factors in the evolution of the field, is a good starting point in understanding cinema. Therefore, some brief observations on cinema will be made. First of all, I will try to give an answer to the question “what is cinema?” with this simple approach:

Analysis of the form of the cinematic text concentrates on two basic building blocks of the film, the shot and the cut, and on the structure that comes into being when the film is assembled, the combination of shot and cut that is the finished film.<sup>11</sup>

It is acknowledged that there is an artistic field called cinema and that this artistic and intellectual field has an important impact on social life because it is a public phenomenon and a medium for the representation of reality. Cinema should be

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<sup>11</sup> Robert P. Kolker, “The Film Text and Film Form,” in *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies*. Edited by John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson (Oxford: University Press, 1998), p.12.

conceived as an art form that is created by a collective group for the sake of gaining public approval.

The famous cinema historian Ivor Montagu writes that, “No other art has the power to incorporate this much of actuality in an image.”<sup>12</sup> Additionally; It is argued by many cinema historians that “The cameras mechanical reproduction creates a new perhaps rather strange relationship between image and reality.”<sup>13</sup> As Walter Benjamin asserts that people’s perception of reality, as cinema audiences, was differentiated as a result of cinema:

Also, the film actor lacks the opportunity of the stage actor to adjust to the audience during his performance, since he does not present his performance to the audience in person. This permits the audience to take the position of a critic, without experiencing any personal contact with the actor. The audience’s identification with the actor is really identification with the camera. Consequently the audience takes the position of the camera; its approach is that of testing. This is not the approach to which cult values may be exposed.<sup>14</sup>

The reality which is represented by cinematographic images offers a new kind of experience for the audience. “Of all the arts Benjamin wrote film is without “aura”, without the singularity of the immediate experience of an artifact uniquely connected with a single human creative imagination.”<sup>15</sup> Therefore, film is more accessible for human beings to be part of a social and cultural discourse. However, the accessibility or the inaccessibility to the reality by cinematographic images has been questioned. Reality which is represented by images is the reality of the

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<sup>12</sup> Ivor Montagu, *Film World: a Guide to Cinema* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1964), p. 332.

<sup>13</sup> Richard Dyer, “Introduction to Film Studies,” in *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies*. Edited by John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson (Oxford University Press, 1998), p.7.

<sup>14</sup> Benjamin, Walter, 1936, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt. (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), p.228.

<sup>15</sup> Kolker, p.12.

filmmakers and this reality is reflected by the frame of the camera. Therefore the relation of the reality and cinematographic image is highly debatable.

Cinema has been very effective in the age of mechanical reproduction and commodity production. Cinema as distinct from other forms of art has never been thought of as independent from its social and economic circumstances. However, specific, peculiar and autonomous artistic and aesthetic improvements in the realm of the *Seventh Art* have to be defined as the most significant aspects of the cinema to grasp the field in its social and historical evolution. But, on the other hand,

Comolli<sup>16</sup> rejected the notion that the cinema evolves autonomously, independent of technological, economic and ideologic forces. He insisted that its evolution was highly mediated; cinematic forms were determined by the often contradictory demands of technology, economics and ideology. Comolli's materialism thus views history as a non-linear series of ruptures whose uneven process reflects underlying contradictions within the existing social, economic and cultural institutions that inform it.<sup>17</sup>

Although the study of film may involve a concern with aesthetics, technology, ideology and audience, the study of film has to take into consideration its industrial character. For most of the world cinema is first of all organized as an industry, that is composed capitalists seeking profit through film production, film distribution, and the presentation of the movies to the audiences. So although it should be insisted that cinema is not a business, it is necessary to study the industrial character of film in order to understand the full impact and influence of motion pictures,<sup>18</sup> as this neglect

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<sup>16</sup> Comolli was one of the editors of the magazine *Cahiers du Cinema*, a popular cinema magazine adressed the more political and theoretical approaches.

<sup>17</sup> John Belton, "American Cinema and Film History," in *Oxford Guide to Film Studies*, Edited by John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson (Oxford: University Press, 1998), p. 230.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p.231.

is a widely shared attitude among film theorists, as it is explained by Douglas Gomery:

As a result of its artistic dimensions, in considering the cinema as art form, historians tended to neglect other aspects of the cinema, such as identity as an economic, technological and/or cultural product. Furthermore the masterpiece tradition dealt with only a small percentage of films, concentrating on a handful of art films and ignoring the great majority of ordinary films produced by the industry. More importantly the tradition understood the value, meaning and significance works to be determined by the degree to which they transcended their historical or industrial context. Finally what determined a masterpiece's uniqueness was the genius of the individual artist whose vision it reflected.<sup>19</sup>

Industrial, commercial, technological, and contradictorily artistic and cultural dimensions of the cinema has always created a tension for cinema as a popular product or as an element of the artistic or "high" culture.

#### Modern Art and Cinema as Products of the Industrial Revolution

Cinema was considered by Lenin as the most revolutionary of arts due to its visual power. According to Walter Benjamin, cinema is the artistic form that can provide the most functions executed by artistic forms in the age of mechanical reproduction. This brought about significant improvements and debates in the 1960s as before depicted by Benjamin:

One might generalize by saying: the technique of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the domain of tradition. By making many reproductions it substitutes a plurality of copies for a unique existence. And in permitting the reproduction to meet the beholder or listener in his own particular situation, it reactivates the object reproduced.... Both processes are intimately connected with the contemporary mass movements. Their most powerful agent is the film. Its social significance, particularly in its most positive form, is inconceivable without its destructive, cathartic aspect, that

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<sup>19</sup> Douglas Gomery, "Hollywood as industry," in *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies*, Edited by John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson (Oxford: University Press, 1998), p.245.

is, the liquidation of the traditional value of the cultural heritage. This phenomenon is most palpable in the great historical films.<sup>20</sup>

As argued by Benjamin, cinema ascribes a more active role to the audience. It was a new, modern experience that was very useful in provoking mass movements in the twentieth century's political regimes.

In the 1910s and 1920s in developed countries and in Turkey and throughout the world following the Second World War, cinema and its great influence in the realm of people's everyday lives as a new cultural object produced changes in the total atmosphere of the social life. Cinema was constituted one of the most important devices of popular culture. Cinema was able to affect or mobilize peoples. Political regimes, by considering this fact always interested with this cultural phenomenon.

Tom O. Reagan argues that, "Cinema as a cultural and economic phenomenon has always transcended nations, due to its internationalist character."<sup>21</sup> However, many scholars argue that cinema should be defined within the specific country's geographical and political frontiers. Every country or geography has its own peculiar role in the historical evolution of the cinema. Therefore, as an artistic form, cinema also must be considered on the scale of national cinema, in its geographical dimension, developing to some extent in isolation and as a speciality of the conditions of the countries in which cinema as an industry and artistic form flourished.

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<sup>20</sup> Benjamin, p.221.

<sup>21</sup> Tom O Reagan, "Introduction," in *The Oxford History of World Cinema*, Edited by Geoffrey Nowell, (Oxford University Pres, New-York, 1997), p.7.

First, Soviet cinema, in the films of the first generation of filmmakers, Eisenstein, Vertov, Pudovkin, had the tendency as long as, as Rekin Teksoy argues in the *Yeni Sinema* review, “A Short Look at the Russian Cinema”: “to augment the desire to live and to work, to adopt to the audience the social idealism perspective via positive heroes, to educate peoples’ tastes and likings.” Political realist cinema gained political functions in the aftermath of the October Revolution. Cinema was used to intervene into the entire public. It challenged the commercial dimensions of the cinema, claiming to consider cinema beyond a leisure time entertainment activity, and it criticized popular cinema for avoiding peoples’ everyday life problems.

The leader of the Bolshevik revolution in Russia, V. I. Lenin, proclaimed that film was the most important of all the arts since it was the most efficient medium for propaganda and Soviet film theory (and that of Eisenstein in particular) was very much concerned with how to move the mass audiences of film to perceive the world in certain ways and act accordingly. The basis for a long tradition in film theory is precisely a Marxist conception of film for changing people’s way of thinking in progressive directions, or, on the contrary, for the reproduction and dissemination of ideology in the sense of false consciousness.<sup>22</sup>

In the capitalist world, cinema also became a privileged sign of social and cultural changes which made élites worried.<sup>23</sup> As a flourishing part of the 1920s, Hollywood produced films that were relevant to the multi-culturality and ethnic plurality of the USA. But, from the beginning, film in United States was a mode of commercial activity controlled by the entertainment industry that attempted to augment its profits. However, this process constituted one of the bases to laying the groundwork for the building of a new nation in a social and cultural manner. Hollywood

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<sup>22</sup> Jostein Grisprud, “Film Audiences,” in *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies*, Edited by John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson (Oxford: University Press, 1998), p.202.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p.204.

accompanied the hegemonist, imperialist policies of the USA. For the rest of the world, Hollywood played an important role in creating popular images for the public culture, and after the Second World War, in the “social welfare state” period; it propagated the American life style, its values and symbols, defining cinematic structure as an instrument for leisure time entertainment activities. “Early films were produced for working class, immigrant and urban audiences and it was believed films could help to ‘Americanize’ immigrants and teach film audiences how to be good Americans”<sup>24</sup> In addition, it was argued that:

Whereas some films from silent and early sound era presented poverty and social struggle from progressive perspectives sympathetic to the poor and oppressed, many films focused on rich and celebrated wealth and power, serving as advertisements for the consumer society and the ruling élites.<sup>25</sup>

Later, cinema products reflected mixed cultural representations of individuals from different social classes. Cinema no longer was to be developed as a product of high culture, which only focused on the rich and celebrated. The pattern was one Max Weber identified: the dynamics of the market require the declassification of culture, forcing cultural entrepreneurs to mix categories to reach the broadest audience.<sup>26</sup> This cultural form was also designed to provide US hegemony as argued by Kellner,

Since the 1920s- that is, for the most of the history of the cinema- one industry, that based in the United States, and known as Hollywood, has dominated the world. Thus the locus of study for history of the film industry based in the US has produced the best films ( by some criteria) but because it

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<sup>24</sup> Douglas Kellner, “Hollywood Film and Society,” in *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies*. Edited by John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson (Oxford: University Press, 1998), p.35.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p.355.

<sup>26</sup> Quoted in Rob King, “Made for the Masses with an Appeal to the Classes: The Triangle Film Corporation and the Failure of Highbrow Film Culture”, *Cinema Journal* 44, no. 2, (Winter 2005); Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, vol. 2, trans. Ephraim Fischhoff (1924, reprint; New York: Bedminster Press, 1968), p. 937.

has forced all other national cinemas to begin by dealing with the power of Hollywood as an industry.<sup>27</sup>

As argued in the quotation, Hollywood commercial cinema sought new markets throughout the world to provide its total hegemony. On the other hand, in Third World centers like Egypt, India (Bollywood), Brazil, and since the second half the 1950s Turkey, commercial cinema products augmented the emphasis of nativity by imitating stories of the Hollywood cinema in their products and offered them to their countries' audiences. However, at the same time, in addition to their missions, countries like India, Japan, Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Greece, Tunisia, and Egypt, outside of the First World, produced masterpieces and influential films that brought them at the scene of the universal art of cinema. Therefore, in the field of cinema, both universal qualities and regional or native characteristics came into purview, too.

In this atmosphere, beginning from the 1920s, some directors from European cinema with some auteur directors from the USA (these directors were generally defined as the filmmakers of the USA Cinema B) gave products, not only considering cinema as an artistic form, but also aiming to improve the technical and photographic dimensions of cinema. The basic characteristics of European Art cinema that transcends the particularities of the national cinemas of the Continent was defined by Vincendeau as follows:

The dominant concept in studies of the cinemas of Europe has been that of 'art cinema'. Arising from the avant-garde works of the 1920s, the films of prominent figures such as Jean Renoir, Ingmar Bergman, and Federico Fellini, and the post-war movements of Italian Neo-Realism and the French New Wave, the essence of European cinema has been defined as residing in works that are, to various degrees, aesthetically innovative, socially committed, and humanist in outlook. To these features are often added the

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<sup>27</sup> Douglas Kellner, "Hollywood as Industry," in *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies*. Edited by John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson (Oxford: University Press, 1998), p.245.

auteurist notions of originality and personal vision- all characteristic which define, and promote, European art cinema as fundamentally different from the industrially based and generically coded Hollywood. The French critics of the 1950s claimed the possibility of authorship and artistry in Hollywood films- Alfred Hitchcock, Howard Hawks- in defining them as a possibility for the basis for an artistic cinema. The sense of art as being the defining characteristic of European film has remained.<sup>28</sup>

In this section, I tried to map the basic elements of cinema, in its evolution, in some of the key countries, by showing the tension of the role of the cinema as an element of the entertainment industry, and an artistic product of the “high culture.”

#### The Background of the Field of the Cinema and Art before the 1960s

What was the role of cinema in this landscape, that is, in Turkey? In those years, cinema was being newly considered as an artistic form and it was defined in a situation of a total backwardness in Turkey; however, intellectuals defended a more critical perspective in the realm of the social sciences; artists and writers tried to transform traditional forms of painting, poetry, and the novel. The relation of art and politics was debated, and innovative attempts were discussed in their environment, not only for dealing with social topics in terms of realist, critical and political dispositions but also to transform the conventional, repetitious and static artistic forms. In a very closed atmosphere, especially in the late 1950s, intellectuals and artists began to be a part of these debates as well as have an interest in the current situation of the artistic field in the world, and they became involved with an increasing curiosity in politics. Within these debates, social realism was more effective especially in the field of poetry, as in the movement of *İkinci Yeni* (Second New), when poets in the avant-garde movements wrote their poems in more

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<sup>28</sup> Ginette Vincendeau, “Issues in European Cinema,” in *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies*. Edited by John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson (Oxford: University Press, 1998), p. 441.

symbolic or allegorical styles, and continued their search for new artistic styles. Existentialism, which was held as a reaction to the social realist movement in the realm of novel and poetry, for instance peasant realism,<sup>29</sup> was defended and adopted by some of the poets, writers and philosophers of the period, like Demir Özlü, Ferit Edgü,<sup>30</sup> Orhan Duru, and Selahattin Hilav.

In the 1950s and at the beginning of the 1960s, philosophy and literature journals like *Yeni Ufuklar* (New Horizons), *Yeni Dergi* (New Journal), *Cep Dergisi* (Pocket Journal), and *A Dergisi* (Journal A) were published. The gravity of the state was transcended by these independent intellectuals and by their publications. For instance, the peasant realism trend was accommodated to the Kemalist project to transform rural life, but existentialism was a very individualistic and modernist theme which defined itself at a distance with the social projects of the state. This meant a real clash with the monopoly of the state over the cultural sphere during the early Republican period. These attempts were significant to grasp the modernist tones of the cultural agenda of Sinematek and its intellectual members who participated in these movements like surrealism and existentialism.

#### Cinema before the 1960s in Turkey

As Rekin Teksoy explains, the Republican elites were not very interested in cinema, in the early Republican period, although they attempted to bring artistic forms like theatre, ballet and even opera, as part of the activities that were organized

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<sup>29</sup> This movement was very effective in 1940's, and 1950's. The prominent figures of the movement were Fakir Baykurt, Mahmut Makal, etc...

<sup>30</sup> Demir Özlü and Ferit Edgü will be close members of the Sinematek Association.

in *Halkevleri* (Peoples' Houses) buildings.<sup>31</sup> A similar argument is defended by Yusuf Kaplan as “The new secular Turkish Republic, established in 1923, gave enthusiastic support to the Western oriented Turkish music, theatre and opera, but did not show any interest in cinema.”<sup>32</sup> As argued by Savaş Arslan:

In addition, it reflects the cultural project of the republic to raise the level of the arts and cultures to standards set by and measured against Europe. However, such direct support failed to materialize from either the Kemalist, republican elite or from the center-right parties that came to power after the institution of a multiple party system. While this slowed the development of filmmaking in Turkey, it also created a safe haven for popular filmmaking outside the staples of cultural westernization in other arts.<sup>33</sup>

Nezih Erdoğan writes that, “The first three decades of the Turkish cinema were marked by the domination of a single man who even still today is criticized for transferring the stylistic devices of theatre to cinema.”<sup>34</sup> This man was Muhsin Ertuğrul. He had a very significant role in the early period of Turkish cinema and was very effective in stylistic developments. In these decades, foreign films were more effective and more broadly shown than Turkish films. Arslan writes that, “In the import film market, Hollywood dominated the cosmopolitan and elite theaters of Beyoğlu in Istanbul during the 1947-1948 season during when 100 of the 118 films shown were Hollywood films, while the influence of Hollywood was also shared with Egyptian films in other parts of the country.”<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Interview with Rekin Teksoy, (April 2007, Istanbul).

<sup>32</sup> Yusuf Kaplan, “Turkish Cinema”, *The Oxford History of World Cinema*, (Oxford: New-York University Press, 1997), p.656.

<sup>33</sup> Savaş Arslan, *Hollywood Alla Turca, a History of Cinema in Turkey*, (Phd. Diss., Ohio State University, 2005), p.62.

<sup>34</sup> Nezih Erdoğan, “Narratives of Resistance: National Identity and the ambivalence in the Turkish melodrama between 1965 and 1975,” *Screen* no. 39:3, (Autumn 1998), p.261.

Cinema, in the 1950s, functioned to popularize conspicuous consumption values and to facilitate the proliferation and the reception of upper middle class urban values in broad segments of society.

Critics of the time argued that, “Turkish cinema, unlike in the West, was not a product of an industrial revolution. It was a product of a consumption economy established by a western type of production in underdeveloped countries.”<sup>36</sup> During the Democrat Party government of the 1950s, cinema went a long way from the period of “thespian directors” led by Muhsin Ertuğrul, producing ten films a year, to a cinema industry producing 100 films a year in the 1960s. In addition, compatible with the fashion of the time, American films were screened at theatres in great numbers and Turkish films were obviously influenced by the consumption culture of Hollywood cinema. The significant influence of Egyptian and Indian cinema has also to be noted.

In this period, *Yıldız* (Star, 1953) and *Yeni Yıldız* (New Star, 1956) were popular cinema magazines of the time. These magazines were concerned with popular culture such as posters of movie stars, gossip about stars and they were produced only with commercial intentions. It is almost impossible to say that world cinema and especially its more important films that went beyond to the commercial cinema, for instance, European art cinema were viewed by the Turkish audience. In this era, however, in the cinema clubs of Galatasaray High School and Robert College, in the cultural institutions of the French and Italian consulates (by membership, and as argued with the privilege of seeing these films without censorship); and by going abroad, (especially, people who went to Paris to study), a

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<sup>35</sup> Arslan, p. 29.

<sup>36</sup> Tanju Akerson, “Türk Sinemasında Eleştiri,” *Yeni Sinema*, no.3 (October, November 1966), p.35.

very privileged number of people had the opportunity to see few of these films. Halit Refiğ, in his book, *Ulusal Sinema Kavgası (The National Cinema Debate)* observes that cinema was not taken seriously as an artistic form, and in the Baylan Patisserie, young intellectuals debated as to whether cinema should be considered an artistic form or not.<sup>37</sup>

The Organization of the *Türk Film Dostları* (Friends of Turkish Film) was founded in 1952. The following year they organized the first Turkish film festival, following a contest organized in 1948 by the Domestic Filmmakers Organization to determine the best Turkish films. Among the friends of Turkish film were writers, filmmakers and journalists such as Burhan Arpad, Lütfi Ö. Akad, Aydın Arakon, Orhon M. Arıburnu, and Hıfzı Topuz.<sup>38</sup> But later, in the 1950s, the directorship of the association of the Friends of Turkish Film, Semih Tuğrul, asked to be left alone. However, in a very short time, this situation began to change. Intellectuals organized discussions to get to know and to learn about the problems of the Turkish cinema, and directors, cinema writers and the Galatasaray cinema club members attended these meetings. Moreover, a journal called *Sinema* (Cinema) was published by Nijat Özon and Halit Refiğ during these years.<sup>39</sup> In the 1950s, Şakir Eczacıbaşı and Tunç Yalman published a section called “*Sanat Yaprağı*” (Leaf of Art) in the newspaper *Vatan* (Homeland); Eczacıbaşı makes this comment about these years: “To the audiences only commercial and star type Hollywood films were offered... Let’s not think that good films were produced in Turkey. It was impossible to see the most

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<sup>37</sup> Halit Refiğ, *Ulusal Sinema Kavgası* (Istanbul: Hareket Yayınları, 1971), p. 18.

<sup>38</sup> Arslan, p.72.

<sup>39</sup> Refiğ, p.18.

significant films of the world, or the important classics that were absent in Turkey. Except for one or two curious people, no one knew what was happening in the world.<sup>40</sup>

### The Intellectual and Political Atmosphere of the 1960s

28 December 1960, the Declaration of the Intellectuals, the New Cinema

“We no longer want rosy films; what we want is those which have the colour of blood on themselves.”<sup>41</sup>

Specifically, it might be noted that the 1960s were bracketed between two military coups, namely those of 27 May 1960 and of 12 March 1971. The 1960 military coup and the constitution of 1961 were turning points, and thus the time in between constituted a transition period for cultural and political debates. The international mobility and the social movements that increasingly sprang up in Turkey were the sources of this period of change. The 1960s were marked by the coup d’etat of May 27 and its more liberal constitution that would lay the basis for a “new period” that opened the way to new ideas for artists and intellectuals, who were impressed by the incredible influx of Marxist ideas and books, the translations, publication and reception had until then been very limited. This atmosphere of relative freedom did not continue too long, especially after the rise of the

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<sup>40</sup> Zeynep Avcı, “Onat Kutlar ve Şakir Eczacıbaşı Sinematek Dönemini Anlatıyor, Roportaj,” *İstanbul dergisi*, Nisan 1994, n.9, p.147-154, In *Onat Kutlar Kitabı*, ed. Turgut Çeviker (İstanbul: Türsak Yayınları, 2006), p.178.

<sup>41</sup> “Biz artık pembe filmler istemiyoruz, bizim istediklerimiz üzerinde kan rengi olanlardır.”, *Yeni Sinema*, no.3 (October, Nowember 1966), p.6.

conservative Justice Party government in 1965,<sup>42</sup> state oppression via censure or other methods became a great obstacle over intellectuals and artists. I do not assert that the 60s was a period of total freedom, but in these years, more democratic and participatory organizations appeared in the public life, and a struggle for a freer public life was started.

In these years, institutions came onto the scene that brought together intellectuals and artists from various fields in a more defined way, becoming able to present their political and cultural views in the public sphere rather than in the spaces which had existed before, such as the *Küllük Kahvesi* (Küllük Coffehouse) in Beyazıt and Markiz and Baylan patisseries in Beyoğlu, as well as pubs and restaurants. An atmosphere was taking shape in which the artists could express themselves more freely. After this relaxation within the political and cultural realms, the Workers Party of Turkey, trade-unions, syndicates, and cultural institutions like cinema clubs, The Sinematek Association, AST (Ankara Art Theatre), and the Association of Men of Letters (Türkiye P.E.N.Yazarlar Derneği)<sup>43</sup> came into being where intellectuals and artists came together and expressed themselves in an increasing affinity to “the problems of the country” by participating in political parties while introducing new styles and innovative, revolutionary forms in the artistic domain. This resurgence was effective in the artistic field in itself, and for defending the importance of art in the everyday life of the people and for the intellectuals adopting specific political

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<sup>42</sup> AP government (Justice Party), [JP, in the leadership of Süleyman Demirel was a party who stand on the right side of the political atmosphere], after October 10, 1965 elections, was considered by some of the intellectuals, especially by Halit Refiğ as a power, increasing political oppression, and as argued by Aslı Daldal, after 1965, some directors as defined producers of “social realist” movement dispersed.

<sup>43</sup> This association was established by the famous Turkish novelist Halide Edip Adıvar in 1950, but its activities increased in the 1960s.

attitudes. This argument is defended by many scholars, and Zafer Toprak observes this phenomenon in a similar context with the Young Turk revolution:

Another factor is the way the 1960s functioned as a particular “era of enlightenment.” There are two periods in Turkish history that have cleared the way for enlightenment. The first one is the “*Kanun-ı Esasi*” years following the Young Turk revolution; the other is the years of the 1961 Constitution after 27 May. The Turkish intellectual and the youth have never read as much as they did in those years. Translations were made and the world was perceived differently in those years. In both phases, the Ottoman and the Turkish people opened up to abroad, prospectively. In the first one, they read Durkheim, Seignobos, Cauwes; in the other, Marx, Engels and Lenin. The search for a nation-state rendered solidarist thinking in the first. In the second, the longing for a social-state brought the class question to the fore.<sup>44</sup>

As Zafer Toprak observes, “in the 1950s, Turkey tried to get to know itself, whereas in the 1960s it was mainly interested in getting to know the world.”<sup>45</sup> Halit Refiğ made a similar observation for the 1960s: “In the bookstores, it was very difficult to find books related to economic issues about Turkey, but there were books which rather were related to what was happening all over the world.”<sup>46</sup> Ataol Behramoğlu argues: “The translation of the Marxist classics and, on the other hand, trends like existentialism and surrealism that aim to transform the artistic and aesthetic perception of the reader went hand in hand in the beginning of the

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<sup>44</sup> “Diğer bir etmen 60’lı yılların bir tür ‘aydınlanma çağı’ işlevi görmesi. Türkiye tarihinde iki dönem aydınlanmayı getiriyor. Biri Jön Türk devrimi ertesini Kanun-ı Esasi yılları, diğeri 27 Mayıs devrimi ertesini 61 Anayasası yılları. Türk aydını ve gençliği, çağlar boyu bu dönemlerde olduğu kadar hiçbir zaman okumuyor. Çeviriler yapılıyor, dünya bir başka algılanıyor bu yıllarda. Dışa açılıyor her iki evrede Osmanlı, ardından Türk insanı. İlkinde Durkheim’i, Seignobos’u, Cauwes’i okuyor; diğesinde Marx’i, Engels’i Lenin’i. İlkinde solidarist düşünceyi hâkim kılıyor ulus-devlet arayışı. İkincisinde sınıf sorununu ön plana çıkarıyor sosyal-devlet özlemi.” Zafer Toprak, “1968’i Yargılamak Ya da 68 Kuşağına Mersiye”, *Cogito*, no. 14 (Spring 1998), p. 158.

