

# The Representation of Inter-Class Encounters in the Art-House Cinema of Turkey

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## Declaration of Originality

The intellectual content of this thesis, which has been written by me and for which I take full responsibility, is my own, original work, and it has not been previously or concurrently submitted elsewhere for any other examination or degree of higher education. The sources of all paraphrased and quoted materials, concepts, and ideas are fully cited, and the admissible contributions and assistance of others with respect to the conception of the work as well as to linguistic expression are explicitly acknowledged herein.

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## Abstract

“The Representation of Inter-Class Encounters in the Art-House Cinema of Turkey”

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The theme of inter-class encounters became a significant part of art-house movies in Turkey during the 2010s. The New Cinema of Turkey refers to movies that emerged during the mid-1990s within neoliberal transformations that resulted in two distinct commercial and art-house film markets. The art-house movies of New Cinema involve the theme of inter-class encounters in various respects. Considered from a historical perspective, the complexity and significance of inter-class encounters increased since mid-1990s, especially after the 2010s. The changes are interpreted based on Gilles Deleuze’s conceptualization of “modern political cinema,” suggesting it can be considered the development of an ethical attitude. An “ethics of encounters” contextualizes them in their social history, opening potentials for self-problematization and transformation by taking the ethical responsibility of one’s position within the social context. It is argued that the art-house movies of New Cinema involved this ethical perspective gradually concerning the representation of inter-class encounters. This process can be interpreted based on Turkey’s economic, political, social, and cultural transformations. As the effects of neoliberal transformations increased the precarity and wealth inequality and the political power regime became authoritarian systematically, an ethical attitude towards the representation of inter-class encounters also became a significant part of the art-house movies in the New Cinema of Turkey.

46.500 words

## Özet

“Yeni Türkiye Sinemasında Sınıfsal Karşılaşmaların Temsili”

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Sınıfsal karşılaşmalar teması 2010’lu yıllar boyunca Türkiye’deki sanat filmlerinin önemli bir parçası haline geldi. Yeni Türkiye Sineması, 1990’ların ortalarında iki ayrık, ticari ve sanat, film pazarı ile neticelenen neoliberal dönüşümler içerisinde açığa çıkan filmleri ifade ediyor. Türkiye’deki sanat filmleri sınıfsal karşılaşmaları çeşitli bakımlardan içermekte. Tarihsel bir perspektiften düşünüldüğünde ise temsillerin karmaşıklığının ve anlatıdaki öneminin 1990’ların ortalarından beri, özellikle de 2010’larda arttığı gözlemlenebilir. Bu değişimler Gilles Deleuze’ün “modern politik sinema” kavramına dayanarak yorumlanmış ve değişimlerin etik bir tavrın gelişimi olarak düşünülebileceği önerilmiştir. “Karşılaşmalar etiği” karşılaşmaları toplumsal tarih bağlamında değerlendirerek buradaki etik sorumluluğun üstlenilmesine, kendini sorsallaştırmaya ve dönüşüm potansiyelleri açmaya dayanır. Bu etik perspektifin sınıfsal karşılaşmaların temsiline giderek içerildiği iddia edilmiştir. Bu süreç Türkiye’nin ekonomik, politik, toplumsal, ve kültürel dönüşümleriyle yorumlanabilir. Neoliberal dönüşümlerin etkileri güvencesizliği ve mülkiyet eşitsizliğini arttırdıkça ve politik iktidar rejimi sistematik olarak otoriterleştikçe sınıfsal karşılaşmaların temsiline yönelik etik bir tavır da Yeni Türkiye Sinemasının sanat filmlerinin önemli bir parçası haline gelmiştir.

46.500 kelime



in memory of Selda



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*The only force bringing them together, and putting them into relation with each other, is the selfishness, the gain and the private interest of each. Each pays heed to himself only, and no one worries about the others.*

– Karl Marx, *Capital: Volume I*, trans. Ben Fowkes (Penguin, 2004), 280.

*It is well known that Greek mythology is not only the arsenal of Greek art but also its foundation. Is the view of nature and of social relations on which the Greek imagination and hence Greek mythology is based possible with self-acting mule spindles and railways and locomotives and electrical telegraphs [and self-moving photographs]?*

– Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (Penguin, 2015), 43.



## Introduction

In 2019, *Parasite* (Bong Joon-ho) won Palme D'or, the best film award at the Cannes Film Festival, one of the leading international organizations of the art-house cinema. It became commercially successful in the following year and, in 2020, won four Academy Awards. Similarly, *Joker* (Todd Phillips, 2019) won the Golden Lion at Venice Film Festival, another important place for the art-house cinema, and next year in 2020, it won two Academy Awards. Next year, *Nomadland* (Chloé Zhao, 2020) also won Golden Lion in 2020 and three Academy Awards in 2021. All of these were surprising for me because I was used to thinking that there is a sharp difference between the reception of art-house movies and commercial Hollywood productions. The image in my mind was that the Academy Awards winners are mostly famous Hollywood productions, while the critically acclaimed art-house movies are celebrated by a limited audience and awarded in art-house festivals organized for them. However, these three movies, *Parasite*, *Joker*, and *Nomadland*, became successful in both contexts and appreciated by very different audiences, while *Joker* can be considered a Hollywood production about a popular comic book character. On the other hand, another issue occupied me more than this situation because it was even more surprising for me that all of these movies involved social, cultural, and psychological conditions of economic class divisions and inter-class encounters as the main

themes of their narratives. I was also used to thinking that the representation of social classes and inter-class encounters had disappeared from cinema. What was happening now, then?

The picture gets even more confusing if one considers that the Netflix Turkey series *Bir Başkadır* (Berkun Oya) was also released in 2020, and it was also about class divisions and inter-class encounters. It caused several debates in Turkey's social media and public sphere concerning the representation of social classes, inter-class encounters, and the political messages behind their representation.<sup>1</sup> In early 2021, around the time when *Nomadland* won three Academy Awards, I was thinking about my master's thesis and realized that the representation of inter-class encounters was not a recent occasion in Turkey. What immediately came to my mind was the movies such as *Çoğunluk* (Seren Yüce, 2010), *Kış Uykusu* (Nuri Bilge Ceylan, 2014), *Sarmaşık* (Tolga Karaçelik, 2015), *Toz Bezi* (Ahu Öztürk, 2015), and *İşe Yarar Bir Şey* (Pelin Esmer, 2017) that involve inter-class encounters as their central theme and these movies spanned to a decade. I realized that I had not reflected on the representation of social classes and inter-class encounters in the cinema in Turkey, but it seemed to me that several movies in the 2010s involve the representation of inter-class encounters. When I did a quick research about the movies after the 2010s, at first, I could not find discussions referring to the representation of social classes. The articles I chanced upon discussed the representation of social classes in Yeşilçam movies, especially the films of Yılmaz Güney, while other articles were about the argument that the representation of social classes disappeared from the cinema in Turkey after the 1990s.

For example, Hepkon and Aydın, in their article published in 2010 *Türk Sinemasının Görünmeyen Öznesi: İşçiler*, discuss the 'absence' of workers

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<sup>1</sup> Ferhat Kılıç, "'Bir Başkadır' da kamerayı kim tutuyor? Gazete Duvar (November 18, 2020), <https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/bir-baskadir-da-kamerayi-kim-tutuyor-haber-1504865>. Zehra Çelenk, "'Bir Başkadır'la derdimiz ne?," Gazete Duvar (November 24, 2020), <https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/bir-baskadir-la-derdimiz-ne-makale-1505354>. For an edited volume on *Bir Başkadır* see: Bahar Öztürk and Beyler Yetkiner, eds., *Kavram ve Kuramlarla Bir Başkadır* (Ankara: Nobel Yayıncılık, 2021).

in cinema after the 1980s based on the oppression of oppositional movements by the coup of 1980, the implementation of neoliberal policies during the 1980s and 1990s, and the “identity politics” becoming the new leftist political agenda in the 1990s.<sup>2</sup> Eleven years later, in 2021, in her article *The Disappearance of Laborer Subject in the New Independent Cinema of Turkey of the 1990s: Globalization and Festivalism*, Aslı Daldal addresses the same question, why the representation of workers disappeared in the 1990s, and she argues that it is due to the market forces of the art-house cinema network that is established through the international film festivals.<sup>3</sup> Daldal's article will be discussed in chapter 3 in more detail. Even though their approaches and arguments are different, both authors conclude that workers disappeared after the 1990s. However, if one considers the movies after the 2010s, one can observe that not only are there representations of workers but also several different class conditions in a multiplicity of inter-class encounters. I interpreted these as suggesting that there is something different in the movies of New Cinema of Turkey during the 2010s regarding the representation of social classes compared to previous years. In this way, I decided to examine the representation of inter-class encounters in the art-house cinema of Turkey.

When I did more research on the representation of social classes and the inter-class encounters in the New Cinema of Turkey, the situation did not get drastically different. Some works contributed to analyzing the representation of social classes, but very few discuss the movies after the 2010s.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, the discussions on the representation of social classes

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<sup>2</sup> Zeliha Hepkon and Oya Şakı Aydın, “Türk Sinemasının Görünmeyen Öznesi: İşçiler,” *Galatasaray Üniversitesi İletişim Dergisi* 12 (2010): 79–103, 99–10.

<sup>3</sup> Aslı Daldal, “1990’ların Yeni Bağımsız Türk Sineması’nda Emekçi Öznenin Kayboluşu: Küreselleşme ve Festivalizm,” *Kültür ve İletişim* 24, no. 1 (2021): 159–89, <https://doi.org/10.18691/kulturveiletisim.800820>.

<sup>4</sup> See for example: Özen Nergis, “Cine-Ethics and Class Struggle: A Review of 2014 Palme d’Or Winner Winter Sleep,” *Potemkin Review*, no. 1 (January 2015), <http://www.potemkinreview.org/winter-sleep.html>. Neşe Kaplan and Ali Barış Kaplan, “Deprivation, Class, and Identity Issue in Contemporary Turkish Cinema,” *Journal of Media Critiques* 1, no. 2 (2015): 111–19, <https://doi.org/10.17349/Jmc115306>. Defne Özönur, “Representation of Class and Political Stands in a Movie: Winter Sleep,” *İletişim Kuram ve Araştırma Dergisi* 43 (n.d.): 98–117. Ulaş Can Olgunsoy, “Rüzgarda Salınan Nilüfer ve Albüm Filmlerinde Orta Sınıf Eleştirisi,” *ARTS: Artuklu Sanat ve Beşeri Bilimler Dergisi* 7 (2022): 57–84.

exclusively focus on the Yeşilçam period and the movies of Yılmaz Güney.<sup>5</sup> These issues raise several questions. If one follows the literature, there are representations of social classes in Yeşilçam, but they disappear after the 80s. One can ask, why are they coming back during the 2010s? What is the difference between the Yeşilçam and the New Cinema in terms of the representation of social classes? How should we understand the representation of encounters between different social classes? Moreover, why is there a lack of discussions about the movies in the 2010s concerning the representation of social classes? Is there something different in the movies that make them different to the extent that one cannot examine the representation of social classes and inter-class encounters in these movies with the same perspective? Besides, what are the characteristics of the movies in the 2010s? What is particularly new in these movies? How can we make sense of the movies during the 2010s within the framework of Turkey's social and historical context?

After I prepared my proposal for this thesis in early 2021, Janet Barış's book *Yeni Türkiye Sinemasında Sınıfsal Görünümler/Classed Appearances in the New Cinema of Turkey* was published.<sup>6</sup> This book is significant for this thesis in several respects. Above all, Barış's work is the primary reference of this thesis for the scope of the analysis. Barış confirms that the representation of social classes in the New Cinema of Turkey after the 2010s is not a topic analyzed and discussed in depth in the academic literature on the New Cinema of Turkey. Moreover, at the end of the book, one can find Barış's interviews with several directors, producers, and film critics. Interestingly, several interviewees argue that the social classes are under-represented in the cinema of Turkey. It is interesting to consider that although Barış discusses 17 movies released between 2010 and 2019, interviewees still argue that social classes are not represented

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<sup>5</sup> M. Nedim Süalp, Aslı Güneş, and Z. Tül Akbal Süalp, eds., *Sınıf İlişkileri: Sureti Suldurulmuş Bir Resim Mi?* (Ankara: Bağlam, 2011). Funda Başaran, ed., *İşçi Filmleri, Öteki "Sinemalar"* (İstanbul: Yordam, 2015). Mustafa Kemal Coşkun, ed., *Emekçileri İzlemek: Sinemamızda Sınıf, Kültür, Bilinç ve Direniş* (İstanbul: Ginko Kitap, 2017).

<sup>6</sup> Janet Barış, *Yeni Türkiye Sinemasında Sınıfsal Görünümler* (İstanbul: Doruk Yayınları, 2021).

enough. Moreover, Barış suggests a framework for examining social classes. She divides her analysis thematically based on the classes focused on in the movies. In this way, the book consists of four chapters; movies that involve the conditions of lower classes, criticisms of middle and upper-middle classes, conditions of urban white collars, and the dilemmas of the bourgeoisie. Thus, Barış takes a comprehensive approach in her study on the representation of social classes in the New Cinema of Turkey after the 2010s.

This thesis will focus only on the theme of inter-class encounters. One can find several reasons for focusing on the theme of encounters. Above all, it will be argued that the representation of inter-class encounters is the new element that distinguishes the movies after the 2010s. This is because one can find movies that involve classed environments in the New Cinema of Turkey; however, before the 2010s, the inter-class encounters were either minimal side stories or in the background of the narrative without direct representation. The third chapter of this thesis will argue that the encounters between different social classes emerged as a novel topic in the movies after the 2010s. Thus, focusing on the theme of inter-class encounters will allow us to examine the emergence of a new subject matter in the New Cinema of Turkey.

In this way, the question becomes, what is particularly significant for encounters? How should we understand the encounters in cinema? What makes encounters unique? As Sara Ahmed argues, each encounter involves a social and historical context.<sup>7</sup> One can suggest that an encounter embodies different processes and trajectories of the social context. Thus, encounters are events that manifest a whole field of social differences, divisions, and patterns that regulate, affect, alter, or subvert social relations. Moreover, in an encounter, one can find instances of the formation and the transformation of the social relations that regulate and reproduce the social context they belong. Consequently, encounters are not only occasions where one can observe multiple processes of social relations, but they are also the events and incidents in which the relations of

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<sup>7</sup> Sara Ahmed, *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality* (Routledge, 2000).

social context can be produced, reproduced, and transformed. Social contexts are always open to transformations, differentiations, and alterations. Encounters are significant instances because, in an encounter, one can find the experience of a social context in its complexity and multiplicity since each encounter reveals different dimensions and conditions of the social context. Encounters are fundamental in the analysis of social classes as well because, as Marx argues, social classes are the results of a dialectic encounter within the economic structure of the society.<sup>8</sup> In this perspective, class divisions result from economic encounters, and these economic relations condition the social, political, and cultural processes of the society.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, inter-class encounters embody a whole set of social relations, conditions, processes, and potentials of transformations.

Moreover, as will be discussed in the second chapter, one can argue that there is an ethics of encounters that emphasizes considering encounters within their social context and developing a self-problematization that would open up the possibility of transformation.<sup>10</sup> This ethical attitude towards encounters will be significant in understanding the differences between the movies in the 2010s. Instead of a Kantian ethical perspective that posits absolute and pre-determined principles that would regulate the individual's actions, ethics of encounters focuses on potentials that emerge in the encounters, which could lead one to take ethical concern towards one's position in the social context of encounters. Thus, an ethical attitude towards encounters emphasizes contextualization of the encounter in the social and historical processes while developing responsibility for one's position, dispositions, and intentions within the social context of encounters might open up the possibility of self-problematization and transformation.

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<sup>8</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital: Volume I*, trans. Ben Fowkes (Penguin UK, 2004), 283-307.

<sup>9</sup> Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, trans. S.W. Ryazanskaya (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1993), "Preface."

<sup>10</sup> Felicia Chan, *Cosmopolitan Cinema: Cross-Cultural Encounters in East Asian Film* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2017). David Martin-Jones, *Cinema Against Doublethink: Ethical Encounters with the Lost Pasts of World History* (Routledge, 2019). Umut Tümay Arslan, *Kat: Sinema ve Etik* (Metis Yayıncılık, 2020).

Furthermore, one can add the differences in gender, ethnicity, nationality, religion, race, age, disabilities, and many others involving the social context of encounters. On the one hand, this intersectional approach is necessary for the analysis of encounters, but, on the other hand, it is hard to find a theoretical perspective that can grasp the plurality of all the differences in one viewpoint. However, the attempt to find “the perspective” that can account for all differences in the social context would also be insufficient because it would be impossible. As Umut Tümay Arslan suggests, an attempt to see everything at once might result in content and an absolute sense of ego in the spectator, but this would only result in a distortion of the social context to the extent that it would only confirm the established ideologies, hierarchies, and social norms; while an ethical perspective would remind the constitutive openness for becoming other to the spectator.<sup>11</sup> As argued by several authors discussed in chapter 2, taking care of the social and historical context of the encounters is primary for having an ethical stance concerning encounters, and it requires a self-problematization and openness to learning and transformation.

While I was writing these lines, Çiğdem Mater Utku, producer of the movie *Toz Bezi*, was charged with 18 years of prison and arrested while the court process continued. Several innocent people are arrested like her in the same lawsuit and charged with similar punishments, while Osman Kavala (who has been arrested for more than three years) is now sentenced to life imprisonment. They are found guilty of, to put it simply, organizing the Gezi protests back in 2013. Not to mention the impossibility of doing something like this, Gezi protests were peaceful events and cannot be considered a crime in any meaningful legal way. The law case is entirely political, and from a legal perspective, several conditions make the judgment completely invalid. However, it seems these extreme sanctions for innocent people are a political statement by the Akp government to warn those who might participate in oppositional movements before the elections because Turkey is in a deep economic crisis right now, and there is one year before the elections. To say the least, these

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<sup>11</sup> Umut Tümay Arslan, *Kat: Sinema ve Etik* (Metis Yayıncılık, 2020),14-6.

show that cinema is a part of Turkey's social, political, and cultural context, and the analysis of the inter-class encounters from an ethical perspective requires the interpretation of the movies by taking into account the socio-historical context of Turkey.

The issue of inter-class encounters in Turkey's social and historical context can be found in the discussions concerning the social, political, and cultural transformations in Turkey. Since the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, there has been a new genealogy of academic studies on social differences, which mainly start with discussions on the theme of modernization and urbanization. As examples of formative studies where one can find examinations concerning the inter-class encounters in Turkey, one can mention sociological and anthropological studies published in the mid-twentieth century, such as the works of Niyazi Berkes, Behice Boran, and İbrahim Yasa. Kemal Karpat's study on shantytowns in Istanbul as a newly emerged phenomenon in the 60s, *The Gecekondu: Rural Migration and Urbanization* (1976), can be considered an analysis of class encounters in the changing urban environment.<sup>12</sup> After the 80s, Turkey experienced profound economic, social, and political changes, which will be discussed below in detail, and the question of inter-class encounters also became a topic in the analysis of these transformations. One can mention volumes *Istanbul: Between the Global and the Local* (1999), edited by Çağlar Keyder, and *Fragments of Culture* (2002), edited by Deniz Kandiyoti and Ayşe Saktanber, where one can find several articles examining encounters in the urban environment based on the recent developments in Turkey during the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>13</sup> *Sınıftan Sınıfa: Fabrika Dışında Çalışma Manzaraları* (2010) edited by Ayşe Buğra is also a significant contribution to the analysis of social classes in Turkey.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Kemal H. Karpat, *The Gecekondu: Rural Migration and Urbanization* (Cambridge University Press, 1976).

<sup>13</sup> Çağlar Keyder, *Istanbul: Between the Global and the Local* (Rowman & Littlefield, 1999). Deniz Kandiyoti and Ayşe Saktanber, eds., *Fragments of Culture: The Everyday of Modern Turkey* (IB Tauris, 2002).

<sup>14</sup> Ayşe Buğra, ed., *Sınıftan Sınıfa: Fabrika Dışında Çalışma Manzaraları* (İletişim, 2010).

These are just a few examples of a vast literature; however, it is important to note that the main theme in these studies is the encounter between what is considered to be the 'center' and 'periphery' depending on the perspective of the study. Thus, most of the time, authors focus on similar types of encounters between the people with the most contrasting characteristics. However, this thesis will argue that the types of encounters that became the subject matter of the movies in the 2010s constitute a multiplicity of perspectives and subjectivities which cannot be boiled down to the dichotomy of center and periphery. This is significant because one can argue that the treatment of inter-class encounters in the movies of the 2010s is different from the understanding of the subject in the academic literature. Thus, how the representation of inter-class encounters in the New Cinema of Turkey during the 2010s differs from these studies is also a significant question.

In a sense, encounters are rare occasions. They do not always happen. When they do, they might be unpredictable because they might open up different possibilities that one had not envisioned before. It seems they are worth telling because cinema is full of encounters. The encounters between different socio-economic classes, on the other hand, are open to a multiplicity of interpretations. It is not always clear what the term 'class' means because it is one of the most loaded words in the history of social sciences and praxis. However, nobody is entirely away from having an insight into the differences between socio-economic classes either. The caricatured representations of workers can be found in almost every commercial production as a 'spice' to diversify the characters' backgrounds. What is different in the art-house movies, then? Why does one feel that something different happens in art-house movies when they represent inter-class encounters? Why is there a distinction between commercial and art-house movies? Why is this distinction established in the cultural domain of Turkey? How can differences in the representation of inter-class encounters be understood in the art-house cinema of Turkey since the 1990s? Finally, what is the social context of changes in the representation of inter-class encounters in the New Cinema of Turkey since the 1990s?

I started the research of this thesis based on these questions, but they did not turn out to be easy at all. Although this thesis could not give definite answers to all of these questions, one can consider it part of the literature on the analysis of the New Cinema of Turkey from the perspective of the social classes and encounters. As mentioned in chapter 3, one can observe that there has been a new body of academic literature on cinema in Turkey since the 1990s that takes into account social and historical context based on different theoretical perspectives proposed in the discussions of social sciences and humanities. If one considers the history of cinema in Turkey, one can argue that the medium of cinema has been present, at least in Istanbul, since the invention of the medium; but in the early decades of the 20th century, it was mainly an upper-class leisure activity in the hotels, restaurants, and saloons around Pera and Beyoğlu in Istanbul.<sup>15</sup> In the early Republican period, cinema was at the hands of Muhsin Ertuğrul, who directed and acted in several movies that he produced by the state means and funding. However, although he had relatively good opportunities, he did not spend so much energy promoting cinema in Turkey because, as a theatrical actor, he considered the medium a lesser form of art than the theater.<sup>16</sup> During the 1940s, movies from Egypt entered Turkey and became popular, the strong hand of the state on film production loosened, and private producers emerged, creating an encouraging environment for the newly emerging directors and scenarists, which can be considered as a preliminary process for the emergence of Yeşilçam.<sup>17</sup> Yeşilçam period is considered to have started in the 1950s; its paradigms were established during the 1950s and 1960s, and between the 1960s and mid-1970s, Turkey became one of the world's most

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<sup>15</sup> Gönül Dönmez-Colin, "Contemporary Cinema of Turkey: Being and Becoming," in *The Routledge Handbook on Contemporary Turkey*, ed. Joost Jongerden (Routledge, 2022), 243-244.

<sup>16</sup> Savaş Arslan, *Cinema in Turkey: A New Critical History* (Oxford University Press, 2011), 55.

<sup>17</sup> Akbaş Emel, "Mısır Filmlerinin Türk Sinemasında Yarattığı Etki," *Etkileşim* 4 (2019): 276-84.

prolific film producers.<sup>18</sup> Between 1960-1980 cinema was a significant social phenomenon, creating many tropes of social memory and imagery varying from Türkan Şoray as the 'absolute beauty to the 'proper social critic' of Yılmaz Güney, or later nostalgia for the open-air film theaters.<sup>19</sup> As Arslan suggests, Yeşilçam was a significant part of the social history of Turkey in various ways, it involved the production of a 'nation' with all its anxieties, impossibilities, and contradictions, and arguably it continues to do so.<sup>20</sup>

When it comes to the representation of social classes and inter-class encounters, there are different perspectives on how the Yeşilçam period might be understood. Akbal Süalp argues that except for Yılmaz Güney and his limited influence in the 1970s, the representation of social classes and inter-class encounters in Yeşilçam is 'evaded' by 'superficial hints.'<sup>21</sup> Akbal Süalp considers the movies of Yılmaz Güney and other examples in the Yeşilçam period that involve the representation of social classes and inter-class encounters as an exceptional minority compared to the context of Yeşilçam. On the other hand, these Yeşilçam movies that involve the representation of social classes and inter-class encounters such as *Gurbet Kuşları* (Halit Refiğ, 1964), *Karanlıkta Uyananlar* (Ertem Göreç, 1965), *Ah Güzel İstanbul* (Atıf Yılmaz, 1966), *Diyet* (Lütfi Akad, 1974), *Maden* (Yavuz Özkan, 1978), and *Sürü* (Yılmaz Güney, Zeki Ökten, 1979) are among the most frequently referred movies in the literature on cinema in Turkey. Furthermore, Daldal suggests that there was a "social realist movement" between 1960-1965 (comparable to, for example, Italian neorealism) that emerged in the suitable political atmosphere of the period, and the movies of this movement involved social and political context in Turkey, although they were mainly seeking for a national identity within the

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<sup>18</sup> Nezi̇ Erdogȧn and Deniz Göktürk, "Turkish Cinema," in *Companion Encyclopedia of Middle Eastern and North African Film*, ed. Oliver Leeman (London and New York: Routledge, 2001).

<sup>19</sup> Arslan, *Cinema in Turkey*, 11.

<sup>20</sup> Umut Tümay Arslan, *Mazi Kabrinin Hortlakları: Türklük, Melankoli ve Sinema* (Metis, 2010).

<sup>21</sup> Z. Tül Akbal Süalp, "Mutlu Sınıf Yoktur; Söyle Bunları," in *Sınıf İlişkileri: Sureti Soldurulmuş Bir Resim Mi?*, ed. M. Nedim Süalp, Aslı Güneş, and Z. Tül Akbal Süalp (Ankara: Bağlam Yayıncılık, 2011), 129–62, 145.

transformations of modernity.<sup>22</sup> Thus, one can suggest that the social and historical context of the representation of social classes and the inter-class encounters in the movies from the Yeşilçam period continue to be a topic of discussion in the literature.

Asuman Suner argues that the production process in the Yeşilçam period never became an industry; instead, producers were making movies by taking loans from distributors, theater owners, or usurers, and the capital produced through the movies mainly was directed to other sectors instead of becoming further investment for the new movies.<sup>23</sup> This process resulted in an economic crisis for cinema at the end of the 1970s because productions became too expensive for the producers (especially with the new technologies such as coloring), and combined with the general economic, social, and political crises of the late 1970s, the atmosphere created by the coup of 1980, and the emergence of television, the heydays of Yeşilçam period when cinema was a popular household activity come to an end, and during the 80's film productions and watching rates fell dramatically.<sup>24</sup> However, Yeşilçam tried to survive through various means (including sex movies) during the 1980s until the film market opened to foreign companies, which resulted in Hollywood distributors entering Turkey and distributing Hollywood movies directly.<sup>25</sup> There was no producer and director in Turkey to cope with the visual qualities and techniques of the Hollywood productions, and according to Savaş Arslan, this marks the end of the Yeşilçam period.<sup>26</sup> As will be mentioned in chapter 3 in more detail, after this transition, there emerged two forms of cinema in the mid-90s; while commercial productions managed to render Yeşilçam themes in the language of Hollywood cinema, the art-house cinema emerged with the movies that found their funding and audience

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<sup>22</sup> Aşlı Daldal, *Umut Distopya Siyaset: Toplumsaldan Bireysele Türk Sinemasından Parçalar* (h2o kitap, 2021), 11-6.

<sup>23</sup> Asuman Suner, *Hayalet Ev: Yeni Türk Sinemasında Aidiyet, Kimlik ve Bellek* (Metis, 2006), 30-1.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, 31.

<sup>25</sup> Arslan, *Cinema in Turkey*, 242-5.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, 251.

through the international funding and film festivals.<sup>27</sup> In this sense, the term New Cinema of Turkey refers to the period after Yeşilçam starting with the 1990s, and it has two different commercial and art-house cinemas with distinct market networks. Thus, the defining element that distinguishes art-house and commercial movies is the different economic contexts of their funding, production, and distribution.

Based on this framework, this thesis focuses on art-house movies that emerged after the mid-90s focusing on the representation of inter-class encounters, and tries to understand the differences in these movies concerning the context of social history in Turkey. In the appendix, there is a list of movies that can be considered art-house movies in Turkey after the 1990s. There, movies that involve inter-class encounters and the ones discussed in this thesis are marked. The selection of the movies for this thesis attempts to focus on the movies that can be considered exemplary for the similar ones and new developments in the representation of inter-class encounters. Thus, this thesis does not emphasize the auteur perspective, and the continuities and discontinuities of single directors will not be discussed in detail. Instead, the backgrounds of directors will be considered as much as they are relevant to the movies' contextualization within the social and historical processes. In this way, this thesis's argument refers to the directors' biographical details only to mention that most come from middle and upper-middle-class environments. Moreover, since the subject matter of this thesis is the movies while discussing the issues concerning ethical discussions, phrases such as “ethics of encounters” and “movie’s ethical attitude toward the representation of inter-class encounters” are preferred. However, the fifth chapter discusses the ethical problems in relation to the classed background of the directors. The methodology of the thesis is the cultural criticism approach based on detailed discourse analysis. The central perspective of the thesis is based on a historical discussion, interpreting movies in a chronological examination of the representation of inter-class encounters in relation to the social context of Turkey. The analysis of movies will focus on

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<sup>27</sup> Özlem Güçlü, *Female Silences, Turkey's Crises: Gender, Nation, and Past in the New Cinema of Turkey* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016), 35-9.

the representation of inter-class encounters; however, the thesis aims to show that the differences in the representation of inter-class encounters changed over time, and this change can be considered based on the economic, social, and political transformations in Turkey since the 1990s.

To understand the changes in the representation of inter-class encounters over time, the thesis consults Gilles Deleuze's discussions on cinema, particularly his use of the concept of 'minor' and the analysis of 'third world cinema.' These concepts and discussions will highlight the particularities of the changes in the representation of inter-class encounters. Moreover, the literature on the cinematic encounters and their ethical dimensions will be mentioned in order to argue that the developments in the 2010s can be interpreted as the emergence of an ethical attitude toward the representation of inter-class encounters. Several authors argue that taking into account the socio-historical context and developing a self-problematization is the key to an ethical attitude, and the differences in the representation of inter-class encounters can be understood from this perspective. It will be argued that after the 2010s, what Deleuze characterizes as the 'minor' elements increased in the movies, and the representation of inter-class encounters in the New Cinema of Turkey became entangled with the socio-historical context of Turkey in a different manner. This change can be considered as the emergence of ethical concerns regarding the representation of inter-class encounters. The differences in the experiences of different social classes and their economic, social, and cultural conditions are increasingly taken into account, contributing to opening up multiple perspectives and self-problematization of subjectivities by pointing out the plurality of conditions, contradictions, and dilemmas that appear in the inter-class encounters. In other words, the difference in the representation of inter-class encounters in the New Cinema of Turkey during the 2010s can be interpreted as becoming ethically concerned with the socio-historical context by taking care of different perspectives and opening up multiple problematizations of various subjectivities.

The remaining question is how this process, the development of an ethical attitude towards the representation of inter-class encounters in

the 2010s, can be contextualized in the social history of Turkey. A possible way to address this issue is to consider Turkey's economic, social, and political transitions since the 1990s. The period after the coup of 1980 is commonly understood in terms of neoliberalism, which is a broad concept and often used ambiguously as an umbrella term for various processes. From an economic perspective, neoliberal transformations refer to changes in policies that establish markets in Turkey open for international capital to flow easier and faster.<sup>28</sup> The transformations in this respect had immense effects on Turkey. Before the 1980s, the economic, social, and cultural privileges were mainly at the hands of Kemalist bureaucratic elites and middle classes.<sup>29</sup> Their privileged position started to be loosened after the 1980s with the new economic developments because neoliberal transformations altered the economic and political conditions upon which their privileges were built. Moreover, the rise of Kurdish and Islamist political movements introduced a critique of Kemalist ideology and destabilized the centrist bureaucratic state power.<sup>30</sup> During the 1980s and 1990s, the Islamist political movements gradually gained power, and in 2002 Akp won the elections with the majority of the votes and formed the government single-handedly.<sup>31</sup>

During the 2000s Akp government intensified the neoliberal policies, implemented vast privatizations of the sectors that mainly were state monopolies, such as health and education, and initiated a wave of re-

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<sup>28</sup> Galip Yalman, "The Neoliberal Transformation of State and Market in Turkey: An Overview of Financial Developments from 1980 to 2000," in *The Political Economy of Financial Transformation in Turkey*, ed. Galip Yalman, Thomas Marois, and Ali Rıza Güngen (Routledge, 2019), 51–87.

<sup>29</sup> Çağlar Keyder, *State and Class in Turkey: A Study in Capitalist Development* (Verso, 1987).

<sup>30</sup> Barış Alp Özden, İsmet Akça, and Ahmet Bekmen, "Antinomies of Authoritarian Neoliberalism in Turkey: The Justice and Development Party Era," in *States of Discipline: Authoritarian Neoliberalism and the Contested Reproduction of Capitalist Order*, ed. Cemal Burak Tansel (Rowman & Littlefield International, 2017).

<sup>31</sup> Cihan Tuğal, *Passive Revolution: Absorbing the Islamic Challenge to Capitalism* (Stanford University Press, 2009).

forms for EU membership; meanwhile, members of the Gülen organization started to hold significant bureaucratic positions.<sup>32</sup> These processes had impacts on several dimensions. While neoliberal policies fostered capital accumulation and increased the gap between upper classes and wage-earner middle and lower classes, the precarious conditions of the workers are increased, and the difference between lower and middle classes gradually decreased.<sup>33</sup> Finding a job gets difficult in several sectors, and factors such as the proliferation of indebtedness (especially in housing) and privatization of education and health increased the economic forces on the middle and lower classes, which contributed to the growing precariousness.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, Akp led an anti-Kemalist and anti-Western lifestyle discourse, which was an additional traumatizing force for the Kemalist middle classes who considered Turkey a Western country and themselves as the progressive elements of the society.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, state welfare disappeared systematically, and Akp developed a discourse of fostering values of family bonds so that the family networks are indicated as protective mechanisms against economic constraints in the absence of state welfare.<sup>36</sup> These conditions intensified the pressures on women since they became the target of both economic and patriarchal hegemonic structures, while the conservative perspective of Akp subjected them to a multiplicity of oppressive forces.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Ayhan Kaya, "Islamisation of Turkey under the AKP Rule: Empowering Family, Faith and Charity," *South European Society and Politics* 20, no. 1 (2014): 47–69, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13608746.2014.979031>.

<sup>33</sup> Özden, Akça, and Bekmen, "Antinomies of Authoritarian Neoliberalism in Turkey: The Justice and Development Party Era."

<sup>34</sup> Merih Angın and Pınar Bedirhanoglu, "Privatization Processes as Ideological Moments: The Block Sales of Large-Scale State Enterprises in Turkey in the 2000s," *New Perspectives on Turkey* 47 (2012): 139–67. Mehmet Erman Erol, "State and Labour under AKP Rule in Turkey: An Appraisal," *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 21, no. 6 (2018): 663–77.

<sup>35</sup> Tanıl Bora, *Cereyanlar: Türkiye'de Siyasî İdeolojiler* (İletişim Yayınları, 2017).

<sup>36</sup> Berna Yazıcı, "The Return to the Family: Welfare, State, and Politics of the Family in Turkey," *Anthropological Quarterly* 85, no. 1 (2012): 103–40.

<sup>37</sup> Betül Yazar, "Neoliberal-Neoconservative Feminism(s) in Turkey: Politics of Female Bodies/Subjectivities and the Justice and Development Party's Turn to Authoritarianism," *New Perspectives on Turkey* 63 (n.d.): 113–37, <https://doi.org/doi:10.1017/npt.2020.18>.

During the 2000s, Akp mainly grounded its hegemony on its alliance with different parts of the society, including a significant portion of the people who support Islamist movements and the segments of the society that profited from the implementation of neoliberal policies.<sup>38</sup> However, after the 2008 global economic crisis, Akp gradually became unable to promote further economic developments and, as a result, its alliance networks were loosened, while its hegemonic strategy increasingly became authoritarian.<sup>39</sup> Although in the 2000s, Akp seemed to promise social and political liberties to the Kurdish people, in the 2010s, the process came to a halt and became reverse.<sup>40</sup> When Akp could not form a single majority government after the elections in June of 2015, Hdp was found guilty, and after 2015, subordination of Kurdish people and political movements became the state policy. Moreover, the power struggle within state mechanisms between Akp and Gülen organization resulted in a series of conspiracies, and in 2016 the members of the Gülen organization in the army attempted to capture the state apparatus with a coup.<sup>41</sup> After they failed, Akp declared a state of emergency and used it to establish an authoritarian hegemony, and this authoritarian regime during the state of emergency solidified in the state bureaucracy with the transition to the presidential system with the 2017 constitutional referendum.<sup>42</sup>

To sum up, neoliberal transformations led to a growing precarity of wage-earners and deterioration of middle classes while Akp developed an authoritarian regime and intensified the oppression of Kurds and women. These processes lead to several political dissents during the 2010s. The most significant political uprising against Akp was the Gezi

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<sup>38</sup> İsmet Akça, “Hegemonic Projects in Post-1980 Turkey and the Changing Forms of Authoritarianism,” in *Turkey Reframed: Constituting Neoliberal Economy*, ed. İsmet Akça, Ahmet Bekmen, and Barış Alp Özden (London: Pluto Press, 2014), 13–47.

<sup>39</sup> Özden, Akça, and Bekmen, “Antinomies of Authoritarian Neoliberalism in Turkey: The Justice and Development Party Era,” 199–201.

<sup>40</sup> Kumru F. Toktamış, “(Im)Possibility of Negotiating Peace: 2005–2015 Peace/Reconciliation Talks between the Turkish Government and Kurdish Politicians,” *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 21, no. 3 (2018): 286–303.

<sup>41</sup> Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2017).

<sup>42</sup> Errol Babacan et al., *Regime Change in Turkey: Neoliberal Authoritarianism, Islamism and Hegemony* (Routledge, 2021).

protests in 2013. These protests involved several different parts of the society and articulated an intersection of problems such as ecological crises, oppression of women and LGBTI+ people, subordination of Kurds, discomfort about anti-Western rhetoric, and hegemonic state control over the public sphere, including mass media, among many others. The rise of the Kurdish political movement can be considered another significant oppositional development that significantly affected Turkey's political and social atmosphere. Moreover, during the 2010s, feminist movements also grew notably, which impacted social life in a multiplicity of dimensions.

The changes in the representation of inter-class encounters in the New Cinema of Turkey during the 2010s can be considered in this context. It will be argued that changes in the movies after 2010 can be examined as the development of an ethical attitude towards representing inter-class encounters in cinema. When it comes to how and why such an ethical attitude emerged in cinema for the theme of inter-class encounters during the 2010s, one can address the economic, social, and political processes in the context of Turkey. The rise of the precariousness of workers, and especially lower classes, and the significant deterioration of economic and social conditions of the middle class can be considered as contributing to the development of a concern for the theme of social classes. Moreover, the rise of authoritarian state power and the oppositional movements such as feminism and Kurdish politics can be regarded as constituting an environment in which filmmakers start to develop a concern for the problems arising in the social context. In this way, the emergence of inter-class encounters as a significant theme during the 2010s and their ethical character can be interpreted within Turkey's economic, social, and political context.

The second chapter of the thesis addresses the discussions that form the basis of the following analysis. At the beginning of the chapter, theoretical accounts on the nature of cinematic representation are mentioned as the ground for analyzing movies. Gilles Deleuze's discussions on the concept of "minor" and "third world cinema" suggest a viewpoint for interpreting the transitions in the representation of inter-class encounters.

The second chapter also mentions the discussions on encounters in cinema and their ethical character, which will be the central perspective of this thesis to understand the significance of the inter-class encounters in the 2010s. The chapter ends by addressing the concept of class to clarify its different uses. The third chapter discusses the literature on the New Cinema of Turkey. It starts by mentioning the accounts that define the New Cinema in Turkey. This involves the arguments on how the difference between commercial and art-house cinema can be understood. The chapter continues by mentioning the literature on the main aspects of the New Cinema of Turkey by focusing on gender, ethnicity, and class. These discussions will highlight the themes of crisis, identity, and ethics in cinema. In this way, the third chapter forms the context of the following examination by mentioning the significant themes examined by the authors who wrote about the New Cinema in Turkey. The fourth chapter examines the representation of inter-class encounters in the art-house movies during the 1990s, 2000s, and 2010s. This chapter concentrates on the representation of inter-class encounters during these three decades by emphasizing the details in the encounters and differences in movies over time. The fifth chapter suggests that the differences in the movies after the 2010s can be understood as gradually involving what Deleuze calls 'minor' modes of representation of inter-class encounters, and this transition can be considered the development of an ethical attitude towards the representation of inter-class encounters. Finally, this transition can be interpreted based on Turkey's economic, social, and political context, especially concerning the growing precarity of workers, decline of middle classes, increasing authoritarian regime, and the rising oppositional political discontent.

The history of New Cinema since the 1990s is open to different interpretations and discussions where the historiography and the social context of cinema can be problematized from different perspectives. A significant aspect of this problematization involves the criticism of positing a "national cinema" as a distinct and independent historical category. The genealogy of modern political cinema and the theme of inter-class encounters goes back to the beginning of cinema when Lumiere Brothers

recorded the workers leaving the factory. After World War II, a new group of movies emerged that are significant in developing characteristic images, styles, and narratives of social classes in cinema that fall under the scope of modern political cinema.<sup>43</sup> Movies of Italian neorealism such as *Bicycle Thieves* (Vittorio De Sica, 1948), French New Wave such as *Week-end* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1967), movies of Yılmaz Güney, American independents such as Robert Altman, proletariat trilogy of Aki Kaurismäki (1986-90), working class movies of Ken Loach, movies such as *Rosetta* (Dardenne Brothers, 1999) and *Mondays in the Sun* (Fernando León de Aranoa, 2002) are significant examples of these movies. In this way, one can suggest that the international pool of cinematographic images, styles, and stories contribute to the formation of cosmopolitan memory of cinematic forms, which serves as a toolbox for the later filmmakers to articulate themselves. Deleuze examines the process before and after WWII as a transition from “movement-image” to “time-image,” where the latter breaks the established norms of movement and action, creating new and thought-provoking potentials for cinema. His understanding of modern political cinema follows his analysis of time-image, and he suggests that there is a notable stylistic difference in these movies. I consider the movies of New Cinema examined in this thesis within the global historical trajectory of modern political cinema and the theme of inter-class encounters within the genealogy of movies that create the cosmopolitan memory of images, styles, and stories of social classes.

Thus, it is important to consider the emergence of New Cinema in Turkey within the context of global and local trajectories of filmmaking and imagination. This perspective suggests a problematization of the idea of “national” cinema by arguing that the context of cinema has always been a cosmopolitan field of images, narratives, and stories and New Cinema of Turkey emerged within this context of international filmmaking. Moreover, the theme of inter-class encounters in the previous movies in Turkey also contribute to the development of cinemato-

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<sup>43</sup> András Bálint Kovács, *Screening Modernism: European Art Cinema, 1950-1980* (University of Chicago Press, 2007).

graphic imagination. Movies such as *Diyet* (Lütfi Akad, 1974), *Maden* (Yavuz Özkan, 1979), *Sürü* (Yılmaz Güney, 1978), *Bir Yudum Sevgi* (Atif Yılmaz, 1984), *Beyaz Bisiklet* (Nisan Akman, 1986), *Yoksul* (Zeki Ökten, 1986), *Ah Belinda* (Atif Yılmaz, 1986), *Düştürü Dünya* (Zeki Ökten, 1988), *Zengin Mutfağı* (Başar Sabuncu, 1988), *Fazilet* (İrfan Tözüm, 1990), *Benim Sinemalarım* (Füruzan, Gülsün Karamustafa, 1990) are significant examples where one can find the theme of social classes and inter-class encounters. Not only a global historical context of cinema contributes to the emergence of New Cinema, the movies that produced in Turkey also create a historical context for the development of the images, narratives, and styles of the movies after 1990s.

Alternative historical narratives on cinema's social context are an area open to further research. Examining cinema in this way also introduces different perspectives on the general social and historical processes, which can inform the general historical trajectories. On the other hand, it is crucial to reflect upon how cinema introduces alternative perspectives to the established historical narratives. The movies that involve inter-class encounters in the art-house cinema of Turkey are significant examples of alternative narratives where one can find the subaltern subjectivities and oppressed individuals struggling to express themselves under the domination of hegemonic forces. These movies suggest a multiplicity of perspectives on social context and historical transformations, which question the cultural hegemony of the historical narratives that prioritize the development of Western capitalist society over and above all other social formations. The idea of a "national" cinema is also an extension of the cultural hegemony of capitalist imperialism. It is based on a distinction between the cinema that is assumed to render the "universal" historical trajectory of Western Hollywood and Art cinema, while non-western societies are signified in terms of their national, ethnic, religious, or cultural differences and considered "particular" and secondary to the world-historical narratives. Thus, examining how global capitalist forces are rendered in the New Cinema of Turkey and how these movies

introduce different perspectives of the history of capitalism suggest alternative historical narratives of capitalism and the historiography of New Cinema in Turkey.

I am aware of the problems arising from using the word “art” to designate a specific group of films, and I do not intend to attribute an aesthetic value to the movies. The choice of using “art-house” as a term to distinguish the movies examined in this thesis is because the distinction between commercial and art-house cinema is established in the economic and cultural context of cinema. The funding, production, distribution, and recognition of movies form two significantly different worlds, and the analysis of this thesis follows the differences in the cultural context. One of the aims of this thesis is to question the social context of cinema; thus, it is required to follow the processes in social history. On the one hand, there are several continuities and connections between commercial and art-house productions, and not everyone would consider this difference important for interpreting movies.

On the other hand, if one considers the relation between cinema and the social context, there is a significant difference in how movies are part of the historical processes and how the stories, images, and narratives in movies are related to the social text. Thus, the contextualization of movies within the social history and asking how movies related to their social, economic, political, and cultural environment requires us to question the differences between the commercial and art-house productions. Since this thesis focuses on the art-house movies, it is also important to ask how this analysis can be compared to commercial productions and whether there are significant similarities or differences in these movies. Moreover, one can also question whether this difference is valid anymore because, during the 2010s, the difference seems to be narrowed, especially with the development of online distribution platforms. The significance of institutions in developing the medium of cinema and the transformations in the cultural context of movies has increased over the years. These institutions include endowments that support film productions, international and local film festivals, the increase in university departments that specialize in media and film studies, and the journals and

magazines promoting and discussing cinema, among many others. All these changes affect cinema in several ways, and the dynamics of these processes are areas to be investigated.

The analysis and the argument in chapters four and five suggest that the transformations in the representation of art-house movies in the New Cinema of Turkey can be considered as an increase of the elements of modern political cinema and considered within the social context of Turkey since the 1990s, this transition can be understood as the development of an ethical attitude toward the theme of inter-class encounters. However, I refrain from suggesting a linear progression narrative. By discussing the classed conditions of the social context of art-house movies and emphasizing the ethical limitations of the conditions of cinema I suggest that the discussions on the social context and ethics of cinema require a detailed and nuanced approach. Even though I argue that the transitions can be viewed as the development of an ethical attitude this process is neither absolute, nor evolve in one direction. The social context of cinema is complex and complicated, while movies involve several historical trajectories. The different aspects of the ethical problems that arise in this discussion and the limitations one can point out in these interpretations are further discussed in the fifth chapter and the conclusion.

This thesis aims to contribute to the examination of New Cinema in Turkey from the perspective of social classes. As mentioned above, the representation of social classes and inter-class encounters in cinema is not a topic discussed in detail, although several movies in the 2010s involve this theme as the main element of their narrative. Thus, the thesis can be considered an attempt to address this issue in order to open up further discussions in the literature. The subject of social classes in cinema remains to be examined in detail, and further research would increase the depth of the interpretation of the New Cinema of Turkey from this perspective. Moreover, this thesis also attempts to address the social and historical changes in New Cinema by addressing the previous literature on this issue. The transitions in cinema during the 2010s wait for further research because several different trajectories can be investigated and discussed from a historical and social point of view. The inter-class

encounters are just one of the themes in the complexity of New Cinema of Turkey, and the analysis of cinema within the context of social history is a fruitful subject matter that is open to further examination.

## Theories on Cinema, Encounters, and Class

This chapter mentions the theoretical discussions that can be considered in relation to the analysis of the inter-class encounters in the art-house movies of the New Cinema in Turkey. To discuss the foundational theoretical frameworks on cinema that emerged in the first half of the 20th-century chapter starts with the accounts of Sergei Eisenstein, Dziga Vertov, Andre Bazin, Christian Metz, Walter Benjamin, and Siegfried Kracauer; focusing on the issues concerning representation and social context of cinema. The second section is on the concept of minor cinema developed by Gilles Deleuze, which suggests a valuable perspective in contextualizing cinema's social and political dimensions in relation to its artistic achievements. Afterward, the chapter continues with discussions on encounters and how one should approach social encounters, emphasizing the ethical dimension of the encounters and their analysis in cinema. The arguments on different dimensions of encounters will shed light on how certain forms of oppression are developed through encounters and how one can have an ethical perspective against reproducing them. The last section refers to four different uses of the term class to clarify the concept's meaning for the analysis of this thesis. The differences in the meaning of class must be considered because forgetting their differences might result in the mentioned ethical problems because it is also a form of forgetting the social context of the encounters. The chapter

concludes by summarizing the arguments by pointing out their relations with each other.

## § 2.1 Theories on Filmmaking and Representation

One of the earliest studies on cinema was conducted in the USSR after the revolution, as they considered cinema an essential medium of revolutionary practice. One of the critical results of these studies in the Soviets is observing what is called the Kuleshov effect. First theorized by Lev Kuleshov, it is the effect of montage that results in the spectator's attribution of emotions, feelings, or meanings to a shot due to its relation to other shots.<sup>1</sup> Developing the idea of montage as the primary cinema technique, Sergei Eisenstein suggests that "... the very production of simple meanings rises as a process of juxtaposition."<sup>2</sup> Moreover, he considers cinema the art of the masses since it does not require pre-requisite knowledge to understand, and its visual language is universal.<sup>3</sup> In this way, he understands the relationship between a movie and the spectators as 'teaching' how to think dialectic Marxist theories.<sup>4</sup> However, the main focus of Eisenstein was to explore the new potentials of this new medium and the unique ways of signification that emerged through cinema. In this sense, he was questioning what cinema is and what are the possibilities that cinema allows.<sup>5</sup>

Dziga Vertov, on the other hand, pursues an avant-garde route, rejecting to pose a predetermined meaning to the film, experiments with the different possibilities of montage. Instead of building a coherent narrative, he introduced the idea of "Kino-eye as the possibility of making the invisible visible, the unclear clear, the hidden manifest, the disguised

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew Crippen, "Aesthetics and Action: Situations, Emotional Perception and the Kuleshov Effect," *Synthese* 198, no. 9 (May 1, 2021): 2345–63, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11229-019-02110-2>.

<sup>2</sup> Sergei Eisenstein, *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory*, ed. Jay Leyda (HMH, 2014), 246.

<sup>3</sup> Angelos Koutsourakis, "Marx and Cinema," in *Understanding Marx, Understanding Modernism*, ed. Mark Steven (New York: Bloomsbury, 2021), 134–45, 138.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, 138.

<sup>5</sup> Francesco Casetti, *Theories of Cinema, 1945-1995* (University of Texas Press, 1999). Casetti distinguishes between the ontological and analytic perspectives on cinema. In a nutshell, ontological accounts discuss what cinema is, while analytic viewpoints focus on interpretation. The theoretical discussion of this thesis mainly follows the ontological accounts and asks about the ethical potentials of cinema.

overt, the acted non-acted; making the falsehood truth."<sup>6</sup> Vertov is more interested in how cinema can reveal what is not directly apparent. When he is criticized for making films "unintelligible to masses," he answered by arguing that he attempts to make people "think," and, according to him, it is not a coincidence for dense content to be hard to grasp, such as the works of Marx and Lenin.<sup>7</sup> Whether didactic as Eisenstein or avant-garde as Vertov, the attempt is to render social reality in cinema, and class encounters emerge here in two ways. First, the images of people belonging to different classes are juxtaposed, mainly through their works and how they dress, look, and behave. Second, events articulated through montage manifest the relationship between different classes and their effects on each other during social processes. Notwithstanding their differences, both Eisenstein and Vertov are interested in what cinema should be more than what it is.

In his essay *The Ontology of the Photographic Image* (1945), Andre Bazin argues that the representation of a photographic image must be accepted as something real, actually existing in space and time. "Photography enjoys a certain advantage in virtue of this transference of reality from the thing to its [photographic] reproduction."<sup>8</sup> When it comes to the objective reality of this representation, he claims: "The photographic image is the object itself, the object freed from the conditions of time and space that govern it."<sup>9</sup> The photographic representation is the representation of an existing object in reality, and the object's reality is handed over to its image. In this way, cinema has its connection to reality; however, Bazin argues that the reality effect in cinema has its unique conditions. Against Eisenstein's position that juxtaposition of images constitutes meanings, Bazin emphasized the form and composition of a single frame. He claims that techniques such as using long shots, deep focus, wide ranges, and active use of background and foreground in the same

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<sup>6</sup> Dziga Vertov, *Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov* (University of California Press, 1984), 41.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 37-8.

<sup>8</sup> André Bazin, *What Is Cinema?: Volume I*, trans. Hugh Gray (University of California Press, 2005), 14.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

shot create the sense of a homogeneous and continuous space-time, which constitutes the reality effect of cinema.<sup>10</sup> Bazin celebrates those who used these, such as Orson Welles, Robert Bresson, or the directors of Italian neorealism, because, in the world of modern capitalism, which constantly exerts alienating forces, these movies help people to overcome their alienation and reconstruct their sense of a coherent reality.<sup>11</sup>

Christian Metz introduced the perspective of semiotics to film studies. Semiotics is the study of signs in a formal analysis. Ferdinand de Saussure argued that language works based on the differences between signs, i.e., there are only differences in a language.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, the relation between a sign and its meaning is arbitrary, i.e., there is no necessary relation between a word and the meaning understood by it. Instead, meanings of signs are developed in the cultural contexts based on their relative differences. Metz introduced semiotics to film analysis by arguing that cinema is not a language, but linguistic analysis can be applied to cinema as long as it functions as a language.<sup>13</sup> Based on Saussure's distinction between the spoken language (*parole*) and the linguistic structure that underlies it (*langue*), Metz claims that "... the cinema is certainly not a language system (*langue*). It can, however, be considered as a *language* [*parole*]."<sup>14</sup> Metz points out that there cannot be a given grammar for cinema in reference to which one can dissect all the meanings. Instead, cinema invents different forms of signification that must be examined separately. Cinema works as a language when it has already developed certain meaningful cinematographic forms established in a cultural context. Metz calls a 'code' of cinema a specific cinematographic principle with a particular effect repeated over time and established as a standard

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<sup>10</sup> Pascal Bonitzer, *Bakış ve Ses* (Istanbul: Metis, 2018), 13-7, 48.

<sup>11</sup> Bazin, *What Is Cinema?*, 124.

<sup>12</sup> Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. Wade Baskin (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 120.

<sup>13</sup> Christian Metz, *Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema*, trans. Michael Taylor (The Chicago University Press, 1991).

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, 105.

technique.<sup>15</sup> He distinguishes different types of constructing codes in cinema, which are not necessarily finite. For example, the sense of a uniform space (emphasized by Bazin) is achieved through cross-references of objects, architectural elements, and a coherent spatial perspective. On the other hand, stories develop their referential plane through the codes of characters and events.

Walter Benjamin, in the essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1935), argues that since films are mechanically reproduced, there is no longer a distinction between the 'original' and the 'copy' in cinema, which destroys what he calls the 'aura,' the qualitative effect of artwork due to its uniqueness.<sup>16</sup> Benjamin points out that the sense of reality is different in cinema compared to other mediums such as painting or sculpture because while "manual reproduction" in painting and sculpture reproduces sight, the camera reproduces the light of an object technically, enabling images that are not directly accessible insight.<sup>17</sup> Since the artistic significance of a traditional artwork is based on its aura, its criticism is problematic, according to Benjamin, because it is mediated by class hierarchies, while "with regard to the screen, the critical and the receptive attitudes of the public coincide."<sup>18</sup> Therefore, "The reactionary attitude toward a Picasso painting [of the public] changes into the progressive reaction toward a Chaplin movie."<sup>19</sup> In this way, Benjamin finds a democratic potential in cinema since a film is produced, watched, and criticized collectively. He considers commodification as external to the cinema, coming from "outside of the studio" as the "cult of movie star," which he interprets as a response to reconstruct the aura in cinema through the persona of the celebrity.<sup>20</sup>

However, there are two problems with Benjamin's position. First, the distinction between commercial and art-house cinema, established

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 40-41.

<sup>16</sup> Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2007).

<sup>17</sup> Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," 220-1.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 234.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 234.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 231.

after WWII (inaccessible to Benjamin, who died in 1940), seems to revive the distinction Benjamin thought to be collapsing. One can argue that commercial cinema is the cinema of the masses while art-house cinema is the cinema of an internationally embedded network of directors, critics, scholars, cinephiles, and art-house movie theaters.<sup>21</sup> Second, Hollywood companies have industrialized the production and distribution of films to the extent that the market forces create a hierarchy (hence the emergence of 'independent' producers and film festivals) which does not let the democratic environment Benjamin envisions flourish. The movies examined in this thesis are art-house movies that do not have the means for production and distribution as commercial films. On the other hand, since Benjamin argues that cinema destroys aura, the attempts to develop an aura in commercial cinema through the cult of the movie star or various other means can be considered reproducing the class hierarchies and contributing to the social hegemony where cinema becomes an ideological apparatus.

Finally, Siegfried Kracauer argues that cinema has distinctive features that make it a unique medium in his work *Theory of Film* (1960), which discusses the properties of cinematographic reality. By claiming that "there are different visible worlds," Kracauer claims that, unlike theater or painting, films "must record and reveal physical reality" because the medium of cinema has its particular relation with the physical world.<sup>22</sup> He mentions two 'realistic tendencies' of cinema. First, although movies are staged, a photographic image tends to appear unstaged as if it is taken incidentally. They show events as contingent and indeterminate, and the film's staging requires hiding the staging itself as if the film is not a recording. Second, cinema presents "objective movements" and "... it is entirely possible that a staged real-life event evokes a stronger illusion of the reality on the screen than would be the original event if it

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<sup>21</sup> Thomas Elsaesser, *European Cinema: Face to Face with Hollywood* (Amsterdam University Press, 2005), 505.

<sup>22</sup> Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (Princeton University Press, 1997), 28, 37.

had been captured directly by the camera.”<sup>23</sup> Since cinema has its particular regime of visual reality, Kracauer states that the cinematographic sense of reality necessitates a different universe of staging. First, cinema requires inanimate objects to stand on their own and seem to belong to the environment to create a realistic sense of space. The acting, gestures, and facial reactions must be minimal because actors must act as if they are not acting, as a person coincidentally passing before the spectator. Moreover, dialogues must also be used moderately. Since cinema is based on a visual world, language should not explain what images can show, and sounds such as voice and music may impose a different realm upon the visual image.

Furthermore, he develops the idea of a "found story," which is not a story that is "contrived" but "discovered" in the actual world because it happens not as a story but as an event that the spectator encounters.<sup>24</sup> Found stories develop a connection between the movie and the spectator by telling stories that the spectator might find in its social environment. Found stories may be 'episodic' as glimpses of people's lives in their ordinary everydayness, or 'slight narratives' where "A story must come out of the life of a people, not from the actions of individuals."<sup>25</sup> Instead of separating individuals from their social context, slight narratives reflect people's lives in their social environment from a daily perspective. Moreover, he argues that the cinematic content is what can be captured with the camera only, and this includes a depiction of daily movements, transient events, and the "flow of life."<sup>26</sup> In this way, Kracauer suggests that cinema can manifest social life from the people's point of view in their social conditions.

Although these authors have different perspectives on the nature of cinema, they all seem to consider cinema as having a unique relation to social reality. Eisenstein and Vertov regarded cinema as the primary artistic medium that can reveal the underlying processes of social reality.

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 33-5.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid 245-6.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 246-7. Kracauer quotes director Robert J. Flaherty.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 270-3.

On the other hand, Bazin attributes a reality to the cinematic representation that can restore the destroyed sense of reality due to alienating forces of capitalism. Metz suggests that cinema is not a language but creates codes that function as the constitutive elements of meanings, which are established over time in the social context. From this viewpoint, one can deduce that the cinematic representation constructs its special codes of meaning that are constituted in the social context, and these meanings are constitutive elements of the established forms of meaning in the social context. In this process, cinema has a different social effect, according to Benjamin, as he argues that traditional forms of art are valued in relation to class hierarchies, while cinema has the potential to destroy the effects of class hierarchies and become a collective medium. In this way, he suggests that cinema has a social significance because it can contribute to the collective activity of society. On the other hand, it is argued that the cinema market does not seem to enable the potentials Benjamin suggests to become completely actual; instead, the art-house cinema market seems to emerge as a response to the dominant Hollywood-oriented market that reproduces class hierarchy. Kracauer's arguments on the found story and slight narrative suggest an account of how representations relate to social reality since Kracauer argues that cinema tends to represent people as they are in their social context. Thus, cinema has the potential to represent social encounters as people in their everydayness experience them. This representation has a particular relation to the social context it represents because it can be a part of the formation of collective experiences, development of meaningful articulations, and restoration of a sense of reality while representing the inter-class encounters as people experience them in the course of their lives. The representation of encounters in cinema can represent people's social life in their everydayness and reflect the effects of social processes on the formation of social contexts.

## § 2.2 Deleuze, Minor, and the Modern Political Cinema

Gilles Deleuze's conceptualization of modern political cinema in terms of the concept of minor will be helpful for the analysis of this thesis.

Deleuze and Félix Guattari introduce the concept of the minor by examining a particular encounter, the literature of the people of minorities written in the language of the majority, and develop the concept on several axes.<sup>27</sup> The concept of minor marks a specific creative potential and sheds light on the nature of revolutionary artistic action, which contextualizes the political dimension of artworks. Moreover, they develop the minor based on an analysis of hegemony; thus, it informs how cultural power operates and a particular way in which artists react to it. When Deleuze examines third world movies that emerged during the 1960s and 1970s, he considers them as the 'modern political cinema' and analyzes the films by the concept of the minor, considering the movies of the directors such as Yılmaz Güney, Ousmane Sembene, Glauber Rocha, and Pierre Perrault. Deleuze interprets them as political reactions against the dominant forms of cinema and revolutionary achievements against capitalist imperialism. In this way, Deleuze's discussion of minor cinema helps us understand encounters from a political perspective in relation to capitalist cultural hegemony.

In *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (1975), Deleuze and Guattari characterize minor literature in terms of three criteria.<sup>28</sup> The minor literature alters the language by opening up new ways of writing, all the content is developed in a political dimension without a distinction between public and the private, and everything has a collective value concerning the whole people of the minority. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, they extend the meaning and application of the term minor.<sup>29</sup> While the majority refers to the cultural features that hold the privileged social position, "adult-white-heterosexual-European-male-speaking a standard language," minorities are the people who struggle to express themselves within the established cultural norms of the majority by reacting against them, such

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<sup>27</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 16-7.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 16-7.

<sup>29</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

as women, LGBTI+, people of color, non-Western cultures, ethnic minorities, people of non-adult ages, people with disabilities.<sup>30</sup> In this sense, becoming minor is an attitude that transforms the norms established by the majority to affirm oneself and, in this way, opens up new potential for the people of the minority to express themselves. This is the primary significance of minor cinema that Deleuze emphasizes.

When Deleuze discusses minor cinema, he focuses on this perspective, i.e., to open up the potential for a new collective expression by transforming the major forms of cinema. Similar to Benjamin, Deleuze finds a democratic and collective value in cinema. Moreover, his position can be interpreted in relation to Kracauer's understanding of cinematic reality. Kracauer argued that cinema has its unique relation to social reality through found stories and slight narratives. Deleuze can be understood as taking this examination forward to its political implications. When cinema involves the found stories of the people who suffer subordination, cinema not only represents the life of the minority but also transforms the cinematic forms to affirm the lives of those people. In the second volume of his work *Cinema II: Time-Image* (1985), Deleuze characterizes minor cinema in three aspects.<sup>31</sup> First, minor movies are about a problematic situation where "... the people no longer exist, or not yet... *the people are missing*."<sup>32</sup> The minor movies are about the communities and collective experiences destroyed or oppressed by the capitalist economy and imperialism. The movies either point out this destruction and its catastrophic consequences or, by pointing out the absence of the communities, they call for the emergence of new collective experiences. Second, the distinction between public and private collapses in minor cinema, and everything becomes political either through a crisis or a "trance."<sup>33</sup> Trance is another cinematographic form of telling a crisis, which Deleuze

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 105-6.

<sup>31</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema II: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 215-224.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid 216.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 219.

also refers to as fabulation. When the film's content is about an impossibility, the movie converges to becoming unrealistic or even mythical because it examines an impossibility while the story is based on actual conditions.<sup>34</sup> In these instances, individual and collective political matters are intertwined to the extent that the particular events in the movie suggest possibilities and contradictions in the social context, even though the events in the movie might seem extraordinary or unbelievable. Finally, minor movies reshape the form of cinema by bringing the actual person who is segregated and turned into a "party" through domination and oppression to invent its uniting language in such a way that the individual and the collectivity, the real and the fictional, the artist and the people are entangled and transformed in a state of transition.<sup>35</sup> "As a general rule, third world cinema has this aim: through trance or crisis, to constitute an assemblage which brings real parties together, in order to make them produce collective utterances as the prefiguration of the people who are missing (and, as Klee says, 'we can do no more')."<sup>36</sup>

The representation of inter-class encounters in the art-house movies of the New Cinema of Turkey can be examined from this perspective. Movies point out several forms of crises emerging from Turkey's economic, social, and political history, where people face various impossibilities that are unbearable for them. Since the 1980 coup, not only that the neoliberal transformations created forces that exert growing pressures on the middle and lower classes, but the same period has been marked by the oppression of the several different political organizations that would address these problems. One can add the war between the Turkish state and PKK and the oppression of the Kurdish population as significant crises. All these processes and many others force people to change their lives, move to different places, and lose their social and cultural environments while struggling for survival. Deleuze's formulation that 'people are missing' can be interpreted in the sense that the forces of these crises become so powerful in a society that people come to feel disconnected

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 219.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 221-3.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, 224.

from their social environment because their community, traditions, social and cultural contexts are lost or substantially altered. While addressing people's detachment from their social context due to the economic, social, and political crises, cinema can represent people's impossibility of forming a collective experience.

Encounters in cinema are especially significant because encounters are the primary instances people manage or fail to produce collective experiences. The impossibility of becoming a community in an encounter can be considered where one feels that 'people are missing.' This phrase refers to the experience that one cannot find a community in one's social context where one feels belonging. However, as Deleuze suggests, minor cinema can be a 'trance' in the sense that the representation of the impossibility of producing a collectivity might open up new articulations that can prefigure new future possibilities. Although cinema can only suggest these possibilities, which may be unrealistic or imaginary, at least minor cinema can point out that there may be alternatives to the established social processes. Even if the cinema does not open up new possibilities, just by representing the impossibilities people undergo, minor cinema might be relevant for the social recognition of the crises society experiences. Minor cinema is a 'trance' in that it is the endeavor of cinema for a transition from the experience of the impossibilities towards future possibilities, even if it is just a recognition of the crises. The representation of encounters is significant from this perspective because encounters can be instances where the impossibilities of becoming a community are experienced, felt, and produced, and the potential for new collective experiences has emerged, suggested, or denied.