<sup>45</sup> Quoted in Şehnaz Tahir Gürçağlar, “Translator as Conveyor: Critical Thought in Turkey in the 1960s,” *Works and Days*, 20 (2002), p. 260.

<sup>46</sup> “Kitapçı dükkanlarında Türkiye’nin ekonomik ve sosyal meseleleriyle ilgili bir kitap zor bulunurken, vitrinler dünyanın dört bucağında neler olup bittiğini bildiren kitaplarla doluydu.” Halit Refiğ, p. 28.

period.”<sup>47</sup> Enis Batur, in a similar vein, argues that in the 1960s and 1970s, the Kemal Tahir “line” that emphasized the peculiarity of Turkey, denying to a some extent the Kemalist tradition by accusing it of being despotic and defending the Ottoman heritage, went hand in hand with intellectuals who adopted and introduced the political and cultural agenda of the international socialist movement, (looking out at the world from the same window as Western socialist intellectuals and who underlined the international dimensions of art and politics in Turkey), and finally intellectuals who had existentialist and modernist tendencies.<sup>48</sup>

The period of getting to know the world motivated Turkish intellectuals to embrace all of these sources both by developing sensitivity to the social realities of their countries, but also through experiencing the individual tensions of human life. All Third World countries experienced a simultaneous process of dealing with social and individual problems in a similar vein. In addition, the modernist humanist tradition had more profound origins in Turkey, beginning with the translation the modern classics in the Ministry of Education of Hasan Ali Yücel. Interventions from had already been made by the members of the Marxist tradition, especially by the members of the TKP ( Communist Party of Turkey) into the cultural and political life. Furthermore, the translation of dissident books contributed not only to the flourishing of social/political movements and provided nourishment for their

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<sup>47</sup> Ataol Behramoğlu, Conference in the moderation of Hasan Bülent Kahraman, 7 March 2007, Aksanat Centre of Culture.

<sup>48</sup> Enis Batur, *Alternatif Aydın* (Istanbul, Hil Yayınları, 1985).

intellectual hunger, but also were by themselves the constitutive products of this development.<sup>49</sup>

Therefore, those dynamics that were effective in the establishment of Sinematek Association were also influential in the realm of theatre, and in the improvements of the visual and plastic arts (within the Istanbul Art Academy and in France, figures like Bedri Rahmi Eyüboğlu, Fikret Mualla, Abidin Dino, Avni Arbaş and Komet produced masterpieces of Turkish painting and visual arts); these were the general positive dynamics of the period. As mentioned, the 1960s was a period in which the intellectuals, who so far had been generally accustomed to thinking in a more isolated way, opened themselves up to a broader extent than what the Kemalist elites had authorized them to do during the first decades of the Republic. While the paradigm of modernity, as the experience of westernization and modernization, came to be more deeply debated than previously done, the monopoly of the discussion of these concepts went out of state control, and began to be appropriated more by actors located in different realms of public life.

Intellectuals who were mostly affiliated with the ideals of the Republic at the same time debated the limits of the ideals of the ideology to which they clung. However, increasingly anti-imperialist movements demanded the total independence of their countries in line with the axis of the Third World anti-colonialist movements. These Third World, post-colonial movements attempted to deconstruct, whether they were modern, universal or not, the Eurocentric world history and economic system perceptions and values. But Turkish intellectuals could not avoid falling back into the developmentalist and modernist tendencies of the state, which overrode the

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<sup>49</sup> Erkal Ünal, *Invited Sojourners: A Survey of Translations into Turkish of Non-Fiction Left Books Between 1960 and 1971* (M.A. Thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2006).

discourse of the postcolonial nation states of those decades. The status of Turkey in respect to these anti-colonial movements will be debated in the fifth chapter.

In those years, when the world became an arena in which capitalism and socialism vied against each other, intellectuals and the youth found themselves in an atmosphere in which such questions were asked: what kind of modernity do we want; and do we opt for the East or the West, and civilization or tradition, were asked.

Murat Belge writes that, “It can be said that the Turkish Marxist Left, in a measure that could reduce its likelihood to become a national political force, acted by the instinct to adopt universal principles rather than popular tendencies.”<sup>50</sup> As is pointed out in Belge’s assessments, intellectuals and the Turkish Left debated the problems of the economic and social development in the context of the structural dependency of the country on the world capitalist system, attributing this backwardness, underdevelopment, hindering of the development of the country to the imperialist powers, at the same time defining the particularity of the country by its historical background. This naturally led to an expectation for a total and specific revolution in the country. Ataoğlu Behramoğlu reflects the general political perspective of the day, in an interview published in *Ant* Journal:

Since the 1960 revolution, the Marxist worldview had affected Turkish society to a large extent. Those questions which had preoccupied the minds of our intellectuals since the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and stretched until our recent history, have in the last years gravitated toward a clear and a scientific synthesis. The reasons underlying our being a backward, poor and dependent country have been expressly stated. Labourers and socialist

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<sup>50</sup> “Denilebilir ki, Türkiye Marksist solu, ulusal bir siyasi güç olma şansını zedeleyebilecek oranda, popüler eğilimlerden çok evrensel ilkelere uyma içgüdüleriyle davranmıştır.” Murat Belge, *Türkiye Dünyanın Neresinde* (Istanbul: Birikim yayımları, 1993), p. 83.

intellectuals have organized and begun to struggle to take power into their own hands. And they have covered much distance in this respect.<sup>51</sup>

Doğan Avcıoğlu and a group of intellectuals presented themselves as the *Yön* (Direction) circle and after a while, journals like *Ant* (Oath) (a periodical published by many notable intellectual of the period, like Aziz Nesin, Yaşar Kemal, Çetin Altan, Mehmet Ali Aybar, especially intellectuals who came together around the Workers Party of Turkey), *Devrim* (Revolution- in line with *Yön* Journal), *Aydınlık* (Enlightenment- Mihri Belli who was an earlier militant of the TKP [Communist Party of Turkey] and militants of the radical student movement of the 1968 defended the line of National Democratic Revolution<sup>52</sup> via this journal), *Yurt ve Dünya* (Homeland and the World- theoretical journal of TIP (Workers Party of Turkey), in which a Sovietic and Stalinist ideological approach was defended) were important in that they were constitutive elements for conveying socio-political information and messages to the leftist audience.

Intellectuals of the Workers Party of Turkey such as Behice Boran and Sadun Aren rejected the political views espoused by the *Yön* circle. They criticized “the positive relation that *Yön* wished to establish between socialism” and “national culture,” which was formed by the mediation of the negative relation between

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<sup>51</sup> “1960 devriminden beri marksist dünya görüşü Türk toplumunu büyük ölçüde etkiledi. Osmanlı imparatorluğu'nun çöküş yıllarından başlayarak bütün yakın tarihimiz boyunca aydınlarımızın kafasını kurcalayagelen sorunlar son birkaç yıl içinde aydınlık, bilimsel bir bileşime ulaşmaya yöneldi. Geri, yoksul, bağımlı bir toplum oluşumuzun nedenleri açık, seçik ortaya kondu. Emekçiler ve sosyalist aydınlar örgütlenerek iktidarı ele geçirmek için mücadeleye başladılar. Epeyce de yol alındı.”, Atıf Behramoğlu, “Sanat Üzerine Soruşturma,” *Ant*, no. 66 (2 April 1968), p.15.

<sup>52</sup> National Democratic Revolution was evaluated as an alternative of the TIP (Workers Party of Turkey) centered parliamentarist socialist revolution, by the fact that Turkey did not yet complete its bourgeois Kemalist revolution, therefore, the essential mission of the day was an anti-imperialist struggle against USA to provide the complete independence of Turkey.

imperialism and “national culture”<sup>53</sup> as unsatisfactory, and exclusive for the universal values of the common human heritage, and internationalist socialist movement. On the other hand, intellectuals like Sencer Divitçiođlu, Selahattin Hilav, and İdris Küçükömer introduced a debate which was commonly known as the “Asiatic Mode of Production Debate,” by emphasizing the social peculiarity and speciality of the Turkish Republic that was based on its Ottoman social and economic heritage. Orthodox Marxists denied these approaches and attempted to show the relevance of the Turkish case through Marxist theory. Especially the writers of *Yön* and defenders of “Asiatic Mode of Production” were motivated by an anti-imperialist progressivism. This progressive elite attempted to show that its economic and social interests were coherent with the interest of the masses from the lower-middle classes.<sup>54</sup> After a while, the 1968 university students’ movements, by criticizing the backwardness and the dependency of Turkey on the imperialist system, increased the desire for a revolution.

As I assert as the main characteristic of the period, anti-imperialism, also led to a debate between universalism and nativism. This period of rapid internationalization led to some reactions, as may be expected. Some writers argued that intellectuals were learning the problems of the world before they became interested in the problems of their own country. A novel by Kemal Tahir, *Devlet Ana* (Mother State), which generally was regarded as a mixture of social science and literature, was in harmony with the spirit of the period that searched for the specificity of Turkey based on its Ottoman heritage, assuming a completely different

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<sup>53</sup> Erkal Ünal (M.A. Thesis, Bođaziçi University, 2006), p.54.

<sup>54</sup> Hikmet Özdemir, *Yön hareketi: kalkınmada Bir Strateji Arayışı* (Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1986).

path from the Marxist, European historical evolution scheme. Accordingly, it was possible within this theoretical-historical framework, to define nationalist culture in its uniqueness, isolating Turkey from the rest of the world, and especially from the Western economic, cultural and social mode of production and life styles. Kemal Tahir was a strong defender of national culture, and he vehemently criticized the Westernization process which was adopted by Turkish intellectuals and by the Turkish left. In an article published in Ant Journal, Tahir claims:

Our art, which has been harnessed to Westernization that we are trying to conduct for about one hundred years in contradistinction to our historical characteristics, neglects nativity and the historical characteristics of the Anatolian Turkish peoples, and struggles desperately to fit into the value criteria of foreign arts...

The imitation of the West that has been prevalent in our artistic branches since the Tanzimat makes our artists the authors of a semi-intellectual caste who slavishly indulge in whatever comes from the West and thus estranges them from our Anatolian peoples...

I want to regretfully point out that the development of socialism in Turkey, just like our art, has been unable to break loose from the effects of the conditions of erroneous Westernization; and instead of developing toward the Anatolian Turkish peoples and seeking their language of understanding and their milieu, has remained the amateur craft of a small intellectual minority and a semi-intellectual group who are committed not to the essence of the theory, but to its rough formulae, and who are naturally remote from the people.”<sup>55</sup>

As argued by Kemal Tahir, the emphasis on nativity and national values as opposed to the false adaptation, and imitation of Western values was the main

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<sup>55</sup>“Sanatımız yüz elli yıldan beri tarihsel özelliklerimize aykırı olarak yürütmeye çalıştığımız Batılılaşmaya koşularak yerlilikten Anadolu Türk halklarının tarihsel özelliklerinden kaçıp bütün değer ölçülerini yabancı sanatların değer ölçülerine uydurabilmek için debelenmektedir.

Sanat kollarımızda Tanzimat’tan bu yana sürdürülen Batı kopyacılığı sanatçılarımızı, Batı’dan gelen her şeye kölece kapılan yarı aydın zümrenin yazarları haline getirerek anadolu halklarımızdan hızla uzaklaştırıyor.

Türkiye’deki sosyalist gelişme de –esefle söyleyeyim- tıpkı sanatımız gibi memleketimizin içine düşürüldüğü yanlış batılılaşma şartlarının etkisinden kurtulamamış, anadolu türk halklarına doğru gelişeceğine, onların anlaşma dilini ve ortamını arıyacağına dışa dönük teorinin özüne değil, kaba kalıplarına bağlı halktan uzak bir küçük aydın azınlığın ve yarı aydın grubun amatör zenaati halinde kalmıştır.” Kemal Tahir, “Türkiye’de Sanat Görevini Yapıyor mu?” *Ant*, no. 63 (12 March 1968), p.15.

characteristic of this intellectual line that was put on against universal, and as argued that was symbolized in Western life style.

I will also briefly describe the economic and social conditions of the 1960s and 1970s. As is well known, Europe completed its transition from an agricultural, rural society to urban life in the nineteenth century, but in Turkey, the backwardness or lateness of urbanization led to the emergence of new cities and an immense migration of the peasants to the cities during the 1950s and 1960s. This great migration had very important implications in the social and economic transformation of the cities into metropolises like Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir. Istanbul had a population of near 770,000, in the 1950s, but in the 1960s, it rapidly increased to more than 1.5 million and continued to increase. Immigration to European countries, mainly Germany was one of the main socio-economic events of the day. Increasing population of Turkey could not be absorbed by the economic and industrial production in the national scale. As argued by Savaş Arslan these were years of socio-economic transformations as a result of the new model of economic development:

These were years of the often-violent socio-economic transformation of Turkey, marked by military interventions and political oscillations and violence. Turkish modernization had accelerated during this period through numerous factors: the expansion of mass education, mass communication, and culture; import substitution based industrialization; urbanization, migration and immigration; the advance of the nuclear family and individualism; and consumerism within an increasingly capitalist economic system slowly replacing the state-centered planned economy. All of this resulted in the amplification of class distinctions. While the era of the First Republic might be viewed in terms of sociopolitical modernization, the era of the Second Republic brought about more of a socioeconomic modernization entangled with capitalism. However, both processes of modernization and westernization were far from complete.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Arslan, p.119-120.

These transformations were significant to understand political debates which were reflected in the realm of cinema in Turkey. Cinema debates, and films to what extent they reflected these transformations, were important for this work.

### The 1960s and cinema

The 1960s was both a turning point and a transition period for Turkish cinema. The increasing popularity of Yeşilçam cinema among the people, and “universal art of cinema” which were defended and presented by Sinematek that attracted intellectuals and educated youth, produced changes in people’s life styles. People of this decade witnessed a massive rate of film production and very important developments in the field of cinema both in Turkey and throughout the world. During this period, approximately 200 films were shot per year. Turkish cinema followed the U.S, Hong Kong and India, when the number of the films produced was as high as 239 in 1966, in Turkey.

European cinema was at this time in a deep crisis. The number of films produced in a year had fallen to 70 in France, which was deemed the heart of the art cinema. The total number of films produced in eight northern European countries was only 82. As mentioned above, cinema had a huge commercial background. As such the cinemas of these countries were essentially commercial industries. According to the evaluations of Sinematek, European Art Cinema (including the Eastern parts of the continent), the auteur directors of the Hollywood Cinema, Third World Cinema and the USSR harbored the grand cinema movements. Beckerton considers this period in a similar vein as many cinema historians:

Cinema was changing. More interesting works were emerging, or now being recognized, from India (Satyajit Ray), Japan (Kurosawa), Brazil (Glauber

Rocha); from Czechoslovakia (Forman, Svankmajer), Poland (Polanski, Wajda), the USSR (Tarkovsky); from Germany (Jean-Marie Straub), Sweden (Bergman), Italy (Antonioni, Fellini, Pasolini) and from France, (Buñuel, Marker, Resnais, Rouch).<sup>57</sup>

The 1960s and the early 1970s marked the golden age of Yeşilçam cinema, due to economic growth in the cinema industry, the increasing numbers of the audience, its relative respectability among Turkish people, and increasing numbers of film journals and critics. During this decade, Turkish cinema reached wider masses with the proliferation of the industry in Yeşilçam and it was a significant tool of socialization for the masses, bringing urban values and consumption habits to a greater population. Abisel notes that the 1960s and the early 1970s were the “happy years of Turkish cinema.”<sup>58</sup> This cinema, however, as the symbolization of the imagination of happiness, romanticism, innocence and purity<sup>59</sup> was only one side of the reality. As it will be defined later, the various cinematographic problems and weak financial background of the industry was vehemently criticized by the cinema critics of the moment. As defined by Savaş Arslan, Yeşilçam can be separated into three periods in these years:

The golden years of Yeşilçam lasted for two decades, 1960s and 1970s. These years were marked by three military interventions: one of them opened a decade of limited artistic freedom after 1960; the second, in 1971, divided the two decades by limiting the openings created by the previous decade; and, in 1980, the last and the most reactionary one triggered a period of decline. Given these historical developments, this study will deal with three periods of Yeşilçam cinema under three names: “Early Yeşilçam,” the 1950s, as a period of opening and laying out of a certain cinematic pattern of production, distribution, and exhibition; “High Yeşilçam,” the 1960s and the 1970s, as a

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<sup>57</sup> Emilie Beckerton, “Adieu To Cahiers”, *New Left Review* 42, (November-December, 2006), p.83.

<sup>58</sup> Nilgün Abisel, *Türk Sineması Üzerine Yazılar*, (Ankara, İmge Kitabevi, 1994), p.98.

<sup>59</sup> Arslan, p. 123.

period of ‘the classical’ or ‘golden age’ in popular cinema (hence the similarity to classical Hollywood cinema), and “Late Yeşilçam,” the 1980s.<sup>60</sup>

Yeşilçam cinema had some native and universal characteristics. Savaş Arslan defined

Yeşilçam cinema as:

Many of the films have a very simple story line that narrates the eternal clash between good and evil, staying true to a melodramatic modality. Nonetheless, such simplistic and incompetent filmmaking was sufficiently rewarded at the box office to prevent the dominance by Hollywood films of the national cinema market.<sup>61</sup>

Giovanni Scagnomillo indicated in an article published in the fifth volume of *Yeni Sinema* review<sup>62</sup> that a big portion of the films produced in Turkey in the 1960s were adaptations and/or nativizations of foreign Western films and foreign novels.

Another aspect of Yeşilçam which emerged in the following years was the attempts to establish a different cinema despite all the internal dilemmas of the industry. Between 1960 and 1965, a cinema movement (It should be noted that this is created by historians or cinema critics) called the social realist cinema movement,<sup>63</sup> symbolized by the films mentioned above of Duygu Sağıroğlu, and Ertem Göreç in collaboration with Vedat Türkali, Metin Erksan and Halit Refiğ. The line advocated by Kemal Tahir deeply affected the cinema directors of the period such as Halit Refiğ and Metin Erksan. These directors introduced a debate by putting the national

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p.11.

<sup>61</sup> Arslan, p.17.

<sup>62</sup> Giovanni Scognomillo, “Türk Sinemasında Yabancı Uyarlamalar,” *Yeni Sinema*, no.5 (1967) p.17.

<sup>63</sup> The term *Social Realist* movement was used by many directors and cinema critics. For a distinctive work, in this matter see, Aslı Daldal, *Art, Politics and Society: Social Realism in Italian and Turkish Cinemas*, (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2003).

and moral values of the East, and especially Turkey's, against the material culture of the West, and also by connecting this debate to the anti-imperialist spirit of the period against the cinema critics and young intellectuals who were meeting as a group at Sinematek. They dealt with economic and social change and its consequences, migration, rapid urbanization, unemployment and the problems of the rural areas.

The directors who abided by this tendency claimed to be transforming Turkish cinema from inside the Yeşilçam, without denying the current situation of the cinema and its cinematic pattern, but as an alternative position, as an extension of their political views to show the sufferings of the poor masses. Halit Refiğ who was affected by the Kemal Tahir line adopted the approach that Turkey has another kind of social structure which could not be defined through Western models. He also said: "Turkey is an economically backward society with limited agricultural possibilities, with a non-developed industry. Today, Turkey's sole wealth is the labour power of the population exceeding 30 million and the historical predilections of its people to build states."<sup>64</sup> He proposed to overcome the economic weakness of Turkey with national politics and by "turning" to the people. In this atmosphere, the heterogeneous group of the Sinematek was mainly affected by the political approaches of *Ant* magazine. Some of its members, such as Onat Kutlar, Hüseyin Baş, Ferit Edgü were regular writers to this magazine of politics and culture. Many intellectuals and critics involved with the Sinematek were members of the Workers' Party of Turkey.

As is mentioned, the "Social Realist" movement produced significant films in the first half of the 1960s. To name few of these films, *Gecelerin Ötesi* (Beyond the

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<sup>64</sup> "Türkiye tarım imkanları az olan, endüstrisi gelişmemiş, ekonomik olarak geri kalmış bir toplumdur. Bugün için tek zenginliği otuz milyonu aşkın nüfusun emek gücü ve halkının tarihsel devlet kurucu vasıflarıdır." Refiğ, p.40.

Nights) (1960); *Yılanların Öcü* (The Revenge of the Serpents) (1962); *Suçlular Aramızda* (The Culprits Are Among Us); *Susuz Yaz* (Dry Summer) (1963), Metin Erksan which received the Best Film Award at the Berlin Film Festival; *Otobüs Yolcuları* (The Bus Passengers) (1961); *Karanlıkta Uyananlar* (Awakening in the Darkness) (1965) by Ertem Göreç; *Gurbet Kuşları* (The Birds of Exile) (1964); and *Haremde Dört Kadın* (Four Women in the Harem) (1965) by Halit Refiğ; and *Bitmeyen Yol* (The Never Ending Road) (1965) by Duygu Sağıroğlu. These films are defined at the core of the movement by Daldal in her book, *Art, Politics and Society, Social Realism in Italian and Turkish Cinema*.<sup>65</sup> Daldal describes these films as such:

we generally have the combination of Marxist inspired social realism and metaphysical, even theological elements in films. While Ertem Göreç and Vedat Türkali opt for social realism and, with a strong emphasis on “chorality” and “positive types,” Halit Refiğ describes in a tragic mode, the irreparable loss of human qualities in a decadent society, and reflects faithfully *Yön*’s social and political messages. Metin Erksan, on the other hand, oscillates between class conscious urban realism and village based “chaos” and “alienation.”<sup>66</sup>

This trend was effective, as also argued by Daldal, thanks to the Yeşilçam system which still left a room for alternative ideological attitudes.<sup>67</sup> Producers who did not maintain a considerable capital in the conditions of an undeveloped cinema industry, interested less in ideological matters, they did not attempt to determine the ideological choices of the cinema directors and there was a more close and complex relationship with directors, scenarists and producers. A similar story is told in the

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<sup>65</sup> Daldal, p.144.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p.144.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p.148.

novel of Vedat Türkali, *Yeşilçam Dedikleri Türkiye* (The Turkey Called Yeşilçam) which a novel that aim to combine the political and social problems of the country along the axis of the cinema industry.<sup>68</sup> Halit Refiğ argues that the *Social Realist* trend was liquidated after the October 10, 1965 elections, due to the JP government's politics of censure and oppression of the directors.

In those years, Onat Kutlar, in an article published in *Meydan* (Forum) journal argued that to get angry with the already very unsatisfactory Turkish cinema (the marginal products of the Turkish cinema which he saw not as artistic productions, although he acknowledged Metin Erksan's proper films, a few works by Memduh Ün, Atıf Yılmaz and Halit Refiğ's as worthwhile specimens) were not enough to change the current situation. As he says, it should be more meaningful to have access to basic cinema books and films and make it possible to enable the audience and the reader to see (and read) them. Additionally, he criticized directors who identified themselves with the social realist, intellectuals' movement in the following years. "In our cinema, as Tarık Dursun K. mentions, it seems that the way to shoot a (SOC Melo and receive 10-15 Turks- to shoot a socialist melodram and gain 10-15 thousand liras) has been opened."<sup>69</sup>

Daldal described the atmosphere of the 1960s cinema:

The years that followed the 1960 coup were marked by an unprecedented flourishing and politicization of film magazines, festivals and clubs. *Si-sa*, *Yeni Sinema*, *Sine-Film*, *Sinema 65* were some of the newly published

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<sup>68</sup> See Vedat Türkali, *Yeşilçam Dedikleri Türkiye* (Istanbul: Gendaş, 2001).

<sup>69</sup> "Henüz çok yetersiz Türk sinemasına (sanat olarak görmediği Türk sinemasının bazı sınırdaki çalışmalarını Metin Erksan'ın eli yüzü düzgün filmleri, Memduh Ün'ün bazı eserleri, Atıf Yılmaz ve Halit Refiğ'in dökülmeyen yanlarının bu yargıyı henüz değiştirecek güçte olmadığını düşünmektedir.) yüklenmektense kaynak eserlerin izleyici ve okurla buluşmasının öneminden bahsediyordu. Ayrıca daha sonraki yıllarda, kendilerini toplumsal gerçekçi bir aydın hareketi olarak tanımlayan sinemacıları da "Sinemamızda Tarık Dursun K.'nin SOS bir Melo çekip 10, 15 Türk alma (Sosyalist bir melodram çekip 10-15 bin lira kazanma) yolu açılmış gibidir." Refiğ, p.46.

intellectual film magazines. Various film clubs and associations such as Film Club 7, the Ankara Film Society, the Film Club of the Institute of French Studies in İstanbul and finally Sinematek were all created in this period.<sup>70</sup>

Among these cinema magazines, *Cinema 65* is significant as the last common ground for cinema critics, who would later define themselves around Sinematek and cinema directors like Halit Refiğ and Metin Erksan, who would be the defenders of the National Cinema. This debate will be largely explained in the following sections. In addition, in 1962, the first private cinema club was established by Sami Şekeroğlu: *Kulüp Sinema 7*. This club was founded in the Art Academy of Mimar Sinan University. It should be noted, among these cinema clubs, Sinematek was the most effective and productive, with a considerable superiority.

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<sup>70</sup> Daldal, p.141.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE EMERGENCE AND THE INITIAL AGENDA OF THE ASSOCIATION IN ITS HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL CONTEXT

In this chapter, Sinematek is considered in its historical and social context, in order to represent its intellectual and artistic production which was reflected in the *Yeni Sinema* magazine and in the all activities of the association. The Sinematek Association will be defined in its specificity as a center for cinema and intellectual debate. The internal relations of the association and its members profiles will be depicted & The artistic and cultural medium of the association will be analyzed.