Deleuze claims that minor cinema brings the real people together to form their collective utterances. Encounters are one of the primary social forms of coming together and producing collective articulations. The analysis of encounters in minor cinema indicates how people experience the impossibilities in their social existence, how they manage or fail to develop collective experiences, and whether cinema suggests future possibilities in these encounters. In this way, one can contextualize the cinematic representation within the social history where people struggle

with crises and collective experiences. On the other hand, the distinction between art-house and commercial cinema, where Hollywood forms create a cultural hegemony while art-house cinema tries to survive through establishing another market of funding, production, and distribution, continues to be a problem for the analysis of Deleuze as well as it was for the arguments of Benjamin. Deleuze published his major works on cinema during the mid-1980s, where he clearly distinguished the images of Hollywood productions and the movies that introduce alternative images af. However, although there were film festivals in that period, the distinction between art-house and commercial was not dominant and significant as it became in the 1990s. Therefore, even if movies involve the characteristics that Deleuze attributes to the modern political cinema, one can argue that movies are disconnected from a general audience by the capitalist market forces to the extent that it is questionable whether the potential of these movies might have effects in the social context. The fifth chapter will address these issues concerning the movies examined in this thesis.

### § 2.3 Encounters, Forgetting, and Ethics

The concept of encounter is a complex and complicated one. On the one hand, it is not new; for example, Marx investigates the political processes as a struggle between different social classes, an encounter in the form of a political struggle to achieve social power. On the other hand, the examination of encounters experienced a substantial change over the twentieth century mainly due to the critique of subjectivity and identity by poststructuralist philosophers such as Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault. Instead of considering social encounters as happening between two subjects with distinct identities, the cultural criticism that developed in the last quarter of the twentieth century and continues to be elaborated upon considers the subjects and identities as results of the practices that happen in the social encounters.<sup>37</sup> Thus, encounters are constitutive of the identities and the formation of their subjectivities. This per-

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<sup>37</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (Routledge, 2007), 35.

spective results from the rejection of any atemporal or ahistorical characterizations of a fixed identity. If individuals exist in the context of their social history, then social practices are fundamental in subjectivization, and from this perspective, identities cannot be understood as separate from the encounters in the social existence. In this way, subjectivity can be considered in relation to the whole set of practices of an individual, such as the conduct of behaviors, ways of speaking, beliefs, desires, preferences, and aims that can be understood as part of a personality, and identity is the sense of the self that occurs with these processes. Encounters are the focal points where one can examine the processes of subjectivization and the formation of identities within the social contexts.

Zygmunt Bauman suggests that modern societies tend to form a distinction between what is normal and the anomaly, which renders social encounters mediated by the formations of the strangers.<sup>38</sup> This argument can be considered parallel to how Deleuze and Guattari discuss the distinction between majority and minority as they argue that the majority is the cultural norms of the privileged and the minority as the deviation. Bauman argues that a stranger is a person who creates a feeling of anxiety because the behaviors, outlook, or ideas of that person undermine the established coherence of the “cognitive, aesthetic, and moral maps” of the majority.<sup>39</sup> The examination of encounters in cinema should consider how being majority or minority is produced since these are not quantitative terms; instead, results of the social power relations and cinema might reproduce or work against the established forms of power. For example, although half of the population is women, they are treated as a minority in the patriarchal power structures. Moreover, the majority's characterization might depend on the social and cultural context. There might be different majorities and minorities in villages, small cities, and metropolises, as well as in different class contexts since the power rela-

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<sup>38</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, “The Making and Unmaking of Strangers,” in *Debating Cultural Hybridity: Multicultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-Racism*, ed. Pnina Werbner and Tariq Modood (London: Zed Books, 1997), 46–58.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

tions have different effects in different economic class contexts. While examining encounters in cinema, one should consider how movies represent the majority and minorities in power relations that are particular to different geographies and social, cultural, and economic contexts.

Sara Ahmed argues that the figure of the stranger became a significant reference point of cultural criticism because it can be examined as the embodiment of the differences that must be included and preserved, which would contribute to a cosmopolitan political project.<sup>40</sup> She criticizes this perspective, arguing that this attitude still preserves the person as the embodiment of a stranger, while the form of the encounter between normal and anomaly continues. Instead, cultural criticism should find ways of destroying the image of a stranger. Encounters between what is expected and anomaly in society, where anomaly might be a foreigner, minority, woman, LGBTI+, people with disabilities, or different religions, involve a power hierarchy within the social context, and encounters might reproduce a subordination. She examines the encounter with the stranger as having a form of 'fetishism' in the sense that Marx develops the term for the appearance of commodities under capitalism. Marx claims that commodities within the capitalist system have the character of a fetish (which is an object with a religious value due to being a symbol) since besides their material qualities, commodities have an additional value because they mediate the social relations of exploitation and power.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, the relations between people appear as the objective relations between the commodities; Ahmed continues that, in this way, an object is transfigured to become an embodiment of social relations, and this perspective can be applied to the figure of a stranger.<sup>42</sup> For the one who forgets the socio-historical context of the encounter, the encountered individual embodies the figure of the stranger, according to Ahmed, because the figure of the stranger is the reification of the social relations

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<sup>40</sup> Sara Ahmed, *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality* (Routledge, 2000), 4.

<sup>41</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital: Volume I*, trans. Ben Fowkes (Penguin UK, 2004), 163-178.

<sup>42</sup> Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*, 4-5.

in an encounter.<sup>43</sup> In this way, she argues that without destroying the sense of stranger, an inclusive attitude is impossible because people appear to be strangers when the forgetting "erases the very forms of difference" and "renders impossible the formation of an inclusive community."<sup>44</sup> Thus, it is an ethical and political duty to take care of the social and historical context of the encounters to overcome the forgetting that results in stranger fetishization and develop a community that embraces differences. As stranger fetishism is developed by forgetting the social and historical context of the encounter, the ethical and political duty primarily requires the remembrance, memory, or the reconstruction of the socio-historical context of the encounter.

As Georg Simmel suggests, the stranger is not an unknown person. "For to be a stranger is naturally a very positive relation; it is a specific form of interaction."<sup>45</sup> He argues that in all encounters, people have some things in common and some things indifference; when the things in common are not interdependent to the people in the encounter, but common characteristics are general and not special to the encounter, people might be encountered as strangers: "For this reason, strangers are not really conceived as individuals, but as strangers of a particular type...."<sup>46</sup> Encountering a stranger can be understood as forgetting that the encounter is happening between individuals instead of identifying the encountered person with the general features of a stereotype. Although these stereotypical attributes are signifiers developed in the social context, forgetting that an individual is never a collection of general features of a group results in encountering a person as a stranger who belongs to a specific social group. This can be a possible way to understand what constitutes to be a minority. Women, LGBTI+, children, older people, people of color, ethnicities, religions, and people with disabilities might appear as

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>45</sup> Georg Simmel, "The Stranger," in *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, trans. Kurt Wolff (New York: Free Press, 1950), 402–8, 402.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, 407.

strangers because instead of being considered individuals, they are encountered as embodiments of these categories by forgetting the social context that marks them with these signifiers. The inter-class encounters are another instance at the intersection of these differences. One can argue that the exploitation relation between different economic classes can be reproduced in different manners during the social encounters because individuals can become the embodiment of economic, social, and cultural differences between different classes in the inter-class encounters. In this sense, the ethical problem of encounters becomes the depersonalization of individuals by treating them solely based on the general features of the social group assigned to them.

David Martin-Jones argues that if one reconsiders the analysis of Deleuze after the neoliberal transformations, now the deletion of the socio-historical context is extended to the point of forgetting all the other histories except for the major Western progressive capitalist history and cinema has become a few places where one can record and preserve these alternative histories.<sup>47</sup> In this sense, minor cinema in the neoliberal period can be considered a space for remembering different histories, enabling one to reformulate a different future based on different historical possibilities. Martin-Jones agrees with Sara Ahmed on the significance of forgetting in establishing power by suggesting that one of the most effective operations of colonial hegemony is the destruction of the local histories, and the remembrance of these lost pasts is a crucial element of resistance.<sup>48</sup> For him, cinema is a space for articulating the lost pasts by developing a social archive that records alternative narratives and perspectives that can work against the dominance of the cultural hegemony of capitalism. The remembrance of alternative histories as different social potentials can be considered an element of the minor cinema in the neoliberal period when neoliberal market forces homogenize cultural

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<sup>47</sup> David Martin-Jones, *Cinema Against Doublethink: Ethical Encounters with the Lost Past of World History* (Routledge, 2019), 213-4.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*, 210-1.

practices and social histories.<sup>49</sup> Paul Willemen suggests that a comparative film analysis must consider the different forms of history in relation to capitalism by reflecting the particularities of different contexts.<sup>50</sup> The global economic effects of neoliberalism are not experienced in the same way in different cultures and contexts; thus, one should not assume a singular historical and social result for the same neoliberal capitalism operating everywhere in the world in the same way. Willemen argues that if one stops assuming that there is only one cultural context for capitalism, then the idea of a foreignness would collapse because cinemas of different cultures suggest different responses to capitalist forces.<sup>51</sup> Willemen's resonates with Ahmed's perspective because they both argue that if one contextualizes an encounter within the social history, the strangeness (for Ahmed) and foreignness (for Willemen) will disappear, and one can establish a dialogue between differences which would also work against the cultural hegemony of the capitalist markets. The encounters in cinema can be interpreted to what extent one can find the formation of dialogues that can overcome, rendering differences stranger or foreign.

Forgetting the socio-historical context of the encounter and one-sidedness by assuming that one's culture is the primary way of living seems to be the central target of these criticisms for examining encounters. Forgetting should not be considered a black and white situation since it is possible to encounter differences without contextualizing them. In this sense, forms of mere mentions, over-determinations, belittlements, carelessness, or too powerful assumptions are also instances of forgetting. Thus, it can be considered as forgetting the possibilities, potentials, differences, and contradictions of the other's perspective. These arguments can be applied to the analysis of inter-class encounters. The social and cultural formations of the economic classes are different from each other, and they experience economic, social, and cultural conditions differently. When people forget these differences in their encounters or

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid, 214-5.

<sup>50</sup> Paul Willemen, "For a Comparative Film Studies," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 6, no. 1 (2005): 98-112, 103.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, 103.

consider their experiences as the only possible historical trajectories, the encounter becomes a form of social and cultural oppression. Cinema can be considered a medium where one can find films against the formation of this subordination by remembering and recording the different, divergent, and alternative social, cultural, and economic contexts, experiences, and histories. Felicia Chan emphasizes the ethical implications of this issue by arguing that an attitude against the established power structures requires one to develop a self-reflexive perspective where one can problematize oneself, as argued by Gerard Delanty in his discussion of critical cosmopolitanism.<sup>52</sup> One can deduce from Chan that encounters require ethical decisions because social and cultural differences are already mediated by forms of power, subordination, or oppression, and it is inevitable that either one reproduces them or reacts against them. The necessity of this ethical choice can also be argued for inter-class encounters because encounters between different classes might reproduce exploitation if one does not take care of the ethical implications of an inter-class encounter.

Chan argues that there is always a paradox here because it is impossible to resolve the tensions arising from the social context in an encounter immediately; therefore, the ethical stance requires facing such paradoxes and problematizing one's position. While the dominant forms of commercial Hollywood cinema produce a cultural hegemony by forgetting different cultural contexts and histories other than Western capitalism, art-house cinema might take an ethical stance by contextualizing the encounters and developing a self-problematization against the social hierarchies. The problematization of one's position within the social context involves taking responsibility for the ethical dilemmas, paradoxes, and tensions that emerge in the encounters. In this way, one can open oneself to transformations by learning different and alternative possibilities about oneself, others, and the social context of encounters. Self-

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<sup>52</sup> Gerard Delanty, "The Cosmopolitan Imagination: Critical Cosmopolitanism and Social Theory," *The British Journal of Sociology* 57, no. 1 (2006): 25-47, 35. Felicia Chan, *Cosmopolitan Cinema: Cross-Cultural Encounters in East Asian Film* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 141-2.

problematization requires an effort to keep one's subjective perspective open to changes concerning the problems that might emerge in one's social context. Although this is a challenging task to involve, it is required to engage with the ethical and political problems of one's social environment. Moreover, minor cinema is a form of this ethical position because minor movies involve the crises in the socio-historical context from the perspective of the individuals who suffer their consequences as impossible situations. In this way, minor movies also contextualize people in their socio-historical context.

The underlying contextual forces in an encounter can be subtle, as the critique of ideology proposed by Slavoj Žižek suggests. Žižek's central argument in his political philosophy is that ideologies are not 'false ideas' that one can point out and dismiss easily because the powerful ideologies primarily operate on the level of desires. Based on the Lacanian psychoanalysis, Žižek argues that ideological structures produce specific forms of desires that if individuals follow those desires, they execute the aims of the ideology.<sup>53</sup> Based on a psychoanalytic approach, he argues that subjective desires are developed within the social context, and the formation of the symbolic register of the social context involves the aims and strategies of ideologies as constituents of the social context. Thus, although an individual might assume to have a subjective desire, one might be hunted by the dominant ideologies operating through social symbols. Žižek's arguments are worth considering while taking a self-reflexive ethical stance because a problematization of one's desires and examining the sources of one's desires are also required to have an ethical approach in encounters. For example, Ipek A. Celik Rappas & Philip E. Phillis examine the movies where one can find encounters between Europeans and migrants and argue that the movies reproduce a European hegemony over the migrants because the representation of the migrants functions as a means for the moral development of the European character, while

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<sup>53</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture* (MIT Press, 1992), 128-30.

the migrants are fixed in the peripheries of Europe rendering the meaning that that is the place where they belong.<sup>54</sup> Thus, although the movies Çelik Rappas and Phillis examine may initially seem to involve encounters that attempt to overcome the hierarchical differences, Çelik Rappas and Phillis show that they forget the ideological structures underlying the context of the encounters and become reproductions of established power hierarchies.

To sum up, authors who examine the encounters in cinema emphasize forgetting the socio-historical context and one-sidedness about the possibilities and differences as a constitutive element of social and cultural subordination and suggest that cinema has the power to become a counterforce against it. Cinema can suggest different historical narratives, personal stories, and perspectives on cultural differences that can help to overcome the one-sided cultural representation of the dominant forms of cinema. John Mowatt argues that if one stops assuming that there is only one way of understanding and interpreting the culture, a different field of differences, pluralities, and multiplicities emerge where one can develop dialogues.<sup>55</sup> However, the cultural hegemony under neoliberal capitalism leads to the disappearance of alternative historical narratives, as argued by Martin-Jones, and minor cinema can be considered a place where the alternatives to capitalist imaginations can be remembered, recorded, and reconstructed. Therefore, one should approach encounters by restoring the socio-historical context of cultural multiplicities. This approach would be an ethical position where one critically reflects on the presuppositions and dispositions of oneself, especially the formation of desires that might be affected by ideological strategies. These insights can be applied to examining inter-class encounters by considering the concept of class in detail and how it relates to the history of economic, social, political, and cultural contexts.

## § 2.4 Four Concepts of Class

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<sup>54</sup> Ipek A. Celik Rappas and Philip E. Phillis, “‘Do the Right Thing’: Encounters with Undocumented Migrants in Contemporary European Cinema,” *Studies in European Cinema* 17, no. 1 (2020): 36–50.

<sup>55</sup> Mowatt, *Re-Takes: Postcoloniality and Foreign Film Languages* (University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 45.

It is argued that the examination of the encounters in cinema necessitates an ethical stance that involves the awareness concerning the socio-historical context of encounters and a self-problematization because forgetting these turns encounters into subordination. Ethical positions concerning encounters can be found in (at least some) art-house movies as they react against the forms of commercial cinema that establish cultural dominance by forgetting the socio-historical context. On the other hand, art-house movies develop an awareness of the socio-historical context and, by problematizing the one-sided perspectives, open up a dialogue for the plurality of differences. The examination of inter-class encounters particularly focuses on the encounters between different classes, and the analysis of inter-class encounters requires taking into account the socio-historical context of different classes to maintain the ethical perspective. In this sense, ethical criteria apply both to the representation of inter-class encounters in cinema and the conceptual frameworks one develops for examining cinema. However, the concept of class has multiple meanings, and the effects of class divisions in the encounters can be observed from different perspectives. Thus, to develop an understanding of the socio-historical context of the inter-class encounters, different meanings of the class must be clarified. Moreover, an analysis of inter-class encounters in the art-house cinema of Turkey will show a difference in the movies in their representation of inter-class encounters after the 2010s. Movies after the 2010s have a different approach in the awareness and representation of the socio-historical context of the inter-class encounters. To point out this transition, different meanings of the class will be mentioned here to address the contexts of class divisions from the perspectives associated with the concept of class.

As mentioned by several authors who wrote on the representation of class in cinema, although Marx and class perspective highly influenced the debates in the early and mid-20th century, there has been a lack of scholarship on the analysis of class, especially from a theoretical point view.<sup>56</sup> It seems the term class has different meanings, and an analysis of

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<sup>56</sup> David James, "Is There Class in This Text?: The Repression of Class in Film and Cultural Studies," in *A Companion to Film Theory*, ed. Toby Miller and Robert Stam (Blackwell,

these meanings can be helpful in the examination of inter-class encounters because class distinctions have multiple effects on the encounters in different ways. One can find four different uses of the term class, interdependent perspectives on class, and will be understood based on their relation to each other. This framework aims to inform the multiplicity and complexity of the representation of inter-class encounters by examining it in relation to different dimensions. These four concepts are economic class, political class, class hegemony, and class habitus.

First, the genealogy of the contemporary meaning of the term class goes back to Marx, who claimed that the social divisions of wealth inequality are the results of society's economic system.<sup>57</sup> He argues that different economic classes correspond to different parts of the economic system, and the underlying economic system causes the differences between wealth and income, which results in social class divisions. In this sense, class is identified with different occupations, and the structure of the economic system is proposed as the underlying mechanism that results in different positions in the economy, which divide society into different groups of people who have similar wealth and income due to their jobs. Marx argues that the economic structure of society conditions all the other social forms for two reasons. On the one hand, society exists based on its reproduction, and economic processes actualize this reproduction; therefore, the economic system is necessary for all the other social forms to exist. On the other hand, economic conditions determine the wealth and income of a person, and besides fulfilling needs, these are the social powers that one can use to apply forces on other people. In this sense, how much power a person has is closely related to the economic

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2004), 182–201. Anna Kornbluh, *Marxist Film Theory and Fight Club* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2019). Angelos Koutsourakis, “Marx and Cinema,” Mark Steven, “Screening Insurrection: Marx, Cinema, Revolution,” in *After Marx: Literature, Theory, and Value in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Colleen Lye and Christopher Nealon (Cambridge University Press, 2022), 55–71.

<sup>57</sup> Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, trans. S.W. Ryazanskaya (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1993), <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1859/critique-pol-economy/>. Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume One* (Penguin UK, 2004).

position. Moreover, the economic system is developed when people encounter each other through economic relations. The central argument of Marx is that the relation between a worker and an employer is a form of exploitation where the accumulated profit of the employer is the unpaid labor of the worker.<sup>58</sup>

Second, already in the analysis of Marx, one can find the argument that examining social divisions is not enough to understand the social reality because society is not only the economic structure but also the political organization through various institutions, legal systems, and state bureaucracy. While considering political struggles based on economic relations, Marx emphasizes the political agency developed based on the economic system. In this way, Marx makes the distinction between class-in-itself and class-for-itself.<sup>59</sup> Class-in-itself refers to positions in the economic system, while class-for-itself refers to the people who are conscious of their social reality within the economic system and, as a result of this, lead an organized political action. The work of E. P. Thompson, for example, is one of the most significant instances of this perspective where he examines the formation of the English working-class based on how people living in similar conditions unite and create their own political power.<sup>60</sup>

Third, the social hegemony in relation to class can be considered in three dimensions; consent, discipline, and self-discipline. First, as proposed by Antonio Gramsci, social power relations do not only operate through violence and oppression but also through the production of consent.<sup>61</sup> The formation of social institutions of civil society (such as civil organizations, syndicates, or education systems) in which one participates through voluntary action mediates the social power hierarchies because one voluntarily becomes a part of the functioning of the social power hierarchy. Michel Foucault extends this argument by claiming that

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<sup>58</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital: Volume I*, trans. Ben Fowkes (Penguin UK, 2004), 247-58.

<sup>59</sup> Karl Marx, "The Poverty of Philosophy," in *The Marx Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker, 2nd ed. (New York: Norton, 1978), 218-20, 218.

<sup>60</sup> E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (IICA, 1963).

<sup>61</sup> Antonio Gramsci, *The Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings, 1916-1935*, ed. David Forgacs (NYU Press, 2000).

the modern institutions of prison, workplace, school, army camp, hospital, and asylum follow a disciplinary logic of power that he calls biopower.<sup>62</sup> The practices in these places produce a particular subjectivity because they 'teach' people how to live, behave, and function in society. Thus, biopower refers to the practices that "incite, reinforce, control, monitor, optimize, and organize the forces under it."<sup>63</sup> Finally, Byung-Chul Han argues that the neoliberal power not only produces subjectivity through the control of bodily forces but also creates a form of psychological self-discipline.<sup>64</sup> He argues that the individual struggle for existence and survival becomes so dominant that people have to force themselves to act according to the economic conditions; thus, neoliberal power functions by forming the conditions where individuals are forced to 'educate themselves' to follow the established order. In addition to the production of consent by civil society and the production of subjectivity by modern institutions, class hegemony also operates by conditioning the psychological mechanisms by creating a form of self-discipline where people subordinate themselves to social power.

Fourth, habitus is a concept developed by Bourdieu to understand the effects of class divisions in the formation of one's habits, social networks, tastes on things and issues that one can make aesthetic judgments, and engagements with certain cultural practices such as learning, arts, sports, games, sciences, and literature.<sup>65</sup> Bourdieu shows that economic differences result in the divisions of social environments where people with similar wealth and income live in similar houses, buy similar products, and do similar activities, and there is a tendency to build similar tastes. He extends this analysis to the formation of one's social environment, such as the decoration of the house, mode of dress, the conduct

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<sup>62</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (Penguin UK, 2019). Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction* (Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2012).

<sup>63</sup> Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 136.

<sup>64</sup> Byung-Chul Han, *Psychopolitics: Neoliberalism and New Technologies of Power*, trans. Erik Butler (Verso Books, 2017), 5.

<sup>65</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge University Press, 1977).

of behavior, and use of language. Bourdieu distinguishes different forms of capital besides economic capital, which are social, cultural, and symbolic capital.<sup>66</sup> He builds this analysis on Marx's formulation that capital is accumulated labor that can be invested and turned into profit. According to Bourdieu, this definition of capital is not necessarily an economic concept. It can be applied to developing social networks, being cultivated, and becoming prestigious since these can also be turned into profit when 'invested.' The formation of social networks, cultural expertise, and symbolic prestige contributes fundamentally to the formation of habitus. Economic wealth and income result in different habitus, but in turn, differences in habitus became mediators of the class divisions and class encounters.

Wendy Bottero suggests that habitus can be a ground for analyzing the construction of identities.<sup>67</sup> Since personal dispositions such as taste, behavior, and speech are developed in habitus and habitus is formed in relation to social, cultural, and symbolic formations of capital, the development of personal identity is constructed based on classed identifications within the habitus. Thus, the attributes and predicates people use to identify themselves can be traced to the divisions of habitus. Therefore, examining encounters discussed above in terms of an ethical concern against the forgetting and one-sidedness about the socio-historical context of encounters requires considering the habitus because it is a constituent of subjectivities and identities. Class encounters mediate economic, political, hegemonic, social, and cultural differences. If this context is not considered, the encounter can turn into a form of oppression. This position is unethical, as argued by Chan, and can be through forgetting other historical possibilities than capitalism, as Martin-Jones argues, stranger fetishism where oppressed people become the embodiments of the oppression, as Ahmed claims, or considering one's

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<sup>66</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, "Forms of Capital," in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. J. Richardson (Westport: Greenwood, 1986), 241–58.

<sup>67</sup> Wendy Bottero, "Class Identities and the Identity of Class," *Sociology* 38, no. 5 (December 1, 2004): 985–1003, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038504047182>. Wendy Bottero, *Stratification: Social Division and Inequality* (Routledge, 2005).

culture as the primary one and rendering all the other differences as foreign as criticized by Mowatt. Thus, an ethical attitude would consider the socio-historical context of the encounters by considering the effects of class divisions in economic, political, hegemonic, social, and cultural processes.

Considering these different class accounts is significant to consider because not being clear about their differences might also become a form of forgetting the socio-historical context. For example, one can be aware of the different habitus, but these differences must also be considered with conditions of economic differences. People might be unable to continue education because of economic conditions, but forgetting their economic background might result in a misunderstanding about people's education levels. Moreover, the effects of hegemony are not the same in different economic contexts; while in some environments, biopower mechanisms might be dominant, in others contexts, psychological pressures might be at work more than others. Reversely, being aware of the economic differences but ignoring the differences in habitus can also become a form of oppression because one might impose one's social and cultural dispositions from a one-sided perspective upon others without opening up a dialogue for mutual understanding. Moreover, forgetting the differences in hegemony may result in unawareness of the hegemonic pressures that one exerts in the encounter. Thus, an ethical attitude requires not only being aware of the economic class differences but also the hegemonic forces that differ in different class contexts and the differences in habitus. The political perspective on class requires considering how these economical, hegemonic, and habitus differences are related to one's political participation and how differences in political commitments affect the other forms of class differences. Therefore, considering these different meanings of the concept of class is required in the analysis of inter-class encounters to be aware of the socio-historical context of the inter-class encounters.

## § 2.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, examining inter-class encounters in cinema requires the contextualization of encounters in the social history and analyzing

whether the films take an ethical attitude. An ethical position is to problematize oneself based on the socio-historical context of the encounter and be open to a dialogue with the multiplicity of differences. However, social class divisions result in hierarchies in different ways, and for ethics of encounters, one should consider how class differences form social hierarchies in different processes. The class can be understood in terms of economy, politics, hegemony, and habitus, while class differences in all these forms can affect inter-class encounters. An ethical perspective should not forget the hierarchical forces in these dimensions and how they operate in the socio-historical context. Deleuze's concept of minor cinema suggests a perspective to distinguish the movies with an ethical viewpoint in relation to the oppressed people living in the socio-historical context. The minor movies react against the dominant norms by inventing expressions that articulate impossibilities and prefigure new possibilities. In this way, minor movies try to be ethical because they problematize the social norms that oppress people by contextualizing the encounters in social history. By remembering alternative histories and opening up the multiplicity of differences into dialogue, minor movies express the perspective of the oppressed people. By representing the impossibilities they face, minor movies represent, on the one hand, the consequences of oppression and, on the other hand, suggest future possibilities that must be addressed collectively. Examining inter-class encounters and asking whether they are minor movies not only helps us to understand whether the representations of these encounters are ethical and to point out in what ways they manifest the impossibilities. The authors who wrote on New Cinema in Turkey discussed in chapter 3 interpret the art-house movies in Turkey since the 1990s as a response against the catastrophes that happened in the recent history of Turkey, to develop an alternative memory with an ethical attitude toward the oppression of the subordinated people. By extending their analysis based on the concept of minor cinema, one can also point out how these movies invent new expressions for the oppressed people to affirm themselves and how these films suggest alternative possibilities for the new collective actions.

### 3

## The “New Cinema of Turkey:” A Literature Survey

This chapter discusses the studies on the New Cinema of Turkey, focusing on the theoretical developments and conceptual frameworks that address the scope, history, and content of the films that can be considered the art-house movies of the New Cinema in Turkey and what are the defining features that mark the art-house cinema. The focus will be on the movies before 2010 since the texts examine them, and movies after 2010 will be discussed in detail in the next chapter. This chapter starts with a brief account of the shift in the studies on cinema after the 1990s. It continues by discussing what distinguishes New Cinema from the earlier period, focusing on different dimensions of the concept since it implies artistic, national, temporal, and socio-political connotations. Afterward, the accounts on the central themes of New Cinema, such as gender, ethnicity, and class, will be mentioned, and the ethical perspectives of the authors will be pointed out; since ethical concerns that are grounded in the political context of Turkey seems to be the main ground of analysis of these authors. The chapter will conclude by summarizing the key points.

#### § 3.1 A New Literature

The texts about cinema in Turkey are as old as the beginning of cinema. However, it was Nijat Özön, with *Türk Sineması Tarihi* (1960), who initiated a lineage of authors in the second half of the 20th century, including the works of Giovanni

Scognamillo, Şerif Onaran, Agâh Özgüç, Rekin Teksoy, and Burçak Evren. All these authors follow the general outline of Özön's work in terms of the perspective and the scope of the analysis, which is determined by two aspects: first, the classifications of Yeşilçam movies into distinct periods, and, second, criticisms of directors and movies. The content of these criticisms is mainly an extension of the informal film criticism of the film critics writing in non-academic journals. On the other hand, these works are eager to document the information about movies and their posters, making them significant encyclopedic archival material on the history of cinema in Turkey.

After the 90s, a new body of texts discussed cinema within Turkey's social, cultural, and political context based on the theoretical frameworks of social sciences and humanities. Among the early examples of this new literature, although she does not exclusively write on cinema, the essays of Nurdan Gürbilek seem to be the most influential ones for the later authors.<sup>1</sup> The central theme of her essays is the cultural transformations (for example, the emergence of *arabesque* culture) in relation to Turkey's social and political environment. Her style can be considered a literary commentary on cultural observations where she introduces an interdisciplinary analysis combining ideas from different areas such as literature, literary theory, history, sociology, psychoanalysis, and film studies.

The main body of the new scholarship during the 2000s focuses on the history of cinema before the 1990s, mainly due to the newly available sources and the lack of detailed historical analysis that considers the economic, political, social, and cultural dimensions of the history of cinema in Turkey. Yeşilçam period and the movies of the directors such as Metin Erksan, Lütfi Akad, Yılmaz Güney, Atıf Yılmaz, Memduh Ün, and Halit Refiğ are among the most examined ones. The discussions introduce a new set of questions that have a more general extension, such as what constitutes the identity of the Turkish nation as it is represented in cinema, to what

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<sup>1</sup> Nurdan Gürbilek, *Kötü Çocuk Türk* (Metis, 2001), for example, informs many later discussions.

extent cinema can be interpreted as a constitutive factor of Turkish identity, or how one can interpret the cultural history of Turkey through the analysis of cinema, to give a few examples. In this way, the issues concerning political struggles, oppression, and subordination become central to discussions. Moreover, the representation of women, the dichotomy between rural and urban populations, and the differences between the poor and the wealthy sections of society are among the major themes of studies. These subjects reflect the symbolic realm of the Yeşilçam movies, which had their effects on the cultural imaginations in Turkey.

*Çok Tuhaf Çok Tanıdık* (2005), for example, starts by asking why the movie *Vesikalı Yarım* (Lütfi Akad, 1968) became a cult movie and what distinguishes it from other Yeşilçam movies.<sup>2</sup> They find the answer in the dramatic structure and the cultural relevance of the movie as they ground their analysis on two theoretical aspects, the semiotics of Metz and Lacanian psychoanalysis as extended by Žižek. They argue that the central narrative structure of Yeşilçam is melodramatic, where impossible or miraculous situations and events overdetermine the story, while in *Vesikalı Yarım*, the central theme is still based on an impossibility the movie is surprisingly realistic about its consequences. In this way, the movie does not conform to the established paradigms of Yeşilçam but questions them. The character Sabiha (Türkan Şoray) crosscuts two contradictory images of a woman, a seductive prostitute, and a loyal housewife. This opposition corresponds to the anxieties of modernization in Turkey between the seductive urban life and the traditional rural community. In this way, Sabiha's character opens up a new critical dimension about the cultural possibilities in Turkey by transforming these images of women and modernity into an interrogation about alternatives. It seems the movie's uniqueness lies in an ethical dimension because by rejecting identification with one of these ideal types, the movie suggests an impossibility of resolution and fulfillment both for the gender regime and the

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<sup>2</sup> Nilgün Abisel et al., *Çok Tuhaf Çok Tanıdık: Vesikalı Yarım Üzerine* (Metis, 2005). This book is a collective work of the members of the Radio, Television, Cinema department at Ankara University.

modernization. The works of Umut Tümay Arslan, which will be discussed below, further examine the ethical consequences of political history in Turkey and their relevance to the cultural formations of gender, nation, and ethics in cinema.<sup>3</sup>

### § 3.2 New Cinema

Asuman Suner's book *New Turkish Cinema : Belonging, Identity and Memory* (2006) discusses Turkey's "New Cinema" as a distinct period and conceptualizes it through a detailed discussion of the possible meanings of the term.<sup>4</sup> She problematizes the concept in three aspects that she considers must be taken with care: the idea of a national cinema, positing a new wave and attributing an artistic value. First, she suggests that the idea of a national cinema must be considered from a global perspective, arguing that one should not reproduce Eurocentrism where Hollywood and European cinema are represented as universal, while non-Western movies are marked by national differences and exoticized by attributing an ethnically authentic value. When the movies in non-Western countries are labeled with nationality and categorized based on distinct national boundaries, such as Iranian cinema, Korean cinema, and Brazilian cinema, the terminology may obscure the reality of the movies by imposing alien categorizations. She stresses that instead of segregating movies into nation-state divisions, they must be considered in their context, which must be taken to be transnational. Not only that these movies produced and distributed within an international context of producers, festivals, and movie theaters, but also directors affirm their global perspective and influences. She mentions Zeki Demirkubuz, who, during a panel at Duke University on 'Contemporary Turkish Cinema' in 2004, claims that he does not like to be called 'Turkish director,' instead considers himself a 'film director' and the most significant influence on him were Russian cinema and literature.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Umut Tümay Arslan, *Bu Kâbuslar Neden Cemil?: Yeşilçam'da Erkeklik ve Mazlumluk* (Metis Yayınları, 2005). Umut Tümay Arslan, *Mazi Kabrinin Hortlakları: Türklük, Melankoli ve Sinema* (Metis, 2010).

<sup>4</sup> Asuman Suner, *Hayalet Ev: Yeni Türk Sinemasında Aidiyet, Kimlik ve Bellek* (Metis, 2006).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, 40.

Suner doubts positing the history of a nation as independent from the global world history either. The idea of a new period in the national history of cinema' may imply fictitious historical independence while the history of Turkey is fundamentally embedded in the global world history. To avoid this misrepresentation, she suggests that New Cinema in Turkey can be considered part of flourishing new movies worldwide, including the movies made in Iran, South Korea, and Brazil. Furthermore, she argues that it is questionable whether the directors of the New Cinema constitute a "new wave" (comparable to, for example, Italian neorealism or French New Wave) because they do not act as a unified group nor posit shared artistic standards. The movies Suner focuses on are between 1996 and 2005. The directors of this period, including Zeki Demirkubuz, Yeşim Ustaoglu, Derviş Zaim, Nuri Bilge Ceylan, and Reha Erdem, do not have a uniform artistic style nor posit a collective statement about themselves.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, she claims that although the term New Cinema may sound more apt to the art-house movies, as there was also a dramatic shift in the commercial cinema during the period between 1996 and 2005, New Cinema can be used both for the commercial and artistic movies without introducing an aesthetic judgment.

Suner's discussion is sensitive to postcolonial discussions on the cultural hegemony of the West over non-Western countries and the significance of cinema both in the construction of this hegemony and the counter-movements that resist the dominance of Hollywood. Her strategy concerning possible problems is to be inclusive. She suggests keeping the term New Cinema open to involving as many different possibilities as possible, covering both the commercial and the artistic movies that are made in Turkey or abroad (such as Ferzan Özpetek and Fatih Akın), the

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<sup>6</sup> In this context several authors mention Derviş Zaim's metaphor of "alluvionic:" "I suggest the concept "alluvium." Allivium is a geographic term, it both expresses that these directors fall toward the same direction, and indicates various connections between them. The directors of this period are like the branches of an allivium, they are independent of each other but parralel in their works, sometimes like the branches of an allivium they converge and diverge." Derviş Zaim, "Odaklandığım Şey Gerçeğindir: Türkiye Sineması, Alüvyonik Türk Sineması ve Uluslararası Kabul," <https://www.derviszaim.com/makaleler/>. However, the geographic term for what Zaim describes is not alluvionic since allivium refers to the earth that river carries, while the branching of a river near a sea is called a river delta.

young directors as well as the old Yeşilçam directors who made new movies during the 1990s.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, this perspective leaves little room for specifying what distinguishes the New Cinema as a distinct period. Suner suggests that New Cinema became a new phenomenon with the commercial success of *Eşkiya*, and the development of a new commercial market marks the emergence of a new period. The production, distribution, and reception processes of Yeşilçam between the 1950s and mid-70s slowly diminished during the 1980s due to the economic crisis and the coup. In the early 1990s, cinema was *de facto* non-existent, but after *Eşkiya* became a blockbuster, a new educated urban audience emerged, and cinema was resurrected with a series of successful commercial movies.<sup>8</sup>

Although she presents the emergence of art-house movies as overlapping with this transformation (as *Tabutta Rövaşata* was made in the same year as *Eşkiya* and was the first to have multiple awards from international festivals), one can argue that this is not valid in her analysis. On the one hand, *Tabutta Rövaşata* is not the first art-house movie since Zeki Demirkubuz made *C Blok* in 1994. Suner cites Demirkubuz claiming that he does not consider *C Blok* in his corpus; however, this cannot be an argument determining the beginning of a new period of cinema since the movie is there regardless of what the director thinks about it. On the other hand, more importantly, there is no distinction between art-house and commercial cinema under the term New cinema from Suner's perspective. She argues that since there is no self-sustaining film industry in Turkey, all movies are produced by personal initiatives. If all the movies are, in this sense, independent and there is no distinction between the art-house and the commercial cinema economically, in her analysis, only the emergence of a new cinema market with *Eşkiya* marks the difference between New Cinema and Yeşilçam.

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<sup>7</sup> Especially the movies that are about queer themes such as people with disabilities, homosexuals, and transgender people, as in *Dönersen Işık Çal* (Orhan Oğuz, 1992) and *Gece, Melek ve Bizim Çocuklar* (Atif Yılmaz, 1994).

<sup>8</sup> Suner, *Hayalet Ev*.

Savaş Arslan, on the other hand, in *Cinema in Turkey: A New Critical History* (2011), examines the national and transnational contexts of the movies and concludes that one can consider the commercial movies starting with *Eşkiya* as a continuation of Yeşilçam after Turkey's integration to neoliberalism.<sup>9</sup> As Suner also points out, *Eşkiya* renders Yeşilçam themes (such as impossible love or extraordinarily honorable and heroic male protagonist) in the Hollywood action movie language. This logic can be considered the code (as Metz used the term) of the commercial cinema after *Eşkiya* since several examples repeat it. Savaş Arslan argues that the period between the late 1980s and the release of *Eşkiya* in 1996 is marked by Turkey's opening of the cinema market to Hollywood distributors, making it possible for Hollywood movies to enter movie theaters in Turkey directly. At this time, none of the film producers and directors in Turkey had the material means and technical skills to compete with Hollywood blockbusters; thus, the complete disappearance of Yeşilçam cinema is the integration of the cinema market in Turkey into the international capital. However, according to Savaş Arslan, after Yavuz Turgul proved the adaptability of the Hollywood codes of action to the Yeşilçam themes, the commercial movies continued to reproduce them in various ways and degrees.<sup>10</sup> However, this time, a new group of directors (such as Zeki Demirkubuz, Nuri Bilge Ceylan, and Yeşim Ustaoglu) were doing something different, and their cultural impact established them as auteur directors with a distinct artistic persona. He argues that Yılmaz Güney was a famous Yeşilçam actor and director, but due to the achievements of his movies, he is considered an auteur. However, commercial productions after the 1990s are unable to have such artistic acclaim because the distinction between the art-house and the commercial cinema is established as valid in the cinema culture of Turkey.<sup>11</sup> From this perspective, it turns out that the New Cinema in Turkey can only refer to art-house movies.

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<sup>9</sup> Savaş Arslan, *Cinema in Turkey: A New Critical History* (Oxford University Press, 2011),

<sup>10</sup> As examples for commercial movies that follow the logic of rendering Yeşilçam themes within Hollywood cinematography; *Vizontele* (Ömer Faruk Sorak, Yılmaz Erdoğan, 2001), *Neredesin Firuze* (Ezel Akay, 2004), *Babam ve Oğlum* (Çağan Irmak, 2005), *Kurtlar Vadisi: Irak* (Serdar Akar, 2006), *Recep İvedik* (Togan Gökbakar, 2008).

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, 246, 251.

In his comprehensive work, Savaş Arslan examines what is Yeşilçam and includes both the period before the 1950s and traces the Yeşilçam characteristics after the 1990s in commercial cinema. However, since he considers commercial cinema as the continuation of Yeşilçam, he does not dwell on the art-house cinema. Aslı Daldal, on the other hand, suggests a detailed and more specific characterization of the art-house cinema in Turkey.<sup>12</sup> She discusses whether the concept of "national cinema" can be introduced to make sense of the cultural context of art-house movies.<sup>13</sup> Based on the works of Frantz Fanon, Frederic Jameson, Susan Hayward, and John Hill, she argues that the movies that form a collective resistance against the imperialist dominance of Hollywood cinema can be considered "local" or "national" cinemas. The term national is not because they are nationalists; instead, national cinemas affirm "... their independent spirit, which shows the characteristics of a new cinematic *école* (school of film)."<sup>14</sup> Thus, the concept of national cinema does not only refer to movies in specific countries but being synonymous with art-house cinema applies to any school of film that creates its unique spirit against capitalist cultural imperialism, including French New Wave, Italian neorealism, New Cinema in Turkey, Iran, Korea, and Brazil.<sup>15</sup>

Following Hayward and Hill, Daldal presents three criteria for national cinemas: 1. economic independence from the dominant capitalist markets (including strategies such as taking advertisements in the movie), 2. a cultural pluralism that problematizes the constructions of national identity, 3. the endeavor for a unique artistic style.<sup>16</sup> First, she divides the New Cinema into two periods, 1994-2003 and 2003-2014 (the article was published in 2014), and argues that the directors of the first period had artistic personas independent of each other. However, after Nuri

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<sup>12</sup> Aslı Daldal, *Umut Distopya Siyaset: Toplumsaldan Bireysele Türk Sinemasından Parçalar* (h2o kitap, 2021).

<sup>13</sup> Aslı Daldal, "The Concept of 'National Cinema' and the 'New Turkish Cinema,'" in *New Cinema, New Media: Reinventing Turkish Cinema*, ed. Murat Akser and Deniz Bayrakdar (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), 92–III.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 95–6.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

Bilge Ceylan became internationally successful with the movie *Uzak* in 2003, a generation emerged in the second period after him with similar cinematography and festival-oriented productions. The movies in the first period fulfill the three criteria. "Thus, though we can safely call this new cinema (in Jameson's, Hill's, and Hayward's frameworks) a "national cinema," we cannot talk of a new national cinema "movement" such as the Italian neo-realism, the Danish Dogma or the new Iranian cinema."<sup>17</sup> because they do not attempt to form a unified artistic style typical to all. The movies of the second period, on the other hand, can be considered to have a unified and distinctive artistic style as they follow the example of Nuri Bilge Ceylan. However, Daldal argues that one can be suspicious of whether their artistic choices are sincere or whether they mimic Nuri Bilge Ceylan because his movies are proven to be successful in international festivals. Moreover, there are examples of advertisements and marketing strategies that some directors of the second period involved, which ruined the economic independence.

Although Daldal is nuanced in her account, it is still misleading to use the term "national cinema" for several reasons. Andrew Higson suggests that the accounts of a national cinema that renders the term to signify the movies diverge from the dominant Hollywood productions, as Daldal adheres, attempt to demarcate what is "national" based on what is more artistically and aesthetically significant.<sup>18</sup> However, the term also implies that these movies have something like an essence that marks them with a unique national spirit, and contributing to the formation of national identity. Higson argues that the relation between cinema and the formation of national identity is a complicated matter, but using art as an attribute to distinguish national character results in a misunderstanding of the social processes because it reflects a specific perspective of the aesthetic values on an imaginary community of a nation. Moreover, when the movies involved in the nation-building processes are examined, one can find several commercial Hollywood productions working hand in

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 105.

<sup>18</sup> Andrew Higson, "The Concept of National Cinema," *Screen* 30, no. 4 (1989): 36–47, <https://doi.org/10.1093/screen/30.4.36>.

hand with art-house movies in articulating the imaginations of a sense of nation. As Susan Buck-Morss suggests, cinema has the potential to create “dreamworlds” that function as a means of constructing social imaginations of reality, and the nation-state also involves this process.<sup>19</sup> The examination of New Cinema requires to make a critique of “national cinema” and must be contextualized New Cinema within a global history of cinema in terms of its form and content. Moreover, The cosmopolitan context of art-house movies in their networks and influences suggests taking a critical position towards the narratives that attribute a “national essence” to the art-house movies. Instead, the analysis of New Cinema leads to questioning the constructions of nation-state discourses and how alternative narratives and different perspectives subvert the established normative narratives on national identity.<sup>20</sup>

### § 3.3 Crisis, Identity, Ethics

The movies of the New Cinema in Turkey are critical of the national identity, questioning its coherence, the imaginations built around the concept of being a citizen in Turkey, and they manifest the people who are segregated, alienated, or repressed by the dominant identities and powers.<sup>21</sup> Corresponding to this significant aspect, discussions about the New Cinema also focus on the issues concerning identity and its problematization in cinema. The central theme of Suner’s work is based on an argument that the New Cinema has become a space to recognize the traumas of the recent history of Turkey, which otherwise remain repressed in the unconscious. These include the effects of the 1980 coup, the Armenian Genocide, the oppression of the Kurdish population, the war between PKK and the state, the patriarchal subordination of women, the results of the neoliberal economy that caused transformations that widened the wage gap, vast waves of migration, and the precariousness of the working-class, deterioration of middle-classes, which can be listed among many others. Since these and many other social, cultural, political,

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<sup>19</sup> Susan Buck-Morss, *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West* (MIT Press, 2002).

<sup>20</sup> Ulus Baker, “Ulusal Edebiyat Nedir?,” *Toplum ve Bilim* 81 (1999): 7–25.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

and economic problems are not recognized and discussed openly in the public sphere, the repression of these issues results in a need to create a social memory that can address them, open discussions about them, and posit a possibility of recognition. Suner claims that movies refer to repressed traumas through the crises of identity and the impossibility of belonging to a place or finding a place where one can feel at home.<sup>22</sup> There is an identity crisis because the unrecognized traumas disturb personal integrity. After all, personality is constructed as a coherent identity while repressed problems create contradictions, paradoxes, absurdities, and anxieties. Moreover, the public sphere is also associated with destructive events; thus, it becomes impossible to develop an attachment to the community and the geography.

One can emphasize that formation of social memory is a significant theme in the literature on New Cinema. Suner introduces the concept of the New Cinema of Turkey by arguing that these movies attempt to form the memory of a recent past that could not be done otherwise. In this respect, Özlem Köksal's book *Aesthetics of Displacement: Turkey and Its Minorities on Screen* is another significant work.<sup>23</sup> Köksal examines the representation of minorities in Turkey, such as Kurds, Armenians, Greeks, and Jews, in recurring themes and how social memories are constructed and reconstructed in these movies. She argues that movies of the New Cinema of Turkey are "undermining the general conviction about minorities" by addressing "different discourses about identity that emerged in the post-1980s context" with "a new discourse, one that is informed by post-national sensibilities."<sup>24</sup> In this way, movies open up a space for articulating different discourses on identity and belonging, which she considers contributing to the ongoing transformations in Turkey's social and cultural context.<sup>25</sup> According to her, the aesthetic dispositions are in dia-

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<sup>22</sup> Suner, *Hayalet ev*, 22.

<sup>23</sup> Özlem Köksal, *Aesthetics of Displacement: Turkey and Its Minorities on Screen* (Bloomsbury, 2017).

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, 180.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, 180-1.

lectic relation to the socio-historical context. While social memories influence the representation of social and political issues in the movies, movies are also a part of the development of the social memory that articulates the significant issues in the social and cultural context. Here, one can find parallels between Köksal's analysis and Deleuze's examination of minor cinema. Deleuze's characterization of third world cinema focuses on bringing together the individuals who are separated and dispersed to articulate their collective utterances, which can be the prefiguration of future possibilities on communal experiences. Köksal suggests that New Cinema articulates the issues in the historical context of Turkey by articulating them through a language that contributes to the transformation of the senses of identity and belonging.

Moreover, Umut Tümay Arslan emphasizes that themes of memory, identity, and aesthetics in the New Cinema of Turkey cannot be distinguished from ethical and political questions, and the interpretation of movies should consider their ethical perspectives. Arslan's book *Kat: Sinema ve Etik* (2020) is a comprehensive and detailed discussion of ethics and cinema. It involves several dimensions and a vast number of movies from the history of world cinema; however, for the discussion of the thesis, one can focus on themes such as the ethical consequences of representing social catastrophes in cinema and the ethical perspectives of the movies that can be considered as the New Cinema of Turkey. Arslan suggests a correspondence between the ethics of psychoanalysis (developed by the authors such as Alenka Zupancic and Joan Copjec) and the modern cinema after the second world war. Based on the psychoanalytic argument that the social power mechanisms are constructed on pleasures that render a unified and coherent authoritative subject, Arslan claims that the ethical position against power structures would be the rejection of conforming to these pleasures and recognizing the multiplicity and fragmentariness of existence: "Renouncing the absolute pleasure, accepting the partialness of our enjoyment, and assuming it, we pass into

the universe of ethics.”<sup>26</sup> An ethical film traumatizes the unity and coherence of pleasures that conform the social power mechanisms to the extent that movie “... replaces the subject attached with pleasure again and again to the current social order with the subject who can see the inner limits of the social order and renounce seeking power, prestige, and approval.”<sup>27</sup> One can argue that in this way spectator is forced to take an ethical stance against the social violence, which transforms the subject to act against the mechanisms that reproduce subordination. Assuming the ethical responsibility of one's position within a social power mechanism leads to the transformation of subjectivity because deconstruction of the pleasures that constitute the coherence of a subject would destroy its subsistence. She stresses that an ethical movie should not make the spectator feel that events have come to an end with a final resolution because this would be another way of rendering the conformity of the idea that there is no remaining problem for the spectator to deal with. Here, the guilt of social violence is repressed as if nothing has happened in history. On the contrary, the spectator must feel the guilt of social violence enacted by power mechanisms and assume the ethical responsibility of the guilt so that spectator would start to think about what must be done and what can be done. This attitude is also the way toward a subjective transformation. Arslan considers this fundamental for an ethical perspective on cinema. While discussing *Abluka* (2015) and *Sarmaşık* (2015), Arslan gives them as examples that do not come to a point where all the problems are settled where one can leave the movie going back to enjoy the pleasures of ordinary life.<sup>28</sup> Instead, these movies create problems that the spectator can only solve by becoming other in real life and finding other ways of living that could react against the power mechanisms. It is crucial to emphasize the ethics of cinema because transitions in the representation of inter-class encounters in New Cinema of Turkey will be

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<sup>26</sup> "Mutlak hazdan vazgeçerek, kendi zevkimizin kısmiliğini tanıyarak ve onu üstlenerek geçeriz etik evrene." Umut Tümay Arslan, *Kat: Sinema ve Etik* (Metis Yayıncılık, 2020), 124.

<sup>27</sup> "... mevcut toplumsal düzene tekrar tekrar zevkle bağlanan öznenin yerine toplumsal düzenin iç sınırlarının görebilen, iktidar, itibar ve onay arayışından vazgeçebilen bir özneyi yerleştirir." Ibid, 139

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 165-8.

examined as a difference in the ethical attitude of the movies towards this theme.

### 3.3.1 *Gender*

Building on Suner's perspective, Gönül Dönmez-Colin has several works discussing the instances of traumatic detachments and the crises of identities related to gender and ethnicity.<sup>29</sup> In terms of gender, she observes that one of the main elements of the movies of Nuri Bilge Ceylan is the impossibility of preserving traditional masculinity in the modern world.<sup>30</sup> The male characters in his movies (who get stuck in villages, come from the countryside to the city, try to cope with the urban life, go back to a rural environment, or try to climb the social ladder) experience alienation because their values do not confirm the new social atmosphere. Dönmez-Colin suggests that this can be considered as a problem of modernization in Turkey which challenges the central patriarchal values, and quotes Ceylan claiming that:

The underdeveloped countries emulate the West, which has been imposing its culture through various means. Imperialism has made underdeveloped countries feel slightly ashamed of their culture and traditions. This influence is more obtrusive on the third-world intellectuals who have better possibilities to communicate with the West. Those who assimilate the point of view of the other see their own customs and traditions as extremities created by ignorance.<sup>31</sup>

Although Ceylan seems aware of the postcolonial arguments that the West's cultural imperialism creates prejudices and judgments that subordinate non-Western cultures, it is debatable whether his movies can overcome these prejudices. Moreover, against Dönmez-Colin's argument,

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<sup>29</sup> Gönüll Dönmez-Colin, *Women, Islam and Cinema* (Reaktion Books, 2004). Gönül Dönmez-Colin, *Turkish Cinema: Identity, Distance and Belonging* (Reaktion Books, 2008). Gönül Dönmez-Colin, *The Routledge Dictionary of Turkish Cinema* (Routledge, 2014). Gönül Dönmez-Colin, *Women in the Cinemas of Iran and Turkey: As Images and Image-Makers* (Taylor & Francis Group, 2021).

<sup>30</sup> Gönül Dönmez-Colin, "Contemporary Cinema of Turkey: Being and Becoming," in *The Routledge Handbook on Contemporary Turkey*, ed. Joost Jongerden (Routledge, 2021), 251.

<sup>31</sup> Quouted in Dönmez-Colin, *Turkish Cinema*, 200.

one can mention Žižek that the patriarchal structures built on the Oedipus complex were deteriorating globally in the second half of the 20th century. Thus, one can ask whether the crisis of male identity is a problem of modernization in Turkey or modern masculinity itself.<sup>32</sup>

Feride Çiçekoğlu discusses the representation of gender in cinema concerning the image of Istanbul from a feminist perspective in the trilogy *Vesikalı Şehir* (2007), *Şehrin İtirazı* (2015), and *İsyankar Şehir* (2019).<sup>33</sup> In *Vesikalı Şehir*, she traces in the history of cinema the correlation between the representation of women and the city that is articulated in *Çok Tuhaf Çok Tanıdık*, that the two images of a woman (seductive prostitute and loyal housewife) correspond to the two meanings attributed to the urban environment (dangerous and destructive, wealthy and fertile).<sup>34</sup> In *Şehrin İtirazı*, she argues that the discontent before a revolution or upheaval can be traced in the arts and literature and examines the films before Gezi resistance (by comparing them to artistic productions before the 1871 Paris Commune and the May 68) concerning the unhappiness about the urban space, gender, and modern life.<sup>35</sup> The perspective of *İsyankar Şehir* is based on Julia Kristeva's idea of 'intimate revolt,' which states that one can examine the instances of resistance in the private space that transform gender identities. Çiçekoğlu applies this concept to

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<sup>32</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology* (Verso, 1999), 248.

<sup>33</sup> Feride Çiçekoğlu, *Vesikalı Şehir* (Metis, 2007). Feride Çiçekoğlu, *Şehrin İtirazı: Gezi Direnişi Öncesi İstanbul Filmlerinde İsyankar Eşiği* (Metis Yayınları, 2015). Feride Çiçekoğlu, *İsyankar Şehir: Gezi Sonrası İstanbul Filmlerinde Mahrem-İsyankar* (Metis Yayınları, 2019). In a sense, Çiçekoğlu is a Renaissance artist who studies architecture and urban studies, spends four years in prison after 1980 coup due to her political engagements, writes novels, short-stories, and scenarios of the movies such as *Uçurtmayı Vurmasınlar* (Tunç Başaran, 1989) and *Journey to Hope* (Xavier Koller, 1990) which won the Academy Awards for Best Foreign Movie, publishes academic articles and books on cinema, and teaches at Bilgi University.

<sup>34</sup> This book is rather loose in its argument and quick to conclude the omnipresence of patriarchy. She can only ground the analysis for the Yeşilçam period, and this book can be considered as Çiçekoğlu's transition from a literary writer to an academic one as it is an autobiographical narrative.

<sup>35</sup> The argument of this book seems to hold for the examples of Baudelaire as examined by Benjamin in relation to 1871 and the movies of Godard before '68, but it seems Çiçekoğlu cannot point out an instance of reactionary or revolutionary response in the movies before Gezi resistance. She can only find discontent with modern urban life and gender norms. One can argue that the book results from a euphoria created by the Gezi resistance.

the movies about women's freedom after the Gezi resistance. She shows that the movies such as *Toz Bezi* (Ahu Öztürk, 2015), *Nefesim Kesilene Kadar* (Emine Emel Balcı, 2015), and *Mustang* (Gamze Ergüvan, 2015) are examples of intimate revolt. They recast the private areas into a place of political struggle for women to extend their space of freedom by resisting the normative power mechanisms that constitute subordinating gender structures. However, Çiçekoğlu can be criticized for not considering class differences as a factor in forming a gender regime since she does not discuss the gender differences between the domestic worker women and upper-middle-class house owner women in *Toz Bezi*. Aksu Bora, on the other hand, argues that the formation of a class habitus within the house environment is a constructive element of the female gender, and one can argue that there are distinct female genders for distinct classes because the gender identities are entangled with their tastes, habits, and behaviors concerning the private space.<sup>36</sup>

Özlem Güçlü observes that the image of the silent female character is a trope of New Cinema both in the art-house and commercial productions, who are forced to stay silent, reluctant to speak, cannot speak, or do not speak.<sup>37</sup> She argues that except for a few examples, such as *Bulutları Beklerken* (2005), directed by Yeşim Ustaoglu, these silent female characters are not represented from the perspective of women in their social and political environment, but having been decontextualized, they embody the anxieties, traumas, and fears of the male characters.<sup>38</sup> By referring to Nurdan Gürbilek, Güçlü suggests that in a social atmosphere marked by violence and repression after the 1980 coup, silence becomes a plausible means to address what cannot be spoken about otherwise.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, based on Laura Mulvey's account of the male gaze, Güçlü claims that the silent female characters represent an extension of male crises as male characters establish a "discursive authority" over

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<sup>36</sup> Aksu Bora, *Kadınların Sınıfı* (İletişim Yayınları, 2005).

<sup>37</sup> Özlem Güçlü, *Female Silences, Turkey's Crises: Gender, Nation, and Past in the New Cinema of Turkey* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016).

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, 183.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, 181.

them, which manages the burdens that challenge their patriarchal power. However, the presence of the silent female character continues to pose a threat to the male hierarchy by being a mark of his incapability to openly and directly discuss social and political catastrophes.<sup>40</sup> *Bulutları Beklerken*, on the other hand, gives voice to the perspective of the silent female character by contextualizing her within the history of society and politics, which renders her representation as a critique of the social and political environment.<sup>41</sup> One can argue that Güçlü leads an intersectional analysis as she traces the representation of silenced women by taking into account both the construction of gender regime, the socio-political context and the formation of national identity by comparing the representation of non-Turkish women where she claims that the gender hierarchy can be an element of an ethnic subordination.

Z. Tül Akbal Süalp also observes that except for Yeşim Ustaoglu and a few movies, the period before 2010 is dominated by male directors, male characters, and crises that are formulated in the world of men.<sup>42</sup> Gizem Gür, on the other hand, analyzes the period after 2010 and suggests that there is a 'woman cinema' where one can find female agency and problematization of gender norms in the movies such as *Kumun Tadı* (Melisa Önel, 2013), *Mavi Dalga* (Zeynep Dadak, Merve Kayan, 2013), *Toz Bezi* (Ahu Öztürk, 2015), *Nefesim Kesilene Kadar* (Emine Emel Balcı, 2015), *Ana Yurdu* (Senem Tüzen, 2015), *İşe Yarar Bir Şey* (Pelin Esmer, 2017), and *Kaygı* (Ceylan Özgün Özçelik, 2017).<sup>43</sup> Gür states that this is not only significant development in the New Cinema but also contributes to the feminist struggle in Turkey. Moreover, her analysis shows that these movies represent the subordination of gender, taking into account the divisions of ethnicity, class, age, and geography as entangled. It is important to note

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 179-185.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 183.

<sup>42</sup> Z. Tül Akbal Süalp, "The Glorified Lumpen 'Nothingness' versus Night Navigations," in *Cinema and Politics: Turkish Cinema and The New Europe*, ed. Deniz Bayraktar (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 221-32.

<sup>43</sup> Gizem Gür, "2010 Sonrası Türkiye Sinemasında Kadın Yönetmenler" (Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Ankara, Hacettepe Üniversitesi, 2021), 82.

that the intersectional perspective of the movies must be taken into account because films of the New Cinema do not touch upon a single issue but reflect the complexity of the social problems. These authors' arguments who discuss gender in the New Cinema are grounded on an ethical perspective since the representation of gender in cinema is considered an integral element of the feminist cause of emancipation, and movies are criticized when they conform to the established hierarchical gender norms. Moreover, as Gür shows, an ethical and political perspective critical of gender oppression was developed in the art-house movies after 2010, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

### 3.3.2 *Ethnicity*

The war between PKK and the state of Turkey caused a crisis in the Turkish identity because it made manifest the structural subordination of the Kurdish population since the formation of Republic of Turkey as a nation-state, and Dönmez-Colin suggests that this issue was a taboo in cinema until the 1990s when movies of the New Cinema started to address to it critically. However, she stresses by mentioning Kazım Öz, who is a Kurdish director, that the appearance of Kurdish people in cinema is not new, but commercial cinema is another means of cultural subordination by portraying Kurds as 'typically' underdeveloped, uneducated, and patriarchal, which creates an Orientalist opposition between the representation of Turks and Kurds.<sup>44</sup> The movie *Güneşe Yolculuk* (1999) by Yeşim Ustaoglu, on the other hand, is a long-awaited representation of the violence, segregation, and repression of this history as the movie unfolds through the main character's realization of the conditions of the lives of Kurdish people.<sup>45</sup> Although the movie reflects people's suffering and impossibilities in the search for an identity, there is also a hopeful tone towards developing mutual care and finding a way to live together; as Dönmez-Colin points out that the political message of the film is that "the politicians are at war, not the individuals."<sup>46</sup> It seems Dönmez-Colin finds a humanist voice in the movies of Yeşim Ustaoglu, Nuri Bilge Ceylan, and

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<sup>44</sup> Dönmez-Colin, *Turkish Cinema*, 94.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, 97-9.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, 100.

Derviş Zaim because if their movies are examined from a political perspective, one can argue that they criticize the conditions that segregate, alienate, and subordinate people while (sometimes) suggesting that there are new possibilities of realizing what unites everyone.

Aslı Daldal, on the other hand, considers having a hopeful perspective toward the social and political struggle as the most significant issue. Arguing that although the examples of New Cinema during the 1990s and early 2000s have a humanist character, the movies after the 2000s gradually became dystopian, destroying all the hopes for a better future.<sup>47</sup> For example, the early movies of Nuri Bilge Ceylan (*Kasaba*, *Mayıs Sıkıntısı*, *Uzak*) exemplify the 'realist cinema' characterized by Kracauer: there are very few dialogues, acting is minimal, actors are amateur, style is minimalist, nothing is exaggerated, nature plays a significant role, and events are 'found stories' that emerge from the daily lives of ordinary people.<sup>48</sup> Both the later movies of Nuri Bilge Ceylan (e.g., *Kış Uykusu*) and the movies that emerged during the 2000s and 2010s (e.g., *Sarmaşık* by Tolga Karaçelik and *Abluka* by Emin Alper) reflect a dystopian atmosphere according to Daldal where nothing is possible, everything is ruined, nature is lost, and characters are alienated to the extent that they are drawn into madness and self-destruction.<sup>49</sup> On the one hand, this can be considered a result of postmodernism understood by Jameson in the sense that artists lost their critical perspective, and the political atmosphere in Turkey led them to despair. However, on the other hand, from an ethical perspective, she criticizes hopelessness as coming to terms with violence and oppression of political power because when a movie makes the spectator feel desperate without hope, it forces the spectator to accept the conditions of the oppressor and continue to obey subordination. Therefore, for Daldal, there is an ethical responsibility for movies to suggest to the spectator that there is hope in the future and political possibilities for social transformation. For example, she suggests

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<sup>47</sup> Daldal, *Umut Distopya Siyaset*, Caligari'den Hitler'e Distopyalardan Yeni Türkiye'ye, 169-70.

<sup>48</sup> Daldal, *Umut Distopya Siyaset*, Nuri Bilge Ceylan'ın İlk Dönem Filmleri: Gerçekçi Geleceğin İzinde Kracauer ve "Basit Anlatı" Sineması, 77-100.

<sup>49</sup> Daldal, *Umut Distopya Siyaset*, 173.

that Fatih Akin's movie *The Cut* (2015) about the Armenian Genocide is an excellent example because it does not fall into becoming an enemy of Turks or Armenians, does not try to revenge and multiply the violence, instead builds a universalist narrative where one can find a space for building a dialogue.<sup>50</sup>

Umut Tümay Arslan, on the other hand, criticizes this perspective while discussing Fatih Akin's movie *The Cut* (2014), arguing that in the end, one feels that the issue is settled down, the Armenian Genocide happened and come to an end, which makes the spectator feel that there is no longer a problem.<sup>51</sup> Daldal considers the attitude of building a universalist ground for a dialogue without accusation or revenge positively. Arslan, on the other hand, suggests that this universalism or humanism (by turning the event of the Armenian Genocide into a 'bare fact' that happened at a time in the past) hides the ethical responsibility of the committed guilt and attempts to find a possibility of resolution without taking care of the recognition of the history that committed and then repressed the Armenian Genocide.<sup>52</sup> If one will take ethical responsibility, it can only start by recognizing the concealment, rejection, and forgetfulness so that first, the event becomes guilt that one feels guilty of, and takes the ethical responsibility of this guilt. Historically, the rejection of the Armenian Genocide is a constitutive element of the nation-state identity of Turkey. Recognizing the guilt and taking the ethical responsibility requires a transformation of this identity, and Arslan suggests that it is the only way toward a future. However, movies like *The Cut* refer to the event without taking the ethical responsibility of the guilt but only contributes to forgetfulness about the ethical responsibility. Daldal, on the other hand, answers Arslan's criticisms by arguing that Arslan's perspective makes it impossible to find a political and social solution to the ongoing conflict between states and the social hatred and violence between people. Daldal considers Arslan's perspective as rendering this problem

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<sup>50</sup> Aslı Daldal, "The Cut (Kesik)," birgun.net, December 14, 2014, <https://www.birgun.net/haber/the-cut-kesik-72547>.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, 316-7.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 316-7.

unsolvable because, according to Daldal, in this perspective, the very attempt to address the issue becomes ethically wrong. Moreover, she mentions that finding common ground of dialogue is what Armenian NGOs and politicians who seek a solution are looking for because developing a shared language seems like the only plausible possibility.<sup>53</sup> Daldal's position is still subject to Arslan's criticism that she attempts to find a resolution before (and without) acknowledging the guilt and assuming ethical responsibility, which would open up a possibility of transformation of the subjectivity and identity.