#### The Foundation of the Association on 25 August 1965, and the Influences of Its Review, *Yeni Sinema*

First, a brief description of Sinematek as a general and international association will be presented. *Sinematek* is the Turkish word for the French *cinémathèque*. It refers to a cinema center where examples of the “art” of cinema are collected, kept, displayed and studied. A *cinémathèque* in general consists of an eminent archive of films, a film library/*médiathèque* including press files on such subjects as films, cinema halls and cinema museums. The most important *cinémathèque* in the world is the *Cinémathèque Française*, which is located in Paris. Other preeminent examples of *cinémathèque* include the Institut Lumière, established where the Lumière brothers, the founders of cinema, shot the world’s first film; the *Cinémathèque Suisse* in Lousanne; the British Film Institute in London; the Filmmuseum in Berlin; the

International Institute of Cinema in Torino and the Cinémathèque of Moscow. The history of the cinémathèque, cinema clubs began in Paris as mentioned at the center of the art cinema.

The first cine-club opened in 1921, and a flurry of film magazines was publishing in the inter-war period. Driven into semi-clandestinity under the Occupation, this culture blossomed after 1945. A network of left-wing cine-clubs was set up in Paris. Henri Langlois re-established his Cinémathèque Française and screened (unsubtitled) Hawks, Hitchcock and *film noir* in the rue de Messine.<sup>71</sup>

The Sinematek board of founders was as follows: Onat Kutlar, Şakir Eczacıbaşı, Hüseyin Baş, Aziz Albek, Semih Tuğrul, Tunç Yalman, Tuncan Okan, Sabahattin Eyüboğlu, Cevat Çapan, Macit Gökberk, Nijat Özön and Muhsin Ertuğrul.<sup>72</sup> The role of Henri Langlois,<sup>73</sup> the founder of the Cinémathèque in Paris, in the foundation of Sinematek was very significant. Onat Kutlar, Şakir Eczacıbaşı and Hüseyin Baş in different times during their education in Paris applied to Henri Langlois to help them in the establishment of the Turkish Cinematheque.

After its establishment, Turkish Sinematek initiated a program that included screening the films of the "auteur" directors of European cinema, such as Claude

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<sup>71</sup> Emilie Beckerton, "Adieu To Cahiers", NLR 42, (November-December, 2006), p.71. It was also mentioned that "Among a spate of new film journals, *L'Écran Français* had Sartre, Camus, Malraux, Becker and Langlois on its editorial board." It shows us that in these years cinema critics were among notable intellectuals of the period. Cinema was adopted as a prestigious artistic realm by intellectuals.

<sup>72</sup> The board of founders was constituted by the most notable intellectuals, filmmakers, and cinephiles of the period, by Şakir Eczacıbaşı and Onat Kutlar. Onat Kutlar Kitabı, p.178.

<sup>73</sup> Beckerton, p.70. "Henri Langlois, Born in Izmir in 1914, Langlois was forced to flee the country with his family in 1922, following the Turkish invasion against the Greek population that resulted in four-fifths of the city going up in flames. These dramatic events have been portrayed as foundational for Langlois's own dedication to archival work, his family having lost everything in the city's fires. (Edgardo Cozarinsky's 1994 biographical film, *Citizen Langlois*, begins with a suitcase bursting into flames.) In Paris at the Cinémathèque that he founded in 1936, Langlois—who also set up the first French film archive—screened the great silent classics as well as the latest American releases. His programme played a major role in nurturing early cinephile tastes and shaping research in film history."

Chabrol, Luis Bunuel, Jean-Luc Godard, Luchino Visconti; and the films of the Soviet Revolution Cinema and Eastern European Cinema; American cinema; as well as discussions of these films as an alternative to the established cinema culture. Furthermore, the association published the *Yeni Sinema* review, which covered the movements outside the mainstream, such as the French New Wave Cinema, Italian Neo-Realist Cinema and the “Cinema Nuovo” movement in Brazil. Onat Kutlar describes their motivation in the foundation of an institution such as Sinematek:

The establishment of Sinematek was very exciting for all of us... On the one hand, there are the cultural values of Turkey, its cinematographic representation; on the other hand, we are all cinema lovers. We cannot see the films of our favourite directors in our own country. First of all, we want to watch films.<sup>74</sup>

The group at Sinematek and the writers of *Yeni Sinema* (New Cinema)<sup>75</sup> review criticized the current situation of the Turkish cinema and the films produced, urging for an “artistic cinema” and/or for a political and realist approach. Furthermore, the cinema clubs which spread in the cities in the 1960s and united in a confederation in the early 1970s adopted this attitude, thus helping to establish a new cinema culture. The intellectuals who gathered at Sinematek had the opportunity to view films, which people had been able to see abroad, for the first time from various countries and from various movements. An article in *Yeni Sinema* summarized the aims of the association in its first issue:

Cinema, which is “the most impressive art of our time,” has a long history in our country. Many films have been shot since *Ayastefanos Abidesinin Yıkılışı*;

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<sup>74</sup> “Sinematek’in kuruluşu hepimiz için çok heyecan vericiydi... Bir taraftan Türkiye’nin kültürel değerleri, bunun sinematografik karşılığı, öbür taraftan da hepimiz sinema tutkunuz. Hepimizin çok sevdiği filmlerin yönetmenlerini kendi ülkemizde göremiyoruz. Önce kendimiz film seyretmek istiyoruz..” *Onat Kutlar Kitabı*, p.178.

<sup>75</sup> The name of review was inspired by the cinema movements from Italy "Cinema Nuovo" and from Brasil "Cinema Novo."

however, most of this history of almost half a century bears the malice of a same period of irresponsibility. Apart from the courageous attempts of a few writers and directors with good will, it is a fact that the atmosphere of the art of cinema has failed to become long-standing and sustainable, distinguishing the good from the bad. In our country, where the works of this long history have not been preserved, it was necessary and even compulsory to establish an association to preserve and research such works and to develop cinema with an honorable and respectful identity. Established with such an aim, the Sinematek Association soon gained support and interest as it tried to fulfill the necessities of the friends of cinema who were aware of the situation.<sup>76</sup>

The third issue of the review, published in November 1966 included the following comments:

We declare this transformation which each of you feels: The Age of Cinema is about to begin in Turkey. Its indicators are everywhere. In Istanbul, where a cinema club can hardly survive, there are more than 3,500 members in Sinematek. With the members in Ankara, we reach almost 5,000. Many cinema clubs are being established in Trabzon, Izmir, Izmit, Adana and many other cities. Our review, *Yeni Sinema*, is selling more than the total number of the previous cinema reviews. The number of the publications on cinema has been rising unexpectedly. Screenplays and books on the theory of cinema are being published in series. There are no cinema schools yet, but hundreds of students force the strong doors of bureaucracy to study cinema abroad. And two young scholars, without knowing each other, begin their lectures on cinema, one in Ankara at the High School of Press and Publication, and the other in Istanbul Technical University this year in October. The foundation of Sinematek has emerged a potential that can not be denied. A power that regards cinema as an art and that interprets its function in the daily life and attempts at the civilization of our people in a right way, has put forward its strength.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> “Günümüzün en etkileyici sanatı Sinema’nın, ülkemizde oldukça uzun bir geçmişi vardır. “Ayestaфанos Abidesinin Yıkılışı” filminden bu yana binlerce film çevrildi Türkiye’de. Ancak bu yarım yüzyıla yaklaşan geçmişin hemen hemen büyük bir bölümü gene aynı derecede usun süren bir sorumsuzluğun kötü izlerini taşımaktadır. Birkaç sinemacının ve sinema yazarının iyi niyetli, gözüpek çıkışı bir yana bırakılırsa, iyiyi kötüden ayırabilen, köklü, sürekli bir sinema sanatı ortamının yaratılmadığı bir gerçektir. Bu uzun geçmişin ürünlerinin bile korunamadığı ülkemizde, hem bir koruma ve araştırma görevini yerine getiren, hemde sinemaya bir sanat olarak kendine en yaraşan onurlu, saygıdeğer kimliği kazandırmaya çalışan bir kurumun doğması gerekli, hatta zorunluydu. Bu amaçla kurulan Sinematek Derneği, durumun bilincinde olan bütün sinema dostlarının gereksinimlerine cevap vermeye çalıştığı için kısa zamanda geniş ilgi ve destek kazandı.” “Introduction,” *Yeni Sinema*, no. 1 (March, 1966), p.2.

<sup>77</sup> “Size hepinizin teker teker sezdiğiniz bir dönüşümün haberini açıkça veriyoruz: Türkiye’de Sinema çağı başlamaktadır. Nereye bakarsanız işaretler var. Bir tek sinema klübünün güçlüklerle yaşadığı İstanbul’da bugün yalnızca Sinematek’in 3,500’den fazla üyesi var. Ankara’daki üyelere katılırsa 5,000’e varan bir topluluk oluyor bu. Trabzon’dan İzmir’e, İzmit’ten Adana’ya kadar birçok kentte

Soon after its establishment, Sinematek had a great impact, especially on the educated middle classes, intellectuals from different disciplines, artists from various branches, and among university students. Onat Kutlar wrote:

“The first film that was screened was a film by Claude Chabrol. Langlois participated on the first night. A wonderful French package came. Very good, Wajdas, Truffauts, Chabrols, etc... First of all, we rented two small rooms in Galatasaray on Balıkpazarı Street. We furnished this room very cheaply, with furniture from the Kuledibi flea market. An assistant was given to me and this student was twelve years old, from Galatasaray High School.”<sup>78</sup>

In these very difficult and amateur conditions, the association set out on the road. “First, we screened three films, but later on in the seventh year, it gradually grew to 20 films; therefore, you can guess yourself how many films we screened.”<sup>79</sup>

Once the association was established, they came face to face with oppression due to state censorship. For the sake of screening these films, Onat Kutlar and his friends looked for different alternatives to overcome the impositions of the censorship. Thanks to the close relationships with the French Cinémathèque and the consulates of Russia and some other East European countries, they were able to be

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*sinema kulüpleri kuruluyor. “Yeni Sinema” daha önce yayınlanmış sinema dergilerinin toplam tirajından daha fazla satıyor. Sinema’yla ilgili yayınlar umulmayacak kadar arttı. Senaryolar, sinema kuramı kitapları diziler halinde yayınlanıyor. Sinema okulları henüz yok ama, yüzlerce öğrenci hiç olmazsa yabancı ülkelerde sinema eğitimi görebilmek için bürokrasinin kalın kapılarını zorluyor. Ve birbirinden habersiz iki genç bilim adamı; biri Ankara’da Basın ve Yayın Yüksek okulunda, öbürü ise İstanbul’da Teknik Üniversitesin’de bu yılın ekim ayında Sinema dersleri vermeye başlıyor... Sinematek’in kuruluşu küçümsenmeyecek bir potansiyel gücü ortaya çıkarmıştır. Sinemaya bir sanat kaygısı ile bakabilen halkımızın günlük yaşamında ve uygarlık girişimlerindeki işlevini doğru olarak yorumlayabilen bir güç şimdiden ağırlığını duyurmaya başlamıştır.” “Ellinci Yıla Önsöz,” Yeni Sinema, no. 2 (October- Nowember 1966), p.3.*

<sup>78</sup> “İlk gösterilen film Claude Chabrol’un bir filmiydi. İlk gösteriye Langlois’da katılıyor. Müthiş bir Fransız paketi geliyor, Çok güzel, Wajda’lar, Truffaut’lar Chabrol’ler vs....İlk olarak, Galatasaray’da Sahne Sokak’ta, Balıkpazarı Sokağı’nda iki küçük oda tuttuk. O odayı çok ucuza döşedik. Kuledibi’nden, Bit pazarı’ndan eşyalar alarak. Bana sadece bir tane yardımcı verildi, ve bu öğrenci Galatasaray Lisesi’nde 12 yaşında bir öğrenciydi....” Onat Kutlar Kitabı, p.178.

<sup>79</sup> “Önceleri haftada 3 filmdi. Yedinci yıla doğru yavaş yavaş, haftada 20 filme çıktı. Dolayısıyla yılda kaç film olduğunu siz tahmin edin...” Ibid., p.178.

exempt from censorship. Nevertheless, the state tried to prevent this privilege, attempting to censor these films coming from the consulates. But as these consulates did not allow the use of their copies from the fear of a possible damage to them, the members of Sinematek were trapped in a very complicated situation, and thus, they were unable to show various films they wanted to show.

As discussed above, *Yeni Sinema* reflected the views of the Sinematek circle, under the leadership Onat Kutlar<sup>80</sup> and cinema critics like Nijat Özon, Rekin Teksoy, Giovanni Scognamilio, Ali Gevgili, Tuncan Okan, Sungu Çapan, Tanju Akerson, and Jak Şalom. After this magazine, of which 30 volumes were published until 1970, was closed, they began to issue a magazine called *Filim*, in which they announced and introduced the films that they would show during the next month. *Film* continued for five to six years. Beginning with *Yeni Sinema*, Onat Kutlar and the other cinema critics around him paved the way for the emergence of an attitude specific to the Sinematek circle. For the sake of being independent, they did not accept any support from outside. As Onat Kutlar claimed, this was the basis of its independence and freedom from any political and economic power.<sup>81</sup> As was maintained, the number of its members increased to 6,000, according to Rekin Teksoy, and to 16,000 according to Jak Şalom. The first screenings started at the Kervan Cinema in Şişli, but after a while, they obtained their own place in Sıraselviler, Taksim. In this building, Sinematek had its heyday, but they lost this place as a consequence of not paying the rent. Sinematek also had a library, but it

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<sup>80</sup> Onat Kutlar, (b. Alanya, 1936, d. Istanbul, 1995) was prominent turkish wirtter and poet, founder of the Sinematek and İstanbul International Film Festival. He issued with literature, cinema, even balet critics. He was lowed by all the members of the association. Has died of injurries sustained in a terrorist attack in Istanbul, on January, 11. 1995

<sup>81</sup> Onat Kutlar, *Onat Kutlar Kitabı*, p.187.

was not well organized. It consisted of foreign and Turkish cinema books, political works, Turkish and foreign novels. Sinematek organized cinema courses, but they were not sufficient in the theoretical and technical dimensions of the cinema education.

In an interview on 8 September 1975, Onat Kutlar evaluated the association:

In Sinematek, since its establishment (in 10 years), almost 3,000 films, almost 2,000 short films have been screened; films have been taken from 37 countries, almost 100 guests have come, all of them have been significant and prestigious. Additionally, numerous meetings, forums, concerted screenings have been made. Not too many books have been published. At the time, the number of cinema clubs increased to 20. These cinema clubs were established, through the inspiration of Sinematek.<sup>82</sup>

As Jak Şalom argued, the association reflected and helped the representation of very rich and plural artistic approaches to come onto the scene:

I cannot say that there was to come into being a clear Sinematek attitude as an artistic attitude. The board of directors,' employees' appreciations were different. It was very normal for it to be like that. Films like Citizen Kane, or Leopard were defined as masterpieces<sup>83</sup> by all of us. The films of Jean Luc Godard, or Soviet films were contestable. Basically, I think that these matters, which of the artistic movements, like realism, neo realism, impressionism, were defended by Sinematek should not be considered. I prefer to emphasize that there a pluralistic artistic approach was defended. Sinematek contributed, as even today is not appreciated, to the respect of the art of cinema, to the breaking up of an ice age, to the approach that by screening and producing various, rich, and peculiar films, the world could bear to the good and the beautiful.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Citizen Kane (Orson Welles) called as the number one of the Seventh Art by many cinema critics, Leopard (Luchino Visconti)

<sup>84</sup> *“Sanatsal açıdan açık bir tavrın oluştuğunu söyleyemem. Sinematek ekibini oluşturan çalışanların, yönetim kurulu üyelerinin beğenileri değişti. Bunun böyle olması olağandı. Yurttaş Kane ya da Leopar gibi filmlerin büyük sanat yapıtları olduğu konusunda herkes aynı görüşü paylaşıırken, Jean-Luc Godard'ın, Sovyet sinemasının filmleri tartışma konusu oluyordu. Aslında bu konuyu, gerçekçilik, yenigerçekçilik, izlenimcilik gibi bilinen sanat akımlarının hangisinin Sinematek tarafından savunulduğunun ortaya çıkarılması gerekliliğinden çok, çoğulcu bir sanatsal yaklaşımın savunulmasının altının çizilmesinin daha doğru olduğunu düşünüyorum. Sinematek, sinema sanatı açısından bir buzul çağının çözülmesine, dünyanın sinema sanatı açısından çeşitli, zengin, özgün binlerce girişim, film yapımı ve gösterimle daha iyiye, daha güzele yöneleceği yaklaşımına değeri*

The Sinematek circle should be considered as an artistic community, a particular social group which was influential in the public sphere, but also as a group of socialist or left-wing intellectuals who were more universal, in their ambitions, in their goals, sharing a more common artistic and political agenda, due to cinema which provided this fertile ground. But, on the other hand, people from various classes of society benefited from the association. The influence of the association in public life was such that, the film screenings became a trend even among the upper class, as told by Atilla Dorsay:

In 1966, after I had completed my military service, when I returned in Istanbul, I was very surprised, as if everybody in Istanbul was running to Sinematek. People were watching the ‘art’ films of the Czech, Italian, Hungarian, French cinema... columns, meetings, debates.... It went beyond an artistic phenomenon, a social event that even affected high society.... Cinema years, which in the first ten year more than two thousand films and its half as a documentary were screened.<sup>85</sup>

Scognamillo points out that this did not last very long, as the interest of the upper classes decreased in the second season, but that of the university students and the Marxist and dissident intellectuals of the time increased steadily. As Jak Şalom asserted:

It is difficult to say that as an institution Sinematek had a clear political viewpoint. For one thing, it is questionable whether Sinematek was an institution or not. Without doubt, it was an association which addressed a wide range of people and carried on its job successfully, yet I cannot say that its attitude was institutional.... After a while, Sinematek had its place in society as a “leftist” association and known like that. So much so that it had problems after 12 March 1971 and 12 September 1980 and was closed in the second period. From this perspective, I cannot say that Sinematek had a sheer

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*bugün yeterince bilinmeyen bir katkıda bulunmuştur.*”, Interview with Jack Şalom, (April 2007, via internet).

<sup>85</sup> Atilla Dorsay, *Sabah*, 26.02.2006.

political attitude. However, I can roughly say that within Turkey's political spectrum it was located in a position where left-wing thoughts were discussed.”<sup>86</sup>

As argued by Hülya Uçansu in the interview,<sup>87</sup> the Sinematek association defined itself as the base for creating a socialist culture through discussions conducted on cinema, and the political issues of the time. As a result of this culture, she defined women as in an equal status with men. Women, such as, Adalet Ağaoğlu, Tomris Uyar, Zeynep Oral, Zeynep Avcı, and herself had the conditions to express themselves; but the feminist tendencies to question the role of women in the realm of cinema and in public life was very powerful among them. As mentioned, the 1960s was a period in which there was an increasing translation activity of the foreign books, and publishing of numerous journals of cinema, literature, and politics and this led to a very fertile ground for intellectual debates. As Jak Şalom said:

Sinematek became a platform, a kind of “thought club” where these discussions were frequently held, especially with the leadership of Onat Kutlar. In the evenings, nearly every day, authors, painters, caricaturists, critics, academics, students and generally some other artists, some of whom came to the association continuously and some of whom came at intervals, participated in the discussions; people were debating not only national issues but also international ones. For my part, I have to humbly admit that as a boy who was 19 old in 1965, I greatly benefited from these discussions, learned a lot and that I was encouraged by my brothers and sisters to bring myself up better, and for all these I owe thanks to all of them. Many others like me were taught at this “school.”<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> “Bir kurum olarak Sinematek'in net bir politik tavrının olduğunu söylemek güçtür. Bir kere Sinematek'in kurum olup olmadığı tartışma götürür.. Hiç kuşkusuz geniş bir kitleye seslenen, işini başarılı biçimde yürüten bir dernekti ama tavrının kurumsal olduğunu söyleyemem.... Bir süre sonra, Sinematek "solcu" bir dernek olarak toplumda yerini almış ve öyle bilinmişti. O kadar ki, 12 March 1971 ve 12 September 1980'den sonra bu yüzden sıkıntı çekmiş ve ikinci dönemde kapanmıştır.. Bu açıdan, Sinematek'in düpedüz bir siyasi tavrının olduğunu söyleyemiyorum. Ancak, kabaca Türkiye'nin siyasi yelpazesinde sol kanatta yer alan görüşlerin tartışıldığı bir yer konumunda olduğunu söyleyebilirim.” Interview with Jak Şalom, (May 2007, via internet).

<sup>87</sup> Interview with Hülya Uçansu, (April 2007, Istanbul).

<sup>88</sup> “Sinematek, özellikle Onat Kutlar'ın önderliğinde bu tartışmaların sık sık yapıldığı bir sahanlık, bir çeşit düşünce kulübü olmuştu. Akşam saatlerinde, hemen her gün, kimileri sürekli, kimileri aralıklı

Sinematek succeeded incorporating very different intellectual types such as Şakir Ezcacıbaşı, Onat Kutlar, Aziz Nesin, Yaşar Kemal, Yılmaz Güney, Aliye Rona, Atıf Yılmaz, Ali Özgentürk, Selim İleri, Doğan Hızlan, Gencay Gürsoy, Dora Karabey, Yavuz Özkan, Umur Bugay, Atilla Dorsay, İlkey Demir, and Zeynep Oral who were among the leading cinema critics, directors, freelance writers and journalists. Onat Kutlar, in his book, “*Sinema Bir Şenliktir*”<sup>89</sup> says that significant intellectuals of the period Sabahattin Eyüboğlu, Azra Erhat, Kuzgun Acar, prof. Cavit Orhan Tütengil, Oğuz Atay, Hasan Ali Ediz who participated at a film screening at Sinematek.

To quote from the memoirs of Şakir Ezcacıbaşı, a naval colonel called him right after the military coup in 1971, and said “Oo! There is a problem. We wanted identities from people who were arrested. All of them gave us the card of Sinematek. My brother you are some kind of illegal organization.”<sup>90</sup> As Mr. Ezcacıbaşı was a recognized businessman at the time, he told the officer that most of their members were university students and that those identity cards had been given to them on the basis of their students cards, thus convincing the colonel. Quoting from an article by a leftist student about a lost friend:

I met Seher under the harsh conditions in the aftermath of the military coup in March 12th... I had just been released from Mamak prison. I came to Istanbul

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*gelen yazarlar, çizerler, eleştirmenler, öğretim üyeleri, öğrenciler, genellikle sanatçılar tartışmalara katılıyor, hem ulusal, hem uluslararası konular tartışılıyordu. Kendi hesabıma, 1965 yılında 19 yaşında bir genç olarak bu tartışmalardan çok yararlandığımı, çok şeyler öğrendiğimi, o zamanki ağabeylerim ve ablalarım tarafından yöreklendirilerek kendimi daha iyi yetiştirmeme yönlendirildiğimi alçakgönüllülükle ve onlara bugün bile teşekkür borçlu olduğumu söyleyerek kabul etmeliyim. Benim gibi daha çokları bu "okul"dan geçtiler.”* Interview with Jak Şalom, (May 2007, via internet).

<sup>89</sup> Onat Kutlar, *Sinema Bir Şenliktir: Sinema Yazıları*, (Istanbul, Can Yayınları, 1991).

<sup>90</sup> “Yahu bu ne biçim iş? Mahkemelere çıkarılanlardan kimlik istiyoruz, hepsi getire getire Sinematek kartı getiriyor. Siz gizli bir örgüt falan mısınız kardeşim?” Atilla Dorsay, *Sabah*, 26, 02, 2006.

in February 1973 to find a job and a better living. I was introduced to the director Yavuz Ozkan by a friend. Yavuz took me to the Sinematek Association in Siraselviler Avenue. He introduced me to Onat Kutlar, the director of the association and I began to work at Sinematek. I was managing the library. Under the martial law, I watched the best and most special films, especially Soviet productions in the small and dark hall of Sinematek. We established an exemplary cinema family with Şakir Ezcazıbaşı, Onat Kutlar, Mete Akalın, Hüseyin Baş, Aziz Nesin, Yaşar Kemal, Yılmaz Güney and many others. “When cinema was a festival.”<sup>91</sup>

This quotation shows that this cinema society was more than a simple community of cinema fans and that it provided a real base for young leftist student to meet with the most notable intellectuals of the period and this place give them the opportunity to create a collective identity which benefited from cinema. As Hülya Uçansu told me, it is easier to form a relationship between intellectuals and university students. There was a more transitory, emancipatory social space where the young university students could meet with notable intellectuals of the time. In the case of France, it is easier to observe a similar ground and network for students who participated in the Cinémathèque film screenings:

“Both Rivette and Godard arrived in Paris to study at the Sorbonne but gravitated instead to the Cinémathèque and film journals, and found their education there. Cinephile culture had its own forms of erudition, its lectures, pupils and teachers: ‘in the cine-clubs [we found] our night classes ... our books... wary of intellectuals, universities and politics, protected from all exterior intervention.’”<sup>92</sup>

As it will be discussed, I will not mention this issue in a broader sense, but the main criticism of Sinematek is that, it was not interested in Turkish cinema, although the name of the association was Turkish Sinematek Association. Turkish Sinematek

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<sup>91</sup>Dursun Özden, 3 March 2007, available at: [http://www.odaksevgi.net/yz05/biz/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=410&itemid=75](http://www.odaksevgi.net/yz05/biz/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=410&itemid=75).

<sup>92</sup> Quoted in Beckerton, Antoine de Baecque, *La cinéphilie, Invention d'un regard, histoire d'une culture, 1944–1968*, (Paris, 2003), p. 20.

members, who carried a more universalistic outlook, were not satisfied with Turkish films. They saw Turkish cinema as an underdeveloped cinema that made films for the low, uncultivated classes.