Özlem Köksal, in *Aesthetics of Displacement*, agrees with Arslan's position that *The Cut* neglects to deal with the questions of how such a catastrophic and violent event can be represented or discussed and mentions Akın, claiming that he considers this movie unrelated to all of these because it is just a Western movie: "if I wanted to tell a story of the genocide, I'd probably make a documentary for at least twelve hours long and tell the story of not only 1915, but the last few hundred years."<sup>54</sup> This creates an apparent contradiction because the movie is released on the hundredth year of the Genocide and tells a story that takes place during the events in 1915 and afterward, while Akın claims that the movie is unrelated to all of these, which leads Köksal to conclude that: "*The Cut* does not make connections to contemporary political and social contexts."<sup>55</sup> The discussion on *The Cut* occupies a small portion of Köksal's book, while she mainly focuses on movies such as *Güneşe Yolculuk*, *Bulutları Beklerken*, *Ararat*, *Büyük Adam Küçük Aşk*, *Gitmek/Benim Marlon ve Brandon*, *Sonbahar* which she considers as participating the formation and critique of the social memory about the history of violence and oppression concerning Turkey.<sup>56</sup> She focuses on the experiences of minorities, their displacement, and how the aesthetic choices in cinema in representing these issues involve continuities and similarities. In this way, she

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<sup>53</sup> Daldal, *Umut Distopya Siyaset*, Fatih Akın'ın *Kesik*'inden Tarihsel Notlar: *Ararat* ve "Türk Düşmanlığı" Üzerine, 68-70.

<sup>54</sup> Quoted in Özlem Köksal, *Aesthetics of Displacement: Turkey and Its Minorities on Screen* (Bloomsbury, 2017), 102.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>56</sup> Özlem Köksal, *Aesthetics of Displacement*.

contextualizes the recurring artistic elements in movies within Turkey's social and historical context. She grounds her analysis on a detailed discussion of the social and political history of Turkey throughout the 20th century and suggests that the common elements she identifies in movies are "the politics of language, silence, spatial relations, haunted narratives, and epistolary narratives" can be considered in this context.<sup>57</sup>

### 3.3.3 *Class*

Daldal claims that the agency and representation of labor are disappeared in the films of New Cinema and examines this phenomenon based on an analysis of the global network of art-house cinema through film festivals.<sup>58</sup> First, she assumes that the representation of labor has disappeared from the cinema in Turkey after 1990, and the representation of identities that were outsiders before, such as ethnic minorities and LGBT+, has started to become central themes. Second, she observes that an integrated art-house festival network for the production, distribution and advertisement of art-house movies started to establish a distinct market of cinema in the world during the same period. Moreover, she states that this festival network is just another market of capital circulation and, therefore, it also involves the market forces that capital executes everywhere else. Since capitalist markets are based on the exploitation of labor, the representation of labor in cinema contradicts the economic interests of the capital, which explains the disappearance of labor from cinema, according to Daldal. When movies are involved in the global festival network, winning awards and accumulating money for further productions are conditioned by the capital of the art-house film market, and Daldal claims that the capital of the art-house cinema market does not permit labor to be represented in cinema.<sup>59</sup>

Akbal Süalp grounds her analysis of the New Cinema in Turkey on the transformations in the capitalist system after the 1980s, which decentralized and rearranged society so fast and violently that people were

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<sup>57</sup> Köksal, *Aesthetics of Displacement: Turkey and Its Minorities on Screen*, 25.

<sup>58</sup> Aslı Daldal, "1990'ların Yeni Bağımsız Türk Sineması'nda Emekçi Öznenin Kayboluşu: Küreselleşme ve Festivalizm," *Kültür ve İletişim* 24, no. 1 (2021): 159–89, <https://doi.org/10.18691/kulturveiletisim.800820>.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*, 181.

drawn into turmoil; thus, they are scattered and lost their connection to the social reality. One can argue that Akbal Süalp combines Benjamin's analysis of art within the urban context with Jameson's account of postmodernism. Benjamin argues that the development of new capitalist urban space of 'arcade' (large buildings for shopping in city centers similar to today's malls) in the 19th century created new experiences that led to the emergence of new personalities such as *dandy* and *flâneur*, and new artistic styles such as the poetry of Baudelaire and the style of Dadaism.<sup>60</sup> These new artistic developments are based on juxtapositions and combinations of symbols, images, and signs without posing a predetermined meaning or structure, and Benjamin grounds this style on the experience of a *flâneur* who wanders before showcases of shops in arcades without a predetermined aim to achieve. Thus, the development of new experiences in the urban space creates the ground for new subjectivities and artistic styles. One could argue that the new developments in capitalism that transform the urban space create new types of movement and forces with similar effects, and Jameson's characterization of postmodernism as 'pastiche' - the uncritical and de-historicizing parody or reference, can be understood as a similar result that happened in the second half of the 20th century.

Akbal Süalp argues that postmodernism is the experience of the people scattered to the peripheries of modernity, where everything starts to become indefinite and blend into each other.<sup>61</sup> The people are the lower classes who are under the destructive economic, political, and cultural forces that are so powerful that their experience of their environment and daily life lose meaningful aims or achievements. In this way, the life of the lower class people living in outskirts, shantytowns, peripheries, provinces, and alike converge to what Jameson calls 'postmodernity,' an ahistorical and uncritical mixture of references. Akbal Süalp's understanding of *film noir* and *arabesque* reflects this perspective. She argues that *film noir* aesthetics result from the experience of a metropolitan city

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<sup>60</sup> Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* (Harvard University Press, 1999).

<sup>61</sup> Z. Tül Akbal Süalp, "Taşrada Saklı Zaman-Geri Dönülemeyen," in *Taşrada Var Bir Zaman* (Çitlembik Yayınları, 2010), 87–116, 95.

when lower-class people are dispersed by capitalist forces to the peripheries, ghettos, suburbs, and poor districts that are (in the case of *film noir*) marked by crime, poverty, prostitution, alcohol and drugs, darkness and claustrophobia, and untrustable personal encounters, which is the life that can be seen in movies such as *Tabutta Rövaşata* (Derviş Zaim, 1996), *Masumiyet* (Zeki Demirkubuz, 1997), *Üçüncü Sayfa* (Zeki Demirkubuz, 1999), *Üç Maymun* (Nuri Bilge Ceylan, 2008).<sup>62</sup> On the other hand, what constitutes the *arabesque* is that the environment is painted with the subjective emotions of the male characters, such as pain, burden, anxiety, sorrow, and fear; however, there is no awareness concerning the causes or underlying dynamics of these feelings, which creates an emotional feedback loop where the character can only see his feelings in the environment he lives in.<sup>63</sup> Akbal Süalp argues that this attitude is apparent, especially in the movies that take place in the countryside since, contrary to the conception that rural areas reflect inner peace and natural harmony, the movies such as *Mayıs Sıkıntısı* (Nuri Bilge Ceylan, 1999), *Yumurta* (Semih Kaplanoğlu, 2007) bring the claustrophobia of the metropolis to the countryside. Moreover, the disposition of rendering everything as a reflection of one's inner feelings is not particular to negative emotions, as Akbal Süalp argues that movies such as *Kosmos* (Reha Erdem, 2010) and *Gölgesizler* (Ümit Ünal, 2008) do the same based on spirituality and mysticism. She suggests that being trapped in an emotional state is grounded in the historical context of Turkey, where society is routed due to capitalism, and oppositional movements are violently suppressed, to the extent that people are alienated from everyone else and disinterested in anything but they cannot see the causes of their feelings or contextualize themselves in the social context because there is no reactionary possibility in society through which one can articulate the causes of social problems. Thus, *film noir* and *arabesque* characteristics originate in the experiences of individuals living in lower-class conditions who are dispersed and scattered due to capitalist forces.

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid, 98-9.

<sup>63</sup> 104-5.

These two perspectives can represent accounts of the representation of class in the New Cinema in Turkey; although their understanding of the concept of class is different, they both agree that academic works on the representation of class in the New Cinema of Turkey are lacking. Akbal Süalp examines class as positions in the economic structure of the society, which is determined by the capitalist mode of production. Daldal, on the other hand, examines class by focusing on the representation of the working class and whether movies contribute to the organization and political struggle of the workers. Thus, Akbal Süalp contextualizes the movies within the socio-political organization of the society by taking economic developments as the fundamental conditions of the transformations of class conditions. Daldal, on the other hand, considers the political involvement of movies as lacking and finds its cause in directors' integration into the art-house film market. Therefore, Akbal Süalp criticizes movies by arguing that they do not manifest the underlying social and economic dynamics that cause the problems represented in the movies. In contrast, Daldal criticizes films for gradually becoming dystopian from the 1990s to the 2010s while conforming to the upper-class festival audiences making the spectator feel that problems are impossible to solve, the situation is hopeless, and political struggle is meaningless. On the other hand, although their perspectives are different, both of these authors posit an ethical responsibility for the movies, similar to the discussions on gender and ethnicity, by arguing that cinema should reflect the social reality behind the problems (Akbal Süalp) and open up a possibility for future political struggle (Daldal).

#### § 3.4 Conclusion

The analysis of this chapter mainly focused on the discussions on what is the New Cinema of Turkey and what are its central themes from a theoretical perspective. The authors referred here mainly discuss movies from the mid-90s to mid-2000s, focusing on the emergence of New Cinema as a distinct mode of filmmaking and distribution compared to Yeşilçam. First, the directors and movies of New Cinema have a transnational character, and the authors emphasize that the analysis of New Cinema in Turkey must be grounded in a global perspective. On the one

hand, the directors of the New Cinema are international personalities; not only that some study or live abroad, but they know languages and refer to international influences. On the other hand, the movies exist thanks to the international network of festivals, producers, and funds of art-house cinema.

Contrary to the international character of directors and movies, the New Cinema of Turkey is known by a limited audience in Turkey. It seems there are two causes for this situation. First, as Savaş Arslan argues, the New Cinema was born with a distinction between art-house and commercial cinema in the cultural realm in Turkey, which implies that art-house cinema cannot and should not be commercial, which Daldal explicitly argues. Second, as Yeliz Özşen shows, when Turkey integrated into the international flow of capital and opened its markets to foreign investors, the state did not implement any protection measures against the market forces.<sup>64</sup> This marks the end of Yeşilçam because the traditional production techniques could not compete with Hollywood productions now available through Hollywood distributors. Thus, as Suner shows, cinema *de facto* ended during the early 1990s and resurrected with two branches. One of them is the commercial cinema, whose central logic (Yeşilçam themes rendered within Hollywood codes of action) was created by *Eşkiya* and followed as a paradigm by the later blockbuster productions. Since there were no legal protections against these market forces, the distribution of the films, ownership of movie theaters, and the aesthetics of commercial movies were monopolized in Turkey. Since this context does not leave room for other aesthetic choices, the movies that emerged through other means introduced the art-house cinema. As Daldal shows, after the extraordinary success of *Uzak* in the international festivals, the style of Nuri Bilge Ceylan movies became the primary influence for the later codes of the art-house films in the New Cinema of Turkey.

The discussions about the distinctive features of the New Cinema mainly focus on the first decade of the New Cinema, starting with the

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<sup>64</sup> Yeliz Özşen, “The State and Cinema Sector in Neoliberal Turkey: Regulation or Arbitrary Intervention?” (Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Istanbul, Boğaziçi University, 2019), 156-7.

mid-90s, and take into account the movies of the directors such as Zeki Demirkubuz, Derviş Zaim, Yeşim Ustaoglu, Nuri Bilge Ceylan, Reha Erdem, and Semih Kaplanoğlu as the first generation of the New Cinema. The discussions examined in this chapter mainly focus on these directors' movies. As the next generation, one can add Ahmet Uluçay, Pelin Esmer, Özcan Alper, Mahmut Fazıl Coşkun, Seren Yüce, Tolga Karaçelik, and Emin Alper who emerged during the 2000s and active in 2010s. The directors who started making films during the 2010s can be considered as a third generation such as Erdem Tepegöz, Emine Emel Balcı, Ahu Öztürk, Deniz Gamze Ergüven, Senem Tüzen, Kıvanç Sezer, Ali Vatansever, and Azra Deniz Okyay. What distinguishes these generations will be examined in the next chapter.

The discussions mentioned in this chapter about the first decade of the New Cinema emphasize the significance of Turkey's social and political environment since the 1980 coup. On the one hand, it is argued that the neoliberal transformations in Turkey caused rapid changes in the urban environment, migration, and the increased wage gap during a period when oppositional movements were heavily oppressed. At the same time, the war between PKK and the state manifested the subordination of the Kurdish people, which completely changed the political atmosphere in Turkey. One can add several destructive processes that are not openly discussed in the public sphere, such as gender oppression, LGBTI+ rights, and the Armenian Genocide, and this lack of developing social awareness and memory seems to be the central element of New Cinema. Although Suner examines the movies as a place to address and create a memory of these issues, Akbal Süalp criticizes them for not pointing out the underlying causes of the problems. However, there seems to be an agreement that New Cinema is fundamentally engaged with the questions concerning identities, mainly of the nation, ethnicity, and gender. Except for the movies of Yeşim Ustaoglu, most of the movies of the first decade are considered male movies, where one can find the expression of the pains and traumas of the social and political crises in Turkey from a male perspective. For Güçlü, the frequent image of the silent female character is an-

other function of the male perspective, which accuses these movies of being patriarchal. The movies concerning ethnic oppression of the minorities in Turkey are arguably the most politically significant ones. The controversy between Umut Tümay Arslan and Aslı Daldal suggests that approaching the ethical questions concerning the representation of ethnicity is not an easy issue. One can argue that the extension of their discussion to the issues concerning gender and class would be productive in addressing the intriguing details. Finally, the accounts of Akbal Süalp and Daldal are considered examples that manifest significant perspectives on the representation of class in the New Cinema of Turkey, which either claim that class does not exist in the New Cinema (as Daldal claims) or lack a proper contextualization (as Akbal Süalp argues). In conclusion, although authors have different perspectives on the representation of class, ethnicity, and gender in cinema, they all seem to consider developing an ethical perspective crucial in their analysis. Moreover, not only that they assume an ethical position in their perspectives, but they also examine movies by contextualizing them within ethical problems and analyzing how movies position themselves toward ethical and political issues.

## 4

### The Representation of Inter-Class Encounters

This chapter provides an analysis of the representation of inter-class encounters in the art-house movies of the New Cinema of Turkey by focusing on the questions of how this representation appears in different movies and what are the changes in this theme over time. The questions concerning the particular characteristics of these transitions, their ethical character, and the social context will be discussed in the following fifth chapter. This chapter will focus on a detailed examination of movies concerning their different components, such as the development of the narrative, building up of characters, and the ways of story-telling by focusing on the theme of inter-class encounters. Thus, movies will be taken into account with respect to the representation of inter-class encounters, and different elements of the movies will be considered from this viewpoint. By doing so, the chapter aims to describe the representation of inter-class encounters in the New Cinema of Turkey since the mid-1990s. Moreover, this analysis will be the ground for the discussions in the next chapter concerning the 'minor' characteristics of these films, their ethical attitude towards the representation of inter-class encounters, and the social context of the transitions in this theme over the years. The present chapter aims to mention movies that can be considered among the significant examples of the New Cinema of Turkey concerning the representation of inter-class encounters. While the main

emphasis is on films' involvement with the inter-class encounters, movies are open to drawing analogies between several other ones in terms of their similarities and differences. In the appendix, one can find a list of suggested movies for comparison.

The chapter will analyze movies in four groups in chronological order, and the reasons behind considering these movies in this periodization are discussed below in detail. It is a prerequisite to point out that this periodization will be relative to the examination carried out in this thesis. The cutting lines between different periods are always blurry and ambiguous, while one can find several continuities and discontinuities in cinema from several perspectives. Moreover, this periodization does not cover all New Cinema. Instead, this grouping aims to highlight the details in the present examination and contribute to the main argument of this thesis. To mention briefly, the first group refers to roughly the first decade of the New Cinema, from the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s. The second group is the next decade, from the mid-2000s to the mid-2010s. The third group is the movies in 2015 and 2016, and the final group is the movies after 2017.

One can consider these groups on the grounds of three dimensions; the social context of Turkey, the transitions in conditions of cinema, and the stylistic differences of the movies. In terms of Turkey's economic, social, and political context that conditions the cultural domain of cinema, the years of the early 2000s and mid-2010s can be considered significant times of transition. After Akp became the single majority government, Turkey started to experience a series of transformations during the 2000s, which marked Turkey's economic, social, and political atmosphere significantly.<sup>1</sup> In this respect, it is not unreasonable to consider the period after the Akp government as a different period from the previous years. One can argue that the cultural effects of political transitions take time, especially in cinema, since the production process of movies might take

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<sup>1</sup> İsmet Akça, "Hegemonic Projects in Post-1980 Turkey and the Changing Forms of Authoritarianism," in *Turkey Reframed: Constituting Neoliberal Economy*, ed. İsmet Akça, Ahmet Bekmen, and Barış Alp Özden (London: Pluto Press, 2014), 13–47.

several years. Thus, one can consider to years of the mid-2000s as marking the transition towards a different period.

A similar argument can be given for years in the mid-2010s. As discussed in the introduction, several authors suggest that there is a significant transformation of the political context in Turkey during the mid-2010s in several aspects.<sup>2</sup> These include the end of the government's dialogues with Kurdish politicians (declared in 2014), the changes in the hegemony of Akp, especially after the coup attempt in 2016, and the transition to a presidential system in 2017, among many other changes. In this respect, the mid-2010s can be considered transition years that have effects on the cultural context of Turkey as well. The years before these transitions can be taken as the second decade of cinema, from the mid-2000s to the mid-2010s. The years 2015 and 2016 are interesting for cinema since there are several movies in these years (mentioned below) that involve inter-class encounters, as well as several different themes concerning social problems, oppression, and violence are significantly present in the movies of these years. One can argue that a reason for the increase in the movies that address social problems may be the influence of the Gezi protests since its atmosphere can be taken as inspirational for filmmakers to deal with the social problems in Turkey. While movies of the years 2015 and 2016 can be considered in relation to a euphoria created by the Gezi protests, one can argue that after 2017 this euphoria ended when the political regime of Turkey became authoritarian and a series of economic crises have started.

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<sup>2</sup> Errol Babacan et al., *Regime Change in Turkey: Neoliberal Authoritarianism, Islamism and Hegemony* (Routledge, 2021). Betül Yazar, "Neoliberal-Neoconservative Feminism(s) in Turkey: Politics of Female Bodies/Subjectivities and the Justice and Development Party's Turn to Authoritarianism," *New Perspectives on Turkey* 63 (n.d.): 113–37, <https://doi.org/doi:10.1017/npt.2020.18>. Kumru F. Toktamış, "(Im)Possibility of Negotiating Peace: 2005–2015 Peace/Reconciliation Talks between the Turkish Government and Kurdish Politicians," *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 21, no. 3 (2018): 286–303. Barış Alp Özden, İsmet Akça, and Ahmet Bekmen, "Antinomies of Authoritarian Neoliberalism in Turkey: The Justice and Development Party Era," in *States of Discipline: Authoritarian Neoliberalism and the Contested Reproduction of Capitalist Order*, ed. Cemal Burak Tansel (Rowman & Littlefield International, 2017). Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2017).

The same periodization can be argued for the context of cinema more particularly. Above all, the technologies and industry of visual media have changed fundamentally since the 1990s.<sup>3</sup> The digital camera emerged during the 2000s, and several filmmaking technologies became more easily accessible. Moreover, the industry of television and cinema grew significantly. Suner already points out the emergence of a new cinema market between the mid-1990s and mid-2000s, and the following decade between the mid-2000s and mid-2010s, continued this growth both in television and cinema productions. One can add Daldal's observation that when *Uzak* became highly successful in international art-house film festivals, it created a momentum of inspiration because now becoming an independently funded art-house film director started to seem possible. During the 2010s, internet use proliferated, and platforms such as Netflix became significant, which affected the industry fundamentally because, in the 2010s, series such as *Game of Thrones* proved to be more profitable than the productions in single movies; thus, one can argue that after 2010s series became a more commercially successful medium than cinema. These transitions can be considered from a transnational perspective, but in terms of art-house cinema in Turkey, the transition is apparent with the directors such as Tolga Karaçelik, Emin Alper, and Seren Yüce, who started their careers with art-house movies and later directed series for platforms.

One can observe the emergence of three different generations in three decades. The first generation of directors emerged between mid-1990s and mid-2000s are the names such as Zeki Demirkubuz, Yeşim Ustaoglu, Derviş Zaim, Nuri Bilge Ceylan, Reha Erdem, Semih Kaplanoğlu, Ahmet Uluçay, Ümit Ünal, and Tayfun Pirselimoglu. For the second generation of directors between mid-2000s and mid-2010s one can mention Kazım Öz, Seyfi Teoman, Hüseyin Karabey, Özcan Alper, Pelin Esmer, Mahmut Fazıl Coşkun, Aslı Özge, Seren Yüce, Tolga Karaçelik, Ramin Matin, Emin Alper, and Erdem Tepegöz. Finally, there is a third generation

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<sup>3</sup> Aslı Daldal, *Umut Distopya Siyaset: Toplumsaldan Bireysele Türk Sinemasından Parçalar* (h2o kitap, 2021). Savaş Arslan, *Cinema in Turkey: A New Critical History* (Oxford University Press, 2011).

of directors such as Emine Emel Balcı, Ahu Öztürk, Deniz Gamze Ergüven, Senem Tüzen, and Esen Işık, who have their first feature-length films in 2015; Mehmet Can Mertoğlu and Kıvanç Sezer in 2016, Emre Yeksan, Ceylan Özgün Özçelik, and Fikret Reyhan, 2017. In appendix one can find several other directors.

Movies of the first generation of directors are idiosyncratic in their styles, narratives, and themes. Most of the movies of these names now became classical examples of New Cinema, inspiring and influencing several other directors of the later generations. The movies of the second generation have several similar stylistic characteristics that Daldal examines in detail. Moreover, the number of directors who produce movies with the funding of the Ministry of Culture, Eurimages, and international producers increased in the second period, which can be considered in relation to the atmosphere created by the Akp government in the 2000s. A significant point is an increase in the number of woman directors during the 2010s. The generation of directors that emerged after 2015 is not as prolific as the earlier generations, most of whom have only one or two movies. Although one might argue that it is still early to draw judgments upon this generation of directors, one can suggest that the end of the euphoria of the Gezi protests, the political environment in Turkey becoming authoritarian, and the worsening of the economic conditions progressively might have affected cinema. On the other hand, it is important to note that the movies after the mid-2010s have several new stylistic elements and divergences from the earlier examples, which are open to several different interpretations that this thesis will not dwell upon.

In this chapter, it will be argued that although the representation of inter-class encounters can be found in the movies of New Cinema since the 1990s, the manner in which movies involve this theme changes over time. In the movies of the first period, from the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s, inter-class encounters are either side stories of the movies that aim to contribute to the main narrative or form the background of the stories. Several movies involve classed environments, but inter-class encounters are not among the main subject matters. In the movies of the second decade, between the mid-2000s and mid-2010s, one starts to find

movies that involve inter-class encounters as their main theme; however, these movies mainly focus on one side of the encounter. The movies in 2015 and 2016, on the other hand, introduce inter-class encounters with different perspectives in detail where the social context of encounters are manifest in multiple dimensions. Nevertheless, movies in these years mainly emphasize impossibilities, contradictions, and deadlocks that emerge in the encounters, while the examples in the following years after 2017 involve several different possibilities, subjectivities, and perspectives within the social context. This is not to say that the movies after 2017 suggest solutions to the social problems; on the contrary, by addressing the plurality of perspectives and possibilities in the encounters, movies after 2017 involve even more dilemmas arising from the encounters in a variety of ways. After the analysis of this chapter, the next chapter will discuss the characteristics of these movies and transitions from Deleuze's concept of minor, argue that these transitions can be considered as the development of an ethical attitude, and suggest that the development of an ethical attitude towards the representation of inter-class encounters can be understood based on the social, historical, economic, and political context of Turkey.

#### § 4.1 First Period: from the mid-1990s to mid-2000s

Movies mentioned in this section as examples of the first decade are *C Blok* (Zeki Demirkubuz, 1994) *Mayıs Sıkıntısı* (Nuri Bilge Ceylan, 1999), *Güneşe Yolculuk* (Yeşim Ustaoglu, 1999), *Kaç Para Kaç* (Reha Erdem, 1999), *Filler ve Çimen* (Derviş Zaim, 2000), and *Yazgı* (Zeki Demirkubuz, 2001). One can observe that inter-class encounters are not absent in this period. However, this theme does not occupy the central theme of the movies either. Instead, inter-class encounters form the background of the narrative, which focuses on other themes, or they are side stories that contribute to the main story in a particular way.

In *C Blok*, one can observe that the main story is built upon classed encounters, while the movie's central theme focuses on the emancipation of the middle-class woman from the boredom of her life and marriage. Although this emancipation happens through her subordination and ex-

exploitation of the domestic workers, the movie highlights the psychological flows of the middle-class woman, while the perspectives of the workers remain hidden as they are represented as much as they have an encounter with the middle-class characters. The encounters are between middle-class married couple Tülay and Selim and two workers in the domestic environment; the domestic worker woman Aslı and the doorman's son Haled (Aslı's sexual partner in the beginning). The movie's main narrative unfolds as Tülay seduces Haled (breaking their relationship), which leads Haled to insanity. The movie starts with a scene where house owners are not at home Aslı calls Haled to the house, flirts with him, and then they have sex on the house owners' bed. Tülay sees them secretly, being traumatized, and leaves the house without them noticing. She is traumatized because their passionate intercourse makes her realize that she does not have pleasure in her life and marriage. From then on movie focuses on Tülay's struggle for emancipation, and the characters Aslı and Haled appear as much as they are involved in the story of Tülay. One can hear Aslı only when the house owners talk to her, which mostly happens because they are annoyed by her passion for watching television. The contrast drawn between Aslı and house owners functions to highlight the lack of enjoyment in the middle-class lives of the house owners because one cannot find the perspective of Aslı other than functioning for this purpose.

Moreover, while the middle-class woman is represented with an agency, as she can transform her life, the worker woman Aslı lacks an agency to change the conditions of her life nor react against the oppression. Aslı is subordinated, humiliated, and raped while she keeps silent and continues working, and the crimes go unpunished. As Aksu Bora argues, the female gender is not only constituted in relation to the male gender, but class differences also affect the gender regime.<sup>4</sup> Tülay constantly insults Aslı but disregards her personality and considers herself in a position to seduce her sexual partner without feeling guilty. Thus, the economic, social, and cultural differences enable Tülay to have no ethical

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<sup>4</sup> Aksu Bora, *Kadınların Sınıfı* (İletişim Yayınları, 2005), 184-5.

responsibility concerning Aslı and Haled. The same is true for Tülay's husband, Selim, who rapes Aslı to take revenge after learning that Tülay is cheating on him, but he does not undergo any sanction for the crime.

*Mayıs Sıkıntısı* (Nuri Bilge Ceylan, 1999) is the story of Muzaffer who tries to shoot a movie casting his relatives as amateur actors in the province where his family lives. The main theme is his inability to understand and communicate with the people living in the province, especially with his father. His attempts to cast his relatives and villagers as actors repeatedly fail because he cannot understand their perspectives due to his idealism about making his movie. From this perspective, the movie might suggest that idealistic and one-sided goals cannot be achieved but lead to a lack of empathy. This issue can be interpreted as the contradiction between the idealism of Muzaffer and the concerns of the people living in the small town. If these matters are considered from the perspective of social classes, Muzaffer's encounter with the people living in the province can be considered an inter-class encounter between Muzaffer's urban middle-class habitus and the habitus of lower-class people of the provincial town. However, while this theme forms the background of the story, the narrative does not emphasize this issue. Instead, the emphasis is on the contradictions between the different subjective perspectives of the characters. While Muzaffer aims to make a film, his father is only concerned with the trees, his cousin is anxious about university exams while dreaming of going to the city, and the young boy is curious about the lighter that plays music. The differences in characters' aims and ideas repeatedly create misunderstandings and problems in their relationships, but they cannot find any possibility of reconciliation.

*Güneşe Yolculuk* (Yeşim Ustaoglu, 1999) is a significant example in terms of encounters, including inter-class encounters. However, the central focus of the movie is the encounters between different ethnicities and the transformation of identity, while inter-class encounters form the general background of the story and highlight the particular class conditions of the lower class people. Main characters Mehmet and Berzan develop a friendship as they live in similar economic conditions, which is the precarious lower class habitus. Mehmet is from Western Turkey and, at first,

uninterested in the socio-political environment, while Berzan is Kurdish and participates in demonstrations to support the prisoners on hunger strike. After Mehmet is caught sitting next to a bag with a gun, police suspect him guilty, assuming from his outlook that he is Kurdish. As a result of being a suspect, Mehmet loses his job and house, and Berzan helps Mehmet find a job and a house. When Berzan dies suspiciously during the demonstration, Mehmet decides to take Berzan's body to Berzan's hometown at Hakkari. As Dönmez-Colin suggests, in this process, Mehmet realizes the oppression of Kurdish people and the conditions in southeastern Turkey.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, as Köksal argues, in this process, he experiences a transformation of his identity as he encounters the condition of the Kurdish people and the oppression and violence against them.<sup>6</sup>

The movie's main theme is based on the ethnic encounter within the same class environment; thus, the class conditions form the background of the story. *Güneşe Yolculuk* emphasizes the precarious conditions of Kurdish people who cannot find jobs with security and regular income and being involved in Kurdish politics cause death, oppression, and becoming jobless. Thus, Kurdish people experience class differences through structural ethnic discrimination in which the state is the primary actor. However, except for a few minimal instances, the movie does not represent direct inter-class encounters in the story that involve the encounters of Mehmet and Berzan. The direct inter-class encounters are rendered as the side story through Arzu (who and Mehmet love each other), who works in a laundry and is under the pressure of her employer. Arzu's employer not only oppresses and exploits her through economic means but also acts as a dominant mother treating Arzu as a young daughter to whom she can subordinate. Thus, the representation of the inter-class encounter between Arzu and her employer is at the intersection of economic and patriarchal relationships. Arzu is under the hegem-

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<sup>5</sup> Gönül Dönmez-Colin, *Turkish Cinema: Identity, Distance and Belonging* (Reaktion Books, 2008), 98-9.

<sup>6</sup> Özlem Köksal, *Aesthetics of Displacement: Turkey and Its Minorities on Screen* (Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2016), 147.

ony of the employer, which can be considered an instance of what Foucault calls biopower since Aslı is constantly watched and controlled by the employer, whose dominance is a mixture of a mother, a teacher, and a boss.<sup>7</sup>

In *Kaç Para Kaç* (Reha Erdem, 1999), Selim is a virtuous shopkeeper (selling shirts), loyal husband, good father, trustworthy businessman, and a humble and modest person controlled in his actions. However, he loses all these virtues one by one throughout the movie after finding an enormous amount of money. When it comes to inter-class encounters, his relationship with the apprentice in his retail store is one of the side stories symbolizing his loss of trustworthiness. At first, he advises the apprentice to be humble and focus on learning the profession; he later fires the apprentice without any information and lies to protect himself by accusing him of robbing the store, resulting in the innocent boy becoming guilty and going to jail. Dönmez-Colin interprets the movie as a criticism of the neoliberal policies in Turkey by rendering the message that new alignments with money results in the collapse of traditional values.<sup>8</sup>

The representation of the encounter between the apprentice and the employer is similar to Arzu in *Güneşe Yolculuk*. Both are workers in small stores, and the encounter is mediated by an age difference as employers utilize it for their advantage. Moreover, both involve several cultural signifiers (family authority, teacher, boss) executed as a form of biopower. Selim uses any opportunity to harshly criticize and humiliate the apprentice and gives harsh advice when the apprentice asks for a wage increase. In this way, the traditional values that regulate the relationship between the employer and the apprentice function to produce consent which, as Gramsci argues, is an effective hegemony mechanism that regulates class differences.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, although one can observe these conditions, both of these instances of inter-class encounters are

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<sup>7</sup>Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978). 140,1.

<sup>8</sup> Dönmez-Colin, *Turkish Cinema*, 16.

<sup>9</sup> Vasilis Maglaras, "Consent and Submission: Aspects of Gramsci's Theory of the Political and Civil Society," *SAGE Open*, January 2013, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244012472347>, 2.

secondary side stories in the main narrative of the movies and function as elements of narrative that focus on other themes.

Derviş Zaim's *Filler ve Çimen* (2000) involves several social and political problems in Turkey during the 1990s; state corruption, mafia involvement in politics, lack of welfare, and discrimination against homosexuality, among many others. On the one hand, there is a low-income family of two siblings; Havva is a successful marathon athlete but without any funding, works in a factory, and her brother has a fatal illness is a veteran soldier having lost his leg while fighting against PKK. On the other hand, there are power struggles in the world of corrupted higher state bureaucrats, mafia, and wealthy businesspeople. Havva makes several attempts to reach the minister to ask for funding for the treatment of her brother, but all her attempts fail because the minister is busy fighting his enemies and managing illegal plans. When Havva tries to help the young owner of the hotel (that gives them food help), the situation gets even worse. The primary narrative device of the movie, parallel stories of the wealthy, powerful, and the desperately poor, involve economic hierarchy. However, economic difference builds the story's background for criticizing the state's corruption and lack of care for the poor people. Dönmez-Colin interprets the movie as "an important manifestation of cinema's contribution to the preservation of collective memory" as it addresses several socio-political problems in Turkey. However, one can criticize the use of caricatured characters, such as the representation of PKK in the movie. PKK militants enter the story when the hotel manager hires them as hotel security against the mafia; in the very few instances, they speak with a grotesque accent, and then they immediately plan a suicide bombing. Although Dönmez-Colin considers the movie a "preservation of collective memory," it can also be considered a forgetting of the socio-historical context by concealing the context of the social and political problems by representing them through stereotypical signifiers.<sup>10</sup>

*Yazgı* (Zeki Demirkubuz, 2001) is about Musa, an utterly indifferent person without any attachment or reaction to anything he undergoes.