The ambiguity of its structure as to its social composition and the differences in the approaches of its members to cultural issues were an ongoing concern for Sinematek. Sinematek members were careful to find or establish a balance away these differences. For instance, Onat Kutlar published some of his articles in *Papirüs* or *Ant* magazines instead of *Yeni Sinema*. The association reflected the increasing radicalism of the period, but they also tried to maintain a more artistic atmosphere around the association. They tried to carry out the activities of the association with a view to this heterogeneity in the association. The Sinemateks of Şakir Eczacıbaşı and Onat Kutlar were different. Şakir Eczacıbaşı who was the son of a big business family was aware of his socio-economic background, but Onat Kutlar was more akin to leftist, radical views of the period. As mentioned, the Sinematek group and its periphery, audience, people who only came to see foreign films were parts of this very complex social phenomenon. Some upper class audiences and members can be defined as people who were estranged from the realities of Turkey, but at the core, Onat Kutlar and his friends were socialist intellectuals who attempted to breach the distance between themselves and the Turkish people. Accordingly, they were in search of a synthesis of a European “high” culture and the native and popular culture of Anatolia, which may be seen as an attempt to provide a link to the socio-cultural peculiarities of Turkey.

As argued, the core of the association, or the line of Onat Kutlar, Hüseyin Baş, and other cinema critics, and some of the university students who were affected

by them, shared a more homogenous cultural and political agenda. The association tried to accommodate groups, people with different viewpoints, but the agenda of this group was always more clear and this agenda may be defined as an imposing one among other members. Onat Kutlar line was always the main motivation of the association with a superiority among other cultural intentions, and other members were adopted this tendency to some extent.

In the process of the invention and realization of cinema culture, there was no national tradition to be based on; they had to rely on Western cinema culture. Despite this fact, this cinema culture was adopted by many cinephiles. As argued by many of the circle members, “[this association] forged a cinephile generation.” Rekin Teksoy asserts that thanks to the Sinematek, there are people sixty years old who still loves cinema. The most important contribution of Sinematek is the creation of a generation of cinephiles, a conscious cinema audience.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### CINEMA CIRCLES AND CINEMA DEBATES

In this chapter, I will attempt to reflect ideological and political debates that the Sinematek association and its members engaged in with other cinema circles, especially the National Cinema Debate. After 1965 and during the first half of the 1970s, the Sinematek was deeply affected by and also oriented the debates about the role of cinema in the search for a new political regime. Sinematek gave rise to the *Genç Cinema* (Young Cinema) circle, which was deeply affected by the political process, and this circle was a product of the association's cultural milieu, but also of the increasing social struggles. The 1970s after the 1968 university movements increasingly became a period in which struggles, in very large dimensions, including different kinds of social uprisings, were dominant in the peoples' and intellectuals' everyday lives. Art and cinema were also considered as weapons in this struggle; it was argued that they should be linked in every realm of life. Post-1968 years became a turbulent period, in Turkey leading to the military coup of 1971. Sinematek relatively lost its influence after 1976.

#### The Tension between Sinematek and Turkish Cinema Directors

##### The National Cinema Debate

The Sinematek Association, seeking to bring universal cinema values to the Turkish audience, introduced a debate by emphasizing the underdevelopment of

Turkish cinema, its dependence on the rules of commercial cinema, clichés, the star system, and the cinema atmosphere that produced the poor values of the popular culture. This period was considered by Jak Şalom as:

In 1965, in the year that the Sinematek Association was established, Turkish cinema was in a heartbreaking situation. From a cinematographic perspective it was very difficult to say that there was a cinema language in Turkey although it was possible to mention that there were certain concepts like the novel language, the tale language. As a coincidence, although cinema arrived in Turkey in an early period, thanks to the directors of photography of the Lumiere brothers, cinema could not be evaluated as a language, it entered and remained a bunch of bad moving images on film.<sup>93</sup>

Therefore, Sinematek members criticized the then prevalent cinema as a tool for the reproduction of the ruling capitalist system's ideological perpetuation, and they saw the Social Realist cinema movement as unsatisfactory, defining themselves as an alternative to mainstream Yeşilçam cinema. Giovanni Scagnomillo, one of the critics of *Yeni Sinema* argues that "social realist" term was only an arbitrary lable.<sup>94</sup> As Daldal wrote; "The attitude of the members of Sinemetek denying a respectable status to social realism was mainly due to the extreme elite polarization typical of Turkish political history, this time, within the cultural intelligentsia, following the loss of the reformist spirit of the coup."<sup>95</sup> As defined by Nezih Erdoğan, the Sinematek members first of all attempted to find alternative modes of production for the Yeşilçam cinema industry:

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<sup>93</sup> "1965'te Sinematek'in kurulduğu yılda, Türk sineması içler acısı bir durumdaydı. Sinemasal açıdan, roman dili, öykü dili gibi birtakım kavramlardan söz etmek olası ise, sinema dili diye bir şeyin olduğunu söylemek zordu... Türkiye'ye sinemanın rastlantısal olarak Lumiere kardeşlerin görüntü yönetmenleri sayesinde çok erken girmesine rağmen, sinema bir dil olarak gelişemedi, kötü bir seyirlik oyun olarak filme çekilen görüntüler dizisi olarak girdi ve öyle kaldı." Interview with Jack Şalom, (May 2007, via internet).

<sup>94</sup> Interview with Giovanni Scagnomillo, (May 2006, Istanbul).

<sup>95</sup> Daldal, p.141, Daldal also asserted, at the same page: "Onat and his friends (Tuncan Okan, Tanju Akerson, jak Şalom...) was very critical to the existing film industry in Turkey, known as Yeşilçam (named after a street in İstanbul, meaning "Pinetree" , as it was very commercially oriented."

The mid 1960s witnessed the beginning of a debate about national identity in Turkish cinema. A group of writers from various branches of literature gathered around the film magazine *Yeni Sinema* and founded the Turkish cinematheque (with some help from Henri Langlois). They argued that a national cinema with international concerns was impossible with Yeşilçam which was associated with worn out formulas, plagiarism, escapism, and exploitation. While *Yeni Sinema* published interviews with film directors such as Godard, Renoir and Antonioni and translations from theoretical works examining cinema in relation to other arts, screenings organized by the Cinematheque gave a particular audience access to, canon of European art cinema. When one looks back at this scene, one can see a program aiming an art cinema. If, in Europe, art cinema developed as a resistance to the increasing domination of Hollywood, in Turkey, as the first obstacle to be tackled, alternative modes of production were sought and festivals and competitions held to promote short films.<sup>96</sup>

The directors representing the professional aspect of cinema, especially directors like Halit Refiğ and Metin Erksan, who defended the Social Realist<sup>97</sup> cinema between 1960 and 1965, were the leaders of the National Cinema movement. The National Cinema approach, led by the director and critic Halit Refiğ, focused on possible definitions of the identity of Turkish cinema, collecting his articles in *National Cinema Debate* (Ulusal Sinema Kavgası) [1971]. Some scholars argues that Refiğ, emphasized the role of cinema in the establishment of an anti-colonialist culture, in a similar way as the theorists of the Third Cinema which emerged as a new, socially conscious cinema in Latin America, Africa, and Asia, as an alternative to the international, social and cultural changes of the 1960s.<sup>98</sup> In the wake of decolonization and independence, in these places activist filmmakers sought

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<sup>96</sup> Erdoğan, p.261-262.

<sup>97</sup> The Social Realist movement and its basic films were defined in the section about 1960s and cinema.

<sup>98</sup> Ashish Rajadhyaksha, "Realism, Modernism and Post-colonial Theory", in *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies*. Edited by John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson (Oxford: University Press, 1998), p. 417.

to create a cinema that could contribute to popular struggles against political oppression and economic dependency. Yılmaz wrote:

Although the generalization of all the films coming from the non-Western world as anti-colonial and anti-Western suggests a theoretical determination and allows several investigators of national and non-western cinemas, a considerable number of non-western films have a discourse of national histories, current struggles for national liberation, the aesthetic and political debates on post-colonialism and cultural emancipation, and raising the political consciousness of people (Kaplan, 1996, Sembené, 1968). Surprisingly the very anti-colonial ideas of Franz Fanon affected the cinema of many non-Western filmmakers. In other words, films and filmmakers through the filmmaking process tried to face their colonial history.<sup>99</sup>

This similarity between third cinema activist and Halit refiğ and Metin Erksan was highly debatable, despite the fact that their ways of looking at the cinema was parallel to each other. Refiğ argued that Turkey was not a Third World country, due to its strong state tradition. He was not content to make assessments for the historical and social conditions of Turkey in a way similar to those for Asian, African and Latin American countries. According to him, Turkish cinema did not have a colonial past and filmmakers emphasized their distinction from those countries which had colonial pasts.<sup>100</sup> The broader movement called “third cinema”, informed by postcolonial debates on cultural identity against European hegemony, can be a reference point for the Turkish National Cinema debate, but Turkish filmmakers refuse to be situated within the context of Third World countries. I will elaborate the possible position of this debate in the sixth chapter of the thesis.

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<sup>99</sup> Bülent Tunga Yılmaz *Discourse and Narratives in the National Cinema Movement* (M.A. Thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2002), p.40.

<sup>100</sup> Refiğ, p. 101.

Daldal, as she described the Social Realist movement in her work, made significant considerations about the movement and the directors.

1. All the directors within the core of the movement are “engagé” types of people, with strong political and social commitments. They see themselves as “missionaries of progress”...
2. All the films that fall within the social realist movement treat the problems of the “common man”
- 3...they have a clear anti-bourgeois and anti-capitalist stance.
5. The existence of a socio-political event at the background of all films. <sup>101</sup>

As a background for the National Cinema approach, Refiğ argued that Turkish cinema, developed during 1950s and dependent neither on the bourgeoisie nor the state, was a “popular cinema” that had emerged from the people’s need to see domestic films. However, the domestic film industry had lost its national characteristics for several reasons: among them, the star system, stereotypical themes and the influence of foreign films. According to Refiğ, the basic problem was to make a film that was national in its general structure and its properties. The National Cinema perspective was expressed in the films produced in Yeşilçam Cinema which Halit Refiğ defined as the “people’s cinema” but whose shortcomings he thought had increased for the time being. For this reason it was necessary to criticize them and to transform them through a struggle within the Yeşilçam system.

The National Cinema perspective developed, as a reaction to the Sinematek circle, which emphasized “the importance of the values of the universal art of cinema.” By way of advocating a more nationalist and populist approach, these directors accused the Sinematek circle of being indifferent to the realities of Turkish cinema, and of being Western admirers, cosmopolitans, and rootless spectators. These debates, in a very large context, were very significant in forcing the Sinematek

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<sup>101</sup> Daldal, p. 145.

association members and cinema critics to define themselves as a circle, or an intellectual line, with respect to the attitudes that they defended or adopted during this process.

The initiating event of this debate actually was the *Birinci Sinema Şûrası* (First Congress on Cinema) in 1964, which brought together three professional institutions of cinema, Sine-İş, the Producers' Association and Directors' Union, with governmental authorities and the intellectuals of cinema to discuss the problems of Turkish cinema and suggest solutions. The congress was cancelled as those who worked in cinema opposed the intellectuals and cinema critics, and they refused to debate their professional problems with these cinema critics, whom they deemed "biased." The definition of cinema critics in reference to Refiğ's definition of Turkish Cinema, (made eight years before in *Cinema* journal with a similar approach, for the present cinema as a "swamp which should be drained") made the opposition even more obvious. In the second volume of the *Yeni Sinema* review, The Sinematek circle declared that:

To develop a national cinema and produce works over a certain level of quality, we should first explain the present situation without any fear, and put forward the reasons with its diverse aspects honestly. The writers of the journal were conscious that the problems of the domestic cinema industry were in a close relationship with the structure of our society; then that should not be considered in an isolative, distinctive domain... Turkish cinema as an artistic form cannot be mentioned in an isolated way from the arts of other countries.<sup>102</sup>

They pointed out that what they highlighted was not the standards of Turkey, but the

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<sup>102</sup> "Yeni Sinema, ulusal sinemanın gelişmesi, sanat değeri belli bir düzeyin üzerinde eserler verilebilmesi için önce içinde bulunduğumuz durumun korkusuzca açıklanmasını, nedenlerinin çeşitli yönleriyle ve dürüstçe ortaya konmasını istemektedir. Dergi yazarları yerli sinema endüstrisinin sorunlarının, toplum yapımızla sıkı ilişkilerinin bulunduğu, bu yüzden soyut, ayrı bir alan olarak düşünülmemeyeceğinin bilincindedir... Türk sineması bir sanat olarak da öbür ülkelerin sanatlarından soyutlanmış bir biçimde düşünülemez. Yeni Sinema Türkiye ölçülerine değil, evrensel sinema sanatı değerlerine önem vermektedir." "İkinci Sayıda," *Yeni Sinema* no.2 (April-May, 1966), p.3.

values of the universal art of cinema. Therefore, they argued that *Yeni Sinema* would follow the struggle that avant-garde cinema journals continued until a Turkish national cinema progressing as an artistic form participated in this “universal” endeavour.<sup>103</sup> By the term “universal” they meant the cinema traditions of the Western countries (France, Italy, Sweden, Eastern European countries cinemas.); and Third World cinema which had emerged in Latin America; even Japanese Cinema, such as the films of Akira Kurosawa,<sup>104</sup> films that would help to promote a European style film culture. Onat Kutlar, inspired by the French Cinémathèque, desired a similar atmosphere in Turkey where the standard of “universal” cinema could be evaluated by the audience. Intellectuals who had visited the big cities of the West, such as Paris and London, were ambitious for the flourishing of urban life in the big cities of Turkey. They felt the necessity of associations like Sinematek to participate in the universal culture of the West.

Halit Refiğ criticized the views of *Yeni Sinema* and claimed that the milieu of Sinematek was erroneous in assuming that to make good films was to make films like the western producers. He thought that such an article meant being ignorant of Turkish cinema. A forum called “The Social Structure of Turkey, Turkish Cinema and Its Future,” held on 27 July 1966, at which Halit Refiğ and Duygu Sağıroğlu, who had similar ideas, discussed these issues with the intellectuals of Sinematek and raised the tension. With respect to this matter, Vedat Türkali, in 1974 argued that:

At that time, the attitude of the intellectual founders of Sinematek against our cinema was in the mode of mockery or denial. However, it should first of all

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<sup>103</sup> “Bu yüzden sanat düzeyinde gelişen ulusal bir Türk sineması, bu evrensel çabaya katılincaya kadar *Yeni Sinema* öncü dergilerin sürdürdüğü savaşı izleyecek, daha da ileri götürecektir.” Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Japanese director known for his unique cinema technique. He used the camera to distance himself from his subject, the camera serves as the mirror of the soul.

have to get the background of the cinema, and to have benefited from it. The reason underlying this counter attitude was the fact that they had not watched Yeşilçam or they were not able to assess those films. They were not ready to be in a dialogue. The belief that good cinema can be made in a total rejection of Yeşilçam –and this belief even survives today in various circles– was a thing which should have been realized considerably. I was in that forum in 1966 –open and read the speech of Onat Kutlar– these are things which can be easily said today. That is, at the time Halit Refiğ described our cinema as a swamp to be drained, but today, he was defending it, how could he do it, etc. However, it seems to me that this was a well-prepared row and the matter was transformed into a blood feud.<sup>105</sup>

The debate continued in the *Ulusal Sinema* (National Cinema)<sup>106</sup> review, which was published as an alternative to *Yeni Sinema*. Sami Şekeroğlu,<sup>107</sup> the founder of the Turkish Film Archive and the publisher of *Ulusal Sinema*, embarked on a serious rivalry with Sinematek, commenting that, “some of our cinema writers, institutions which was affected by foreign countries’ culture, youth who do not even recognize themselves have failed to believe that it is a right way to attack unconsciously the Turkish cinema.”<sup>108</sup>

Refiğ pointed out that the cinema referred to as Yeşilçam had laid the basis for both a “popular cinema” and a “national cinema.” He explained his

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<sup>105</sup> “O zamanlar Sinematek’in aydın kurucularının sinemamıza karşı tavrı ya alay etme ya da karşı çıkma biçiminde olmuştu. Önce sinemadaki birikimi bilmek, ondan yararlanmak gerekiyordu halbuki. Bu ters tavır Yeşilçami iyi izlememekten ya da değerlendirememekten geliyordu aslında. Dialog kurmaya hazırlıklı değildiler. İyi sinemanın Yeşilçam’a toptan karşı çıkılarak yapılacağı inancı ki bunu hala birçok çevrelerde devam ediyor, iyi düşünülerek yapılması gereken bir şeydi. Ben işte o 1966’taki açikoturumda bulundum, o gün Onat Kutlar’ın söylediklerini bugün açın okuyun rahatlıkla söylenebilecek şeylerdir. Yani vaktiyle Halit Refiğ sinemamızdan kurutulması gereken bataklık diye bahsediyordu, bugün niye savunuyor, gibi şeylerdi. Fakat bana öyle geliyor ki, orada hazırlıklı bir kapışma oldu, ve mesele bir kan davasına dönüştürüldü.” Vedat Türkali, Vedat Türkali ile konuşma, Haziran, Temmuz, Ağustos, 1974, Yedinci Sanat, Sayı: 16-17, in *Bu gemi nereye; yazılar, konuşmalar, soruşturmalar*, (İstanbul, Cem Yayınevi, 1985), p.56-57.

<sup>106</sup> National cinema magazine was published in the 1968, it continued to its fourth volume.

<sup>107</sup> Sami Şekeroğlu was the founder of the Turkish Film archive, he was stil professor at the Mimar Sinan Turkish Cinema and TV Institute.

<sup>108</sup> *Ulusal Cinema Review*, no.1, p.14.

understanding of the concept of “Popular Cinema” as follows; “As Turkish cinema was not established by foreign capital it is not the cinema of imperialism; neither is it a bourgeois cinema as it was not established by national capitalism; nor is it a state cinema as it was not established by the state... Turkish cinema is a popular cinema as it emerged from the people’s need to see films and depended not upon capital but labor.”<sup>109</sup>

According to Refiğ, popular cinema had gained power especially between the years 1958 and 1960, as the capital lacking for cinema was met by bonds issued/invented by the enterprises around Turkey. For instance, film enterprises began to produce films with money from the cities like Samsun, Izmir, and Adana. In this process, the patrons of cinema salons, by assuming that they represented the audience, were active in choosing the stars to act in the films, and the scripts for these films. Thus, according to Refiğ, the real owners of these bonds were the Turkish film audience, the people; the themes of the films were the tales, stars, and popular music, which were appreciated by the people.

Daldal depicted the “progressivist” and “populist” tendencies of the post-1960 elite that were clearly present, with an increased dose of universalism and class politics in the *National Cinema* movement.<sup>110</sup> I agree with her views, mostly with the points of “progressivism and “populism” and it can be asserted that solidarist and nationalist tendencies intersected with these claims. But as will be elaborated in the following chapters, class emphasis (there were very different descriptions of class, and as is known, class structure of Turkey was the main conflict of the intellectuals

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<sup>109</sup> Refiğ, 91.

<sup>110</sup> Daldal, p. 143.

of the period) and universalism, which generally had been shared by Turkish intellectuals since the Tanzimat period, was rejected by Refiğ and Erksan in an escalating controversy with the Sinematek circle.

However, Refiğ, who defended popular cinema, also criticized it, by arguing that the weakness of popular cinema, which was dependent neither on private capital, nor on the state, relied on its anonymous, general artistic character which was based on the adaptation of stories from the West. Thus, arguing that Yeşilçam lost its national properties, due to it was not completely prone to foreign influence, they criticized the Yeşilçam cinema industry.

In this period, it was unclear whether the National Cinema directors had big problems with Yeşilçam. It was known that they had adopted the rules of the Yeşilçam cinema industry, and thus they had compromised in a sense. Thereafter, In 1967, Metin Erksan, Duygu Sağıroğlu, Memduh Ün, Atıf Yılmaz, Osman Seden, Alp Zeki Heper, and Halit Refiğ, in a signed declaration refused to respond to a questionnaire on the role of criticism prepared by *Yeni Sinema*, and that was the end of relations between filmmakers and Sinematek. The intellectuals who produced and reflected upon the Turkish cinema confronted each other after this step. Atilla Dorsay, who was a member of the Sinematek was labeled a “Western admirer.” He replied to this accusation in an article published in the significant socialist journal, *Ant*, by arguing that to produce so many Turkish films did not mean that there was a Turkish national cinema:

A national cinema shall naturally feed upon the cultural accumulation of that nation and shall be inspired by it. However, this is not a destination, but a starting point. Defining Turkish cinema as a national cinema is an example of cheap demagogy, because it is a cinema aiming to draw the money from

people's pockets and it is far from being for the benefit of the people.<sup>111</sup>

This discussion continued in cinema journals and meetings, and ultimately led to a symbolic polarization. Refiğ wrote in his book *Ulusal Sinema Kavgası*:

Another coincidence upon which we should stress as regards our cinema was the fact that the starting point of the activities of the Sinematek Association, founded by Şakir Eczacıbaşı, temporally intersected with the winning of the elections by Süleyman Demirel. It is a very interesting thing that this association on whose board of founders there were no professionals, brought together intellectuals who were getting along as “leftists” and also assembling every elements who were against the Turkish cinema in its organization. The Social Realist movement, which was the first, conscious leftist movement in the history of the Turkish Cinema and flourished in spite of the effects of the right media and its institutions, was defeated, in the end, by the “leftist” writers and institutions.<sup>112</sup>

In the style of Refiğ, the unfair accusations directed at Sinematek can be seen clearly. Refiğ based his accusations on the character of Şakir Eczacıbaşı, who was the most notable businessman of the period, by adopting the populist ideological spirit of the period; on the other hand, he accused Sinematek of being unaware of the conditions of Yeşilçam cinema. But, cinema critics and the Sinematek association aimed at transforming the existing Turkish cinema. They laid stress upon the handicaps and the disabilities of the Turkish cinema, attempting to pass over them by adopting universal cinema values, especially the values coming from the left-wing of Europe. For instance, Western cinema was significant for them, but they were looking for a way to transcend the political and artistic values of the capitalist world

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<sup>111</sup> Atilla Dorsay, “Ulusal Türk Sineması ve Çıkış Yolları Üzerine Soruşturma” *Ant*, no. 86 (20 August 1966), p.14.

<sup>112</sup> “Sinemamız açısından üzerinde durulması gereken bir tesadüf de Demirel’in seçimleri kazandığı bir sırada Şakir Eczacıbaşı tarafından kurulan Sinematek Derneği’nin çalışmalarına başlamasıydı. Kurucuları arasında bir tek profesyonelin bulunmadığı bu derneğin, hem solcu geçinen aydınları, hemde Türk sinemasına karşı bütün elemanları bünyesinde toplamasında ilgi çekici bir durum vardır. Türk sinemasının tarihinde ilk bilinçli sol hareket olan toplumsal gerçekçilik hareketi, sağcı basın ve kurumlarının patırdıları ile ilgi toplayp geliştikten sonra, ölüm darbesini solcu geçinen yazar ve kurumlardan yedi.” Refiğ, p.35.

system. Nevertheless, Refiğ described the position of Sinematek as follows: “Cinema is a universal art. The unit for the evaluation of this artistic form is the West. To make good film is to make films like the Western people.”<sup>113</sup> He seemed to want to escalate the discussion into a conflict, like an East-West contradiction and added that “a more different characteristic of the strong warriors of Sinematek is to defend in the first line the Marxism trend that follows the fashion of existentialism.”<sup>114</sup> Metin Erksan responded to the questionnaire of the magazin *Ant*, by arguing that critics were not competent to talk about Turkish cinema:

First of all, these chronic spin doctors will not say far from France that “let’s shoot Aziz Nesin’s “Nazik Alet.” These gentlemen will first of all learn that Turkey’s problems can be resolved within Turkey. Those people, who denigrate the most valuable products of the Turkish cinema just because they do not get inspiration from the Western cinema –the reason for this denigration is their ignorance of the artistic, political, social and economic history of their own country– will not write on the Turkish cinema.”<sup>115</sup>

They accused them of imitating Western trends, of being alienated from the Turkish reality and of underestimating the national and moral values of the people. The Sinematek circle, on the other hand, criticized the Turkish cinema, of which the following quotation by Ali Gevgili may be an example: “In the second half of the twentieth Century, there are no humanistic values in the Turkish cinema. Turkish cinema, let alone the political and social problems, is alienated from its own

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<sup>113</sup> “Sinema evrensel bir sanattır. Bu evrensel sanatı değerlendirme birimi batıdır. İyi film yapmak ancak Batılı gibi film yapmakla olur.” Refiğ, p 46-47.

<sup>114</sup> “Sinematek’in ortaya saldıği yaman savaşıların bir başka özelliği de şimdilerde existencialisme modasının yerini alan marxist düşüncede öncülüğü kimseye bırakmayacak kadar yiğit olmalarıdır.” Ibid., p.36.

<sup>115</sup> “Önce müzmin akıl hocaları ta Fransalardan kalkıp Aziz Nesin’in “Nazik Alet”ini filme alın demeyecek. Bu beyler önce Türkiye meselelerinin ancak Türkiye’nin içinde halledilebileceğini öğrenecek. Kendi ülkelerinin sanat tarihini, siyasi tarihini, içtimai tarihini, ekonomik tarihini bilmediği için Türk sinemasının en değerli ürünlerini Batı sinemasından esinlenmekle pisleyen kişiler türk sineması üzerine yazı yazmayacak.” Metin Erksan, “Ant’ın Sinema Soruşturması”, *Ant*, No:28, (11 July 1967), p.14-15.

people.”<sup>116</sup> For the crystalization of the Sinematek attitude, I have to make a long quotation from Onat Kutlar, whose essays epitomized this attitude. He also attempted to declare their alternative ways to make cinema in Turkey:

Roads are closed to those movie makers who do not want to be conformist and who want to introduce a brand new worldview, a new way of narration and a new form. The first road, everything begins with a complete bow to the market patterns; whereas the second, these patterns are opened out a little at the expense of great concessions. Then, for the non-conformist movie maker, searching for possibilities outside the market is an imperative. The latest technical and aesthetic developments in the world cinema make it possible to shoot a film very cheaply. Hence, these new cinema generations can find artlover capitalists for their avant-garde films, and can even shoot short films with their own money. These attempts may be far from representing the native cinema, since they would be the individual debuts in the initial phase. But if they produce valuable cases, if they do not fall into a hole of imitation in the name of art, they will make use of the international possibilities of the cinema and more importantly, they will contribute to the formation of a “quality market” in the country with the support of Sinematek, cinema clubs and the media. There will not be a problem after the emergence of such a market, for market producers profiting in this field will allow making of such films, even if only for the aim of gaining money.<sup>117</sup>

I argue that these debates, for each side, were related to the intention to define the “Left” and “leftist” values as the main concern, and the two sides, namely the Sinematek, Onat kutlar line, and National Cinema, Halit Refiğ line were competing

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<sup>116</sup> “XX. yüzyılın ikinci yarısında, Türk sineması hala hiçbir insani değer taşımamaktadır. Türk sineması toplumsal yada politik sorunlar bir yana, kendi insanına yabancıdır.” Ali Gevgili, “Çağdaş Sinema Karşısında Türk Sineması” *Yeni Sinema*, no.3 (October-November, 1966), p. 15.

<sup>117</sup> “...yollar konformist olmak istemeyen, yepyeni bir dünyaya bakış açısını, yeni bir anlatım, yeni bir biçim getirmek isteyen sinemacıya kapalıdır. Birinci yolda herşey piyasa kalıplarına bütünüyle boyun eğmekle başlamakta, ikincisinde ise bu kalıplar büyük tavizler pahasına azıcık aralanmaktadır. Öyleyse non-conformiste sinemacı için piyasa dışında olanaklar aramak zorunludur. Dünya sinemasında teknik ve estetik alandaki son gelişmeler çok ucuz film yapmayı mümkün kılmaktadır. Böylece bu yeni sinema kuşakları yapacakları öncü filmler için sanatsever kapital sahipleri bularak, hatta kendi paralarıyla kısa filmelr çevirmek isteklerini gerçekleştirebileceklerdir. Bu girişimler başlangıçta tek tek çıkışlar olarak kalacağından belki yerli sinemayı temsil etmekten uzak kalacaklardır. Ama değerli örnekler verirlerse, sanat adına özenti çukuruna düşmezlerse sinemanın uluslararası olanaklarından yararlanacaklar ve daha da önemlisi Sinematek’in, Sinema klüplerinin, basının desteğiyle ülkede bir “kalite pazarı”nın oluşmasını sağlayacaklar. Bu pazar doğduktan sonra mesele kalmamaktadır.çünkü bu alanda kazanç gören piyasa yapımcıları yalnızca kazanç amacıyla da olsa böyle filmler yapılmasına imkan tanıyacaktlardır.” Onat Kutlar, “Türk Sineması Niçin Olumlu Çıkış Yapamıyor,” *Ant*, no. 11, (March 1967), p. 15.

to fall into line with the Left, although its definition differed on each side. The emphasis on humanism and the humanist values of the common heritage of humanity as a more universalistic approach was more deeply adopted by the Sinematek circle. Nezh Erdoğan attempted to conceptualize this debate by the help of these keywords, as argued that they represent two different cinemas, one of which, Sinematek circle claims was only a program, I give this schematization but this does not reflect the distinction between Sinematek and National Cinema.

### New cinema

Western  
Art cinema  
model: European art cinema  
to create  
auteur policy  
alternative modes of production  
festivals, competitions

### Yeşilçam

domestic  
popular cinema  
model: Hollywood  
to produce  
star system  
capitalist mode of production  
Production-distribution- exhibition<sup>118</sup>

This blood feud between cinema directors and critics led to a big crisis. In 1967,

Semil Tuğrul considered this situation as follows:

Nowadays, movie makers, cinema authors and other people interested in cinema can no longer sit around a table and debate these issues.... One cannot find a person who is not condemned by anybody. Manifestos are published, protest telegrams are dispatched, and worse still, threats are poured out. In this demagogic environment, the feverish irrelevant debates revolving around this issue are rendering even the most constructive, most mild and most positive ideas into a rag.... My point is that Turkish cinema is passing through its most sterile, most complicated and most negative age of its 51 years of history.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Erdoğan, p.262.

<sup>119</sup> “Şimdilerde artık sinemacılarla, filmcilerle, sinema yazarları ve öteki ilgililer bir masanın etrafına toplanıp tartışmıyorlar bile bu konuları... Ortada suçlanmadık insan bırakılmıyor. Bildiriler yayınlıyor, protesto telgrafları çekiliyor; daha da olmazsa tehditler savruluyor. Bu konu etrafında yerli yersini koparılan fırtınalar en yapıcı, en yumuşak, en olumlu fikirleri bile paçavraya çeviriyor demagoji ortamında ...Diyeyeğim Türk sineması 51 yıllık geçmişinin en kısır, en karışık, en olumsuz çağını yaşıyor şu sıralarda.” Semih Tuğrul, “Ant’ın Sinema Soruşturması”, no. 28, (11 July 1967), p.14-15.

### “Genç Cinema”

Now, I will consider the Genç Cinema movement which was initiated by a group of dissidents in the association, and which represents the beginnings of the polarization and fragmentation within the circle.

The National Cinema circle was not the only group which criticized the Sinematek circle. A young group who represented themselves as revolutionary abandoned the Sinematek Circle and began to publish a new cinema journal titled *Genç Sinema* (between October 1968-April 71, sixteenth and the final volume was published twelve days after the March 12 military coup) and accused Sinematek circle of being part of “petty-bourgeois opportunism.” This radical group was at first appropriated by the group; however, with the hardening of the debate, they were excluded and the circle chose to act as if they were indifferent to this group. The Genç Cinema group held that, cinema had to be independent from the given structure of the cinema industry. Cinema was an appropriate device to transform the system and they defended this action by producing films as a part of their political strategy. To make movies is to be considered to make politics. They had a strong commitment to using films as an instrument for social justice and social equality. The performance of the Genç Sinema movement was not very effective, but they continued to believe in the importance of the review and saw it as like *Cahier du Cinéma*, which was a review of the New Wave Circle, the famous cinema circle of the 1960s in France). After a while, leftist cinema reviews such as *Yedinci Sanat*, *Çağdaş Sinema*, *Gerçek Sinema*, *Militan Sinema* appeared all on the scene. All of them attempted to find a new Marxist, materialist cinema independent from the

Yeşilçam cinema industry. They continued to display resistance against censorship as a part of their intellectual responsibilities, because censorship in the cinema was the most important problem of the cinema directors and the period.

The youth desired to be part of an intellectual sphere, but on the other hand, they refused the kind of living that this brings with it, as a result of their rebellious political position. They would rather prefer to be in action than watch films and debates in the small locals of an institution; they wanted to go out to the streets. Bernardo Bertolucci's last film "The Dreamers"<sup>120</sup> was concerned with the fans of the French Cinematheque who turned into romantic revolutionaries. In this atmosphere, Sinematek circle with these other cinema circles and also those inside became part of these debates.

As has been argued, the Political Cinema Movement in the leadership of the Genç Cinema was based on the Türk Sinematek association and Hisar Short Film Competition's fertile ground. On the one hand, the political and romantic atmosphere continued with all of its forcefulness, and the winds of Yılmaz Güney's political cinema began to blow. This will be observed by the effects of these facts and even at the expense of excluding some of the youth from the group of the Genç Cinema who participated at the beginning, but not voluntary to interest with politics. It introduced into the debate of a sharp and political cinema.<sup>121</sup> One of the members of the Genç

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<sup>120</sup> The Dreamers, 2003, "It begins at a protest outside the famed Cinémathèque Française in February 1968 over the ouster of its legendary director Henry Langlois... Bertolucci has said that he's interested in three "revolutions"—cinematic, sexual and political, which were "synchronized" in 1968... *The Dreamers*, suggests that "modern cinema" began at the Cinémathèque Française, through the influence exercised by its varied screenings on the French New Wave directors.", by David Walsh, 2004, Film Review, available at: <http://www.wsws.org/articles/2004/feb2004/drea-f19.shtml>

<sup>121</sup> "Genç Sinema'nın önderlik ettiği Politik Sinema akımı Türk Sinematek'inin ve Hisar Kısa Film yarışmasının oluşturduğu verimli ortamdan doğar. Bir yandan da 68 kuşağının duygusal politik ortamı bütün hızıyla sürmektedir ve Yılmaz Güney'in politik sinema rüzgarları esmeye ve tartışılmaya

Sinema, Jak Şalom, introduced the slogan as “Let’s take our cameras, and go on to the streets” by adopting the approach New Wave circle, but they could not produce a significant numbers of films. March 12, 1971 coup introduced a period of hard oppression. Both Sinematek and other opponent cinema circles were exposed to harsh pressure. The Hisar Short Film Competition and Genç Cinema circle was dispersed.

For the crystalization of the disposition of the Genç cinema circle, I present the long manifesto of the group, which was handed out after a film screening at the Sinematek:

#### The Manifesto of the “Young Filmmakers”

First, It should be once more explained that art develops within society and develops with it, that it is impossible to conceive of it apart from society; the concept of people should be redefined; idioms of the people should be illuminated for the people and in their name of; and it should also be specified that the purpose of the expression of the concept of people is to point out the laboring classes.

Second, Genç Cinema opposed this cinema system, just like it opposed the social system in which the cinema system was located. Both of the systems had fallen wide of the mark to explain the human being, to aim at the human being. They had no any aim apart from exploiting people both materially and spiritually. Therefore, Genç Cinema had to be independent and must not concede any of its fundamental principles on account of any circumstances and reasons.

Third, it should be definitely understood and explained that traditional culture could be beneficial only when it was viewed from a revolutionary perspective and those values that had accumulated so far should be evaluated from this viewpoint. While examining today’s human being, while looking at her, Genç Cinema saw a new human being who had new values and took her as a whole together with both her positive and negative actions. Genç Cinema reflected upon *content and form* (we see a similar attitude like *Cahiers du Cinema*) in an interdependent fashion and from a revolutionary viewpoint. And it believes that these concepts are inseparable.

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*başlanmıştır. Bunların da etkisi kısa sürede gözlenecek, dahası başlangıçta aralarına katılmış ama politik olmayı istemeyen kimi Genç Sinemacıları da dışlamak pahasına son derece keskin ve politik bir sinemanın tartışmasına girilecektir.”* Ömer Tuncer, Türk Belgesel Sineması, Kamera Arkası Grubu, 7 July 2007, available at:

<http://asinema.wordpress.com/2007/07/07/turk-belgesel-sineması/>

Fourth, Genç Cinema was definitely against all Yeşilçams on earth. No matter where it is found on earth, there was in fact one enemy. Universality in this sense was hand in hand with the idea of nationality. Genç Cinema believed that a rigorous, fitting national art that has real artistic values would spontaneously gain universal dimensions.

Last, it should be explained that the filmmaker was incumbent with leaning over the realities of her own country. But Genç Cinema was opposed to all kinds of bigotry and dogmatism reflected into the art works through these realities. An artist freely created her work.

The existence of an organization is definitively necessary, in order for us to wage a war wending its way toward these aforementioned aims. The real and significant matter is the art works and to make it available to the people. And it will be these art works that will write down the real manifesto.

One of the leading figures of the *New Cinema* movement, Ahmet Soner portrays that period in an article written after the death of Onat Kutlar in 1995:

We young enthusiasts of short films set out on from scratch by shooting short films. Our greatest supporter was Onat Brother; he heartened all of us, being all the time next to us. We issued the journal “Young Cinema”. Onat Brother also had his share in the manifesto published in the first volume. That year the youth movement escalated through marches, boycotts and demonstrations and ultimately peaked with the coming of the Sixth Fleet. That day, which would later be referred to as “Bloody Sunday”, people walked from Beyazıt to Taksim and they were attacked while entering the square. Kuzgun Acar, Engin Ayça and I tried to display what was going on with our 16 mm cameras and Ömer Tuncer tried to the same with his 8mm camera. Onat Brother was along with us in those days. We were using the Sinematek Association as a club as a spot to meet. There we were typing our articles and also there we were folding the journals just printed and sending them to subscribers. We were like the staff of the association. We were helping to carry those films to be shown to the cinema and then we were sitting to watch the show... Our radical challenges, our attitudes not willing to compromise led to reactions by some circles. There was some gossip that the Eczacıbaşı capital (Şakir Eczacıbaşı was the head of the Board of Directors of the Sinematek Association) financed and patronized us. Now it was time to gain independence. We rented a place in Galatasaray... (because of a conflict with Onat Kutlar) We waged a war against the Sinematek Association...Our intention was to capture the association in the first plenary meeting. This was a childish idea. Furthermore, even if we had captured it there, we would surely have transformed it into a political party and paved the way for it to be closed. We were distributing leaflets we wrote against the association to the members in front of the gate of the association, and selling our journals at the entrance of the saloons where there were cinema performances... After a while, we issued a declaration in which we accused the association of

“serving imperialism.”<sup>122</sup>

In the turbulent atmosphere of the late 1960s, as is narrated by Ahmet Soner, the Genç Cinema circle was grounded in the political struggle of the students and workers, and reflected the political radicalism of the middle class university students and their intention to reach rural and poor urban people, whom they barely knew.

In addition, I would like to briefly define Islamic tendencies in the films of the period that was symbolized in the “Milli Cinema” circle. Mili Cinema was another cinema circle which was developed as a reaction to the materialist, modernist ideology of the Republic by the reference of an Islamic ideological approach. It was first defended by a cinema club which was established within MTTB (Confederation of Nationalist and Conservative Students), in 1963. The first film of this movement was made by the director Yücel Çakmaklı. His first film, *Birleşen Yollar* (Crossroading Roads), was an adaptation of a novel with islamic undertones by Şule Yüksel Şenler entitled *Huzur Sokağı*. In this film as argued by his director, ithe sharp contradiction that Turkish society was experiencing in the process of modernization,

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<sup>122</sup> “Biz kısa film heveslisi gençler, kısa film çekerek işe sıfırdan başlıyoruz. En büyük destekçimiz Onat Abi, hepimizi yüreklendiriyor, hep yanı başımızda yer alıyor. “Genç Sinema” dergisini yayınlıyoruz. İlk sayıdaki çıkış bildirisinde Onat Abi’nin de payı var... O yıl gençlik hareketi; yürüyüşler, boykotlar ve mitinglerle günden güne tırmanmış, 6. Filo’nun gelişiyle doruk noktasına yükselmişti. “Kanlı Pazar” diye anılacak olan o gün, Beyazıt’tan Taksim’e kadar yürünmüş, yürüyüş kolu meydana girerken saldırıya uğramıştı. Kuzgun Acar, Engin Ayça ve ben 16’lık, Ömer Tuncer ise 8’lik kameralarla olan biteni görüntülemeye çalışmıştık. Onat Ağabey o günlerde hep yanı başımızdaydı. Sinematek Derneği’ni lokal olarak kullanıyorduk. Yazılarımızı orada daktilo ediyor, baskıdan çıkan dergileri yine orada katlayıp abonelere postalıyorduk. Sanki derneğin personeli gibiydik. Gösterilecek filmlerin sinemaya taşınmasına yardımcı oluyor, sonra da oturup gösteri izliyorduk... Radikal çıkışlarımız, uzlaşmaya yanaşmayan tavırlarımız çeşitli çevrelerin tepkisine yol açıyordu. Eczacıbaşı sermayesinin (Sinematek Derneği Yönetim Kurulu Başkanı, Şakir Eczacıbaşı idi) bizleri finanse ve himaye ettiği dedikoduları çıkarılmıştı. Artık bağımsızlığa kavuşmanın zamanı gelmişti, Galatasaray’da bir yer kirladık... (Onat Kutlar ile yaşanan bir gerilim sonrasında)... Sinematek Derneğine savaş açtık. Niyetimiz ilk genel kurulda derneği ele geçirmektir. Çocukça bir düşüncedydi bu. Ayrıca ele geçiresek bile orayı siyasi bir partiye çevirir ve üç günde kapatılmasına yol açardık. Dernek aleyhinde yazdığımız bildirimleri derneğin kapısında üyelere dağıtıyor, film gösterilerinin yapıldığı salonların girişinde dergimizi satıyorduk. (Bir süre sonra) bir bildiri yayınlayarak, derneği “emperyalizme hizmet etmek” ile suçlamıştık...” Ahmet Soner, “Onat İsyancıdır.” *Özgür Ülke*, 12 January 1995, p.10.

the duality between Western mode of life and the Islamic, conservative tradition of the country was depicted. Individuals that symbolized these two different kind of life were experiencing a crisis. Yücel Çakmaklı, Mesut Uçakan, Salih Diriklik were the leading figures of this movement. Çakmaklı argues that their approach to the cinema was informed by nationalist and conservative values, depending on the Islamic tradition. This movement would be more influential after the 1980s with the increasing influence of the Islam in political and cultural life. This movement in the 1980s was transformed to the movement *Beyaz Sinema* (White Cinema)

“The Desire for the Total Demolition of the Cinema Industry”

“Sinematek, after 12 March, was the focus of leftist youth, and it was broken, contrary to general suppositions, as an elite place.”<sup>123</sup> The political attitudes that were currently conducted in Europe in the realm of cinema were adopted by the leftist students in Turkey. By being part of the numerous revolutionary political organizations of the period, after the 1968 university students’ movement, young revolutionaries issued politics, in the line of Maoism or the Soviet communist parties. Some of them, by defining cinema as a weapon of the revolution, attempted to define new roles for cinema. In *Yeni Sinema*, it was argued that, “whereas the bases of the social regime will be changed, the order of the cinema also will be changed. Whether this will continue for a long time, the new generations will continue their unavoidable fight to establish the real cinema.”<sup>124</sup> In the *Yeni Sinema*

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<sup>123</sup>“Dernek 12 Mart’tan sonra solcu gençlerin ilgi odağı olmuş ve beklendiği gibi elit bir mekan olmaktan çıkmıştı.” Aydın Sayman “Onat Kutlar Presente!”, in Onat Kutlar Kitabı, p.214.

reviews that were published towards 1970, the tone of radical and revolutionary approaches increased.

In a manifesto published in *Ant*, on 25 March 1969, the Yeşilçam cinema, by 500 people (living in Çeşme, a town with a population of 4000) was mercilessly criticized and the manifesto came to an end as the following: Our heart is with you revolutionary cinema lovers, you intellectuals siding with us. What could you ask from us better than this? Come on! <sup>125</sup>

In this climate, Yılmaz Güney, for instance, produced popular, commercially successful film which were also hailed by the Sinematek group. The first film of Yılmaz Güney *Seyyit Han* (Seyyit Khan) was appreciated, due to its cinematographic failures by Onat Kutlar, in an article, in *Yeni Sinema*. After this, Güney wrote, directed and performed in his first film *Umut* (Hope) in 1970. The first screening of this film was held in Sinematek's hall in Mis Sokak. After the film, Ömer Lütfi Akad embraced Yılmaz Güney and said, "This is our first realist film."<sup>126</sup>

This film came to be one of the most debated films in Turkish cinema and was evaluated as a milestone. It is also the first and most striking example of how deeply Güney was influenced by Italian Neo-Realism. As argued by Tunca Aslan, Güney's association with Neo-Realism is manifested on screen in his stark portrayal of the lives of ordinary men, of the pitiful, oppressed masses, a portrayal devoid of cliché and artifice. But for Güney, Neo-Realism was more than mere inspiration. In this film, in particular, it became clear that he was also making his own valuable

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<sup>124</sup> "Toplum düzeninin temelleri değişince sinema düzeni de kökten değişecektir. Bu değişme uzun bile sürse yeni kuşaklar gerçek bir sinemayı kurmak için kaçınılmaz savaşlarını yapacaklardır." "İkinci Sayıda" *Yeni Sinema*, no. 2 (April-May, 1966), p.5.

<sup>125</sup> *Ant*, no. 117, 25 March 1969, p.14.

<sup>126</sup> Interview with Giovanni Scognamillo, (May 2007, Istanbul).

contribution to the heritage. According to Yılmaz Güney, art was the most important device for class struggle and its function was to motivate people to think about political and social issues. Güney dominated and also was affected by the Sinematek circle. “In other words, the Sinematek association, by defending the possibility to reach good and beautiful, in the “stormy order” of the *Yeşilçam* preferred to rely on the youth, a director like Yılmaz Güney who attempted to absent from the *Yeşilçam* conditions<sup>127</sup>

Yılmaz Güney and Ömer Lütfi Akad (first he had participated in the declaration of the *Yeşilçam* cinema directors who did not want to collaborate with Sinematek, but then he had very good relations with the circle.) were adopted by the circle and directors like Erden Kıral, Ömer Kavur, and Nuri Bilge Ceylan were deeply affected by the circle. Onat Kutlar personally participated in the scenario studies of Erden Kıral’s film *Bereketli Topraklar Üzerinde* (Upon Fruitful Lands-1979) and Ömer Kavur’s film *Yusuf ile Kenan* (Yusuf and Kenan-1979). In the 1980s this group of young directors tried hard to differentiate their films from those of popular cinema: although they made their films in *Yeşilçam*, they sought recognition from international art cinema institutions. Erden Kıral, Ali Özgentürk, Tunç Başaran and Ömer Kavur were the leading figures of these young directors.<sup>128</sup>

It can be argued that accusations about the Sinematek utopianism or detachment from the realities of filmmaking in Turkey were unfounded, while Sinematek milieu was a seedbed for Yılmaz Güney art, and his followers like Şerif

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<sup>127</sup> “*Yeşilçam*’ın “bozuk düzen”i içinde daha iyiye, daha güzele ulaşmanın olası olmadığını bir önyargı gibi ileri sürerek, gençlere, Yılmaz Güney gibi *Yeşilçam* ortamında “kaçak” güreşen bir sinemacıya bel bağlamıştı.” Interview with Jak Şalom, (May 2007).

<sup>128</sup> Nezh Erdoğan, p.263.

Gören, Ali Özgentürk, and Erden Kıral. However many cinema critics will argue that these attempts were not sufficient and Turkish cinema will be in a crisis in the late 1970s and the late 1980s.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DUALITIES IN THE EVOLUTION OF CINEMA DEBATES

As far as the cinema in Turkey was concerned, it is necessary to define contradictions or dualities shaped around concept-pairs such as; the East vs. the West; nativity vs. Universalism; individualism vs. Populism; and economically developed vs. underdeveloped countries. Cinema debates flourished along with these dualisms. For instance, for the Milli Cinema circle, the West, for the Sinematek circle, the hegemony of developed countries, and to produce films in an underdeveloped country, for the Genç Cinema circle individualism were the main problems to be transcended for Turkish cinema. In this chapter, Sinematek and other cinema circles are defined as they adopted some of these dualities as the main axis to debate problems of Turkish cinema. The sections, *Internationalization and Native Place-making*, *The Accusation of Avant-garde Art with Individualization*, *Overcoming Backwardness in the Turkish Cinema and in Turkey* are presented to reflect the debates and discussions in which the association participated, with the help of some theoretical dualities and political projects that were dominant during the decade.

#### Internationalization and Native Place-Making

The tension between writers and directors can be considered in a similar vein, with the clash or the debate between universality and nativity or, in other words, internationalization and native place-making.

I would like to identify the themes, universality and nativity in the theoretical and political background, according to my observations of current literature. First of all, internationalism and nativism are often cited in a binary relationship as the *raison d'être* of one another, and several scholars have noted the tenacious connection between internationalism and native place-making.<sup>129</sup> As Walter Benjamin argues, the conception of the eternal recurrence of “tradition” and the belief in progress, “internationalization,” are complementary, if refractive.<sup>130</sup> As Vlatsoz argues in a similar way, “modernization always involves the invention of new traditions to stabilize itself... Modernization and the invention of tradition proceed together in a nested relationship.”<sup>131</sup>

The post-colonial discourse<sup>132</sup> after the decolonialization process attempted to show the Western psychological and philosophical categories which are used to define the distinctiveness of the two geographies like East or West. For example, intuition, sentiments, the essentiality of the East versus rationality and the knowledge of the West are the main points of these orientalist intellectuals for defining the diversity of the East and West, but as mentioned, the invention of tradition always

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<sup>129</sup> Jennifer Robertson, “It Takes a Village, Internationalization and Nostalgia in Postwar Japan”, in *Mirror of Modernity, Invented Traditions of Modern Japan*, ed., Stephen, Vlastos, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), p. 110.

<sup>130</sup> Walter Benjamin, in Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (Cambridge, Mass. : MIT Press, 1991), pp. 108-109.

<sup>131</sup> Stephan Vlatsoz, “Tradition: Past/Present Culture and Modern Japanese History” in *Mirror of Modernity, Invented Traditions of Modern Japan*. p.112.

<sup>132</sup> See *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies*, ed., Neil Lazarus (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004); see also *Colonial Discourse, Postcolonial Theory*, edited by Francis Barker, Peter Hulme, and Margaret Iversen (Manchester [England]; New York: Manchester University Press; New York: Distributed exclusively in the USA and Canada by St. Martin's Press, 1996).

goes hand in hand with the modernization process; therefore, just like universalism, the invention of tradition was also a product of and central to Turkish modernization. The absolute ontological nature of these completely different cases, like East and West, has been questioned by many scholars, and Orientalism or Self-orientalism<sup>133</sup> are some of the salient concepts in criticizing such intellectual schematizations. Süha Ünsal writes that:

Universality is a contradictory concept. It is exclusive, ethno-centric, oppressive and totalitarian. In the contemporaneous phase of human civilization, the West is universal insofar as it imposes its own concepts on everyone as the universal. Against this argument of the modern Western civilization, a great literature has been produced by the Third World imagination which points to modern Western civilizations' exclusive, ethno-centric, oppressive and even totalitarian character. However, even when one only considers the political culture of the geography in which we live, it can be easily seen that the native thinking was as much exclusive, ethno-centric, oppressive and despotic as the universal thinking.<sup>134</sup>

As is implied in this quotation, the absolutization of these concepts for different geographical, social and economic entities may prevent us from seeing the similarities of the different countries of the Eastern or the Western world. The differentiation of these units, like the East and West, developed and underdeveloped countries defined as analytic tools is one of the conceptualization of modernization theories and Orientalist tendencies, insofar as the "individual," "novelty,"

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<sup>133</sup> See Edward W. Said. *Orientalism* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1995). See also, *Orientalism: A Reader*, ed A.L. Macfie (New York: New York University Press, 2000); and Reina Lewis, *Gendering Orientalism: Race, Femininity and Representation* (London; New York: Routledge, 1996).