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<sup>10</sup> Dönmez-Colin, *Turkish Cinema*, 186.

He works in a small office with the boss Naim and three workers, one of whom, Sinem, he later marries. Soon Musa realizes that Sinem is cheating on him with the boss Naim, but he does nothing. The boss kills his wife and two children and puts the accusation on Musa; Musa does not reject the accusation and goes to jail. Naim starts to live with Sinem but later cannot stop feeling regret, confesses everything to the police, and commits suicide. Then, Musa is released, goes back to his house, and finds Sinem, a middle-class woman earlier in the movie, now dressed as a villager housewife, with a child whose father is not told. Again, Musa says nothing. The central plot of *Yazgı* (2001) is based on an inter-class encounter between the workers and their boss; however, the movie focuses on the main character's indifference and, based on his actions and ideas, develops a nihilist critique of attributing a meaning to the world. Z. Tül Akbal Süalp, on the other hand, argues that while this nihilism is a result of the destructive social, political, and economic history of Turkey, the movie does not take this context into account in this way, becoming sanctification of a lumpen indifference.<sup>11</sup>

The representation of the inter-class encounters in the first decade of the New Cinema in Turkey involves similarities and differences with respect to several aspects. They do not have a uniform stylistic approach, and these movies are not similar in their approach to the representation of inter-class encounters. Thus, there can be different interpretations of how directors address socio-political issues. The stories of Aslı in *Güneşe Yolculuk* and the apprentice in *Kaç Para Kaç* involve direct inter-class encounters but become the side stories where the main narrative emphasizes a different theme. On the other hand, for *Güneşe Yolculuk*, one can argue that although it does not involve the representation of direct class encounters in the encounter of Mehmet and Berzan, the representation of lower-class conditions still sheds light on the social context of inter-class encounters in Turkey since movie deals with a problem that is so embedded in the social context of Turkey, ethnic discrimination of

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<sup>11</sup> Z. Tül Akbal Süalp, "Taşrada Saklı Zaman-Geri Dönülemeyen," in *Taşrada Var Bir Zaman* (Çitlembik Yayınları, 2010), 87–116, 99.

Kurdish people, that one cannot miss the classed background of the narrative. In *Filler ve Çimen*, there is no direct inter-class encounter except for a minimal part; instead, the movie provides a critique based on a parallel narrative. In *Mayıs Sıkıntısı*, one can deduce that the encounter is between different class habitus; however, the movie focuses on the personal dilemmas of the characters. *C Blok* is different from other movies since one can find a detailed representation of inter-class encounters, which can be compared to the movies of the next decade, although the narrative focuses on the perspective of the middle-class woman. *Yazgı* also involves inter-class encounters in detail; however, this time movie builds upon its nihilist critique to the extent that the class differences becomes metaphorical signifiers and can be replaced with another set of relationship that involves a love triangle.

#### § 4.2 Second Period: from the mid-2000s to the mid-2010s

The second decade of New Cinema between the mid-2000s and mid-2010s is a prolific period since both the directors of the earlier period continued to make movies, but new directors also emerged in this period. This section mainly focuses on the new directors and types of representations of inter-class encounters while mentioning some examples of the directors from the earlier period at the end of the section. It is important to note that one can find several similarities and differences in the movies of this decade with respect to each other and in comparison to the previous period. However, this section emphasizes the development of new characteristics and examples that emerged during these years. This section mentions movies of the new directors who introduce new representations of inter-class encounters such as *Sonbahar* (Özcan Alper, 2008), *11'e 10 Kala* (Pelin Esmer, 2009), *Çoğunluk* (Seren Yüce, 2010), *Gelecek Uzun Sürer* (Özcan Alper, 2011) and *Zerre* (Erdem Tepegöz, 2012) and touches upon the differences in the new movies of the old directors such as *Yeraltı* (Zeki Demirkubuz, 2012), *Bir Zamanlar Anadolu'da* (Nuri Bilge Ceylan, 2011), and *Kış Uykusu* (Nuri Bilge Ceylan, 2014). It will be argued that the representation of inter-class encounters takes a different manner in these movies since these movies explicitly focus on the theme of inter-class encounters and manifest the underlying social context; however, the

focus of the narrative is on one side of the encounter, while the other side is not developed with the same detail and emphasis.

*Sonbahar* (Özcan Alper, 2008) is the story of Yusuf, who has spent ten years in prison due to political reasons; where he is traumatized by *Hayata Dönüş Operasyonu* and returns to his hometown after being released for having a fatal illness.<sup>12</sup> He has an introverted character without speaking often and not making many gestures, but there is an apparent contrast between his urban middle-class habitus and the villagers. The movie narrates his remaining few months living in the village with his mother, who only speaks Hemshin, a dialect of Armenian spoken in north-eastern Turkey.<sup>13</sup> He constantly experiences flashbacks to his traumatic memories in prison, and his depression makes him impossible to develop any dialogue in his encounters. He does not speak much to his mother but soon finds his old childhood friend, who welcomes him engagingly; however, Yusuf cannot articulate anything about his feelings or ideas. In terms of cinematography, *Sonbahar* is not far away from the directors of the earlier decade. However, *Sonbahar* is fundamentally different in its involvement in the social context. For example, one can compare *Yumurta* (Semih Kaplanoğlu, 2007) to highlight the difference. In *Yumurta*, the main character, also named Yusuf, is a second-hand bookseller who is a cold person preferring not to speak often, and does not have many gestures. He returns to the village after his mother dies, prefers to stay for a while, hesitates to form a dialogue with the young villager woman Ayla who was helping his mother, and the movie ends without a resolution, though one can argue that there is an indication of a future bonding between them. *Yumurta* can be compared to the movies such as *Mayıs Sıkıntısı* or *Yazgı*, where one can interpret the underlying classed conditions; however, the story-telling emphasizes different themes to the point that class conditions of the encounters become arbitrary. On the

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<sup>12</sup> *Hayata Dönüş Operasyonu* is an operation organized by the state in several prisons in different cities on the same day, 19 December 2000, to stop the prisoners on hunger strike against the prison system; during the operations, thirty-two people died, and many people were injured.

<sup>13</sup> Köksal, *Aesthetics of Displacement*, 34-5.

other hand, in *Sonbahar*, the story is contextualized in the socio-historical background since how and why Yusuf comes to that psychological situation is a direct result of Turkey's social and political context.

Pelin Esmer's *11'e 10 Kala* (2009) is the story of an encounter between Mithat, a collector in the 1980s, and the doorman of the apartment Ali. Mithat obsessively collects anything he can keep in his house and waits for the second-hand bookseller to find the eleventh volume of the *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi* of Reşat Ekrem Koçu. Ali is working to save some money to find a better house and bring his family from his village to the city. The other members of the apartment, except for Mithat, want the building to be rebuilt, which would be profitable. Mithat tries to resist neoliberal developments, and his encounter with Ali develops as he makes Ali buy his newspapers, get a missing newspaper from the library archive, and move some of his books to the storage. In this process, Ali realizes Mithat's ignorance and unawareness about the world around him since his obsession occupies all his time and effort. Meanwhile, Ali finds a better job in the library and a better house to rent where he can bring his family. In the end, everyone in the apartment except for Mithat leaves as the building will be demolished, and finally, Ali also leaves Mithat without informing him, leaving him the eleventh volume of the *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi* that he stole from the second-hand book store. Feride Çiçekoğlu interprets the film's pessimism about Mithat and optimism about Ali as a critique of authoritarian modernization projects in Turkey, which obsessively attempt to take control of everything, while democratic grassroots movements are the future of the social evolution.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, one can also suggest that the opposition is between the secular Kemalist middle classes who lost their privileged social status after neoliberal transformations and developed a nostalgia for the earlier modernization dreams in Turkey, as Esra Özyürek argues; and the newly emerging urban lower classes in the outskirts of the metropolis who

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<sup>14</sup> Feride Çiçekoğlu, "Ses ve Zaman: 11'e 10 Kala," in *Bir Kapıdan Gireceksin: Türkiye Sineması Üzerine Denemeler* (İstanbul: Metis, 2012), 145–57, 155–7.

struggle for better living conditions.<sup>15</sup> From this perspective, neoliberalism renders Mithat insignificant and outdated, while Ali seeks a promising future.

*Çoğunluk* (Seren Yüce, 2010) can be considered a significant example that focuses on an inter-class encounter that manifests the economic, social, cultural, and ideological differences between different classes.<sup>16</sup> It is the story of Mertkan, whose family moved up the social ladder recently as his father is a successful building contractor. Gül, who studies sociology and works in a snack bar, falls in love with Mertkan, and they develop a relationship, though Mertkan does not show much affection. Their encounter details Mertkan's ignorance about their socio-economic differences and his lack of understanding and empathy. Mertkan's father tells him that he does not want this relationship since Gül is Kurdish with highly performative nationalist speech. Gül's family does not want her to study, and Gül suddenly disappears as his relatives take her back. Mertkan's father sends him to a far building site (not to work but) to make him 'smarten up,' and surprisingly, it works. Mertkan, who did not have a firm will and personality, now suddenly starts to reprimand workers, use egoistic and humiliating language, ask his father for a gun to 'protect' himself, and, in this way, acquires the patriarchal class habitus of his fathers. The movie can be considered a criticism of the newly emerged middle and upper-middle-class habitus in the 2000s, thanks to neoliberal developments or the Akp government. On the other hand, as Karin Karakaşlı also criticizes, the movie invests in the criticism of a middle-class habitus through Mertkan and his family so much that the character of Gül becomes functional, even an 'excuse' to develop the main criticism of the movie.<sup>17</sup> The narrative does not reflect her perspective and subjectivity, and her character is only depicted with stereotypical features.

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<sup>15</sup> Esra Özyürek, *Nostalgia for the Modern: State Secularism and Everyday Politics in Turkey* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), 19-20, 35.

<sup>16</sup> It is the earliest movie Janet Barış discusses in her book dedicated to the representation of class in the New Cinema of Turkey. Janet Barış, *Yeni Türkiye Sinemasında Sınıfsal Görünümler* (İstanbul: Doruk Yayınları, 2021).

<sup>17</sup> Karin Karakaşlı, "Çoğunluk Olarak Az," in *Bir Kapıdan Gireceksin: Türkiye Sineması Üzerine Denemeler* (İstanbul: Metis, n.d.), 133-41, 135.

Özcan Alper's second film *Gelecek Uzun Sürer* (2011), can be compared to *Güneşe Yolculuk* as it is also a story of going to southeastern Turkey and realizing the conditions of Kurdish people. However, this time the main character is an upper-middle-class woman Sumru, a doctoral student studying musicology. She collects elegies around Turkey for her doctoral thesis in original languages such as Lazuri, Armenian, and Kurdish. She comes to Diyarbakır, and at first, she seems like a tourist enjoying the environment. Then, her interviews for elegies become recordings of oral histories as she listens to the narratives of mostly women Kurdish people who lost the men in their families in the massacres done by the Turkish army, which also burned their houses, killed their animals, and destroyed whole villages. Instead of her research project, Sumru starts to examine archives concerning massacres and chance upon a clue about her ex-boyfriend. The film ends with her realization that the suffering of the Kurdish people she was recording is her suffering and loss as well. In this sense, the movie has a "tragic realization" structure where she is not aware of herself, but events unfold in such a way that she realizes her situation and, in the end, understands the reality of her life.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, as Koçer and Göztepe claim, the same is also true for Ahmet, who is at first excited about flirting with Sumru, but as he also gets entangled with the narratives and recordings with Sumru, he also experiences a transformation and starts to face with his traumas due to being Kurdish and having lost his father in an unsolved murder when he was a child.<sup>19</sup> Koçer and Göztepe consider the representation of Ahmet, who is a lower class man selling pirated films on the street but has a bohemian lifestyle and high cultural capital so that he can form an intimate dialogue with Sumru, as a positive development for the representation of Kurdish people on the cinema in Turkey.<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, the dialogue between Sumru and

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<sup>18</sup> This structure of realization is the defining element of the Ancient Greek tragedies. However, in Ancient Greek tragedies, the content is more definite. The main characters are unaware of their arrogance and realize their fault when gods put them into trouble.

<sup>19</sup> Zeynep Koçer and Mustafa Orhan Göztepe, "Representing Ethnicity in Cinema during Turkey's Kurdish Initiative: A Critical Analysis of *My Marlon and Brando* (Karabey, 2008), *The Storm* (Öz, 2008) and *Future Lasts Forever* (Alper, 2011)," *Alphaville: Journal of Film and Screen Media* 13 (2017): 54–68, <https://doi.org/10.33178/alpha.13.03>, 63.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, 63-4.

Ahmet becomes possible thanks to Ahmet's high cultural capital, and Sumru does not attempt to develop a dialogue with anyone else. Thus, one can ask whether the movie suggests a positive future for a possibility of dialogue, as Koçer and Göztepe suggest, or whether it reproduces a class hierarchy by rendering the dialogue possible on the condition that people have the similar cultural capital.<sup>21</sup>

*Zerre* (Erdem Tepegöz, 2012) is about the struggles of a lower-class woman from her perspective, focusing on her agency. She seeks a job to survive with her child and mother living in precarious conditions. She sells scents at funerals, and they depend on food help from a restaurant where her relative Remzi works. They cannot pay the rent being under the pressure of the houseowner, who suggests that Zeynep sell her kidney. The film starts in a textile atelier where the workers (who discuss doing something as their wages are not paid) are immediately fired, and Zeynep (who was incidentally sitting at the same table with them at lunch). She finds a job in a factory at Tekirdağ, where she should stay for a month. The process of going factory, the working environment, and the terrible conditions in the dorms resonate with prisons or army camps. Most of the workers are women, while the overseers are men. Some workers are forced into prostitution at night, and Zeynep hardly escapes being raped. When she learns on the phone from her mother that the houseowner came with a doctor to examine her daughter, Zeynep runs back home with fear and decides to sell her kidney to keep her daughter safe. Finally, she finds a job as a dishwasher in a restaurant via her friend, and the movie ends with a bitter yet hopeful tone.

*Zerre* marks a significant change in the representation of inter-class encounters. Not only that the precarious conditions of the lower class person represented from her perspective, but the movie emphasizes the struggles and strifes of a woman to maintain the safety of her family. In this way, the movie reflects the agency of a lower-class woman and the particular conditions that she has to overcome because of being

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<sup>21</sup> Koçer and Göztepe, "Representing Ethnicity in Cinema during Turkey's Kurdish Initiative: A Critical Analysis of *My Marlon* and *Brando* (Karabey, 2008), *The Storm* (Öz, 2008) and *Future Lasts Forever* (Alper, 2011)," 63-4.

a lower-class woman. Her encounters with the houseowner and the employer at the factory show that the oppressive conditions of unemployment exert all kinds of hegemonic forces. Barış suggests that her struggle is also about preserving her social status and emotional attitude since she also fights to sustain her strong character.<sup>22</sup> On the other hand, as Barış claims, the movie is careful to avoid becoming melodramatic or stereotypical; instead, one can argue that it is an example of what Kracauer calls a found story.<sup>23</sup>

Finally, one can mention the changes in the new movies of the old directors towards the end of this decade. In the movies, such as *Bir Zamanlar Anadolu'da* (Nuri Bilge Ceylan, 2011), *Yeraltı* (Zeki Demirkubuz, 2012), and *Kış Uykusu* (Nuri Bilge Ceylan, 2014), one can find the recurring themes of these directors now involving inter-class encounters in a different manner. In *Yeraltı* (Zeki Demirkubuz, 2012), the main character Muharrem is a middle-class man working in a government office in Ankara and has three different encounters in the movie. First, he goes to a dinner with his old 'friends' whom he hates condemning them for dishonesty, flattery, and banality. The second one is the story of the domestic worker Türkan who is the only person he has dialogues with. In the beginning, Türkan complains about the misbehavior of an old (and probably mentally ill) man living downstairs, then asks for Muharrem's advice when the man gives Türkan a contract to sign, otherwise forcing her (with her three children) out of the basement floor flat. Muharrem deduces that the man is in love with Türkan and advises her to kill him; Türkan tries but fails, but later develops compassion for the older man and decides to marry him. When Muharrem makes fun of her situation Türkan is offended, and they have a fight, Türkan leaves, and Muharrem undergoes an anger attack smashing windows and furniture in the house. Third, he has an encounter with a prostitute. They have a conversation when Muharrem acts weird, and she feels uncomfortable; Muharrem gives her his number and address, and at the end of the movie, when she comes to his house finds him angry after he broke everything. Muharrem claims that

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<sup>22</sup> Barış, *Yeni Türkiye Sinemasında Sınıfsal Görünümler*, 30-2.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, 33.

he gave his address to humiliate her weakness in order to take revenge because he had wanted to play a game (when he was acting weird), but her behavior made him feel stupid. However, it turns out that it is he who is in weakness and needs help, while she becomes the only person who pities him. Thus, Muharrem's encounters with two lower-class women symbolize two themes of the movie; his misunderstandings due to his egocentrism and his stupidity due to his arrogance.

*Bir Zamanlar Anadolu'da* is a composition of several stories. The story takes place in central Anatolia and is about a group of government officials and a murderer. Together they seek the man he killed and buried in the fields, but he cannot remember precisely where, and all the fields and fountains look the same. Other than him, all characters have a role in the government bureaucracy, such as prosecutor, doctor, police, gendarme, and mukhtar. Arslan examines the movie as a critique of bureaucratic hegemony, by undermining its alleged stability and indicating its central and formative void, suggesting that "Bürokrasi, gömülmüş bir ceset ve Anadolu, ulus olma hikayemizin labirentini kuran sihirli üç sözcük gibi."<sup>24</sup> The class backgrounds of the characters are clearly articulated through their habitus. The prosecutor Nusret and the doctor Cemal are cultivated middle-class men who build an intimate dialogue. The police commissar Naci has a lower-middle-class habitus where he performs authoritative and reckless masculinity while neglecting to care for his family and tries to hide his shame because of his child's mental illness. It is significant that as the class of the characters gets lower, their significance in the narrative diminishes, and the lower-class young villager woman never speaks. *Kış Uykusu* revolves around the theme of Aydın's vanity, who oppresses the lower class tenants in economic, social, and cultural ways. Although the movie is explicitly built upon a classed encounter, one can argue that this class difference becomes a means to highlight the conceit of Aydın. The lower class people are represented in two ways. Ismail is violent and full of honor, rejects forming any dialogue with the upper-class people, attempts to attack Aydın, and burns the

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<sup>24</sup> Umut Tümay Arslan, "Bozkırdaki Labirent Manzaradan Lekeye," in *Bir Kapıdan Gireceksin*, ed. Umut Tümay Arslan (Istanbul: Metis, 2012), 193–219, 215.

money brought by Nihal ( the young wife of Aydın who devotes herself to philanthropy). On the other hand, Hamdi performs a humble and respectful personality to find a way to come to terms with Aydın, although his attempts fail to create any difference.

Although all movies examined in this section involve inter-class encounters as their main theme or the central element of the narrative, they all focus on one side of the encounter except for *11'e 10 Kala*. *Sonbahar* has several similarities with the characteristics of the movies of the previous decade; however, it is also fundamentally different in terms of its involvement with Turkey's social and historical context. *Çoğunluk* is another significant example since its narrative is based on a story of an inter-class love affair, while the main theme is the criticism of a specific middle-class environment that emerged thanks to the developments under Akp. *Zerre*, on the other hand, leads a critique of the social context of lower classes while emphasizing the gendered conditions of the struggles for survival. *Sonbahar*, *Çoğunluk*, and *Zerre* are similar movies since they represent inter-class encounters by focusing on the story of an individual and a particular class environment to criticize the social context of Turkey. *Gelecek Uzun Sürer* is different because it tells a story of transformation through encounters. Although the main storyline is an inter-class encounter between Sumru and Ahmet, who are from different economic classes, their encounter soon becomes a dialogue within the same cultural capital. On the other hand, their encounters with the Kurdish people who tell their experiences of violence and oppression open them to a transformation of their perspectives on their pasts and attitudes towards their social context. *11'e 10 Kala* involves an inter-class encounter where one can find the perspectives of both of the characters in detail. However, this encounter is somewhat one dimensional in the sense that it emphasizes the disappearance of an old lifestyle that can be associated with the Kemalist bureaucratic elites of the early Republican period with their disappointed idealism that ends up in nostalgia, while neoliberal transformations replace it with its lower-classes that struggle to find a better life under precarious conditions. Finally, in movies such as *Yeraltı*, *Bir Zamanlar*

*Anadolu'da*, and *Kış Uykusu*, the inter-class encounters become more central and manifest compared to the earlier movies by these directors. However, compared to the other examples examined in this section, they are not fundamentally different from the examples of the previous decade, although the details of the class conditions increase dramatically.

#### § 4.3 Third Period: after mid-2010s

##### 4.3.1 2015 and 2016

The movies in 2015 and 2016 are worth considering as a different group for several reasons. On the one hand there are several movies in these years with inter-class encounters such as *Toz Bezi* (Ahu Öztürk, 2015), *Sarmaşık* (Tolga Karaçelik, 2015), *Ana Yurdu* (Senem Tüzen, 2015), and *Babamın Kanatları* (Kıvanç Sezer, 2016) which will be examined below. In addition, one can mention several other movies from these years that involve different forms of social and political problems in relation to class, gender, and ethnicity such as *Nefesim Kesilene Kadar* (Emine Emel Balcı, 2015), *Mustang* (Deniz Gamze Ergüven, 2015), *Abluka* (Emin Alper, 2015), *Bulantı* (Zeki Demirkubuz, 2015), *Köpek* (Esen Işık, 2015), *Kor* (Zeki Demirkubuz, 2016), and *Tereddüt* (Yeşim Ustaoğlu, 2016). In addition, one can find several similar elements in the movies of these years, while they are significantly different in several respects from the previous and later movies. In this way, one can find stylistic features that distinguish these movies as well. Moreover, several woman directors emerged in these years, which is a fundamentally significant development compared to the earlier decades. Since these years also correspond to the significant political transformations in the social context of Turkey, one can consider these years as transition years when a period ends, and another one starts to take shape.

*Toz Bezi* is the story of two Kurdish domestic workers, Nesrin and Hatun, who are friends and neighbors working in different upper-middle-class houses. The movie starts when Nesrin's husband leaves the house, and she becomes unable to accommodate her living with her daughter. Hatun, on the other hand, dreams of climbing the social ladder and living in a house similar to the ones she works for. Nesrin has a friendly dialogue with the houseowner Aslı conversing with her about

the disappearance of her husband and her economic problems, while Aslı encourages her to be a strong and self-sufficient woman promising to look for a job for her. When Nesrin hesitates to clean the windows since the neighbor downstairs might complain, Aslı tells her not to worry about him. Later, Aslı tells Nesrin that the neighbor complained, Nesrin asks what her response was, and Aslı says that she said it was the domestic worker woman who did it. This scene marks a sudden break in the development of their dialogue as it turns out Aslı does not care about Nesrin's perspective. It later becomes apparent that she does not try to find a job for Nesrin either and drops the subject by admitting that it is not easy to find a job for Nesrin since she is not educated. Hatun, on the other hand, works for an upper-class woman Ayten who is disdainful of her. When Hatun is with Nesrin or in her own house, she has a dominant character and is proud of her cleverness, while in the upper-middle-class habitus, she is shy and clumsy. When she tries to increase her wage or work for Ayten's daughter, she fails to accomplish her plans and, in the end, accepts Ayten's authority to work more. When Ayten's friend mistakes Hatun to be a Circassian, Hatun tries to perform accordingly, but when her accent reveals that she is Kurdish, Ayten mentions new neighbors whom she liked a lot and is surprised upon hearing that they are from Diyarbakır. When Nesrin cannot find a job and Hatun gets stuck with her dreams, they dissent; without any means to survive, Nesrin disappears, leaving her child behind. Hatun realizes the oppression of the houseowner and, being disillusioned, stops working for her, goes to Nesrin's relatives, and admitting that she is also Kurdish suggests holding the responsibility of Nesrin's daughter.

*Toz Bezi* (Ahu Öztürk, 2015) is a significant film representing inter-class encounters because it sheds light on several different dimensions from an ethical point of view. Not only that the economic differences be traced to the social and cultural differences that become a means for hegemony, but class encounters are entangled with the differences in gender and ethnicity to the extent that they cannot be separated. While Aslı repeats the upper-middle-class clichés without caring about the differences in Nesrin's life, Nesrin has to decide to leave her child for her good.

This may sound like an exaggeration, but it can be considered what Giorgio Agamben examines as a "paradigm" since Agamben suggests that an exceptional example can manifest the underlying processes of its domain.<sup>25</sup> What Nesrin experiences might seem exceptional, but what she suffers can be considered as the limit of the conditions she lives in. Hatun, on the other hand, is captured by the desire to live in an upper-class habitus, while in her encounters, the houseowner Ayten repeatedly restores class hegemony by reminding her that Hatun belongs to a different habitus. *Toz Bezi* emphasizes the one-sided view of the upper classes as they either do not take the conditions of workers into account or dismiss it as unworthy of consideration. The fact that Hatun believes herself to be Circassian for a while shows that she is ready to adopt any signifier to achieve her desires. Moreover, the tension between Ayten and her daughter becomes an economic and existential problem for Hatun since, in the process, she is forced to work more. Although her dreams seem economically impossible, what disillusioned her is her feeling a necessity to care for Nesrin's daughter. On the one hand, it is this ethical stance that makes Hatun realize the immediate realities in her environment, but, on the other hand, she finds in Nesrin's daughter a promising girl while Hatun's husband and son do not treat her with respect. Moreover, as Arslan suggests, without concluding with a resolution and taking an intersectional perspective on class, gender, and ethnicity, *Toz Bezi* "traumatizes" the spectator to the extent that the ethical problems remain and create a force on the spectator to take ethical responsibility for these social and political issues.<sup>26</sup>

*Sarmaşık* (Tolga Karaçelik, 2015) takes place in a cargo ship that gets stuck near a port because the shipowner goes bankrupt. The story continues with the remaining crew of six men. There is a strict power hierarchy on the ship under the captain Beybaba, a dominant paternal figure portrayed as an old-fashioned secular man. The second man in the hierarchy, İsmail, is a middle-aged religious person under the pressure of

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<sup>25</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *The Signature of All Things: On Method*, trans. Luca D'Isanto and Kevin Attel (New York: Zone Books, 2009), 25.

<sup>26</sup> Arslan, *Kat*, 163.

Beybaba and struggles to subordinate Cenk, a wayward drug addict. Cenk forms a childish friendship with Alper, who is similar to Cenk in character but younger and inexperienced. Nadir is obedient and introverted, and whose family house in Sulukule was demolished recently by the state. Finally, Kürt is a gigantic person who never speaks. The captain cannot find any financial support, there is an option of abandoning the ship and going home, but he decides to stay. As they spend months and get bored and run out of food. When Nadir, Cenk, and Alper learn captain's decision to stay on the ship start to question his decision. There starts a psychological tension between Cenk and İsmail, while the captain never steps back to sustain his authority and performs an extreme reaction when he feels that the order is loosened. As İsmail is humiliated by the captain, he tries to form dominance over Cenk, but Cenk answers his attempts with equal strength and never subordinates himself to his authority. Then, suddenly Kürt disappears, and they all start to lose their psychological stability; first, Nadir and then İsmail claims to see the ghost of Kürt. Cenk hits İsmail's head to take the keys for medical pills, and Nadir attempts to commit suicide, but the captain does nothing other than try to sustain his authority. The movie ends by suggesting the possibility that the crew might agree to act against the captain, which boils down to an alliance between Cenk and İsmail.

When interpreted as an allegory of the socio-political power struggles in Turkey, the captain can be interpreted as the state power, İsmail as the Muslim population who supports Akp or maybe as the Gülen organization, Nadir as the lower class people, Cenk as the oppositional movements and Alper as youth counterpart of oppositional movements, while Kürt embodies the Kurdish population. From this perspective, the movie criticizes the state power, which depends on the forces of a capitalist economy it cannot control, while trying to manage its authority by establishing a strict hegemony over the lower classes through religion. However, as Meral Özçınar argues, this is one of the readings of the movie and should not be taken as the primary one, nor valid in itself.<sup>27</sup> The

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<sup>27</sup> Meral Özçınar, "Deleuzyen Sinema: Minör Bir Oluş Olarak Sarmaşık Filminin Rizomatik Yapısı," *SineFilozofi* 2, no. 4 (2017): 73–93, 89.

power struggles in the movie can also be considered from the viewpoint of inter-class encounters. The shipowner is never seen, whom only the captain could have a contact but the shipowner is inaccessible from the beginning. While the problems occur due to economic reasons, the person responsible for the problems is unreachable to the people who suffer the economic consequences. Captain talks with different authorities on the phone, begging for help and explaining his lack of means, but he is extremely harsh and authoritative to the crew. This dissimilarity manifests that although power presents itself as absolute, it is relative to its position in the hierarchy and has multiple faces. A relationship of obedience mediates the relationship between the captain and the crew, and except for a few attempts of Cenk, nobody shows a reaction against captain while he shouts and humiliates them and hits on Cenk's face. The division of labor is strictly considered a hierarchical power relation, suggesting the hegemony that mediates class relations. When the crew wants to discuss with the captain about leaving the ship, he understands their attempt as rioting and blocks the possibility of a dialogue. He intentionally breaks every form of dialogue and turns it into rebuking to establish his dominance. He turns his inability to reach the upper class into an authority under him, the strategy that İsmail also tries on Cenk but fails. However, Özçınar suggests that the captain's authority rests on the crew's consent, and when they start to stop giving consent, his power is substantially undermined.<sup>28</sup> Kürt, who is physically the most powerful person, remains silent and passive and then suddenly disappears. Özçınar suggests that his presence creates power balance, but when he disappears, not only the power hierarchy but the psychological maintenance of the characters is also destabilized as Kürt's ghost starts to haunt them.<sup>29</sup>

*Ana Yurdu* (Senem Tüzen, 2015) is the story of Nesrin, who goes to her family's old village house to find peace to finish her novel, followed by her unexpected mother Halise, and the movie becomes Nesrin's struggle for independence from her mother's dominance. Halise comes uninvited because she feels she must be with Nesrin, who had an abortion and

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 86.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 85.

divorced recently, while Nesrin is uncomfortable and disturbed because of her mother, and her annoyance increases gradually as her mother misunderstands and judges her. The people in the movie are from three classes: lower-class villager women who speak with an accent; Halise, the middle-class mother who is a teacher; and Nesrin, who is an upper-class writer. Halise is religious, believing in several superstitions and oppressive about how Nesrin behaves and dresses. Moreover, Halise adapts to the habitus of the villager women easily, starts to dress and talk like them, and gossip with them. Nesrin, on the other hand, does not like to have contact with the villager women with whom her mother likes to gossip. Instead, she talks with two villager women: the first one is trying to survive without a job with her two young children as her husband left her alone for another woman without caring for her, and the second woman suffers from the violence of her husband but cannot find any means to leave home. Both are frustrated and depressed, while it turns out that these two women are marginalized in the village and topic of gossip among the women Halise chats with, and thanks to Halise, Nesrin also becomes a topic and target of superstitious speculations. Özgür Veliöglü Metin suggests that what Nesrin undergoes can be interpreted as the disciplinary power Foucault examines because she is under constant monitoring and control through various means.<sup>30</sup> When Nesrin attempts to tell her mother to stop oppressing her, Halise cries and interprets the situation that Nesrin is in a good emotional state and she needs help. Later, Halise finds the reason for Nesrin's 'problem' in having an abortion, claiming that it is a great sin. When they talk about their family memories, from their dialogue, one can deduce that Halise did not want to give birth to Nesrin but could not prevent it, and when Nesrin was young fell in love with another teacher but could not do anything. In this way, the movie draws a sharp contrast between Halise, who could not live free because of her submission to religious and superstitious beliefs, while Nesrin struggles for her freedom but fails to make an impact on her mother;

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<sup>30</sup> Özgür Veliöglü Metin, “Annem İzin Vermese Bu Filmi Çekmeyecektim’: Foucault’nun İktidar Kavramı Üzerinden Ana Yurdu Filmi Okuması,” *SineFilozofi Özel Sayı* (2019): 474–92, <https://doi.org/10.31122/sinefilozofi.515242>, 481-91.

whom she does not entirely break off either. Finally, Halise suddenly tells Nesrin a story about the superstitious consequences anal sex and adds that it is a great sin. Then Nesrin has a sexual encounter with the mentally ill apprentice of the auto repairer. It seems this is a statement against her mother's religious and superstitious oppression. One can argue that the movie represents climbing the social ladder as opening up new possibilities for freedom; however, it requires struggling against the oppressive forces of the lower class habitus.

*Babamın Kanatları* (Kıvanç Sezer, 2016) takes place in a construction worksite where most of the workers are Kurdish and focuses on the lives of two construction workers, Ibrahim and Yusuf. Barış suggests that the movie can be considered a statement against the under-representation of the lower class workers in cinema since it spends a significant portion of the duration in the working environment.<sup>31</sup> Ibrahim is an older man who lost his house in the Van earthquake; his family lives in a container in Van while he is working far away from his family to save money for a new house. He learns that he has cancer and tries to get retired, but he is told that he has to work more than a year to get retirement or pay for the remaining days. Without knowing what to do, Ibrahim does not tell anything to anyone and tries to continue working while losing his health. As he is worsened, he starts to make mistakes and suffer the pressure of doing wrong. Yusuf is a young man who dreams of becoming wealthier and flirts with Nihal, a cashier in a dress shop. Resul is the overseer who controls the worksite, and he is the only person who can talk with the employer, Levent. Levent promises Resul to become the employer of the next project, but it seems he tries to make Resul responsible for the illegal processes. The wages are not paid for a while, and when one of the workers, Abdullah, gathers others telling them to strike, overseer Resul immediately fires him, and when Abdullah demands his unpaid wage, Resul beats him. When Resul asks Levent about the payment of the wages, Levent harshly reacts by advising him to be respectful, and

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<sup>31</sup> Barış, *Yeni Türkiye Sinemasında Sınıfsal Görünümler*, 25.

when workers ask Resul about the payment, he does the same. This symmetry continues throughout the movie as Resul performs towards the workers in the way Levent treats him. On the other hand, Yusuf imitates a middle-class habitus with his clothes and earring, thinking that this would impress Nihal, but, on the contrary, she finds the earring ugly and becomes uncomfortable when Yusuf tries to kiss her at a cafe. Instead, they build affection and an intimate dialogue when they talk about the conditions in their lives. Yusuf is traumatized when a worker dies on the worksite because of a broken machine. This situation makes Yusuf to take care of himself and realizing the significance of having a sustainable income, he agrees with Resul to work on the next project. Employer and lawyer meet with the worker's relatives who died on the worksite and offer them money to prevent any law case. Ibrahim, suffering from illness and psychological pressure, commits suicide, and the offer scene repeats, where the employer offers money to Ibrahim's wife to prevent any law case. She only knows Kurdish, and Yusuf comes as a translator; however, Yusuf finds the offer very low, they bargain, and the employer accepts Yusuf's conditions, but Ibrahim's wife rejects, claiming that she cannot trust anything.