<sup>134</sup> "Evrensellik çelişkili bir kavramdır; dışlayıcıdır, etnik merkezlidir, baskıcı ve hatta totaliterdir. Ama insan uygarlığının bugünkü aşamasında, en azından kendi kalıplarını herkese dayatabildiği için evrenselidir. Batı düşüncesinin bu iddiasına karşın Çağdaş Batı uygarlığının dışlayıcı, etnik merkezci, baskıcı, totaliter evrenselliğinin eleştirisine dair "Üçüncü Dünya" tahayyülünün ürettiği geniş bir külliyat vardır. Oysa sadece yaşadığımız coğrafyanın siyasi kültürü düşünüldüğünde bile yerli düşüncenin de en az evrensel düşünce kadar dışlayıcı, etnik merkezci baskıcı ve despotik olduğunu kolaylıkla görülebilir." Süha Ünsal, "Neden Onların Oksidentalistleri Yok", *Birikim*, no.111-112, (July- August, 1998), p. 58.

“citizenship consciousness,” “historical consciousness,” “urban life,” and other numerous concepts were absent in the Third World countries or in the East.<sup>135</sup> Finally, I address Theodore Adorno, for the definition of the concept of authenticity. Adorno states that, “all authentic products and experiences, in the age of capitalism, by being isolated from its context and value, are subjected to reproduction, and the authentic is reproduced by thinking for itself.”<sup>136</sup>

In the light of these definitions, we can analyze the status of Turkey. The concept of universalism has always been at the total determination and the hegemony of Western civilization, especially for the most part of Turkish intellectuals. Moreover, internationalization is not antithetical to “Turkish culture”; rather, it is both a product of and central to the ongoing (since the Tanzimat period) formation of a national cultural identity. But, on the other hand, the main theme of this process was the differences between Eastern and Western ethics and culture, an issue that has been the subject of an intense controversy among Turkish intellectuals since the Tanzimat period. The peculiarity of Turkish society and its culture, based on its tradition, is the main argument of another theoretical position that claims to stress the incompatibility of the two different paths; that is, the defender and producer of the universal and material culture, namely, the West, and the East, which defines itself at the same time as the West desires to identify the East and its concepts, but according to these intellectuals East should identify itself with its own set of values, not

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<sup>135</sup> See Bryan Turner, *Orientalism, Postmodernism and Globalism* (London; Newyork, Routledge: 1994).

<sup>136</sup> “Adorno’ya göre bütün otantik ürün ve tecrübeler, kapitalizm çağında, değer ve bağlamlarından kopartularak yeniden üretilmeye tabidir; ve otantik olan, ampirik bir sahicilik/sahihlikte kendinden bulunan bir şey değildir; onu işleyerek, üzerine düşünerek, eleştirel bir yeniden üretimle varedilebilir.” Quoted in Tanıl Bora, “Sol ve Yerlilik meselesi,” *Birikim*, no. 111-112, Suhrkamp, 1973, Aesthetische Theorie, p.249.

according to those of the West.

Throughout the history of Republican Turkey, thinkers of this theoretical position like; Peyami Safa, İsmail Hakkı Baltacıođlu and as mentioned Kemal Tahir have defended moral and national values in line with the Republican modernization to show the handicaps of this process. Similarly, directors of National Cinema reactively accused the innovative intellectuals who desired to embrace Western or universal values in the form and the content of their works, of being western admirers and of being the producers of the ideology of individualism. “Not being a native,” “disconnection from the country” and “not setting foot in the land of this country”, were among the criticisms that the Turkish directors launched at Sinematek heart and soul. These suggestions implied that the Left and Sinematek as a conveyor of universalism were not authentic. The Sinematek circle, in the context of the debate that went between universalism and nativism, denying to some extent the emphasis on authenticity and morality, and Turkish peculiar position against Western countries, was of the opinion that the audience was worthy of the existing universal cinema products, that to watch them could produce improvements in Turkish cinema.

Although they were censored and interrupted, due to the comparison of certain films that came in Turkey like *Rocco and His Brothers*, (Luchino Visconti), *L'eclisse* (Michelangelo Antonioni), etc... with respect to appreciation, to aesthetic values, it was unavoidable to reveal in a sharp manner, contradictions due to social and political causes which had existed since the Tanzimat era, between a certain number of people who preferred examples of incoming foreign films, in very difficult conditions and people who liked Turkish films.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> “Kırılmış, sansüre uğramış olmakla birlikte Türkiye’de gösterime giren yabancı filmlerin kimilerinin (*Rocco ve kardeşleri*, *L'Eclisse* (Antonioni) vb) Türk filmleri ile karşılaştırılmaları, beğeni açısından, yani estetik değerler arasında seçim yapılması açısından eninde sonunda Türk filmleri ile karşılaştırılmaları, beğeni açısından, yani estetik değerler arasında seçim yapılması açısından eninde sonunda Türk filmlerini izleyen ve beğenen kesimle, yabancı sinemaların Türkiye’ye güç koşullarda da olsa girebilen örneklerini yeğleyen kesim arasında eninde sonunda, belki de Tanzimat’tan beri varolan tarihsel ve toplumsal nedenler yüzünden çelişkileri, keskin bir biçimde açığa çıkaracağı kaçınılmazdı.” Interview with Jak Şalom, (April 2006, via internet).

Refiğ, in contradistinction to the views of the Sinematek, made a similar distinction between the West and the East, just like the thinkers who emphasized the particularities of the Eastern countries. “My main source and support in the formation of the National Cinema concept has been Kemal Tahir and his novels. The most important influence of Kemal Tahir in my life has been his approach that Turkish society has followed a very different historical path than Western societies, even an opposite historical evolution scheme.”<sup>138</sup>

Additionally, we come face to face with the argument that class struggle was deemed incompatible with the Turkish experience by the National Cinema circle. For instance, it is argued that the class struggle in Erksan’s and Refiğ’s films might be assumed as being converted into the struggle not only between classes but also between western and eastern life styles.<sup>139</sup> In this context, Halit Refiğ argued that, the Eastern-Western conflict is above the class struggle in Turkey, the real struggle is to defend our values against the values of the West. The approach that art is universal is one of the expressions of cultural imperialism.<sup>140</sup>

Refiğ’s approach can be considered as the invention of the authentic values of the East against the universality of the West as they were very functional for the political and cultural needs of the day. Refiğ emphasized the conflict between the two different cases in order to authenticize Turkish art by reflecting upon it. And via the invention of the peculiar historical values, in his articles, as well as in his films

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<sup>138</sup> “*Ulusal sinema kavramının ortaya çıkmasında en büyük kaynağım ve desteğim Kemal Tahir ve romanları idi. Kemal Tahir’in benim üzerimdeki en büyük etkisi, Türk toplumunun Batı toplumlarından çok farklı, hatta çoğu zaman karşıt bir tarihi gelişme çizgisine sahip olduğu temel düşüncesi idi.*” Halit Refiğ, “Türk Sinemasının Yükselişi ve Çöküşü Üzerine Bazı Düşünceler”, in *Türk Sineması Üzerine Düşünceler* (Doruk Yayıncılık, Ankara, 1996), p. 184.

<sup>139</sup> Bülent Tunga Yılmaz, (M.A. Boğaziçi University, 2002).

<sup>140</sup> See Halit Refiğ, *Ulusal Sinema Kavgası*, (Hareket yayınları: İstanbul, 1971).

supported his political and subjective position against the Sinematek circle, who stressed universalism: “In Turkey, theatre, painting, music which were the products of the westernization policy of the state, are naturally in a very different line with the cinema which was born from the body of the people and passively resisting the Westernization process. Therefore, for our intellectuals educated in the Western culture, there is not a thing called the Turkish cinema.... As well as for the westerner, there is not a Turkish art...”<sup>141</sup> Finally, he added: “Turkish Cinema will be based on our countries and our people historical values, rather than on the experiences of the foreign countries.”<sup>142</sup>

As mentioned above, the Sinematek circle was also part of these debates by defining themselves as the defenders of the universal values of the cinema. In the 1960s, the intellectuals, who were aware of the people’s suffering and ignorance, were concerned with the economic and social problems of the country. Their main goals were to educate and to improve the cultural habits of the ordinary, people who were in terrible economic, social, and cultural conditions. Sinematek circle described itself as a cultural institution aiming to improve people’s tastes. This attitude of the Sinematek line was more akin to the cultural agendas of the republican elite, although they were aware of the problems the cultural and economic policies of the Early Republican era. If we adress to the post-colonial theories, we encounter with the position that a self colonizer elite, but populist tendencies and a search for the values of the Anatolian people balanced this position.

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<sup>141</sup> “Türkiye’de devletin batılılaşma siyasetinin ürünleri olan tiyatro, resim, müzik gibi sanatlar ile batılılaşmaya pasif bir direnme gösteren halkın bünyesinden doğan sinema pek tabiidir ki çok ayrı çizgide bulunmaktadır. Bu yüzden Batı kültüründe yetişmiş aydınlarımız için Türk sineması diye bir şey yoktur...Tıpkı Batılılar için Türk sanatı diye bir şeyin olmadığı gibi” Refiğ, 75.

<sup>142</sup> “Türk sineması yabancı ulusların deneyine değil, kendi ülkemizin ve halkımızın tarihsel özelliklerine dayanacaktır.” Ibid., p.59.

Although the culture of cinema was not very developed, Yeşilçam cinema, also called the *gecekondu* [shanty town] industry which succeeded at reaching the people and this motivated intellectuals and directors to search for alternatives to the current cinema industry. In this process, they adopted the Western cultural heritage with the argument that participation of Turkey to the western culture was necessary. This can be seen clearly in these quotations: “Time will show us that in order to analyze the complex structure of the undeveloped countries, there was a need for a strong Western culture.”<sup>143</sup> In addition, it was defined as hostility to the Western mode of production: “Without doubt, the cinema that is related to the Western mode of production by its interests, but which is made by those claiming to turn their backs to Western culture, is not a national cinema. As it is not national, the Turkish cinema has no place in World cinema.”<sup>144</sup> They defended universalism or mainly European Art cinema against the Yeşilçam cinema industry due to its numerous shortcomings. We can see here an approach that questions the Western mode of production, but they do not have a problem with Western cultural institutions.

These debates were based on what had to be done to affect people’s cultural lives. They saw the gap between intellectuals and the people. The universal (Sinematek circle) or the authentic character (National Cinema circle) of this cinema were regarded as a necessity to reach people by the two sides to make a good connection and to close the distance among the people and the intellectuals. Kemal Tahir considered that the Turkish cinema was successful in reaching people through

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<sup>143</sup> “Zaman Türkiye’de az gelişmiş ülkelerin karmaşık yapısını görebilmek için güçlü bir Batı kültürüne ihtiyaç olduğunu gösterecekti.” Introduction, *Yeni Sinema*, no. 6 (April-May 1967), p.3.

<sup>144</sup> “Batı üretim tarzına çıkarlarıyla bağlı ancak batı kültürüne sırt çevirenlerin sineması şüphesiz ulusal olmayan bir sinemadır. Ulusal olmadığı için Türk sinemasının dünya sinemasında yeri yoktur.” Ibid.

the films by Refiğ and Erksan. Defending the National Cinema thesis, he said: “Turkish cinema, which makes ignorant people the audience of the cinema, is, even in this respect, at a much more important level to which my works could not reach in Turkey, that is, it is at a very serious point.”<sup>145</sup>

Refiğ asked the question, “Will cinema close the gap between the people and intellectuals? Or will it widen this gap more than it is today?”<sup>146</sup>, and made identification between the state, its people and their tradition. He also attempted to ascribe to cinema some nationalist missions in order to close this gap. He did not criticize the national policies of the state; conversely, the Sinematek circle maintained a distance from the nationalist policies of the state. In this period, it should be noted that by the increasing influence of the extreme fascist organizations against leftist students, nationalism was flourished against the anti-imperialist ideological positions to balance the motivations to adopt the leftist ideologies of the time. Ferit who was one of the regular members of the Sinematek criticized the intention to be against all the products of the Western culture by defending the nationalist culture.

In recent years, one can see in our country as well as in all underdeveloped countries that there is a tendency to deny the West en masse. Today most of our intellectuals are talking about the imperialist features of Western culture; they also mention that there is not only an economic colonialism, but also a cultural colonialism, and conclude that we should wage a war against the colonialists in this front as well. In other words, erstwhile Western admiration en masse is on the verge of leaving its place to hostility to the West en masse.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> “Büyük şehirlerimizi çepeçevre kuşatan ve adına nedense gecekondular dediğimiz köylerle her biri köyden başka bir şey sayılamayacak kasabalarımızın çoğu, okuma bilmez haklarını sinema seyircisi kılan ve orada tutan Türk filmleri, salt bu bakımdan bile, benim sanatımın Türkiye’de ulaşmadığı çok önemli bir yerlerde, çok ciddi bir yerlerde.” Refiğ, p. 70.

<sup>146</sup> “Sinema halk ile aydınlar arasındaki uçurumu kapatacak mıdır? Yoksa daha da mı açacaktır?” Ibid., p. 60.

I will say that the imperialist Western culture is not imperialist in its general features and that we can solve our problems only with the methods brought in by this culture. Without doubt, this is not copying of the West as it has been understood until today. This means understanding this culture, implementing its methods to our own structure, enriching this culture with our own and thus appropriating it. Arriving at a clear synthesis is what we have to carry out today.<sup>148</sup>

A similar political approach, was adopted by the circle members, at least by a significant part of them. It can be seen that they were more inclusive by exceeding the emphasis on nativity and authenticity; with an internationalist attitude, in the search for universal values, taking into account the fact that these were shared and produced by the socialist and capitalist geographies of the world. These quotations will be considered as an alternative position to the National Cinema perspective:

Nazım Hikmet once said that “I see myself as a heir not only of the Turkish culture, but all the cultures of humanity.” When I say culture, I mean not only Greek and Renaissance culture, but also the cultures of Asia, Africa, and America. Openness to all experiments, settling account with all experiments is the duty of great and courageous artists.... True artists do not accept the narration of either the West and the East or of the dead traditions, and they do not dance to their pipe. These are the fears and nightmares of those who cannot be artists.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> “Son yıllarda bütün az gelişmiş ülkelerde olduğu gibi memleketimizde de Batı’yı bir toptan yadsıma eğilimi göze çarpmaktadır. Bugün birçok aydınımız Batı kültürünün emperyalist niteliklerinden bahsetmekte, yalnız iktisadi sömürücülüğün değil, aynı zaman da bir kültür sömürücülüğünün de yürürlükte olduğundan, bu alanda da sömürücülere karşı savaşmaktan söz edilmektedir. Yani bir zamanki toptan Batı hayranlığı bugün yerini toptan bir Batı düşmanlığına bırakmak üzeredir.” Ferit Edgü, “Kültür Emperyalizmi Üzerine Konuşmalar,” *Ant*, no. 17, (25 April 1967), p.15.

<sup>148</sup> “Emperyalist Batı’nın kültürünün genel çizgileri içinde emperyalist olmadığını ve sorunlarımızı ancak bu kültürün bize kazandıracağı yöntemlerle çözebileceğimizi söyleyeceğim. Hiç şüphesiz bu bugüne değin olduğu gibi, Batı’yı kopye etmek demek değildir. Bu kültürü anlamaya çalışmak, onun yöntemlerini kendi yapımıza uygulamak ve bu kültürü kendi kültürümüzle zenginleştirmektir, ve böylece kendimize mal etmek. Açıkcası bir bileşime varmak, bugün başarmak zorunda olduğumuz budur.” Ferit Edgü, “Kültür Emperyalizmine Nasıl Karşı Çıkılır?” *Ant*, no.19, (9 May 1967), p.14.

<sup>149</sup> “Kendini sadece Türk kültürünün değil, insanlığın tüm kültürlerinin mirasçısı bir kimse gibi görüyorum” diyordu Nazım Hikmet. Kültürden söz ettiğim zaman sadece Grek ya da Rönesans kültürünü değil, Asyanın, Afrikanın ve Amerikanın da kültürlerini kastediyorum. Bütün deneylere açıklık, bütün deneylerle hesaplaşma büyük ve yürekli sanatçıların harcıdır... Gerçek sanatçılar için ne batının, ne doğunun, ne de ölü geleneklerin anlatımını benimsemek, onların dümen suyunda eser vermek söz konusu değildir. Bunlar sanatçı olmayanların korkuları, karabasanlarıdır.” Onat Kutlar, “Ulusal Türk Sineması ve Çıkış Yolları Üzerine Soruşturma” *Ant*, no. 80, (9 July 1968), p.14.

If we oppose the West in the cultural field, that means we oppose many things. We should be very careful in this regard. We not only oppose Hegel and Descartes, but also Marx and Engels.... If these figures are not opposed, if they are not going to be opposed, then who is going to be opposed? Are not they an indispensable part of Western culture?<sup>150</sup>

Not to fear the West, to resist its culture, politics and imperialist coercion. But on the other hand, not to avoid the values of the Western culture, the values of Descartes, Hegel and Marx. Secondly, we should look without fear not only into the Western culture, but also into our own.<sup>151</sup>

The quotations from the notable intellectuals Onat Kutlar, Güzin Dino and Pertev Nail Boratav reflect the search for a synthesis between Western and national cultures, and an awareness about the socialist thinkers of the West. Pertev Naili Borotav was an important social scientist, her views could not be identified with the Sinematek circle, but Ferit Edgü and Güzin Dino were significant members of the Association and writers of the *Ant* Journal. Borotav role for this group is to accomodate with one of the more important figure of the intellectual realm, and its view, in this matter were relevant to reflect the attitude of the Sinematek Line. Hasan Ali Yücel and interestingly Yahya Kemal (the so called Turkish Humanists) were also defenders of such a synthensis, and thus the debate transcends a simple leftist and conservative divide, as it is known Yahya Kemal was also defined as one of the symbolic figure of the Turkish conservatism.

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<sup>150</sup> “Biz Batı’ya karşı kültür alanında cephe alacaksak çok şeye karşı cephe alıyoruz. Bu konuda çok dikkatli olmak gerek. Yalnız Hegel’e, Descartes’a karşı cephe almıyoruz, Marx’a, Engels’e karşı da cephe alıyoruz... Eğer bunlara karşı cephe alınmıyorsa, alınmayacaksa kime karşı cephe alınacak, Batı kültürünün bunlar ayrılmaz birer parçası değil mi?” Güzin Dino, “Emperyalist Niteliği Olmayan Kültür”, *Ant*, no. 23, (6 June 1967), p.15.

<sup>151</sup> “Batı’dan korkmamak, kültürüne karşı olsun, politikasına karşı olsun emperyalist baskısına direnmek. Ama beri taraftan, batı kültürünün değerlerinden, Descartes’ından, Hegel’inden, Marx’ından çekinmemek İkincisi yalnız Batı kültürüne değil, kendi geçmiş kültürümüze de korkmadan, ürkmekten eğilmek gerek.” Pertev Naili Boratav, “Kültür eksikliğimizi Nasıl Tamamlarız?”, *Ant*, no. 24 (13 June 1967), p.15.

In the light of the above-mentioned facts, it is possible to identify some key points about the political debates of the period. The conceptualization of the problems of modernity as appeared in the contradiction between the East and the West, universal vs. nativity, and the role which cinema could play in socio-political developments despite the enormous size of the current cinema industry enables us to see the general political atmosphere as crystallized on the micro level of this cultural institution and in other cinema circles. Questions like what kind of modernity or civilization, alternative imaginations for modernity and reactions that appeared in the flux of this transition period drove cinema, which was deemed the most “modern” of artistic forms, at the heart of these debates. These issues will be discussed in the next chapter in their worldwide context.

### The Sociality of Art and the Freedom of the Artist

#### The Accusation of the Avant-garde Art for Individualization

“The self feeding by itself dies by being strangled.”<sup>152</sup>

Fellini

In the 1960s, cinema increasingly took into consideration the problems that individuals were facing in their everyday lives, their uncanniness, their desperation in the flux of modern life, bringing the modernist perspective of the novel and poetry to the realm of cinema. Philosophical and theoretical debates about the constitutive and the reflective notions of cinema and its language, and the peculiarity of its

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<sup>152</sup> *Kendi kendiyle beslenen ben boğazlanmış olarak ölüür.*

narrative system especially flourished. The relation between Social realist art and modernist art, (which tends to penetrate into the inner world of the individual and aims at manifesting the desperation of modern life) has always been problematic, and this interdependent relation has been a tension that has determined the whole Western art. These tensions have led to the troublesome relation between the political and the artistic fields. On the one hand, the creativity, articulated as a distinctive quality supposed to define the producer of a creation, the independence and autonomy of the artist; and on the other, his/her social responsibilities, which he/she ascribes to herself/himself, and his/her will to intervene into the political field. These two sets of aspects represent the extreme positions between which most artists frequently oscillate. This imaginary distinction, the autonomy of art, or the determination of the social field over the artistic field (artistic products being regarded as the periodical representations of the social context) gave rise to these consequences: first, the isolation of the artistic field from other aspects of life as a surviving strategy for artists; second, seeing art as an outcome of social relations. In my opinion, the collective consciousness of the social agents should be conceived as a central factor. The role of art can be reduced neither to social relations, though it is itself a social relation, nor to the aesthetic creativity of some “genius” artists, though again it is a creative product. I posit that art emerged as a result of the tension between commitment and the endeavor to self-realization in an individualistic manner, which is determined on the final stage according to whether the artist has any collective, that is social, identity or not. These theoretical positions and dualities were relevant to understand the debate about the accusations of the individualism for the Sinematek members

Hence, the Sinematek Association and its circle's position in this debate were very significant with respect to the accusations of cosmopolitanism and rootlessness, as was discussed in the previous section. In the light of the *Yeni Sinema* reviews, by relying upon my interviews with the members of the Sinematek circle, I can maintain that they were in a very unstable position amid this controversy. As a consequence of thinking that cinema had universal values; they did not turn down the modernist perspective that stressed the inner life and existential problems of the individual. Moreover, they introduced a reactive position as a response to the accusations that they were "put of a touch with the land of this country." With respect to this matter, they summarized the position of the defenders of the People's Cinema, in other words, National Cinema as such: "Cinema is an art that is produced for the masses. The snobbism of a few intellectuals does not interest us. The likings of the people interest us. We have to express our thoughts in the language that they comprehend. We cannot produce films like *Last Year in Marienbad*.<sup>153</sup> Our films will be coherent to the context of Turkish society."<sup>154</sup> But they attributed to the approach of National Cinema circle a clear insincerity as can be seen in the quotation:

To make participant large groups of spectators who were conditioned to the worst of the films over the years to the concept of 'interest' is a hypocritical slyness. Therefore, they want to both protect their own interest, but also to gain the support of revolutionary circles, by taking cover under the concept of people. In any use of the people concept, it was not confronted with such

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<sup>153</sup> Original name *L'Année dernière à Marienbad*, 1961, Alain Renais, by the help of Alain Robbe-Grillet, one of the pioneer films of the movement of Nouveau Roman.

<sup>154</sup> "Sinema yığınlar için yapılan bir sanattır. Bir avuç aydının bilgiçlikleri ve batılı beğenileri bizi ilgilendirmiyor. Bizi halkın beğenileri ilgilendiriyor. Düşüncelerimizi onların anlayacağı bir dille anlatmak zorundayız. Biz "Geçen Yıl Marienbad'da" gibi filmler yapamayız. Filmlerimiz Türk toplumunun yapısına uygun olacaktır." "İkinci Sayıda" (In the Second Volume), *Yeni Sinema* no.2 (April-May,1966), p.5.

shrewdness. Both, in the ‘people’s theatre’ of Vilar, and also in Lorca “Barracada”...In Turkey, “people’s cinema” will certainly be done.<sup>155</sup>

As mentioned, Sinematek was a heterogeneous space, there existed elitist tendencies along with populist intentions; and political identity which focused on social factors, and socialization in an individual manner went hand in hand. Thus a synthesis of these two approaches, the role of social realities and personal emancipation and creativity must be defined. Therefore, I argue that the Sinematek members had a strong tendency not to see art and cinema as either a mirror on which one can see the reflections of social relations, or as an aesthetic creativity of some “genius” artists.

In 1974, in an interview made with Vedat Türkali in the journal *Yedinci Sanat* [Seventh Art], the young cinema critic vehemently criticized the Sinematek Association by considering modernist art with a sarcastic approach:

Question: Films of the socialist countries that were screened at Sinematek have never been in an extreme socialist ideology. Excluding one or two films by Eisenstein, rather than having a socialist perspective, they have been individualistic films imitated by looking at the problems of the Western capitalist countries, concerning depression and war... Is it possible to say that the Sinematek event, apart from satisfying the hunger of a few petit-bourgeois intellectuals, just as in the whole of capitalist Europe, to see films whose “artistic!” characteristics were predominantly high, contributed to a political cinema movement which can be forged in Turkey?<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> “Yıllar boyu en kötü filmlerle şartlandırılan en geniş seyici topluluklarını sonra kalkıp bir “çıkar” kavramına ortak yapmak çift yanlı bir kurnazlıktır. Böylece hem kendi çıkarlarını korumak, hem de halk kavramının kurnazlığına sığınarak devrimci çevrelerin desteğini kazanmak istiyorlar. Hiç bir halk sanatı kullanımında böylesine bir açığözlülüğe raslanmamıştır. Ne Vilar’ın “Halk Tiyatro”sunda ne de Lorca’nın “Barraca”sında... Türkiye’de elbette bir “Halk Sineması” yapılacaktır..” Ibid., p.3.