*Toz Bezi* is Ahu Öztürk's first and last feature-length film, *Sarmaşık* is the second film of Tolga Karaçelik, *Ana Yurdu* is the first and the only fictional movie of Senem Tüzen, *Babamın Kanatları* is the first movie of the Kıvanç Sezer. In addition, they are both writers and directors. In these movies, one can find the representation of inter-class encounters from the perspectives of different classes and the contextualization of the encounters in relation to economic, social, and cultural processes. These movies suggest a transition in representing the inter-class encounters for several reasons. The main storyline of these movies is directly about inter-class encounters. In addition, they manifest the social and cultural differences between classes and how differences in habitus mediate the encounters in different ways. Moreover, social and cultural relations can also play roles in forming hegemony that regulates the class hierarchies. Lower-class people are either silent, submissive, childish, or reactionary,

but they cannot find a way to subvert the power hierarchy. *Ana Yurdu* represents a different form of encounter contrary to others, where the lower class habitus becomes the oppressive force against the emancipation of the upper-class woman. Compared to the movies of the previous period, these movies focus on inter-class encounters similar to *Çoğunluk* and *11'e 10 Kala*, but the context of economic, social, and cultural differences are manifest in these movies more than in the earlier movies. However, these movies involve the impossibilities lower classes face in the encounters either due to economic conditions, social incapacities, or cultural inequalities. On the other hand, middle and upper-middle classes are represented as self-centered, oppressive, or greedy, which can be criticized for stereotyping. If one considers *Ana Yurdu* as a movie where the upper-class person tries to be free from the constraints that she faces due to her inter-class encounters with the lower classes, this can be generalized to the upper classes in the movies because, in different ways, middle and upper-middle classes are represented as trying to become free from the limitations or consequences they face due to their inter-class encounters.

#### 4.3.2 After 2017

Since 2017 there have been changes in the New Cinema in Turkey. On the one hand, several directors do not have films after 2016, or they are no longer as productive as the previous years. On the other hand, there emerges a diversity in the style and narrative of the movies. For example, contrary to the general mood of the New Cinema, one can find examples such as *Kelebekler* (Tolga Karaçelik, 2018) and *Son Çıkış* (Ramin Matin, 2018), which involve elements of dram and comedy. The representation of inter-class encounters continues to appear after 2017, and the movies examined below are *İşe Yarar Bir Şey* (Pelin Esmer, 2017), *Saf* (Ali Vatansever, 2018), *Kız Kardeşler* (Emin Alper, 2019), and *Hayaletler* (Azra Deniz Okyay, 2020) represent inter-class encounters from different perspectives.

*İşe Yarar Bir Şey* (Pelin Esmer, 2017) is the story of Leyla and Canan who meet on a train going İzmir. While middle-class advocate and poet Leyla goes to the twenty-fifth anniversary of graduation to see her school friends for the first time since graduation, Canan is a lower class nurse

who goes to do illegal euthanasia to save money for acting school since she wants to be an actress. As Canan suffers the moral and psychological dilemma of killing a person, Leyla gradually involves her mission, and their train journey becomes an intimate friendship. They are from different economic classes, education levels, and class habitus; however, as Özge Güven Akdoğan suggests, they open their lives to each other by showing mutual care and ethical concern.<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless, this should not be over-emphasized because their economic differences do not seem too dramatic, and there is an age difference between them which makes Canan respect Leyla and renders Leyla as if she is the older sister of Canan. Moreover, the narrative focuses on Leyla's curiosity about the killing of a person. When they arrive in İzmir in the morning, they go together, and it turns out that the person they come to kill, Yavuz, knows the poems of Leyla and does not seem depressed at all. After the three have a conversation, Leyla manages to postpone the event to the day after and, in the evening, goes to the school meeting. The anniversary scene is like a summary of middle-class habitus in Turkey. As Berceste Gülçin Özdemir argues, dealing with the themes of life and death through the encounters between Leyla, Canan, and Yavuz movie can be considered as opening up new transformative dialogues and questions.<sup>33</sup> However, in terms of inter-class encounters, *İşe Yarar Bir Şey* seems to focus on the middle-class character, similar to the examples of *Çoğunluk* and *Kış Uykusu*. However, compared to these previous examples, the perspective of the lower class character is represented in detail, and one can argue that instead of pointing out the impossibility of forming a communication, this time film attempts to seek new ways of developing a dialogue with a mutual understanding.

*Saf* (Ali Vatansever, 2018) is about a young and poor married couple, Kamil and Remziye. They live in Fikirtepe, where urban transformation projects continue to replace old neighborhoods with new mass

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<sup>32</sup> Özge Güven Akdoğan, "İşe Yarar Bir Şey'de Yolculuk, Hareket ve Zaman," *SineFilozofi* 3, no. 6 (2018): 3–22, <https://doi.org/10.31122/sinefilozofi.402294>, 11.

<sup>33</sup> Beceste Gülçin Özdemir, "İşe Yarar Bir Şey Filminin Kadın Karakterlerine Ve Ölüm Olgusuna Feminist Film Kuramı Çerçevesinde Anamorfotik Bakış," *SineFilozofi Özel Sayı* (2019): 493–517, 514–5.

construction projects. The lower class people in the neighborhood try to protect themselves from the destructive effects of the urban transformation but cannot agree with what they should do. Remziye is a domestic worker and secretly saves money since she dreams of having a baby. Kamil is a highly introverted and shy person who seeks a job but is hesitant to work on the project in Fikirtepe because people in his neighborhood are against it. Nevertheless, he goes and replaces the nightshift of a Syrian worker Ammar for the same wage, which makes other Turkish workers angry since it causes wages to get lower. Moreover, Kamil does not have the license for the vehicle he uses, the overseer tells him to enroll in the license course, but he cannot pay the fee. Meanwhile, Ammar keeps coming to the worksite asking for his job. Kamil tells the situation to his friend Fatih to ask for money for the fee; Fatih finds the solution by beating up the Syrian worker and telling him that he will find some men and will beat him at night. Kamil becomes anxious at night and goes to Ammar's house; Fatih does not show up, Kamil himself goes, and while trying to push Ammar, he falls from the balcony and dies. The second half of the movie is about Remziye's struggle to find him. The reckless police department does not help much; she goes to several worksites and finds Ammar (who returned to work) but cannot communicate since Ammar only speaks Arabic and there is no translator. Meanwhile, she plans with her friend to slander the Romanian babysitter to replace her, but then she pities her and gives her the passport that the houseowner keeps. Later, the security of the construction site realizes Ammar is carrying the dead body of Kamil and Ammar goes to jail. Remziye finds a young boy who knows Arabic as a translator to talk with Ammar. As Barış suggests, she anticipates Ammar's position in her encounter with Ammar and realizes he is not to blame.<sup>34</sup> The conditions of construction workers in *Saf* are not far from *Babamın Kanatları*, and a similar bargain for preventing the law case also happens at the end of *Saf*. However, *Saf* ends with a bitter, hopeful tone similar to *Zerre*, where Remziye tries to get out of her situation. *Saf* is significant in its attempt to work against the representation of

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<sup>34</sup> Barış, *Yeni Türkiye Sinemasında Sınıfsal Görünümler*, 54.

absolute good and evil characters, instead involves several contradictory ethical issues and dilemmas.

*Kız Kardeşler* (Emin Alper, 2019) is about three sisters, Reyhan, Nurhan, and Havva, who were sent to houses in the city as baby sitters, they all return to their father Şevket's house in the village due to different reasons, but considering the village life as worse they start to regret. Reyhan is the older sibling who returned as she became pregnant, and his father quickly married her to the shepherd Veysel whom everyone in the movie belittles. The houseowner of Havva dies, while Nurhan is fired as she beats the boy, she has to take care of. Havva's houseowner Necati (after bringing her back) stays in the village to spend time in good air; however, when they are drinking in the evening, Veysel gets drunk and insists on asking for a job, which results in Veysel's beaten up. This is an example of an inter-class encounter where communication cannot be developed due to cultural differences, but later, the difference becomes a form of violent oppression. Veysel is in a subaltern condition where he cannot articulate himself according to others' understanding, and nobody attempts to understand his perspective as they assume that he is stupid. Ergüç argues that the power structures they undergo constitute their life conditions and form their subjectivity since the power relations they experience condition their subjective attitudes, concerns, and aims, such as finding a way to go back to the city.<sup>35</sup> In this way, they experience the encounters as a transformation of social and cultural atmosphere which plays a significant role in forming their subjectivity.

*Hayaletler* (Azra Deniz Okyay, 2020) is similar to *Yazı Tura* (Uğur Yücel, 2004) because both movies are eager to involve all bits of the socio-political context in Turkey regardless of the density of the scenario. However, *Yazı Tura* does not involve encounters with different classes. *Hayaletler* takes place in a lower-class neighborhood that undergoes urban transformation on a day when power is out in the country. Didem is a teenage woman passionate about dancing and wants to win the dance contest with her group, but when one of the group members cannot come

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<sup>35</sup> Veysel Ergüç, "Kız Kardeşler Filminde Öznenin Durumu: Judith Butler Perspektifinden Bir Okuma," *Sinecine* 11, no. 1 (2020): 81–103, 97.

(because her mother does not let her go), Didem is entirely distracted and leaves contest. On top of it, she learns that her boyfriend is cheating on her. Her older sister Ela is a feminist activist who works for an NGO in the neighborhood lives in a middle-class habitus, and parties regularly. İffet is a middle-aged woman who needs money to protect her son in prison and decides to sell drugs without any other means. Raşit rents rooms to Syrian migrants for higher prices to exploit their precarious conditions; records the demonstration of the feminist activists sending their videos to police, and damages houses to turn them into areas for urban transformation. Atifet Keleşoğlu considers the movie a critique of Turkey's problems based on "here and now" situations and characters, while the narrative involves a dystopian atmosphere.<sup>36</sup> Didem is an ambitious person with a strong character, and she struggles to realize her dreams, but everything in her life goes upside down; and experiences different kinds of oppression and, having lost her job, accepts to sell drugs with İffet. On the other hand, while partying with an LGBTI+ community, Ela goes to buy drugs and encounters her sister. This is a notable instance of an inter-class encounter because it is unique compared to earlier examples. The representation of two sisters encountering different class habitus might suggest that, after all, the line between the lower class and middle class is not economically sharp but socially and culturally significant. The encounter traumatizes Ela probably because of the contradiction that her political engagements do not have correspondence with her personal life. Moreover, whether her activism is sincere or a performative part of the middle-class habitus is also a question.

#### § 4.4 Conclusion

To sum up, one can argue that there is a significant change in the representation of inter-class encounters in the art-house movies of the New Cinema of Turkey. The movies in the first decade of the New Cinema between 1994 and 2003 involve inter-class encounters, and some of these movies also have references to the political context of Turkey; however, inter-class encounters in these movies are not the main emphasis of the

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<sup>36</sup> Atifet Keleşoğlu, "Bir Sabtopya (Subtopia) Atlası Ya Da Kentin Hayaletleri," *Sekans*, no. 616 (Kasım 2021): 3–19, 11.

narratives. Instead, inter-class encounters function to tell stories by developing the background. Moreover, most of the movies in this period lack a contextualization of the encounters. The movies of the new directors emerging in the second decade of the New Cinema between 2003 and 2014, on the other hand, introduce movies where inter-class encounters are the central theme. Moreover, the socio-historical context of Turkey can be found in these movies. However, one can argue that the focus of the movies before 2015 is still one-sided, emphasizing the perspective of one of the classes in the encounter while the other classes become secondary in the story. The movies in 2015 and 2016, on the other hand, introduce encounters where one can find the perspectives of different classes elaborated in different ways. Moreover, these movies open up different perspectives on the representation of inter-class encounters; however, they emphasize the oppression and hierarchy in the class differences. The movies after 2017, on the other hand, introduce different attempts at developing a dialogue between different classes; although these attempts are not always successful, they suggest different possibilities and questions that can emerge in inter-class encounters.



## 5

### Ethics and the Social Context

The contextualization of artworks within the social history is a subtle issue because it involves several dilemmas. Although one admits the creative potential of artistic practice, reconstructing the economic, social, political, and cultural context of artworks introduces a perspective that considers art as part of a general framework of historical processes. One can adhere to a dialectic view that understands cultural products such as artworks are not only constituted within the social context of their production but also constitutive elements of their social environment in various aspects. Therefore, artworks such as movies are not only affected by the historical processes that involve the context of their making, but they also influence the formation of their cultural, social, economic, and political sphere in several respects.

This chapter suggests that differences in the representation of inter-class encounters since the 1990s can be considered in relation to the social history of Turkey. The characteristics of the representation of inter-class encounters can be interpreted based on Deleuze's analysis of what he calls "modern political cinema" and the concept of the minor.<sup>1</sup> In this perspective, the differences in the theme of inter-class

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<sup>1</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 16-7. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema II: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 215-224.

encounters are conceptualized by arguing that the transitions over time can be considered as an increase in the characteristics that Deleuze considers as modern political cinema. This perspective is the ground of the argument that these transitions can be interpreted as the development of an ethical attitude toward representing inter-class encounters in the New Cinema of Turkey during the 2010s. This ethical attitude is based on the contextualization of encounters in their social context which leads one to take one's ethical responsibility in those conditions, opening up potentials for self-problematization and transformation. As movies involve the characteristics Deleuze attributes to modern political cinema, they are engaged with this ethical attitude. This transition can be understood based on the social, political, economic, and cultural transformations in Turkey. As the precarity of working classes and the wealth inequality in society increases, and the authoritarian dominance of the power regime grows, movies develop an ethical attitude toward the representation of inter-class encounters during the 2010s in the New Cinema of Turkey.

#### § 5.1 The Representation of Inter-Class Encounters

Since neoliberal transformations started in Turkey during the 1980s and 1990s, the precarious conditions of workers are systematically increasing and the effects of precarity on Turkey's social environment are continuously growing.<sup>1</sup> The number of people living on the outskirts of metropolitan cities and working under precarious conditions has increased since the 1990s to the extent that these conditions started to shape several dimensions of social life in various ways.<sup>2</sup> The conditions

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<sup>1</sup> Barış Alp Özden, İsmet Akça, and Ahmet Bekmen, "Antinomies of Authoritarian Neoliberalism in Turkey: The Justice and Development Party Era," in *States of Discipline: Authoritarian Neoliberalism and the Contested Reproduction of Capitalist Order*, ed. Cemal Burak Tansel (Rowman & Littlefield International, 2017). Merih Angın and Pınar Bedirhanoğlu, "Privatization Processes as Ideological Moments: The Block Sales of Large-Scale State Enterprises in Turkey in the 2000s," *New Perspectives on Turkey* 47 (2012): 139–67. Mehmet Erman Erol, "State and Labour under AKP Rule in Turkey: An Appraisal," *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 21, no. 6 (2018): 663–77.

<sup>2</sup> Ayfer Bartu Candan and Biray Kolluoğlu, "Emerging Spaces of Neoliberalism: A Gated Town and a Public Housing Project in İstanbul," *New Perspectives on Turkey* 39 (2008): 5–46. Cemal Burak Tansel, *States of Discipline: Authoritarian Neoliberalism and the Contested Reproduction of Capitalist Order* (Rowman & Littlefield International, 2017). Nazlı Şenses, "Gender, Women and Precarity: Examples from Turkey," in *Women, Migration and Asylum*

of precarity are also worsening in several dimensions. It became harder to find jobs, and privatizations of health and education sectors made these less accessible to the middle and lower classes. These conditions result in a deterioration of the conditions of middle classes, which means that the hierarchical social wealth inequality is gradually increasing, and society is becoming more polar.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the state welfare programs also decreased during the 2000s, and the conservative discourse of the Akp government that fosters values of traditional family structures seems to suggest family networks as the backing mechanisms against destructive forces of the neoliberal transformations.<sup>4</sup> While the lack of social welfare contributes to the growth precarity, the conservative rhetoric on traditional family relations directs several oppressive forces on women, who are increasingly under the subordination of economic and patriarchal structures.<sup>5</sup> Another important process was the political struggles for the rights of Kurdish people. Although Akp government seemed to promise these in the first decade of its rule, there was no progress in the conditions of Kurdish people and the processes halted in 2015, starting a series of state violence that continues to oppress Kurdish people.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, Turkey gradually became an authoritarian regime

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*in Turkey: Developing Gender-Sensitivity in Migration Research, Policy and Practice*, ed. Lucy Williams, Emel Coşkun, and Selmin Kaşka, Migration, Diasporas and Citizenship (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2020), 49–67, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-28887-7\\_3](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-28887-7_3).

<sup>3</sup> Çetin Çelik and Tuğçe Özdemir, “When Downward Mobility Haunts: Reproduction Crisis and Educational Strategies of Turkish Middle Class under the AK Party Rule,” *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 43, no. 2 (February 17, 2022): 260–77, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2021.2018652>. Mehmet Erman Erol, “State and Labour under AKP Rule in Turkey: An Appraisal,” *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 21, no. 6 (2018): 663–77.

<sup>4</sup> Berna Yazıcı, “The Return to the Family: Welfare, State, and Politics of the Family in Turkey,” *Anthropological Quarterly* 85, no. 1 (2012): 103–40.

<sup>5</sup> Betül Yazar, “Neoliberal-Neoconservative Feminism(s) in Turkey: Politics of Female Bodies/Subjectivities and the Justice and Development Party’s Turn to Authoritarianism,” *New Perspectives on Turkey* 63 (n.d.): 113–37, <https://doi.org/doi:10.1017/npt.2020.18>. Devran Gülel, “Feminist Movement and Law-Making in Turkey: A Critical Appraisal from 1998 to 2018,” *Women’s History Review* 30, no. 1 (January 2, 2021): 2–27, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2019.1695357>.

<sup>6</sup> Kumru F. Toktamış, “(Im)Possibility of Negotiating Peace: 2005–2015 Peace/Reconciliation Talks between the Turkish Government and Kurdish Politicians,” *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 21, no. 3 (2018): 286–303. Veli Yadirgi, “Turkey’s Kurdish Question in the

during the 2010s, and the economic conditions resulted in a crisis towards the end of the 2010s.<sup>7</sup> The oppositional movements also gained momentum during these processes. While one can mention the Gezi protests as a significant event in several respects that continue to have its effects on the social and political dimensions in Turkey, the feminist movements and the Kurdish politics also gained considerable power, while the state continues to increase its authoritarianism and oppression of any oppositional movement.<sup>8</sup>

The development of an ethical attitude towards the representation of inter-class encounters in New Cinema can be considered within the social context of Turkey, and Deleuze's discussion of modern political cinema suggests a ground for this analysis. Deleuze argues that modern political cinema brings together the individuals torn apart because of capitalism's destructive forces to produce their collective utterances.<sup>9</sup> Thus, the movies he examines emphasize the impossibility of becoming a community, and Deleuze considers the collective articulations of individuals in these movies as suggesting prefigurations for future collective experiences.<sup>10</sup> In this sense, modern political cinema responds to destructive

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Era of Neoliberalism,” *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 22, no. 6 (November 1, 2020): 793–809, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19448953.2020.1801242>.

<sup>7</sup> Barış Alp Özden, İsmet Akça, and Ahmet Bekmen, “Antinomies of Authoritarian Neoliberalism in Turkey: The Justice and Development Party Era,” in *States of Discipline: Authoritarian Neoliberalism and the Contested Reproduction of Capitalist Order*, ed. Cemal Burak Tansel (Rowman & Littlefield International, 2017). Errol Babacan et al., *Regime Change in Turkey: Neoliberal Authoritarianism, Islamism and Hegemony* (Routledge, 2021). Görkem Altınörs and Ümit Akçay, “Authoritarian Neoliberalism, Crisis, and Consolidation: The Political Economy of Regime Change in Turkey,” *Globalizations* 0, no. 0 (January 17, 2022): 1–25, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2021.2025290>.

<sup>8</sup> Fuat Ercan and Şebnem Oğuz, “From Gezi Resistance to Soma Massacre: Capital Accumulation and Class Struggle in Turkey,” *Socialist Register* 51, no. 1 (2015): 114–35. Yazar, “Neoliberal-Neoconservative Feminism(s) in Turkey: Politics of Female Bodies/Subjectivities and the Justice and Development Party’s Turn to Authoritarianism.” Toktamış, “(Im)Possibility of Negotiating Peace: 2005–2015 Peace/Reconciliation Talks between the Turkish Government and Kurdish Politicians.” Özden, Akça, and Bekmen, “Antinomies of Authoritarian Neoliberalism in Turkey: The Justice and Development Party Era.”

<sup>9</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema II: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 215–224.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

forces of capitalism that segregate people by dismantling their communities, by bringing individuals together where they can produce their collective expressions. The characteristics that Deleuze examines as modern political cinema can be observed in the movies that involve inter-class encounters in the New Cinema of Turkey. The transitions examined in chapter 4 suggest that art-house movies of the New Cinema in Turkey involve inter-class encounters continuously during the 2010s and the multiplicity of the subjective positions and the complexity of characters are increasing. Thus, the representation of inter-class encounters is converging toward what Deleuze considers as the modern political cinema.

One can argue that these features are increased in movies over time, and this can be considered based on the devastating conditions created by neoliberal transformations in Turkey, especially in terms of the growing precarity of workers, deterioration of middle classes, and increasing authoritarianism of the state. The ethics of encounters discussed by several authors suggest that an ethical attitude towards encounters should consider the social and historical context of the encounters while opening up potentials of self-problematization and transformation that leads to taking ethical responsibility for one's position in the social context.<sup>11</sup> This ethical attitude closely connects with Deleuze's examination of modern political cinema. Deleuze argues that political cinema entangles the real situations and fictional circumstances to the extent that cinema might articulate prefigurations that might be concealed and forgotten within the social context.<sup>12</sup> This corresponds to the ethics of encounters since it suggests that encounters should be considered in their social and historical context, and in this way, they might open up the

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<sup>11</sup> Sara Ahmed, *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality* (Routledge, 2000). Mowitt, *Re-Takes: Postcoloniality and Foreign Film Languages* (University of Minnesota Press, 2005). Felicia Chan, *Cosmopolitan Cinema: Cross-Cultural Encounters in East Asian Film* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2017). David Martin-Jones, *Cinema Against Doublethink: Ethical Encounters with the Lost Pasts of World History* (Routledge, 2019). Ipek A. Celik Rappas and Philip E. Phillis, “‘Do the Right Thing’: Encounters with Undocumented Migrants in Contemporary European Cinema,” *Studies in European Cinema* 17, no. 1 (2020): 36–50. Umut Tümay Arslan, *Kat: Sinema ve Etik* (Metis Yayıncılık, 2020).

<sup>12</sup> Deleuze, *Cinema II*, 215-224.

potential for transformations and self-problematizations.<sup>13</sup> In this sense, the political cinema that Deleuze understands involves the ethical attitude theorized by the authors who discuss the ethics of encounters in cinema.<sup>14</sup> If the transitions in the theme of inter-class encounters in the art-house movies of New Cinema can be considered as a gradual increase of the characteristics of modern political cinema that Deleuze conceptualizes, then one can argue that movies develop an ethical attitude toward the representation of inter-class encounters.

This ethical attitude towards encounters does not attempt to resolve problems by suggesting solutions. Instead, it is an ethics that reminds one's ethical responsibility within one's social and political context by pointing out the deadlocks, impossibilities, contradictions, and dilemmas that emerge in encounters.<sup>15</sup> In this sense, this ethics is also a form of remembering one's ethical responsibilities by creating a social memory that takes into account the social context of encounters. Thus, what makes the representation of inter-class encounters ethical is their potential for a self-problematization that would make the spectator assume the ethical responsibility of one's position in the social context.<sup>16</sup> This is possible when encounters are contextualized within their social history. Moreover, this contextualization involves the problems within the social context so that films do not conform to the established oppressive power relations. Instead of reproducing the structures of social hierarchies, ethical movies create a possibility to subvert them by taking a critical stance toward the social and historical context.<sup>17</sup> However, one must be careful in rendering the social and historical context in cinema because one can easily fall into the trap of forgetting the social context

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<sup>13</sup> Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*. Martin-Jones, *Cinema Against Doublethink*. Chan, *Cosmopolitan Cinema*. Arslan, *Kat*.

<sup>14</sup> Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*. Martin-Jones, *Cinema Against Doublethink*. Chan, *Cosmopolitan Cinema*. Arslan, *Kat*.

<sup>15</sup> Umut Tümay Arslan, *Kat: Sinema ve Etik* (Metis Yayıncılık, 2020).

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

and producing an imaginary perspective that reproduces the structural power relations.<sup>18</sup>

Deleuze considers the reason behind the emergence of modern political cinema as the destructive effects of capitalist processes that separate people and obliterate their collective experiences.<sup>19</sup> One can extend this argument for the neoliberal transformations in Turkey since they also have destructive forces on the collective experiences of people, turning them into individuals who struggle to survive under precarious conditions. From this perspective, the development of an ethical attitude toward representing inter-class encounters can be considered with the context of neoliberal transformations in Turkey. As the destructive forces of neoliberal transformations harm people's living conditions, tear them apart, and damage collectivities, the development of an ethical attitude concerning inter-class encounters can be considered with respect to the destructive neoliberal processes. This ethical attitude brings together individuals into inter-class encounters in cinema where the impossibilities and ethical dilemmas of the social context become manifest, and potentials for self-problematization and transformation might emerge. In this sense, the development of an ethical attitude towards inter-class encounters can be interpreted as a way of addressing, problematizing, criticizing, articulating, and remembering the social, economic, political, and cultural problems arising in the history of Turkey.

## § 5.2 An Alternative Archive

Martin-Jones suggests that Deleuze does not mention the significance of creating an archive of alternative historical narratives about capitalism.<sup>20</sup> He argues that this aspect should also be considered essential for an ethical attitude because concealing independent historical trajectories and rendering the history of capitalism and imperialism as the only social and political possibility is also a significant outcome of neoliberal

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<sup>18</sup> Deleuze, *Cinema II*, 215-224. Umut Tümay Arslan, *Kat: Sinema ve Etik* (Metis Yayıncılık, 2020).

<sup>19</sup> Deleuze, *Cinema II*, 215-224. David Martin-Jones, *Cinema Against Doublethink: Ethical Encounters with the Lost Pasts of World History* (Routledge, 2019).

<sup>20</sup> David Martin-Jones, *Cinema Against Doublethink: Ethical Encounters with the Lost Pasts of World History* (Routledge, 2019).

transformations. Martin-Jones suggests that as an integrated worldwide capitalist market started to be established with the neoliberal transformations, the market of dominant Hollywood cinema also became part of constructing the cultural hegemony of capitalist and imperialist narratives where local differences and alternatives are erased and forgotten. From this perspective, the emergence of inter-class encounters as a significant theme of New Cinema in Turkey during the 2010s can be considered a contribution to the archive of narratives that are alternative to the imaginations created by capitalist cultural hegemony.

One can argue that critics of capitalism and scholars examining the themes concerning social classes have always been concerned with narratives alternative to the normative discourses. This is apparent in the momentum of the significant body of studies on subaltern people who do not have any access to the means of expressing themselves. Moreover, critics of capitalism and imperialism have also produced perspectives that suggest different possibilities and potentials to the established historical narratives that prioritize the capitalist hegemony. In this sense, forming an alternative archive is a significant part of addressing the history and social context of the oppression and subordination of imperialist and capitalist forces. Thus, one can argue that recording unorthodox historical narratives, local differences, and multiplicity of memories and perspectives is a significant connection of cinema with the social and historical context. The discussions of the authors such as Asuman Suner and Özlem Köksal can be considered from this perspective. Suner considers New Cinema as a space for addressing and articulating the catastrophes of Turkey's recent past, which becomes the production of a significant social memory since these issues and questions could not be discussed in the public sphere otherwise.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, building on the discussions of Suner, Özlem Köksal suggests that one can find the representation of

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<sup>21</sup> Asuman Suner, *Hayalet Ev: Yeni Türk Sinemasında Aidiyet, Kimlik ve Bellek* (Metis, 2006).

minorities in New Cinema which she considers a significant social memory, especially for disappearing languages.<sup>22</sup>

On the other hand, although the New Cinema of Turkey is considered a significant part of the development of an alternative social memory against the established normative discourses, the issue of social classes does not become a significant part of these authors' discussions. Suner focuses on the themes of identity and attachment to the social environment, while Köksal discusses the aesthetic features of the representation of minorities.<sup>23</sup> However, the representation of social classes is not discussed in detail concerning the development of social memory, although it is a significant part of the development of alternative historical perspectives against the narratives of capitalism and imperialism. In this sense, these authors can be criticized for lacking an intersectional perspective that considers the topics such as class, gender, and ethnicity in their inter-related social and historical contexts. Although authors such as Suner and Köksal discuss several issues concerning social memory that addresses narratives alternative to the established hegemonic discourses, it seems the issues concerning social classes do not become a significant element in their examinations of the New Cinema of Turkey.

Moreover, it seems to me that there is an established perspective on the representation of social classes which prioritizes the representation of economic and political struggles of lower-class workers, and I would argue that it is an important factor in the lack of discussions concerning social classes in the New Cinema of Turkey. This perspective can also be a reason why the discussions concerning social classes do not become an important part of the discussions concerning the representation of gender, ethnicity, and identity in the works of the authors such as Suner and Köksal. This attitude is manifest in the arguments of the authors such as Akbal Süalp and Daldal, who address the issue of social classes and

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<sup>22</sup> Özlem Köksal, *Aesthetics of Displacement: Turkey and Its Minorities on Screen* (Bloomsbury, 2017).

<sup>23</sup> One can add studies on gender such as the analysis of Özlem Güçlü where she focuses on the representation of silent female characters. Özlem Güçlü, *Female Silences, Turkey's Crises: Gender, Nation and Past in the New Cinema of Turkey* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016).

their representation in the New Cinema of Turkey. When Daldal argues that the representation of workers has disappeared from cinema since the 1990s, she considers only the lower class workers who participate in a leftist political movement.<sup>24</sup> When she addresses the movies after the 2010s, which I argued involve the theme of inter-class encounters significantly, she categorizes them as either a movie concerning Kurdish identity or women by treating these subjects as mutually exclusive.<sup>25</sup> Akbal Süalp, on the other hand, admits that movies such as *Zerre* and *Çoğunluk* involve the representation of social classes, and taking an intersectional perspective, engages with the discussions concerning gender and ethnicity. However, she grounds her interpretation based on the significance of movies in developing political ideas for the political struggles of the lower class workers against the capitalist forces and pressures on them.<sup>26</sup>

In my opinion, this perspective that focuses on lower-class workers who participate in leftist political movements against capitalist powers is the general viewpoint of the representation of social classes in the cinema of Turkey, and it is a significant reason for the lack of studies on movies that involve the representation of inter-class encounters during the 2010s. Since movies after 2010s do not follow this expected theme in the representation of social classes, the authors looking from this perspective either do not consider the movies after the 2010s as significant or interpret them as not contributing to their political agenda.<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, the movies after the 2010s can be interpreted as developing an alternative narrative concerning the representation of social classes and inter-class encounters because they do not conform to this established

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<sup>24</sup> Aslı Daldal, “1990’ların Yeni Bağımsız Türk Sineması’nda Emekçi Öznenin Kayboluşu: Küreselleşme ve Festivalizm,” *Kültür ve İletişim* 24, no. 1 (2021): 159–89, <https://doi.org/10.18691/kulturveiletisim.800820>.

<sup>25</sup> Aslı Daldal, *Umut Distopya Siyaset: Toplumsaldan Bireyselle Türk Sinemasından Parçalar* (h2o kitap, 2021), 253-7.

<sup>26</sup> Z. Tül Akbal Süalp, “Mutlu Sınıf Yoktur; Söyle Bunları,” in *İşçi Filmleri, Öteki ‘Sinemalar,’* ed. Funda Başaran (İstanbul: Yordam Kitap, 2015), 214–41.

<sup>27</sup> See, for example, Hüseyin Kırmızı, “‘Toz Bezi’ Kimlik, Sınıf, Dayanışma” Mustafa Kemal Coşkun, ed., *Emekçileri İzlemek: Sinemamızda Sınıf, Kültür, Bilinç ve Direniş* (İstanbul: Ginko Kitap, 2017).

norm of representation. Instead, opening up different dimensions of inter-class encounters and involving several subjective positions in their complexity, movies after the 2010s introduce different potentials for addressing the issue of social classes in cinema. The work of Janet Barış is significant from this point of view because she discusses the representation of inter-class encounters by taking into account the multiple perspectives of the encounters and the various ways in which social classes are represented in the New Cinema of Turkey.<sup>28</sup> I think a significant aspect of the movies after the 2010s is their involvement with the inter-class encounters in the multiplicity of the dimensions of the social context, including gender and ethnicity, and the complexity of the subjects in their encounters which introduce alternative perspectives concerning the representation of social classes in cinema. As Martin-Jones emphasizes, although Deleuze does not address this issue, developing such alternative archives concerning the historical trajectories of capitalism and the experiences of social classes in their different social contexts is a significant element of the modern political cinema because, in this way, cinema becomes a means of recording alternative histories that are concealed by the hegemonic narratives of capitalism and imperialism.