<sup>156</sup> Bir şeyi hatırlatmakta fayda olabilir mi acaba? Sinematek’te gösterilen sosyalist ülke filmleri fazla sol ideolojide olmadı hiçbir zaman. Ayzenştayn’ın bir iki filmi dışında çoğu sosyalist anlayıştan çok batılı kapitalist ülkelerin sorunlarına özentisi, bireyci bunalım ya da savaş filmleriydi bunların... Sinematek olayının bütün kapitalist Avrupa’da olduğu gibi bir takım küçük burjuva aydınların “sanat”! niteliği üstün basan filmler görme susuzluklarını giderme çabasından başka, Türkiye’de oluşturulabilecek bir politik sinema hareketine katkıda bulunduğu söylenebilir mi sizce?” Vedat Türkali, 1985, p.58.

Meanwhile, as Refiř argued: “Every artistic production along with its creator is conditioned by society’s mode of production and the economic structure in which it is produced. Contrary to general suppositions, the creator does not have a boundless freedom. Therefore, artistic products and the philosophy of aesthetic of the West have to be considered as a result of the mode of production and the economic structure of the society where they were produced.”<sup>157</sup> Refiř, with respect to the argument that asserts the discrepant modes of production and economic structures of the countries, intended to legitimize the peculiar conditions of the Eastern artist who was determined by his country’s social and economic context.<sup>158</sup> He emphasized the limited freedom of the Eastern or Turkish artist and as his argument went, these limits could not be surpassed by adopting Western artistic values. He based his views on Niyazi Berkes’s argument in *Occidentalism, Nationalism, and Social Revolutions*:

“Westernization is a daydream, a recurring reflection of the social deformation founding its expression among intellectuals that the intellectuals of backward countries create in order to palliate the feeling of inferiority stemming from seeing advanced societies against the fact that their own countries cannot develop. Westernization is an individualist utopia of the

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<sup>157</sup> “Her sanat eseri yaratıcısıyla birlikte içinden çıktığı toplumun üretim ilişkileri ve ekonomik yapısı ile şartlandırılmıştır. Çok kere sanıldığıının tam aksine, hiçbir sanatçının eserini yaratmada sınırsız bir özgürlüğü yoktur. Bu bağlamda da Batının sanat eserleri ve estetik felsefesi içinde üretildikleri toplumların ekonomik yapısı ve üretim ilişkilerinin bir sonucu olarak düşünölmelidir.” Refiř, p.65.

<sup>158</sup> It seems to me that there was a similarity with the debate regards Turkish cinema in the 1960s and another one which echoed later in the 1980s: Frederic Jameson, in his article “Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism,” argued that the Third World Literature is based on national allegory and its relation with social events is not similar to the modern canonical literature. The sentence famously quoted from his article is this: “Third-world texts, even those which are seemingly private and invested with a properly libidinal dynamic necessarily project a political dimension in the form of ‘political allegory.’” Frederic Jameson’s argument, which attempted to show the distinctiveness of the countries’ economic or historical circumstances to be reflected to the artistic productions, was realized or defended by intellectuals like Refiř in the field of cinema, and also including all artistic products, with a very similar comparison or separation twenty years before that the argument would be defended, in a coherence with Jameson’s assertion. For instance, Refiř believed in the incoherence of Western products dealing with the libidinal dynamics of the western individual to the Turkish case.

intellectual, which has never actualized anywhere, and which only lends itself to reactionism.”<sup>159</sup>

Similarly, Frantz Fanon discussed the way in which one’s identity in the public sphere and one’s identity in the private sphere could become dissonant, leading to what he called dual consciousness. His examples dealt with issues of colonialism, and the way in which colonized subjects are forced to publicly adopt a foreign culture, while privately they maintain their identity as their own culture.<sup>160</sup> This dual consciousness was the cause behind Refiğ’s argument, criticizing the Western culture that led to a duality in the lives of the Turkish people. This dual consciousness led to the accusation of some intellectuals who were estranged to the realities of their countries, and defining themselves like European modernist intellectuals. This dilemma of the Third World intellectual was also relevant for all the cinema circles of Turkey in the 1960s. But as it will be debated concepts like avant- garde were formulated by the theoreticians of the Western countries, but these concepts were also useful for Third World countries.

The concept of avant-garde is intrinsically European- perhaps, indeed, a differentiating feature of European cinema in the post First World War era.<sup>161</sup> In this context, it is argued that the assumed peculiarities of Turkey led to incommensurability with Western art, and required different standards of

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<sup>159</sup> “Batıcılık geri kalmış toplumların aydınlarının, kendi toplumlarının kalkınamaması gerçeğinin karşısında, ilerlemiş toplumları görmekten gelen aşağılık duygusunu hafifletmek için yaptıkları bir hayal, bir toplumsal sakatlığın aydınlar arasında nikseden görüntüsüdür... Batıcılık hiçbir yerde gerçekleşmemiş, sadece gericiliğe yarayan, bir bireyci aydın ütopyasıdır.” Quoted in Refiğ, p.39; Niyazi Berkes, *Batıcılık, Ulusçuluk ve Toplumsal Devrimler* (Kaynak Yayınları, İstanbul, 1965).

<sup>160</sup> Frantz Fanon, see *A Dying Colonialism* ; translated from the French by Haakon Chevalier, with a foreword by G.M.Carstairs (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1970).

<sup>161</sup> Ian Christie, “The Avant-gardes and European Cinema before 1930”, in *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies*, Edited by John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson (Oxford: University Press, 1998), p.451.

appreciation. As a result of the identification of the West with individualization, Turkish intellectuals who attempted to adopt modernist art were accused of being of bookishness, mimicry and snobbery, as Refiğ observed:

What do they want the high society intellectuals who are against the Social Realism movement? In general, being influenced by the movement of the “new wave” from France, more personal, more individualistic, so to speak more westernized films... It is also the case that no experimentation of this kind of cinema has been made. But its lifetime, between the eve and the aftermath of the 10 October elections, has been as short as that of a butterfly. Beginning with the first pioneer of this movement at the age of 23, Feyzi Tuna’s *Aşka Susayanlar* (Those Thirsting after Love) were just unable to reach the people as social realist films. Duygu Sağıroğlu’s *Bitmeyen Yol* (Unending Road), Alp Zeki Heper’s *Suluk Gecenin Aşk Hikayeleri* (Love Stories of the Pale Night) was censored, Cengiz Tuncer’s *Sevmek Seni* (Loving You) could not be completed, Haldun Dormen’s *Bozuk Düzen* (Corrupt System) and *Güzel Bir Gün İçin* (For a Beautiful Day) led to commercial fiascos.”<sup>162</sup>

In the 1960s Turkish intellectuals did not voluntarily reflect on individual problems. Egoism and individualism were deemed to be products of the wholesale importation of Western style learning and culture. The avant-garde individualism was frowned upon by collective missions defined as a result of leftist aspirations as follows:

Today, our intellectuals and youth, while dwelling on such issues imperialism, new colonialism, liberation wars and waging their war, will naturally regard the inclination to abstract literature outside these issues as a sheer waste of time.... I certainly believe that no artist from any underdeveloped country has the right to say that “I am an artist and I make art.” Of course, if they want to be true artists and assume contemporary

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<sup>162</sup> “Toplumsal gerçekçilik akımına karşı olan üst tabaka aydınları neler istemişlerdir? Genellikle Fransa’daki “nouvelle vague” hareketinden etkilenerek daha kişisel, daha bireyci, yani daha batılı filmler... Bu çeşit sinemanın da denemesi yapılmamış değildir. Fakat ömrü 10 ekim seçimlerinin arifesi ile ertesi arasında bir kelebek ömrü kadar kısa olmuştur. İlk öncüsü Feyzi Tuna’nın 23 yaşında yaptığı “Aşka Susayanlar” ile başlayan bu akım, toplumsal gerçekçi filmler kadar bile halka ulaşamamıştır. Duygu Sağıroğlu’nun *Bitmeyen Yol*, Alp Zeki Heper’in “*Suluk Gecenin Aşk Hikayeleri*” sansürde takılmış, Cengiz Tuncer’in “*Sevmek Seni*”si tamamlanamamış, Haldun Dormen’in “*Bozuk Düzen*” ve “*Güzel Bir Gün İçin*” filmleri ticari fiyasko ile sonuçlanmıştır.” Refiğ, p. 39.

responsibility. An opposite attitude would mean escaping responsibility and would lead to social reactions and lack of interest...<sup>163</sup>

The Sinematek circle, affected by this intellectual atmosphere, distancing itself from individualistic or modernist art (which is not equivalent to what is taken as modernism in this thesis as its name suggests though may be thought of as a cultural expression of a more general movement of modernization with its emphasis on change and progress but considered as a specific form, that is considered as it is exemplified in certain works in a certain period, may be taken more cultural or psychological and not sufficiently universalistic) defining without denying its existence and attempted to identify itself with the more social realistic products of the Western tradition, including the Third World and even Japanese cinema.<sup>164</sup>

### Overcoming Backwardness

In the 1960s, the issue of backwardness, and the military and economic vulnerability to imperialism that came with it was a matter of a common-sense observation among intellectuals and the youth. They considered that was also intellectually and psychologically oppressive and had to be somehow overcome to emancipate cultural and artistic production in Turkey. Intellectuals also were

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<sup>163</sup> “Bugünkü aydınlarımız ve genç kuşaklar emperyalizm, yeni sömürgecilik, kurtuluş savaşları gibi konular üzerine eğilip bunların savaşını verirken elbetteki bu sorunların dışında kalan soyut edebiyata eğilimi bir zaman israfi olarak görecektir... Şuna kesin olarak inancım var ki, ben santçıyım, sanat yaparım demeye hiçbir az gelişmiş ülke sanatçısının hakkı yoktur. Tabii, gerçek sanatçı olunmak, çağdaş sorumluluk yüklenilmek isteniyorsa. Aksine davranış, sorumluluktan kaçma anlamı taşır ve toplumsal tepki ve ilgisizlikle karşılaşılır.” Çetin Özek, “Türkiye’de Sanat Görevini yapıyor mu?” *Ant*, no. 63 (12 March 1968), p.15.

<sup>164</sup> For instance, Onat Kutlar, declared that it was Ingmar Bergman’s “Wild Strawberries” that particularly attracted him and initiated him into the cinema but after seeing Leopard Visconti’s more socially realistic cinema, he leaned towards this tendency in cinema believing it to be more in tune with a marxist worldview.

influenced increasingly by the ideologies of developmentalism and industrialism as ways to be free from imperialism.

Hence, at the time, the monolithic character of the cinema industry and the problem of the economic sources were issues to be discussed. Relations of exploitation and economic problems were more significant than in other art forms, as far as cinema was concerned. These debates introduced by the economic dependency and the underdevelopment of the country had an impact upon the field of cinema. Economic backwardness and underdevelopment were assumed as the final problems of the cinema industry. Sinematek and the intellectuals around it sparked a debate by way of emphasizing the economic and political disabilities of the country in relation to the domain of the cinema. Their positions were based (or seemed to be based) on the political opposition that argued that “socialism” (it was ambiguous and differentiated what they meant by socialism) could be the final destination of the country and for the emancipation and development of the art, it was necessary to change the economic and political system of the country. For instance Nijat Özön, a leading cinema critic who contributed to the definition of the Sinematek line, said, “Today, our cinema is a cinema devoid of freedom.”<sup>165</sup> It was also said that Turkish cinema was “based on poor ground, was a footloose industry.”

An economy that lay on bonds, on money broker, on a protectionist structure that wrongly functions, a community of artists and technicians who had lost themselves; curious banalities, a mass of spectators whose appreciations had withered because of the exploitation, it was a cinema that was obliged eventually to fall down. And, for the present, the best that can be expected is the realization of this fall at the earliest possible time. However, thereafter,

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<sup>165</sup> “*Bugün sinemamız özgürlükten yoksun bir sinema; zayıf temellere oturtulmuş, başıboş bir endüstri...*” Nijat Özön, “Türk Sinemasına Eleştirmeli Bir Bakış” *Yeni Sinema*, no.3 (October-November, 1966), p.12.

with patience and in the long run, it should be possible to constitute a new cinema, on the basis of new grounds.<sup>166</sup>

The transformation of the cinema industry was related to the total demolition of the Yeşilçam industry. On the other hand, Jean Douchet, who was one of the editors of the French leftist cinema review, *Cahiers du Cinema*, said the following in a forum organized on 8 March, 1966: “To think that everything will be all right after the transformation of the regime is unfortunately not right.<sup>167</sup> He referred to the patterns of India, and Brazil, and directors like Satyajit Ray and Glauber Rocha, who had obtained an international popularity, at the same time as defining social poverty and deficiencies of their countries through a social realist perspective and from the “left” side of the cinema. The Sinematek members, however, criticized Jean Douchet, and arguing that in Turkey the transformation of the economic system had to go hand in hand with the improvements in the artistic field, as the economic and the social backwardness precluded the total development of the cinema as an artistic form. They had the tendency to desire the transformation of the political regime. According to the homogenous group in the leadership of Onat Kutlar, the topic of underdevelopment was alternative to the east- west contradiction; they disregarded the cultural conflicts that Turkish society experienced before resolving problems

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<sup>166</sup> “Bonolara, tefecilere dayalı bir ekonomi; yanlış ilkelere göre işleyen koruma düzeni, kendi kendini yitirmiş güçsüz sanatçı ve teknikçi topluluğu; görülmemiş bayağılıklar, sömürmelerle zevki korkunç bir şekilde köretilmiş seyirci kütlesiyle er geç çökmeye mahkum bir sinemadır ve şimdilik sinemadan beklenebilecek en iyi şey de bu çöküşün biran önce meydana gelmesidir Ancak ondan sonra, sabırlı ve uzun vadede yeni bir sinemayı, yeni temeller üzerine kurmak mümkün olabilecektir...” Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> “Ekonomik düzenin değiştirilmesi ile her şeyin yoluna gireceğini düşünmek ne yazık ki doğru değildir.” Jean Douchet, “Panel, Sinematek, Sinema Sanatı Bakımından Gelişmiş Ülkelerdeki İlerlemeler ve Azgelişmiş Ülkelerdeki Duraklamanın Nedenleri,” *Yeni Sinema* no. 2 (April-May, 1966), p. 60.

based on economic poverty, social injustice, inequalities. As Veysel Atayman observes;

The reason underlying Turkish cinema's attempt to purify class realities from infrastructural foundations lies in its relation with the consumer class, in the name of whom it necessarily speaks, and the capitalist extremes...In underdeveloped countries where great masses of people are lost in the dark chaos of poverty, those classes who survive thanks to the operation of the capitalist mode of production, will not only lose the means to be the spokesperson of society, but also the "Yeşilçam" which represents the artistic branch of the same establishment will become foreign to our society. "Our Yeşilçam", as the cinema of the exploiters, passionately desiring to be the spokesperson of the exploiters, will largely disseminate unconsciousness to the society and will continue its commercial robbery.<sup>168</sup>

Atilla Dorsay argued that the first thing to be done in Turkey was to change the economic structure of Turkish cinema.<sup>169</sup> Ali Gevgili also argued that Turkish cinema could be transformed only after Turkish society was free and equal. Until that point; populist and progressive cinema could only be produced by some creative artists.<sup>170</sup>

As referred to in *Yeni Sinema* at the time: "Social awakening, the search for a new society, the struggle to create a new art, are parallel social phenomena in Turkey."<sup>171</sup> This declaration was one of the clear representations of the artistic and political beliefs of the circle members. The critics and the youth who came together

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<sup>168</sup> "Türk sinemasının sınıf gerçeklerini altyapı nedenlerinden arındırma nedeni, zorunlu biçimde sözcülüğünü yaptığı tüketici sınıfla, kapitalist uçlarla kurduğu ilişkinin içinde yatmaktadır.. Geniş halk yığınlarının "yoksulluğun karanlık kaosunda kaybolduğu az gelişmiş ülkelerde, varlığını kapitalist üretim biçiminin işleyişine bağlamış yönetici sınıflar, toplumun gerçek sözcüsü olma niteliklerini yitirdikleri gibi, aynı düzenin sanat uzantısındaki "Yeşilçam" toplumumuza yabancı düşecektir. Sömürenlerin sineması olarak, sömürülenlerin sözcüsü olmak sevdasındaki "Yeşilçamımız" topluma yaygın bilişsizlik yaymakla birlikte, tecimsel soyguna devam edecektir." Veysel Atayman, "1969 Yılında Türk Sinemasının Sorunları," *Ant*, no. 111, (11 February 1969), p.14-15.

<sup>169</sup>Atilla Dorsay, "Ulusal Türk Sineması ve Çıkış Yolları Üzerine Soruşturma," *Ant*, no. 86, (20 August 1986), p.14.

<sup>170</sup> Ali Gevgili, "Ant'ın Sinema Soruşturması," *Ant*, no. 28 (11 July 1967), p.14-15.

<sup>171</sup> "Toplumsal uyanış, yeni bir toplum, yeni bir sanat yaratma mücadelesi Türkiye'de birbirine paralel iki olgudur." "İkinci Sayıda," *Yeni Sinema*, no.2 (April-May,1966), p.5.

in the Sinematek Association sought to transform Turkish cinema. By showing the limits of the current structure, they drew near to the point of seeking the total demolition of the Turkish cinema industry.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CINEMA AND REVOLUTION

In this chapter, the social and historical context of the 1960s and 1970s will be discussed in relation to similar processes throughout the world. “Revolutionary films can not be made before the revolution,” “revolutionary films have been possible only in the liberated countries,” “without the support of revolutionary political power, revolutionary films or art is impossible” were possible questions that can be posed to cinema directors who lived in capitalist countries, but throughout these decades, young directors attempted to challenge these prejudices, and they sought possibilities to make revolutionary films in the Western capitalist and Third World countries. In this chapter, concepts like auteur cinema, third cinema, and second cinema will be defined, and the specific role of Turkish filmmakers and cinephiles via these concepts will be depicted. The cinema of Eastern Socialist countries as they were products of art and political cinema will be defined. Auteur cinema which was an essential characteristic of European cinema, and the transformation of this cinema after the 1968 University students movement will be examined. In addition, the avant-garde tradition of US cinema will be examined. The third cinema along with the debates about post-colonialism will be analyzed. Finally the peculiar context of the Turkish cinema and cinephiles will be debated in relation to the context of the world cinema throughout these approaches, as mentioned.

## European Avant-garde Cinema and the Cinema of Eastern Socialist Countries

After the 1960s, and especially after the 1968 university student movements, cinema flourished in line with revolutionary and alternative cinema approaches that were very effective throughout the world, mainly in French “New Wave” cinema. The increasing domination of Marxism and class struggles, reactions against ruling elites and bourgeois cultural habits oriented cinema directors and critics to produce and defend more revolutionary, politically and socially “responsible” films. This was also a period marked by growing anti-Americanism among many European intellectuals.<sup>172</sup>

It is difficult to determine the boundaries of artistic cinema and political cinema. Art cinema, and political cinema (here political cinema is used specifically as the name of a genre that explicitly aligns itself with a revolutionary aim) were two distinct cases but they were generally defined as an alternative to popular cinema. As a result of the social struggles, political cinema of the 1960s and the 1970s manifested itself generally as a reaction to the capitalist and to a some degree socialist system of the Eastern European countries, and included the repercussions from the political, social systems of the countries in which they were produced and generally from the capitalist World order and to the Imperialism.

First of all, it is necessary to consider the cinema of the USSR and the Eastern European countries’ cinema as they were screened widely at Sinematek and they were relevant for the definition of political, social realist, and artistic cinema. As discussed, Eisenstein, Vertov and Pudovkin were the first generation and constitutive directors of Soviet cinema. But, in addition to the Soviet cinema, for the

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<sup>172</sup> *Cahiers du cinéma : 1960-1968--New Wave, New Cinema, Reevaluating Hollywood*, ed. Jim Hillier (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992).

Eastern countries, like Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and East Germany, a regional formation, often designated East Central Europe and it is also necessary to define other Eastern Europe countries' cinema such as Bulgaria, Romania and Yugoslavia, which are often considered in the context of Balkan Cinema.<sup>173</sup> Cinema was very important for public life. The establishment of “state socialism”<sup>174</sup> after the Second World War should not be considered to have included the establishment of cinemas in those countries where they were existing cinemas as well as cinema industries, especially in Czechoslovakia. After the war, an important phase began for the definition of socialist realist cinema.

Leftist intellectuals of the interwar period returned to their countries and they adapted themselves to the existing socialist rule. They represented the historical and contemporary events that the ruling Communist party wanted them to and also they were accommodating to the official socialist realism of the period.

During the first period, the films can be summarized in three basic categories: First, historical films dealing with the struggle between progressive and regressive forces; bourgeoisie, proletariat, landowners, peasant, indigenous people struggling against foreign invaders. Second, films about socialist reconstruction and the formation of a socialist country and socialist man. Last, World War Two films which reflect the communist partisans' resistance against the Nazis, the Fascists, and the other side, those who collaborated with the invader.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Dina Iordanova, *Cinema of flames, Balkan Film, Culture and the Media*, (London : British Film Institute, 2001), This schematization was made by her.

<sup>174</sup> A note about “state socialism” may be necessary here, since I sometimes refer to this phrase in the later parts of the thesis. When I refer to state socialism, I imply the form of administration founded after the initiatives of the organs of self-initiative, i.e. the Soviets, were annulled in USSR, by growing “stalinism” in the comprehension of the world, in the understanding of politics. In my opinion, “state socialism” is a coherent concept to define Eastern European countries foundations after the Second World War.

<sup>175</sup> Herbert J. Eagle, “Eastern European Cinema,” in Sabrina P. Ramet (ed.), *Eastern Europe. Politics, Culture, and Society since 1939* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), p.332.

Socialist realism and the effects of revolutionary Soviet cinema were dominant in this period. For instance, directors like Sergey Eisenstein and Dziga Vertov were followed by many Eastern European directors.<sup>176</sup> After this period, during the post-Stalinist liberal period of the 1950s and 1960s, especially in Hungary and in Czechoslovakia until the Soviet military interventions of 1956 and 1968 in Prague, and in Poland especially, in the 1970s, “ideological forces and nationalistic heroism was discarded and more humanist films, which dealt with the morality and the atrocity of the war were directed and these films reflected the great suffering and loneliness of the ordinary people during the War.”<sup>177</sup> During this period, films dealing with the main problems of contemporary life began to appear.<sup>178</sup> The investigation of personal experience under state socialist regimes led to the moral crises, degradation, spiritual and physical destruction of individuals in a society in which they felt themselves under great repression. Without dealing with politics directly and often narrated in the form of allegory, these films were, in fact, powerful political statements.<sup>179</sup>

Discussing the cinema of modern state socialism, we encounter the paradoxical feature of this cinema: the obvious apolitical stance, especially after Stalinism. This aversion to politics and the intentional departure from political examination were the basic differences between Eastern and Western cinema. In

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<sup>176</sup> Ibid., p. 346.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., p. 335.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid., p. 335.

<sup>179</sup> Petrova Violetta, “Screening the Past,” Book Review, no.16, 2004 available at: [http://www.latrobe.edu.au/screeningthepast/reviews/rev\\_16/VPbr16a.html](http://www.latrobe.edu.au/screeningthepast/reviews/rev_16/VPbr16a.html) (Dina Iordanova, *Cinema of the Other Europe: The Industry and Artistry of East Central European Film*, (London: Wallflower Press, 2003).

these decades, Western political cinema was challenging the capitalist world order in the films of directors like Jean Luc Godard, Costa-Gavras, Ken Loach, Reiner Werner Fassbinder, Bertrand Tavernier, and Theo Angelopoulos.<sup>180</sup>

As referred to earlier, the Western political cinema was in a great struggle with the contemporary order. Beginning with Italian Neo-Realism in the 1950s<sup>181</sup> and French New Wave Cinema under the leadership of directors like Jean Luc Godard, Francois Truffaut, and Claude Chabrol, escalated with the strong criticism of the social injustices and bourgeois cultural life. Cinema journals like *Cahiers du Cinéma*,<sup>182</sup> *Cinethique*, in France, and *Screen*, in England, were affected by the anti-American, socialist, politically radical atmosphere of the period, and they were in a close relationship with the political movements and communist parties. In 1966, “Comolli welcomed the advent of a new political cinema in which one could see ‘the sharp point of a struggle which is not only artistic but which involves a society, a morality, a civilization.’”<sup>183</sup> Politics became the major subject of cinema.

The role of the 1968 university students’ movements has to be taken into account especially as regards these countries. In the 1968, a manifesto that was declared by the editors of *Cahiers du Cinéma*, stated that, “It seemed to us that as well as continuing to fulfill its original role as an organ of culture and information, it

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<sup>180</sup> Paul Coates, *The Red and the White, The Cinema of People’s Poland* (London: Wallflower Pres, 2005) in Petrova Violetta, *Screening the Past*, Book Review no.16, 2004. Available at: [http://www.latrobe.edu.au/screeningthepast/reviews/rev\\_16/VPbr16a.html](http://www.latrobe.edu.au/screeningthepast/reviews/rev_16/VPbr16a.html)

<sup>181</sup> See Daldal.

<sup>182</sup> See Beckerton.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, p.83.

was necessary to become once again an instrument of struggle.”<sup>184</sup> While for Godard cinema had to be “in the front line of battle,” he argued:

Fifty years after the October revolution, the American industry rules cinema the world over. There is nothing much to add to this statement of fact. Except that on our own modest level, we too should provoke two or three Vietnams in the bosom of the vast Hollywood. Cinecitta, Mosfilm, Pinewood etc. Empire and both economically and aesthetically, struggle on two fronts as it were, to create cinemas which are national, free, brotherly, comradely and bonded in friendship.”<sup>185</sup>

As referred to Godard, in Europe, more radical perspectives were appropriated by filmmakers; they denied the traditional values of the cinema industry.