Finally, this discussion suggests a perspective to criticize the notion of a “national cinema” from a historiographical point of view. This thesis aims to problematize the history of New Cinema from the perspective of social history by contextualizing its development and transformations within the general social, political, economic, and cultural changes. The transformations in Turkey that affect the social context in several dimensions can only be understood within the framework of global historical processes, which is also true for the New Cinema and its various characteristics. On the one hand, the context of cinema that made New Cinema possible was an international network of film festivals, funds, producers, and journals, as well as a cosmopolitan memory of films that have shaped the images and stories of social classes in cinema since the World War II. On the other hand, contextualizing New Cinema within the social history

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<sup>28</sup> Janet Barış, *Yeni Türkiye Sinemasında Sınıfsal Görünümler* (İstanbul: Doruk Yayınları, 2021).

of Turkey is to understand cinema within the dimensions of global and local historical trajectories that affect and condition each other. This perspective suggests a problematization of “national cinema” because it is impossible to posit a distinctive and independent historical trajectory of a “national cinema” that carries a unique essence. Instead, cinema has always been an international and cosmopolitan medium, and the construction of discourses on national identity is a subject of examination from this perspective. Moreover, the history of New Cinema is open to several interpretations, and investigations since the social history of New Cinema has several aspects that remain to be articulated. The historiography of cinema must consider the global historical processes, local and particular differences, and how social context relates to the medium of cinema in various ways.

The problematization of the history of New Cinema from a cosmopolitan perspective that examines the context of cinema in an international network leads to the question of problematizing the distinction between art-house and commercial cinema. The theoretical framework of this thesis follows Deleuze’s conception of modern political cinema in analyzing movies, and their features are interpreted from an ethical viewpoint. I am aware that positing art-house as a distinct category is problematic in several respects since the context of these movies is highly intertwined within the same context of commercial productions, and introducing these concepts as a tool of interpretation may distort their entangled reality by forcing an arbitrary distinction. Against this criticism, I have argued that the distinction between art-house and commercial cinema is not a distinction that I suggest but a difference established within the context of cinema, according to the network and market of movies. The funding, production, distribution, and recognition of art-house and commercial movies involve different markets and networks; although these are not entirely separated, they are different enough to consider the interpretation of their social context from a different perspective. Nonetheless, I admit that this analysis is not comprehensive since it focuses on one aspect of cinema in a limited scope, and a general and more

comprehensive interpretation of the social context of cinema would introduce more a nuanced and detailed analysis of the history of New Cinema.

### § 5.3 Ethical Dilemmas

I argued that the transitions in the representation of inter-class encounters examined in the fourth chapter could be considered the development of an ethical attitude toward the representation of inter-class encounters which can be interpreted based on the transformations in the social context of Turkey. The ethical perspective that grounds this interpretation suggests that when encounters are considered in their social and historical context, they open the potential for self-problematization and transformation by taking the ethical responsibility of one's position within the social context. This ethical perspective does not aim declaring what is right or wrong, nor does it attempt to conclude universal ethical principles applicable in all cases. Instead, the emphasis is on the particular conditions of social context and the potentials that might lead to transformations. In this way, I argued that the movies of New Cinema involve inter-class encounters from different perspectives and represent the complexity of subjective positions, which can be considered as a gradual increase of an ethical attitude, and this can be examined based on the economic, social and political processes in Turkey.

However, the dimensions of this ethical perspective are much more complex when it is detailed based on different extensions of self-problematization. Although one can argue that movies of New Cinema engage with new and different potentials of representation and transformation, one can also point out several ethical dilemmas. Since ethics of encounters requires taking into account different aspects of the context of encounters, one can also consider these movies from the perspective of their directors. One can argue that filmmakers also have classed backgrounds in middle and upper-middle-class environments, and art-house movies can also be contextualized based on this aspect. In this way, one can suggest that art-house movies reflect the tastes and dispositions of a class habitus, and the development of an ethical attitude can be examined within this perspective. On the one hand, one can argue that since the

destructive effects of neoliberal transformations and the growing authoritarian regime in Turkey had harmful effects on the middle and upper-middle classes as well, the development of ethical concern in their movies can be considered as a response to the increasing social problems that filmmakers also experience. On the other hand, one can argue that it is not because they are injured; on the contrary, being in privileged conditions, destructive social processes do not damage filmmakers. Instead, being aware of the growing social problems, they develop a sense of guilt for the sufferings of the lower classes, and the development of an ethical attitude towards inter-class encounters is a response to deal with this feeling of guilt.

Considered this way, one can question whether directors develop an ethical concern or dispose of the ethical responsibility of problematizing their privileged positions. This would be an ethical dilemma since although movies seem to involve an ethical attitude, they would function for the director to become free from engaging a self-problematization and taking an ethical responsibility. In my opinion, this criticism can apply to the movies that are considered to be one-sided in their representation of inter-class encounters in chapter four. Focusing on one side of the encounter can indicate a lack of self-problematization because of forgetting to consider the other perspective. In this situation, directors can be criticized because while attempting to engage with inter-class encounters, they fail to address other perspectives, which also indicates that they do not problematize their own perspectives. I think movies such as *Çoğunluk*, *Gelecek Uzun Sürer*, *Zerre*, *Yeraltı*, *Bir Zamanlar Anadolu'da*, and *Kış Uykusu* that are considered one-sided in their representation of inter-class encounters in the fourth chapter are subject to this criticism. I do not argue that this annihilates all the ethical content in these movies; however, this is a significant problem concerning inter-class encounters. Their involvement with the inter-class encounters is problematic because one cannot find a self-problematization that is open to a dialogue with the other perspectives since one cannot find the other perspectives equally articulated.

On the other hand, I do not consider the movies that involve several perspectives in their complexity and detail, such as *Toz Bezi*, *Sarmaşık*, *Ana Yurdu*, *İşe Yarar Bir Şey*, *Kız Kardeşler*, and *Hayaletler* having this ethical dilemma to the same extent. One can still argue that directors become disposed of certain feelings of guilt concerning their privileged social positions by making these movies. I would still argue that the directors of these movies can be considered as engaging with an ethical attitude concerning inter-class encounters because, in these movies, one can find several different class positions as problematized and represented in detail and complexity. This suggests an ethical attitude because it indicates an attempt to involve with the questions and problems arising in the encounters from different perspectives. I do not claim that directors are entirely successful in their ethical concerns nor try to render anyone right or wrong. Instead, I suggest that while movies with one-sided narratives are subject to criticism for failing to make a self-problematization to a certain extent, movies that involve the complexity of different perspectives can be interpreted as indications of a self-problematization with an ethical concern.

At this point, one can also question whether these movies are entangled with the social context of Turkey as much as it is suggested above because it can be argued that art-house movies have a limited audience and the aesthetic choices of these movies also have a particular class habitus. From this viewpoint, one can suggest that since the styles and narratives of these movies have an expected audience, which is educated middle and upper-middle classes, they do not engage with the social context of Turkey as a whole but target a specific cultural capital. In my opinion, this argument is problematic because it is not always clear whether aesthetic choices and narratives can always be directly mapped with tastes since tastes are not constant and static. Moreover, the styles of the examined movies are not uniform and keep evolving, and one can point out the emergence of several different stylistic choices during the 2010s. On the other hand, the distribution of the movies and movie theaters are at the hands of monopolies in Turkey. Therefore, it is not easy to judge

whether art-house movies are disconnected from certain audiences because of their aesthetic choices or they are inaccessible to the audience due to market conditions in the first place. This issue is also connected with whether these movies have any actual effect on Turkey's social and cultural context. I think it is not easy to answer this question because deriving the social and cultural effects of artworks is a complicated matter. I agree that watching art-house movies corresponds to an educated middle and upper-middle-class cultural capital, including me. However, this does not contradict the claim that some movies involve an ethical attitude concerning inter-class encounters. I argued that several movies that emerged during the 2010s address inter-class encounters, and their problematizations of the social context of Turkey might open up the potential for transformation. However, I am not in a position to conclude whether these potentials have any actual effect in the social context of Turkey.

I can also be criticized for praising the movies that conform to my cultural capital by attributing an ethical potential to them. First, this thesis grounds the argument concerning the development of an ethical attitude based on the social context of Turkey, where one can observe significant economic, political, social, and cultural transformations that are connected to the theme of inter-class encounters and their representation on cinema. Second, the distinction between the art-house and commercial cinema is a cultural phenomenon established in Turkey, as well as in global networks of filmmaking, which is discussed in the third chapter in detail. Finally, although I argued that an ethical attitude toward representing inter-class encounters became a significant part of the New Cinema of Turkey during the 2010s, I do not claim that these movies are free from problems and ethical dilemmas. I have already pointed out that the main problem of the movies before 2015 is their one-sided involvement with the inter-class encounters. The remaining part of this section discusses the criticisms that can be raised against the movies after 2015.

The major issue in the movies from 2015 and 2016, *Toz Bezi*, *Sarmaşık*, *Ana Yurdu*, and *Babamın Kanatları*, is that the characters of these movies are exclusively from one gender and except for a few instances, one cannot find any encounters between different genders. Although the

dynamics in gender regime with respect to class divisions is a significant issue to consider, focusing on one gender can also be criticized for having a one-sided perspective that lacks a problematization. Moreover, in *Toz Bezi*, *Sarmaşık*, and *Babamın Kanatları*, the power hierarchies are clearly articulated based on class divisions where upper classes oppress lower classes. In *Ana Yurdu*, on the other hand an upper-middle-class woman is under the pressure of the religious conservatism of the middle and lower class women. All these movies emphasize a one-directional power relation where individuals of a class condition struggle with the individuals from other classes, and the central element of the storyline is the impossibilities that emerge in the encounters. This situation can be considered in the context of the Gezi protests, where a euphoria of oppositional politics has emerged that emphasize the state's oppression. However, one can question whether social power relations are as one-directional as they appear in these movies. Thus, although these movies involve different perspectives of the multiple subjective positions in detail and complexity, they represent power hegemonies one-directional which can be understood in the context of the Gezi protests.

For the movies after 2017, *İşe Yarar Bir Şey*, *Saf*, *Kız Kardeşler*, and *Hayaletler*, one can raise several criticisms, but the most significant one seems concerning their endings. Although these movies raise different questions and open potentials by involving several subjective positions and dimensions of the encounters, their endings can be interpreted as having a rather settling tone. This situation can be subject to criticism that Umut Tümay Arslan stresses.<sup>29</sup> When movies conclude at the point where issues are no longer a concern for the spectator, this closes the potential of transformation because it frees the spectator from assuming the ethical responsibility of the problems in the social context of their environment. In *İşe Yarar Bir Şey*, one can find several problematizations of the characters; however, the movie's ending can be interpreted as settling down the questions that emerged in the movie. The final shot is from the dying man's perspective, who watches other characters walking away

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<sup>29</sup> Umut Tümay Arslan, *Kat, Sinema ve Etik* (Metis Yayıncılık, 2020).

on the street, and the spectator hears their conversations a few minutes ago while his voice slowly fades away as he dies. One can suggest that although several questions are raised in the movie, identifying the spectator with the perspective of the dying character, the movie releases the spectator from the ethical concerns for those questions. *Kız Kardeşler* is comparable in this respect because, in a very similar final shot the lying ill character confesses her regret because she intentionally becomes ill to escape the responsibilities of her job. In *Saf*, after mourning the death of her husband and dealing with the employers, the movie ends with her going to discussions concerning the neighborhood's future, which renders the feeling that now she starts to make things better. Finally, *Hayaletler* ends after a day of several catastrophes, including a power cut all around the country, Dilem dancing in the dark streets with the light of her phone. I do not argue that these endings settle down all the problems and questions that appear in these movies. However, they are still subject to the criticism of releasing the spectator from assuming responsibility for the problems by rendering a rather settling tone in the end. One can suggest that these endings try to find a somewhat hopeful possibility for the future in the context of Turkey, where an authoritarian regime has kept growing since 2017. However, such hopefulness only contributes to setting the spectator free from taking an ethical concern for the social context of one's environment.

#### § 5.4 Conclusion

One can argue that the characteristics that Deleuze attributes to the modern political cinema in terms of the concept of the minor can be found gradually increasing in the representation of inter-class encounters in the New Cinema of Turkey. Deleuze examines modern political cinema with the concept of the minor and argues that these movies bring together the individuals who are atomized due to the destructive social, political, and economic forces to form their collective articulations, which might suggest prefigurations of future collective experiences. Deleuze attributes a revolutionary potential to the minor modes or artistic practice because when artworks are entangled with the social context in this way,

they have the potential to open up different questions, contradictions, possibilities, and dilemmas within the social history.

In this sense, what Deleuze examines as the modern political cinema involves the ethical perspective discussed by the authors such as Ahmed, Chan, Martin-Jones, and Arslan concerning cinema and encounters. This ethical perspective states that encounters must be contextualized within their social and historical context, where one can take the ethical responsibility of one's position in the context of social encounters, which leads to a self-problematization and a transformation of subjectivity. The movies in New Cinema of Turkey that involve the representation of inter-class encounters can be interpreted from this perspective. The conclusion is that while the characteristics that Deleuze considers as modern political cinema increase in the representation of inter-class encounters, movies develop an ethical attitude towards this theme, which continues to become complex and complicated in terms of the multiplicity of the subjective perspectives and the plurality of social dimensions that involve the encounters. These transitions can be contextualized within the social context of Turkey, where neoliberal transformations had significant impacts in terms of the growing precarity, deteriorating middle classes, and becoming authoritarian regimes of the state. As these problems continue to condition Turkey's social, political, economic, and cultural contexts, the movies of New Cinema can be observed to involve an ethical attitude toward the representation of inter-class encounters progressively.

These changes in the New Cinema of Turkey can be interpreted as developing an alternative archive concerning the social classes in Turkey. These alternative perspectives on the history of capitalism contribute forming a social memory against the dominant imaginations produced by capitalist cultural hegemony, which erases the individual differences and alternative possibilities against capitalism. In this sense, movies in the 2010s can be considered as the formation of an alternative history counter to hegemonic discourses. On the other hand, these movies are not free from criticisms concerning the classed backgrounds of the directors, the exclusive cultural capital of the art-house cinema, and their narratives

can be interpreted as involving several problems concerning the ethical perspective discussed in this thesis. Thus, the argument does not suggest a complete and one-directional picture, but one can introduce multiple interpretations. Instead, this thesis argues that one can interpret the changes in the representation of the theme of inter-class encounters in the art-house movies of the New Cinema in Turkey as the development of an ethical attitude based on the transformations of the social, economic, political, and cultural context of Turkey.

## 6

### Conclusion

The study of cinema from the perspective of social classes is not widely discussed concerning the New Cinema of Turkey. However, several movies after the 2010s involve this theme in detail. This thesis addresses the issue by focusing on the theme of inter-class encounters since the emergence of this theme is a significant phenomenon in terms of cinema's involvement with the social context of classes. Encounters embody several dimensions. On the one hand, they can manifest various processes that condition social relations, which might be fruitful for interpretation. On the other hand, encounters are instances where social contexts are both produced and subverted, suggesting considering the potentials involved in encounters. Marx examines the formation of different social classes based on encounters conditioned by the economic structure of the society. In this sense, social class divisions are understood in terms of encounters within the context of economic relations. These economic relations create constraints that fundamentally affect the formation of social, political, and cultural relations. Thus, inter-class encounters involve the complexity of these processes, and their representation in cinema can be interpreted from this perspective.

The New Cinema of Turkey emerged during the 1990s within several historical processes. The Yeşilçam period between the 1950s and

1970s had significant effects on the cultural context of Turkey, contributing to the formation of several imaginations that continue to have their effects today. By the second half of the 1970s, Yeşilçam had entered an economic crisis. Combined with the general economic and political crisis and the appearance of television, it was no longer popular during the 80s, although several directors and producers struggled to survive. However, when neoliberal policy changes opened the cinema market for international distributors, Yeşilçam methods could not compete with Hollywood productions. In this context, the New Cinema of Turkey emerged with two distinct markets. On the one hand, as emphasized by Suner, *Eşkiya* became a blockbuster by rendering Yeşilçam themes in the cinematographic language of Hollywood, and this logic became the paradigm of commercial cinema. The directors who did not follow this path and made their films through the network of international film festivals and funding introduced the art-house cinema.

Besides cinema, neoliberal policy changes had several effects on Turkey and were entangled with significant economic, social, cultural, and political transformations. After Akp became the single majority government, the implementation of neoliberal policies accelerated. These transformations involve several different conditions in Turkey. On the one hand, the economic processes increased the precarity of the working classes. The economic effects of neoliberal policies also resulted in the deterioration of the middle classes. The anti-Kemalist and anti-western lifestyle of Akp contributed to the traumatization of the Kemalist middle classes. Moreover, the state welfare system also diminished, and the conservative discourse of Akp increased the pressures on women. Although in the first decade of its rule Akp seemed to promise social rights for Kurdish people, these processes came to a halt in the 2010s, and the structural subordination of Kurdish people continued. Akp increased the became authoritarian during the 2010s, and this process solidified in 2017 with the transition to the presidential system.

The movies examined in this thesis are considered based on periods according to the social context of Turkey. In the first decade between

the mid-1990s and mid-2000s, directors of New Cinema introduced idiosyncratic new themes and styles, which became influential in the later periods. Although the representation of inter-class encounters can be found in the movies of this decade, they either form the general background of the narrative or side stories that contribute to the central issue in different ways. In the second decade of New Cinema between the mid-2000s and mid-2010s, which overlaps with the Akp government establishing its political power, one can observe a proliferation of cinema where directors of the previous decade continued to make movies several new directors emerged, introducing new themes and narratives. Inter-class encounters can be seen as the central theme of several movies from this period, such as *Sonbahar*, *Çoğunluk*, *Gelecek Uzun Sürer*, *Zerre*, and *11'e 10 Kala*, where encounters are contextualized in the social environment of Turkey. However, movies generally focus on one side of the encounters.

The years of mid-2010s can be considered transition years for Turkey in several aspects. On the one hand, Akp became no longer able to promote its promising economic development and started to lose its alliances, including the Gülen organization, which organized a failed coup in 2016. Afterward, in the years following 2017, Akp leads the state toward an authoritarian regime. On the other hand, the Gezi protests in 2013 had significant effects on the political atmosphere in Turkey, and oppositional movements such as feminism and Kurdish politics gained significant power. The number of movies produced in 2015 and 2016 that involve themes of oppression, power relations, and social hegemony can be considered in this context. The theme of inter-class encounters in the movies such as *Toz Bezi*, *Sarmaşık*, *Babamın Kanatları*, and *Ana Yurdu* represent inter-class encounters in detail and the complexity of different sides of the encounters and emphasize the impossibilities and dilemmas that emerge in the social context. The years after 2017 are significant since the neoliberal authoritarian regime was established in Turkey, marked by increasing economic crises and precarity. The movies in this period, such as *İşe Yarar Bir Şey*, *Saf*, *Kız Kardeşler*, and *Hayaletler*, involve a multiplic-

ity of perspectives and a plurality of dimensions in the inter-class encounters, dealing with several problems, contradictions and dilemmas in the social context of Turkey.

These transitions can be considered the emergence of an ethical attitude toward representing inter-class encounters. It is suggested that the differences and transitions in the representation of inter-class encounters can be considered as the increase in the characteristics that Deleuze considers as the modern political cinema. Deleuze suggests that it brings individuals who have been torn apart due to capitalism's destructive forces together to produce their collective language, which can be prefigurations of future collective experiences. Although Deleuze admits that cinema can only suggest this, he considers this mode of creative endeavor has revolutionary artistic potential. The representation of inter-class encounters involves this mode of artistic strife, which Deleuze calls a minor mode of production in more complexity and detail progressively. This process can be considered as the development of an ethical attitude based on the discussions of several authors such as Sara Ahmed, David Martin-Jones, Felicia Chan, and Umut Tümay Arslan. This ethics of encounters suggests that encounters must be conceptualized in the social-historical framework to take the ethical responsibility of one's position in the social context, which could open up the potential for self-problematization and transformation. Movies of New Cinema gradually involve this ethical attitude toward the representation of inter-class encounters as the density of the narratives in terms of the multiplicity of subjective positions and the complexity of problems manifest in the encounters continuously increase. The development of an ethical attitude towards the representation of inter-class encounters can be interpreted in Turkey's economic, social, political, and cultural context, where neoliberal changes resulted in an increasing precarity, deterioration of middle classes, and an authoritarian regime. As social problems arise in Turkey, movies become entangled with the social context in increasingly complex and creative ways and assume an ethical stance concerning the social context of Turkey.

The argument of this thesis may seem too linear, suggesting a progressive historical development in cinema; however, it is important to emphasize the limitations and problems of this interpretation. Above all, the network of art-house cinema reflects a high cultural capital of the middle and upper classes. This situation limits the ethical possibilities of cinema since filmmakers cannot overcome all the problems and dilemmas of social classes within the framework of cinema. I do not argue that the history of New Cinema suggests a success story since the conceptual framework of this analysis does not posit a right or wrong destination to achieve. Instead, I suggest that compared to earlier examples, the differences in cinema during the 2010s might be interpreted as a different relationship with the social context, which can open up the potential for transformation. On the other hand, although the representation of inter-class encounters is increasing, one can point out that it lacks several aspects of social classes in neoliberal capitalism. A significant lack of this sort is the racial aspect of capitalist processes. Although capitalism is highly entangled with racial differences and reproduces racial segregation, the movies of New Cinema involve the racial aspect of capital in rare mentions, such as in *Saf*, where one can observe the conditions of a Syrian worker in Turkey.

One can argue that during the 2000s and 2010s, a significant development in cinema was the increase in the number of documentaries, especially about the precarious conditions of Kurds and the state violence that oppresses them. However, it is still a question of why the representation of social classes in cinema involves gender differences, but ethnic and racial differences are not that common, although it is a significant aspect of the social context. Moreover, the religious differences and perspectives seldom explicitly appear except for a few instances, such as *Takva* and *Ana Yurdu*, while religion has been arguably one of the most critical aspects of Turkey's social and political context since the 1990s. Finally, another significant limitation of this thesis's argument is whether a class can be represented in cinema adequately. The movies are examined with the assumption that they represent social classes to an extent; however, the possibility of representing social classes and the impossibilities

that arise in this attempt is also a subject of debate that needs further discussion. These problems and limitations of the argument of the thesis keep the interpretation of the social context of cinema open-ended since the correspondence between the transitions in cinema over the years, and the transformations in the social context must be investigated and interpreted further from a social historical perspective.

A significant aspect of New Cinema is that it suggests a field of interpretation for alternative views on the construction of the national identity in Turkey and the possible alternative historical narratives against the dominant views on capitalism and class. On the one hand, the discussions on the history of New Cinema are fruitful in discussing how different perspectives and subjective positions experience the social and historical processes in different ways and how these differences suggest alternative narratives on the social history. On the other hand, the problematization of the history of New Cinema requires criticism of the dominant narratives on “national cinema” and contextualizing movies within the global cosmopolitan network of films, festivals, fundings, journals, and filmmakers. The complexity of the context of cinema from an international viewpoint needs further examination in understanding how neoliberal processes and the transformations in cinema are connected and influenced by each other. Once cinema is interpreted from a social and historical perspective, the dynamic between cinema and its social context is a significant area to interpret the social and historical changes. The interpretation of social classes is especially significant since the dominant narratives on the concept of class must be problematized in order to discuss how social classes appear in cinema and how different social processes involve in the representation of social classes.

This thesis contributes to the interpretation of New Cinema from the perspective of social classes and the examination of transitions in cinema with respect to the social context of Turkey. For further research, one can consider the lack of studies that interpret the cinema in Turkey from the perspective of social classes as a promising area of research. Although movies seem to involve themes concerning social classes in Turkey, a social and historical perspective that takes into account the transitions in

cinema is not developed and elaborated in detail. Moreover, a comparative analysis between the Yeşilçam period and New Cinema can also be fruitful since these periods have significant similarities and differences, continuities, and discontinuities. This thesis focuses on inter-class encounters, but a more detailed intersectional analysis that discusses the differences of class, gender, ethnicity, age, disability, and many others in relation to each other with more depth would contribute to the interpretation of social context as a fundamental way. In addition, the discussions concerning the representation of class in cinema seem to be exclusively focused on the representation of workers and instances of worker movements. Thus, considering social classes in the complexity of social and historical processes would contribute to developing an analytical perspective that interprets cinema from the perspective of social classes.



## Appendix

### A List of Suggested Movies for Comparison

The following list includes a number of movies that can be considered as the art-house movies of the New Cinema of Turkey and can be compared and contrasted with the movies examined in this thesis. The main characteristics of art-house cinema and New Cinema of Turkey are discussed in chapter 2. Although this list attempts to be as inclusive as possible, it is neither complete, nor comprehensive. Instead, it attempts to provide a pool of art-house movies towards which one can extend the interpretation of inter-class encounters in the New Cinema of Turkey. The sign \* indicates the movies that might be fruitful for the interpretation of inter-class encounters and \*\* points out the movies mentioned in this thesis.

- 1 C Blok, Zeki Demirkubuz, 1994\*\*
- 1 İz, Yeşim Ustaoglu, 1995
- 2 Tabutta Rövaşata, Derviş Zaim, 1996
- 3 Masumiyet, Zeki Demirkubuz, 1997
- 4 Kasaba, Nuri Bilge Ceylan, 1997\*
- 5 Hamam, Ferzan Özpetek, 1997
- 6 Gemide, Serdar Akar, 1998\*
- 7 Kaç Para Kaç, Reha Erdem, 1999\*\*
- 8 Lola + Bilidikid, Kutluğ Ataman, 1999
- 9 Güneşe Yolculuk, Yeşim Ustaoglu, 1999\*\*
- 10 Mayıs Sıkıntısı, Nuri Bilge Ceylan, 1999\*\*
- 11 Üçüncü Sayfa, Zeki Demirkubuz, 1999\*
- 12 Laleli'de Bir Azize, Kudret Sabancı, 1999
- 13 Filler ve Çimen, Derviş Zaim, 2000\*\*
- 14 Büyük Adam Küçük Aşk, Handan İpekçi, 2001\*
- 15 Herkes Kendi Evinde, Semih Kaplınoğlu, 2001
- 16 Yazgı, Zeki Demirkubuz, 2001\*\*
- 17 İtiraf, Zeki Demirkubuz, 2001\*

- 18 Uzak, Nuri Bilge Ceylan, 2002\*
- 19 9, Ümit Ünal, 2002
- 20 Hiçbir yerde, Tayfun Pirselimoglu, 2002
- 21 Çamur, Derviş Zaim, 2003\*
- 22 Bekleme Odası, Zeki Demirkubuz, 2003\*
- 23 Karpuz Kabuğundan Gemiler Yapmak, Ahmet Uluçay, 2004
- 24 Yazı Tura, Uğur Yücel, 2004
- 25 Meleğin Düşüşü, Semih Kaplanoğlu, 2004
- 26 Bulutları Beklerken, Yeşim Ustaoglu, 2004\*
- 27 Korkuyorum Anne, Reha Erdem, 2004
- 28 Duvara Karşı, Fatih Akın, 2004
- 29 İki Genç Kız, Kutluğ Ataman, 2005
- 30 Takva, Özer Kızıltan, 2006\*
- 31 Beş Vakit, Reha Erdem, 2006
- 32 Kader, Zeki Demirkubuz, 2006
- 33 Cenneti Beklerken, Derviş Zaim, 2006
- 34 İklimler, Nuri Bilge Ceylan, 2006
- 35 Yumurta, Semih Kaplanoğlu, 2007\*
- 36 Ara, Ümit Ünal, 2007
- 37 Yaşamın Kıyısında, Fatih Akın, 2007\*
- 38 Gölgesizler, Ümit Ünal, 2008
- 39 Süt, Semih Kaplanoğlu, 2008
- 40 Rıza, Tayfun Pirselimoglu, 2008
- 41 Pandora'nın Kutusu, Yeşim Ustaoglu, 2008\*
- 42 Bahoz, Kazım Öz, 2008\*
- 43 Sonbahar, Özcan Alper, 2008\*\*
- 44 Üç Maymun, Nuri Bilge Ceylan, 2008\*
- 45 Nokta, Derviş Zaim, 2008
- 46 Hayat Var, Reha Erdem, 2008
- 47 Tatil Kitabı, Seyfi Teoman, 2008
- 48 Gitmek: Benim Marlon ve Brandom, Hüseyin Karabey, 2008\*
- 49 2 Dil 1 Bavul; Orhan Eskiköy, Özgür Doğan, 2008\*
- 50 Made in Europe, İnan Temelkuran, 2008\*
- 51 Bornova Bornova, İnan Temelkuran, 2009\*

- 52 11'e 10 Kala, Pelin Esmer, 2009\*\*
- 53 Uzak İhtimal, Mahmut Fazıl Coşkun, 2009
- 54 Kıskanmak, Zeki Demirkubuz, 2009\*
- 55 Köprüdekiler, Aslı Özge, 2009\*
- 56 Başka Dilde Aşk, İlksen Başarır, 2009
- 57 Büyük Oyun, Atıl İnaç, 2009\*
- 58 Çoğunluk, Seren Yüce, 2010\*\*
- 59 Gişe Memuru, Tolga Karaçelik, 2010\*
- 60 Ses, Ümit Ünal, 2010
- 61 Atlıkarınca, İlksen Başarır, 2010
- 62 Bal, Semih Kaplanoğlu, 2010
- 63 Saç, Tayfun Pirselimioğlu, 2010
- 64 Pus, Tayfun Pirselimioğlu, 2010
- 65 Gölgeler ve Suretler, Derviş Zaim, 2010
- 66 Teslimiyet, Emre Yalgın, 2010\*
- 67 Kosmos, Reha Erdem, 2010
- 68 Bir Zamanlar Anadolu'da, Nuri Bilge Ceylan, 2011\*\*
- 69 Gelecek Uzun Sürer, Özcan Alper, 2011\*\*
- 70 Bizim Büyük Çaresizliğimiz, Seyfi Teoman, 2011
- 71 Nar, Ümit Ünal, 2011
- 72 Zenne; Caner Alper, Mehmet Binay, 2011
- 73 Yeraltı, Zeki Demirkubuz, 2012\*\*
- 74 Tepenin Ardı, Emin Alper, 2012
- 75 Gözetleme Kulesi, Pelin Esmer, 2012
- 76 Küf, Ali Aydın, 2012
- 77 Zerre, Erdem Tepegöz, 2012\*\*
- 78 Araf, Yeşim Ustaoglu, 2012
- 79 Şimdiki Zaman, Belmin Söylemez, 2012\*
- 80 Devir, Derviş Zaim, 2012
- 81 Yozgat Blues, Mahmut Fazıl Coşkun, 2013
- 82 Köksüz, Deniz Akçay Katıksız, 2013\*
- 83 Hayatboyu, Aslı Özge, 2013\*
- 84 Daire, Atıl İnaç, 2013
- 85 Ben O Değilim, Tayfun Pirselimioğlu, 2013

- 86 Şarkı Söyleyen Kadınlar, Reha Erdem, 2013
- 87 Jin, Reha Erdem, 2013
- 88 Mavi Dalga; Zeynep Dadak, Merve Kayan, 2013
- 89 Sen Aydınlatırsın Geceyi, Onur Ünlü, 2013
- 90 İtirazım Var, Onur Ünlü, 2014
- 91 Annemin Şarkısı, Erol Mintaş, 2014\*
- 92 Nergis Hanım, Görken Sarkan, 2014
- 93 Kış Uykusu, Nuri Bilge Ceylan, 2014\*\*
- 94 Bir Varmış Bir Yomuş, Kazım Öz, 2014\*
- 95 Kuzu, Kutluğ Ataman, 2014
- 96 Sivas, Kaan Müjdeci, 2014
- 97 Kumun Tadı, Melisa Önel, 2014\*
- 98 Kusursuzlar, Ramin Matin, 2014
- 99 Balık, Derviş Zaim, 2014
- 100 Tuz Ruhu, Nesimi Yetik, 2014
- 101 Sesime Gel, Hüseyin Karabey, 2014\*
- 102 Nefesim Kesilene Kadar, Emine Emel Balcı, 2015\*
- 103 Rüzgarın Hatıraları, Özcan Alper, 2015
- 104 Toz Bezi, Ahu Öztürk, 2015\*\*
- 105 Mustang, Deniz Gamze Ergüven, 2015\*
- 106 Sarmaşık, Tolga Karaçelik, 2015\*\*
- 107 Abluka, Emin Alper, 2015\*
- 108 Ana Yurdu, Senem Tüzen, 2015\*\*
- 109 Bulantı, Zeki Demirkubuz, 2015\*
- 110 Köpek, Esen Işık, 2015\*
- 111 Babamın Kanatları, Kıvanç Sezer, 2016\*\*
- 112 Tereddüt, Yeşim Ustaoglu, 2016\*
- 113 Kor, Zeki Demirkubuz, 2016\*
- 114 Rüzgarda Salınan Nilüfer, Seren Yüce, 2016\*
- 115 Albüm, Mehmet Can Mertoğlu, 2016\*
- 116 Rüya, Derviş Zaim, 2016
- 117 Koca Dünya, Reha Erdem, 2016
- 118 İşe Yarar Birşey, Pelin Esmer, 2017\*\*
- 119 Buğday, Semih Kaplanoğlu, 2017

- 120 Körfez, Emre Yeksan, 2017\*
- 121 Yol Kenarı, Tayfun Pirselimoglu, 2017
- 122 Kaygı, Ceylan Özgün Özçelik, 2017
- 123 Sofra Sırları, Ümit Ünal, 2017
- 124 Sarı Sıcak, Fikret Reyhan, 2017\*
- 125 Zer, Kazım Öz, 2017\*
- 126 Saf, Ali vatansever, 2018\*
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