#### The Questioning of the Relation of the Form and Content

In the spirit of the period, it was argued by many cinema directors like Godard and Truffaut that the contextual transformation of the new cinema has to be informed by a revolutionary form (Politics of form as well as of content). To transform existing narration forms, to prove that there could be alternative forms was the main aim of the revolutionary, innovatory artists. It was said that, “new cinema is new or modern primarily because it breaks with traditional modes of story telling.”<sup>186</sup> Artistically, they wanted to explore new ways of telling stories, and engage the infinite possibilities of storytelling. It was generally said that, in this period, routine, habitual cinema forms led to the deterioration of artistic and aesthetic perceptions. In a reaction to this fact, they thought to advance aesthetic and artistic perceptions by transforming narration forms. Jean Luc Godard once said, “We need to shoot films in

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<sup>184</sup> *Cahiers du Cinema*, p.38.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, p.38.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, p.40.

a political way, rather than have political films *per se*.”<sup>187</sup> For them, as Peter Wollen put it,

The complete overthrow of the existing regime of taste was a precondition for the triumph of new film-makers with new films, demanding to be judged on a different scale of values. This paradigm shift could be seen as ‘the last of a series of twentieth-century critical revolutions in the name of ‘modernism’ against an *ancien régime* of artistic convention.’<sup>188</sup>

In the case of the USA, the avant-garde, like other late-1960s forms of countercultural expression and social protest, put itself to be a forceful alternative cinema, in sharp contrast both to mainstream America and the decaying Hollywood studio system.<sup>189</sup> “The utopian force of the avant-garde film world was based on the assumption, as film critic Amy Taubin writes, ‘anyone could, and it was thought everyone *should*, become a filmmaker. Every consumer a producer’”<sup>190</sup> and this attitude may be considered as more true to cinema as a cultural form, as it sees the cultural in the social and vice versa. In the political atmosphere of the 1960s, the avant-garde seemed both to provide an authentic autonomous sphere and to have a public presence<sup>191</sup>, that is, it promised a field that encompasses the social and the cultural in their unity.

Auteur theory, which was defined by the New Wave cinema directors and cinema critics of the *Cahiers du Cinéma*, intended by Godard and other radical

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<sup>187</sup> Quoted in Uğur Kutay, “Sinemasal ‘Politik Yöntem,’” *Birgün* (9 December 2005), p. 10.

<sup>188</sup> *Screen Reader 1: Cinema/Ideology/Politics*. (London: Society for Education in Film and Television, 1977), p.13.

<sup>189</sup> Michael Zryd, “The Academy and the Avant-Garde: A Relationship of Dependence and Resistance,” *Cinema Journal* 45, no. 2, (Winter 2006) p.20.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, p.22.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*

cinema directors as an alternative to both Hollywood commercial cinema, and every kind of traditional cinema, including the USSR cinema. This example of the New Wave shows us that independent filmmakers were against dominant cinema culture for political and artistic reasons.<sup>192</sup> Politically, they were dissatisfied with commercial cinema's lack of courage and irresponsibility to address social and political matters. They felt that they had to make their own films if they wanted to see these issues on the scene, and they want to transform the relation of the form and content in cinema. In short, they searched for a political filmmaking that takes the social as its content and the cultural or the artistic as its form.

As mentioned, the increasing influence of Marxism led to the penetration of cinema into the realm of politics, because of the commitment of the artists to the political movement. The potential character of the intellectuals to be on the opposite side of the existing political regime intersected with the collective character of the cinema that was realized in a public production process. Therefore, cinema was carried into the center of these political debates. Moreover, intellectual movements and theories such as surrealism, existentialism, individualism, psychoanalysis, semiotics aiming at the institutionalization of the cinema as an artistic branch, namely, the Seventh Art, attempted to reflect their own artistic methods to the realm of cinema.

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<sup>192</sup> Manthia Diawara, "Black American Cinema: The New Realism," in *Film and theory: An Anthology*, ed. by Robert Stam and Toby Miller. (Malden, Mass. : Blackwell, 2000), p.238.

### Third World Countries

Colonialism and its aftermath were important in defining the building process of national cinemas in Third World countries. First, I would like to make a brief description of colonialism:

Colonialism from this post-colonial perspective, was no local or marginal subplot in some larger story (for example the transition from feudalism to capitalism in Western Europe...) In the restaged narrative of the post-colonial, colonization assumes the place and the significance of a major, extended and ruptural historical event... signifying the whole process of expansion, exploration, conquest, colonization and imperial hegomonization which constituted the 'outher face', the constitutive outside, of European and the Western capitalist modernity after 1492. (Hall, 1996:249)<sup>193</sup>

Post-colonial theory allows us to reconceptualize colonialism itself, in the light of our current knowledge of global capitalism. Colonialism certainly did not end with the arrival of the national indepedence in formerly colonized states. As Fanon argues, colonialism brings to Third World countires a double self-consciousness as a result of the elites who adopted western epistemology and mode of life. As Juan José Hernandez Arregui, in his book *Imperialism and Culture* argues:

Culture becomes bilingual not due to the use of two languages but because of the conjuncture of two cultural patterns of thinking. One is national, that of the people, and the other is estranging, that of the elites subordinated to outside forces. The admiration of the upper classes for the US or Europe is the highest expression of their subjection. With the colonization of upper classes the culture of imperialism indirectly introduces among the masses knowledge which can not be supervised.<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> Quoted in Ashish Rajadhyaksha, Realism, Modernism and Post-colonial Theory, Stuart Hall, "When Was 'the Post-colonial'? Thinking at the Limit" in Chambers and Curti *The post-colonial Question: Common Skies, Divided Horizon* (London: Routledge, 1996) In *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies*. Edited by John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson (Oxford: University Press, 1998), p. 414.

<sup>194</sup> Quoted in Fernando Solonias and Octavio Gettino, "For an Imperfect Cinema", *Film and Theory: An Anthology* ed. by Robert Stam and Toby Miller (Malden, Mass. : Blackwell, 2000), p.268.

After the national liberation of the Third World countries, “younger filmmakers from all the continents emerged, and introduced not just filmmaking practice but theory, with a far more explicitly critical postcolonial awareness of their national histories than had previously been possible.”<sup>195</sup> There are examples of alternative or independent cinemas that occupy important places in the history of film, coming from post-colonial countries. The Brazilian Cinema Novo and the Argentinian Third Cinema have all created alternative techniques that were at first unknown to commercial cinemas. These challenges to the dominant aesthetic tradition coming from the Third World, were affected by the wars of independence against colonialism.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, in the wake of the Vietnamese victory over the French in 1954, the Cuban revolution in 1959, and Algerian Independence in 1962, third worldist film ideology was crystallized in a wave of militant film manifesto-essays- Glauber Rocha “Aesthetic of Hunger” (1965), Fernando Solonas and Ottovio Gettino’s “Toward a Third Cinema” (1969), Julio Garcia Espinosa’s “For an Imperfect Cinema” (1969)- and in declarations and manifestos from third world film festivals calling for a tricontinental revolution in politics and an aesthetic and narrative revolution in film form. Solonas and Gettino meanwhile, forged a tripartite schema which distinguished between “first cinema” (Hollywood and its imitators), “second cinema” (the art film) and “third cinema”, a revolutionary cinema composed primarily of militant guerilla documentaries.<sup>196</sup>

As asserted in this quotation, from the 1950s “new cinema” movements were spread over large parts of Latin America, Europe, Africa, and Asia. Many of the filmmakers associated with these movements addressed issues similar to those of the Western avant-garde, and they tried to be in touch with it. For instance, most

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<sup>195</sup> Ashish Rajadhyaksha, “Realism, Modernism and Post-colonial Theory,” in *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies*. Edited by John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson (Oxford: University Press, 1998), p. 417.

<sup>196</sup> Robert Stam “Alternative Aesthetics, Introduction,” in *Film and theory : an Anthology*, ed. by Robert Stam and Toby Miller (Malden, Mass. : Blackwell, 2000), p.262.

famously was the meeting of Godard and Glauber Rocha (Rocha appears in a brief sequence in the *Vent d'Est* [1969], as the symbol of the third cinema). Third world directors were also unaware of their colleagues who produced films in different Third World countries, and they often came together as a consequence of having common Western referents.<sup>197</sup>

However, Third Cinema, which is defined by the Third World countries cinema directors, especially, Latin American directors like, Glauber Rocha, Solanas, and Gettino, sought for a collective, militant, and activist cinema, defining European art cinema as the second, and Hollywood commercial cinema as the first cinema.

Marxists also criticized auteurism's ahistorical assumption that talent will eventually out no matter what political or economic conditions prevail. Third World critics, meanwhile, gave auteurism a mixed reception. Brazilian filmmaker/critic Glauber Rocha wrote in 1963 that "if commercial cinema is the tradition, auteur cinema is the revolution. (Rocha,1963). But in 1969 the Argentinian leftist filmmakers Fernando Solanas and Octavio Gettino mocked auteur cinema, their ("second cinema") as a politically innocuous and easily cooptable by the establishment favoring instead a "third cinema" which is collective, militant, and activist (Solanas and Gettino in Chanana, 1983)<sup>198</sup>

As seen in the above quotation, European Art Cinema was an expression of a cultural agenda and as such it had insufficient emphasis on social problems and conflicts. As a result, third cinema theorists underlined a more socially responsible and a more revolutionary kind of cinema, and in this context, Solanas and Gettino defined third cinema as:

"The anti- imperialist struggle of the peoples of the Third World and of their equivalents inside the imperialist countries constitutes today the axis of the

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<sup>197</sup> Ashish Rajadhyaksha, "Realism, Modernism and Post-colonial Theory," in *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies*, Edited by John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson (Oxford: University Press, 1998), p. 417.

<sup>198</sup> Robert Stam , "The Author, Introduction, *Film and Theory : an Anthology*, ed. by Robert Stam and Toby Miller (Malden, Mass. : Blackwell, 2000) p.5.

world revolution. *Third cinema* is, in our opinion, the cinema that recognizes *in that struggle the most gigantic cultural, scientific and artistic manifestation of our time*, the great possibility of constructing a liberated personality with each people as the starting point- in a word, the *decolonization of culture*.”<sup>199</sup>

They also criticized existing cinema films that they assumed to be synonymous with show or amusement, nothing more or less;

At best, films were witnesses of the decay of the bourgeois values and testifying to social injustice. As a rule, films only dealt with effect, never with cause; it was cinema of mystification or anti-historicism. It was surplus value cinema. Caught up in these conditions, films, the most valuable tool of communication of our times, were destined to satisfy the only the ideological and economic interests of the owners of the film industry, the lords of the world film market, the great majority of whom were from the United States.<sup>200</sup>

Robert Stam argues that these directors are often rooted in non-realist, often non-Western or para western cultural traditions featuring other historical rhythms, other narrative structures, other views of the body, sexuality, spirituality, and the collective life. “Many incorporate para modern traditions into clearly modernizing or postmodernizing aesthetics, and thus problematize facile dichotomies such as traditional and modern, realist and modernist, modernist and postmodernist.”<sup>201</sup> The clear anti-colonial perspective of the third world cinema theoreticians was defined as follows:

Culture, art and cinema are always respond to conflicting class interests. In the colonial situation two concepts of culture, art, science and cinema compete: that of the rulers and that of the nation. And this situation will

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<sup>199</sup> Fernando Solonas and Octavio Gettino 1969, “Towards A Third Cinema”, *Film and Theory : an Anthology*, ed. by Robert Stam and Toby Miller (Malden, Mass. : Blackwell, 2000), p.268.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, p.265.

<sup>201</sup> Robert Stam “Alternative Aesthetics, Introduction, *Film and theory : an Anthology*, ed. by Robert Stam and Toby Miller (Malden, Mass. : Blackwell, 2000), p.262-263.

continue as long as the national concept is not identified with that of the rulers, as long as the status of colony or semi-colony continues in force. Moreover, the duality will be overcome and will reach a single and universal category only when the best values of the man emerge from proscription to achieve hegemony, when the liberation of man is universal. In the meantime, there exist our culture, and their culture, our cinema and their cinema. Because our culture is an impulse towards emancipation, it will remain in existence until emancipation is a reality: a culture of subversion.<sup>202</sup>

In an article of Rajadhyaksha, it is also argued that a small number of Third World film authors, Satyajit Ray, Youssef Chahine, Glauber Rocha, Yılmaz Güney, Ousmane Sembene and Jorge Sanjines, are seen as contributing simultaneously to Western modernism as well as to their “own native tradition.” He continued:

Most of these filmmakers have been showcased in Western film festivals as exemplars of modernist “author cinema.” This has led to the virtual exclusion of all knowledge about the contexts in which the filmmaking practices of these very names occur- as well as the works of other as explicitly aligned themselves to (or opposed) a socialist avant-garde internationalism.<sup>203</sup>

These filmmakers also had a very problematic relation with western modernist tradition and their national tradition, they attempted a synthesis of them. The relationship between cinema and intelligentsia in the third world countries was very problematic, as cinema was considered a western phenomenon. So, excluding some directors whose films were regarded falling inside the canon of the modernist cinema, the directors of the third world countries were finding themselves in great dilemmas;

But the process of their education and the advent of national independence will have made them very aware that they cannot become western filmmakers. Hence they will tend to prove their identity by plunging deeply into local tradition, myth and folklore. The result is all too often an ambiguous

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<sup>202</sup> Fernando Solanas and Octavio Gettino 1969, “Towards A Third Cinema”, *Film and theory : an Anthology*, ed. by Robert Stam and Toby Miller (Malden, Mass. : Blackwell, 2000), p.268.

<sup>203</sup> Ashish Rajadhyaksha, Realism, Modernism and Post-colonial Theory, in *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies*, Edited by John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson (Oxford: University Press, 1998), p. 417.

cinema which is too complex in form for local audiences and too esoteric in substance for western spectators.<sup>204</sup>

National identity and cultural authenticity were also significant problems for Turkish cinema as it was discussed above, the similarities and differences of Turkey with Western capitalist countries were extensively debated by the subjects of this work, but the similarities with the Third World countries were not sufficiently taken into consideration by the members of Sinematek. This problem will be discussed in the following section.

### Peculiarities of Turkey

The Sinematek Association mainly sided with the approaches and films that could be generally termed European, which was designated by the defenders of the third cinema as the second cinema. The arguments put forward against European Cinema by the third cinema theorists were same in essentials with those put against Sinematek by the nationalists and the Genç Sinema circle. Sinematek, on the other hand, insisted on defending the theoretical and political approaches of the European Cinema in their polemics against their critics and against Yeşilçam cinema in general, in an increasing fashion towards the 1970s. This approach of the European political cinema which problematized the relation of form and content, were appropriated by the members of the association.

The intellectuals, youth, and cinema lovers who gathered in Sinematek were not able to effect a transformation of the situation of cinema in Turkey, that is, to

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<sup>204</sup> Roy Armes, "Twelve Positions on the Inaccessibility of Third World Cinema," ed. Woodhead, Christine, *Turkish Cinema: An Introduction*, (London: Centre of Near & Middle Eastern Studies, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1989), p.7.

provide an atmosphere productive for filmmakers that wanted to make modernist or avant-garde films, neither to form a tradition that following generations could rely on. They saw western cinema as the guide and the ideal that Turkish cinema should try to attain. In this sense, it can be said that they were alienated to some extent from the cultural traits of Turkey in line with their universalistic outlook but also in line with their understanding of politics and political change because of which they tended to emphasize the cultural over the social in their institutional project. Put in other words, the ideas and approaches espoused by the association had a more social accentuation, projecting a social transformation for Turkey, whereas their practice as an institution was discordant with this social emphasis as their cultural agenda was too western and too foreign to the social reality of Turkey.

At this point, it should be noted that, in this thesis, such an understanding of society and its culture as definable unities in their own right and as being constituents of a reality of a certain country, nation or territory, is a questioned and criticized one. However, if an approach believes that there are such unities, as here it is assumed that Sinematek has such a conception of a social reality of Turkey, then, such an approach should have a coherent understanding of the socio-cultural whole of the country in question. Thus, the main problem with the approach of Sinematek was claiming particularity or singularity in the case of social situation of Turkey, while seeing culture in universalistic terms. They do not enoughly identify their economic and social problems as the underdevelopment problem with simialr problems of the other underdevelopped countries. However, this failure on the part of Sinematek was not peculiar to it. It was a common problem for many of the

Turkish intellectuals of the republican era as they had a very problematic relation with the West. As noted by Arslan;

While Turkey was not colonized per se, but invaded and then engaged in a successful War of Independence, formations of a Turkish national culture carried almost all elements of a colonized culture in its relation to the West and those who demanded the creation of such an essential national identity led to a cultural self-colonization.<sup>205</sup>

However, Turkish intellectuals did not feel isolated or different from Western countries, as they felt themselves to belong to the cultural world of the Western countries, they did not regard themselves as intellectuals of a Third World country. Yet, they did not have a sufficient knowledge about the Third World countries, and as a result they were ignorant of the similarities between these countries and Turkey to a large extent. This general ignorance was also apparent in the field of cinema; the third cinema of Latin America was neglected and so almost none of their films were screened by Sinematek.<sup>206</sup> Moreover, they were also unaware of the third cinema theoreticians until the 1980s.<sup>207</sup>

Much like China which could not quite place itself in the Second World or the Third World, and which experienced a process of self-colonization triggered by its own governments, the Turkish intellectual climate stayed away from Fanon, Said or other postcolonial theorists until the 1990s.... though both countries never experienced colonial rule per se, both countries were in effect colonized and both peoples suffered exploitation thanks to their own governments' programs and projects of modernization. Thus, postcolonial thought's stress on "deterritorialization, the constructed nature of nationalism and national borders, and the obsolescence of anticolonialist discourse" are significant in understanding this situation of colonization. (Shohat and Stam, 1994, 38)<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>205</sup> Arslan, p.165.

<sup>206</sup> Interview with Giovanni Scognomillo, (May 2007, Istanbul)

<sup>207</sup> Interview, with Teksoy, (April 2007, Istanbul) and Interview with Scognomillo, (May 2007, Istanbul)

<sup>208</sup> Arslan, p.170.

Arslan argues that Turkey's imperial heritage was an obstacle for it to participate in the political struggle of Third World countries. This attitude can also be seen as the result of its political choices:

...the republican elite had inherited an imperial past altered into a narcissistic nationalism that stayed foreign to the Indian cause or the third world in general. They proposed that Turkey set an example for the third world countries in the creation of an independent state, but thus at the same time also imagined themselves as above other third world countries, closer to Western countries and only slightly less developed than they. It is no wonder that while sending troops to Korea in return for being a NATO member, Turkish politicians never tried to participate in the Bandung Conference of 1955.<sup>209</sup>

Arslan tries to conceptualize with some keywords the reflections of the ideological choices of the Sinematek circle as: a critical approach to the past tradition, reliance on the future, progress, project, nationality, universality, and position of a specialist or an intellectual, particularity, creativity. This leads to a vehement critique of Turkish popular films, and Arslan argues that they saw art cinema as an alternative. They were seeking a revolution both in Turkey, and in the realm of cinema. This critical and elitist approach led Turkish popular films, to be underestimated, which hold the richness of the popular culture. Hundreds of Turkish films were excluded from the realm of high art or art cinema which was defended by them.<sup>210</sup>

As a part of modernizing elite, the Sinematek Association neglected and even opened a campaign against the commercial cinema industry by adopting European Cinema and some other countries, and attempted to collaborate with young directors

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<sup>209</sup> Ibid., p.58.

<sup>210</sup> Savaş Arslan, "Popüler Yeşilçam Filmlerinin Eleştirilmesinde bir Sanat Sineması Söyleminin Oluşumu", 25. *Kare*, Journal of Cinema and Culture, no.20, (July- September 2007).

who defined themselves outside the Yeşilçam industry. The National (Ulusal) Cinema circle attempted to set up an alternative attitude inside the existing cinema industry, their attitudes more deeply reflects the nationalist attitude with an emphasis of tradition. The Genç (Young) Cinema circle adapted a similar attitude with the Sinematek association, but as these attitudes were not permanent and homogenous, the Genç cinema circle could not identify itself with the intellectualist position of Sinematek. The Milli Cinema circle also flourished in the Yeşilçam cinema industry, but the Islamic background of these directors was influential in the questioning of modern Turkey which forced individuals to fall into crisis between modern life and traditional values. As we know, the Kemal Tahir line constituted the ideological framework for the National Cinema circle, as a sharp critic of the disadvantages of the Westernization process in the mode of thinking of intellectuals. But, the Sinematek circle's heterogeneous ideological approaches were based on *Ant* magazine and Workers' Party of Turkey's socialist modernization projects. They were generally engaged to the socialist world views defended by different lines as Mehmet Ali Aybar, Behice Boran, Sadun Aren, Aziz Nesin and even the *Yön* circle of Doğan Avcıoğlu. These names had different imaginations of the socialism as a world view, but the common tendency is to adapt a socialist way of development and modernization model as an alternative to Turkey's economic and cultural modes of production. But they were generally, especially leading figures, like Onat Kutlar and Hüseyin Baş, in the line with the socialist revolutionary model of the Workers' Party of Turkey.

The atmosphere of the period, which was prone to think by the differentiation between intellectuals and the people, as well as consideration of the poor,

uncultivated masses as ignorant, regressive powers, triggered the first & the second generation of the intellectuals of the Republican period to be pioneers of the entire society. Urban intellectuals considered that people were uncultivated and open to reactionary ideologies. They were engaged in some sort of society engineering by adopting the model of the Western countries (modernizing ethos). These modernist tendencies hindered them to adopt Third World countries' extreme anti Western, anti-colonial and populist approaches. The imperial heritage of the country and the extreme adoption of Western culture as the highest level of the civilization led Turkish intellectuals into a very complex situation, entailing many contradictions.

As a result, the popular cinema tradition could not be transformed by the new filmmakers, and the gap between Turkish intellectuals and people could not be transcended, as it is not transcended in anywhere else throughout the world. The modernist tendencies of the Sinematek circle led them to underestimate Turkish popular cinema; but their intention to transform the structure of cinema should not be ignored. As it was clearly defined above, their theoretical qualities and dominance could not be translated into praxis. However, there were some attempts by directors like Yılmaz Güney, Ömer Lütfi Akad, and few others to incorporate some influences from the Neo-realist Cinema of Italy and New Wave Cinema of France. Though, on the whole, Turkish cinema was unable to become a part of the universal art of cinema which included both the third cinema which they neglected, and the European cinema which they took as their example.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### CONCLUSION

I would like to conclude my thesis by remembering the impact of Sinematek on the general atmosphere of Turkish Cinema. New tendencies emerged in the Turkish Cinema through the considerable influence of Sinematek. That is political and realist cinema directors like Ömer Lütfi Akad and Yılmaz Güney had established close relations with Sinematek, and Sinematek enabled directors called the “new generation” of the Turkish Cinema to come into the scene. The political debates of this period led to a superficial split between socialist cinema artists, directors and intellectuals, but as time went by, these splits generally lost their importance. Individual problems survive until today. These differences of opinion were important for this period, but Sinematek Association, by its influence and opponents became an important part of the cinema culture in Turkey for a period.

In the leadership of Onat Kutlar, Sinematek gave introduced to a precious auteur cinema but only to its spectatorship to establish a cinema culture. European Cinema, including Eastern European Cinema, and to a limited extent, the Third Cinema, examples like Iranian, and a few Brazilian films, were brought to the Turkish audience. On the other hand, Kutlar continued to accommodate directors like Ömer Kavur, Erden Kıral, and Ali Özgentürk who perpetuated Yılmaz Güney’s tradition. Sinematek also improved documentary film practice of the Turkish cinema audience, and guided young the documentary directors like Enis Rıza and Ahmet Soner to produce realist and political documentaries.

After 1980, some of the Sinematek Association directors, Vecdi Sayar, Onat Kutlar and Şakir Eczacıbaşı introduced a festival, beginning in 1982, first called *Istanbul Film Günleri* (Film Week) turned into the International Istanbul Film Festival, in 1989 within the IKSŞ (Istanbul Foundation For Culture and Arts) These institution tries to adopt the heritage of the Sinematek Association.

The members of the Sinematek, though deeply knowledgeable in the general culture of cinema, were quite inexperienced in the technical areas of cinema, such as fiction, camera, etc. In addition, the indifference of the state to cinema and oppression applied via censorship at times affected the relationship between the state and cinema, as was the case in some other countries and this constituted an obstacle for the institutionalization of the Association. The Sinematek circle defended statism, as a result of their political position, claiming the centralization and support of cultural activities by the state. However, because of the neglects of the state institutions as generally governed by right wing political parties, they did not negotiate with the state institutions.

Sinematek, when compared with other similar institutions around the world, especially with the French cinémathèque with its archive including 50,000 films in 1966, failed on the issues of archiving and preservation. Sinematek was a weak institution; it could survive thanks to the love of cinema of the young people and intellectuals. Nowadays throughout the world, cinémathèques have lost their importance due to the recent technical advancement.

As a result, cinema as a spectator activity is a very efficient way to convey socio-political messages, and very useful to bringing people together as a part of a collective identity. Sinematek created a very effective area in that period. The

relationship between Sinematek and its environment presented fertile ground for the relationship between cinema and society, role of cinema in the solution of the problems of the country and the reflections of such problems on the area of cinema. It is impossible to deny that a kind of sincerity and sharing prevailed in this society. People from different political and ideological positions still remember the richness presented by the collective platform of the society. In my study, I attempted to call attention to this cultural phenomenon.

In this study, It should be noted that the specific position of the Sinematek circle with other cinema circles was related to the particular social and cultural problems of the 1960s and 1970s. These decades were generally treated as the decades there were movements which problematized the Cold War struggle between US and USSR. These political movements, to some extent consciously problematized the disadvantages of the political modernization theories. I attempted to show that these theories had also reflections on the cultural debates of these decades.

After the Cold War, and in the early 1980s, cultural institutions like Sinematek that I have tried to present, have transformed or lost their importance. The process of this transformation in the role of the cultural institutions was the subordination around the needs of the market. Big companies and banks established cultural houses, aiming to organize cultural activities like film screenings, conferences, exhibitions. This total transformation transcends the limits of this work.

Nowadays, cinema studies were focused on popular culture and cultural studies. For example one may ask me why I did not make a study about Yeşilçam or Kemal Sunal who was one of most important figures of the popular culture. I can say that, I tried to call attention to this cultural institution who brought the traces of the

elitist and extreme westernist tendencies of its period. I tried to show that in these decades, intellectuals have been a very problematic relation with these issues to define their political or cultural agenda which went hand in hand with nationalist, contradictorily internationalist, and populist, contardictorily elitist overtones.

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